

Winter One Act Festival: *The Cloak*
Prompt Book
October 30, 2024 – February 18, 2024

Compiled on March 16, 2024
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PROCESS

- I. Finding scripts
 - a. I looked around the Annex Library and perused a few anthologies.
 - b. I found *The Cloak* in one such anthropology and liked it a lot.
 - c. I checked in with Jeff on if I could borrow the anthropology.
 - i. The answer was yes.
 - d. Once I got the okay, the next step was getting rights.
- II. Getting Rights
 - a. Not a lack of effort – and many emails between Ruth, myself, and the playwright’s agent – we decided to move forward with the process regardless of if I received official rights.
- III. Auditions
 - a. Caz and I hosted auditions on Jan 12, 6:30 – 8:30 (really until 9:15)
 - b. We took about 4 days to cast (I was ready in 2).
- IV. Scheduling Rehearsals
 - a. At the time, I did not have an SM, so I oversaw communicating with my cast to obtain availability and figuring out rehearsal times.
 - b. Audrey joined the project on Jan 17th.
 - i. I shifted communication with the cast and Ruth to Audrey – especially regarding rehearsal space
- V. Rehearsal and Tech Period
 - a. I first hosted an all cast rehearsal where we talked through our approach to theatre, our given role, needs as an artist, and needs as a performer.
 - i. From this conversation, I learned about the needs for an actor who is neurodivergent, a chronic illness for another actor, and the experience level of a final actor.
 - b. After this, I hosted paired rehearsals, breaking the show down into sections that engaged various pairings of characters.
 - i. My intention was to do pair work during weekdays and host longer weekend rehearsals to plug things together and work the cycles of the show.
 - ii. Thankfully, this worked well.
 - iii. These rehearsals worked first with movement and character, then relationships, then space.
 - iv. Rehearsals consisted of improv with minimal guidance from me for the first run of a scene
 1. Then going back through with some revisions or things to try.
 2. Talking through some sticky or unclear character work and motivating their blocking.
 3. Then finally cleaning and honing specific actions.
 4. Repeat
 - c. There were a few injuries and illnesses towards the end of the rehearsal period and into tech.
 - i. These prompted a quick turnaround for my swing actor to jump in during tech and opening.

RESEARCH

Genre

Morality Play

- *The English Morality Play as a Weapon of Religious Controversy*¹
 - *Object of pre-Reformation version*
 - *Teach audience the means of salvation, the way to Heaven*
 - *Path normally paved by sacraments of the Church*
 - *Teaching man to avoid evil*
 - *Evil of neglecting the sacraments and committing any or all of the seven deadly sins*
 - *As evolved (in 16th c)*
 - *Became increasingly secularized*
 - *Written on other topics, other than specifically Christian virtues*
 - *Seeing the difference between the beauty of goodness and the ugliness of sin...*
 - *Occasionally demonstrated in physical*
 - *But often in action and dialogue of the characters*
 - *Every morality play*
 - *Contains passages in which the Virtues expound the cardinal tenets of Christianity to each other; to the hero, or to the Vices*
 - *Dialogue, “sermons”*
 - *Presented by both good and evil characters*
 - *Evil – often reminds audience of how evil it is*
 - *Re: Everyman*
- *Morality Play: Dramatic genre*²
 - *Allegorical drama popular in Euro (15-16th c)*
 - *Characters personify moral qualities such, abstractions (re: death, youth) and in which moral lessons are taught*
 - *Type of vernacular drama*
 - *Action centers on the hero (mankind) whose inherent weaknesses are assaulted by such personified diabolic forces – but who may chose redemption or enlist aid*
 - *Usually short*
 - *Serious themes tempered by elements of farce*

¹ Pineas, Rainer. “The English Morality Play as a Weapon of Religious Controversy.” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 2, no. 2 (1962): 157–80. <https://doi.org/10.2307/449497>.

² Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "morality play." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, January 16, 2014. <https://www.britannica.com/art/morality-play-dramatic-genre>.

- *Re: The miraculous apple tree, Condemnation des banquets, the castle of perseverance*

“modern” mystery (1950s)

- *Mystery play*³
 - *Vernacular drama in euro during middle ages*
 - *Usually representing biblical subjects*
 - *Developed from churchmen plays on church premise*
 - *As moved away from the church as the stage, they became filled with irrelevancies and apocryphal elements*
 - *Satire introduced to mock physicians, soldiers, judges, and even monks and priests*
 - *Re*
 - *Chester plays*
 - *Wakefield plays*
 - *The acts of the apostles*
 - *Usually done by guilds – not professional actors*
 - *At height – quote elaborate*
 - *Performed on pageant wagons*
 - *Scaffold stage, dressing room, ready to move about*
 - *The axis mundi represented across the length of the stage*
 - *Didn't attempt to achieve unity of time, place, and action*
 - *Could rep any number of different geographic locations and climates*

Production History

Precedence

Everyman

Seeing the physical bonds off sin constraining the hero's friend Good Deeds, who after everyman has been observed participating in various sacraments, is released to intercede to God for his master

Mankind

The Castell of Perseverance

Mundus et Infans

Wisdom

*The miraculous apple tree,
Condemnation des banquets,
the castle of perseverance*

could not find production history

Costume vision Board based on time play was published

³ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "mystery play." Encyclopedia Britannica, December 5, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/art/mystery-play>.



CAST LIST

The Angel	Sivani Gangaram
The First Dead	Katie Castillo
The First Unborn	Emma Fox
The Second Dead	Emma Fox
The Second Unborn	Zara Shirwany
The Third Dead	Zara Shirwany
The Third Unborn	Katie Castillo
Swing	Katie Castillo
Stage Manger	Audrey Thomson

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

Rehearsal Schedule

PROJECT	One Acts: <i>The Cloak</i>
STAGE MANAGER	Audrey Thomson

Weeks	Who is Called	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
3	Rehearsals		(22) 5:30 - 6:30 PM		(24) 5:30 - 7 PM		(26) 3:30 - 4:30 PM	(27) 1-2 PM
		Zara						
		Sivani						
		Emma						
	Katie							
4	Rehearsals		Rehearsal Hall		Rehearsal Hall		Fess	Fess
		(28) 3 PM-5 PM	(29) 5:30 - 7 PM	(30) 6 - 7 PM	(31) 5:30 - 7 PM			
		Zara						
		Sivani						
		Emma						
	Katie							
5	Rehearsals	Fess	Fess		Rehearsal Hall 5:30-6:30, 6:30-7 Fess			
		(4) 11 AM - 2 PM	(5) 5-7 PM	(6) 6-8 PM	(7) 4-6 PM			(10) 11-2 PM
		Zara						
		Sivani						
		Emma						
	Katie							
6	Tech, Performance: Finalized	Fess	5-6 Fess 6-7 Studio 8	Fess	Fess			Fess
		(12) 5-7 PM [Jeff visit @5 PM]	(13) 5:45 - 6:45 PM		(15) TECH 5:30-6:30 PM	(16) DRESS 5:30 - 8 PM	(17) Called 12:30 PM	
		Zara						
		Sivani						
		Emma						
	Katie							
7	Performance	(18) Called 12:30 PM						
		Zara						
		Sivani						
		Emma						
	Katie							

COSTUME VISION BOARD

(shared with cast)

Needs: Unity (listed in the script as the same costume – choosing to interpret as unity rather than exact same because of varying body shapes of my cast; I want them to feel good in what they wear)

Concept: Same color scheme but varying form – the cloak or prop will accent the individual character; possible, more ambiguous for perceived gender for the unborn and the angel.⁴

Color ideas:

Black	Pros – easier to find unity across different costume forms Cons – blends into background
Scarlet	Pros – easier to stand out from background Cons – fairly bold, maybe more of an accent
Blue	pros – more shade range Cons – don't want this as a dominant color
Purple	pros – more shade range Cons – might be a bit odd on its own



(like the coverage of the arms and torso, don't like the bare legs)



(I like the bottoms)

⁴ This changed for the actual costuming. The Angel was allowed accessories and more...flavorful costuming pieces while the Dead-Unborn were more simplistic in nature and no accent pieces such as jewelry, layers, etc. This choice was made to emphasize that the Angel stands alone more so than the Dead-Unborn pairs.



(I like the solid color look, and the high waisted pants and the top)



(like the shape of the skirt)



(I like the coverage of the body and the ties)



(like this more ambig gender. Don't like the jackets or the layering look)



(oooh like the jumpsuit look)



(I like the yellow dress shape and cut)



(Like the shape of the dress)

PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

Props:

- Bag

Costumes:

- 3 distinct cloaks
 - o 1, especially easy to take off, visually dramatic (swooshy)
- 1 pocket watch
- 1930s (see vision board)
- No jewelry aside from Angel

Set:

- 2 in-flat doorways SL and SR
- 1 black bench
- 1 large skeleton table (weight bearing)
- 3 small skeleton tables
- 1 vertical block (per request of actor for chronic illness accommodation)

Sound (none)

Special Needs

- Swept floor (for safety of bare, no-shoed feet)

TECH SHEET

STUDENT FESTIVAL TECH SHEET

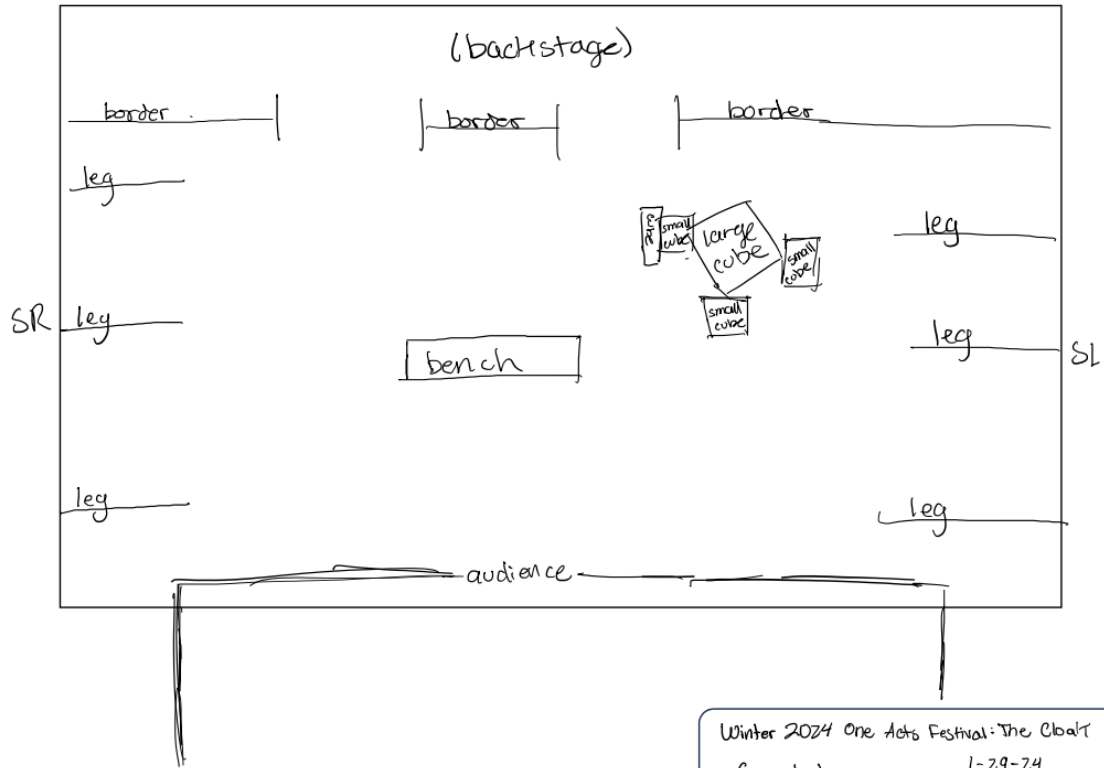
This form is due no later than one month before your performance dates.

Name of Production The CloakDirector/Choreographer Lucia HeeseTech Date Thurs February 15 Dress Date Friday February 16 Perf. Dates February 17 and 18Floor Plan attached ☒**STAFF**Stage Manager Audrey Thomson Run Crew n/aLighting Designer Derek Duarte Sound Designer n/a (?) original music by Gordon Chan**TECH REQUIREMENTS**Approximate Number of Light Cues 5Approximate Number of Sound Cues 3Approximate Number of Costumes 7

Needs: (Check all that apply)

Black Flats ☒ Piano ☐ Dance Floor ☐ Use of Catwalks ☐Other ☒ Describe 1 black bench; 1 large table; 3 small tables; 1 vertical cube**APPROVAL****As Director/ Choreographer I am responsible for all aspects of my performance from tech, through dress, performance and strike.**Lucia Heese Lucia D Heese
Director/Choreographer1-29-2024
Date_____
Derek Duarte, Production Coordinator_____
Date

GROUNDPLAN



ANALYSIS (CONCEPT)

Structure of scene: 3 Cycles

Technically, this one act is just one long scene with no formal breaks in the text. I broke the text down into sections for myself, to make paired rehearsals easier: 1) opening angel monologue, 2) Angel and the Unborn, 3) Angel and the Unborn and the Dead, 4) the Unborn and the Dead, 5) Angel and the Unborn and the Dead, 6) the Unborn, and finally, 7) the Angel. The flow and breakdown of the play was characterized by entrances and exits – presence and absence.

However, I wanted to play to emphasize a sense of time (both for the sake of length of the scene and artistically). To do this, I expanded the text into 3 scenes, or what I call cycles (like cycles of time) to give a sense of repetition. Cycle 1 was silent, a movement sequence of the opening monologue blocking in cycle 2. Cycle 2 was the actual play the playwright wrote. Cycle 3 was a verbal and physical repeat of the opening monologue of cycle 2. The only difference between cycles was the actors, whose bodies represented a given pair of the Dead and the Unborn. I decided to do three cycles to give a sense of unending time, repetition, and only a tiny bit of existential dread.

The actual one act, as a script, is structured for easy repetition and still seeming fresh for a 2024 audience because of its influence of morality and mystery plays. The genres of the script supported my choice to structure the scene based on cycles and entrances/exits.

Power: Take on characters (and thus, casting)

TL;DR: It is all about power and who has it through what means.

1. These are morality play characters; they represent a larger whole than just the individual body present on stage. This element is seen in their names, The Dead, The Unborn, and The Angel.
2. When I first read the script, I focused more on The Dead; but, in analyzing the show from both a research and artistic perspective, my attention shifted to the Angel. The Dead and Unborn are the same thing just wearing a different mask – or in this case, a cloak. The Angel is the odd one out, both in terms of the world of the show but also in the technical elements of the script; she talks to the audience.
3. The playwright goes a step further with these characters because they are all addressed as she/her in the script. The character list describes them with no pronouns or assigned-at-birth-gender. Yet, the playwright goes a step further with these characters because they are all addressed as she/her in the script.

From these three discussions, my take on characters centered around power. Who holds power and how does this power shift with entrances and exits? Who holds power when an element is the

same (presenting gender)? Who is this story about – whose flow of power are we really watching?

All of these elements plus the character lens of power posed a very specific criteria for casting: 1) a company presenting the same binary gender, or risk exaggeration and centering of gender in-/equality, 2) diversity and characters of power, or risk aligning with the idea of a white body being more powerful than colored ones, and 3) the Angel is the center of the show, the actors playing the Unborn and the Dead must be able to engage with the Angel in whatever tone I select for her.

My casting choices focused on finding my Angel on the day of casting. I wanted the Angel's body to be of color. During auditions, I played with a powerful Angel, a bored Angel, a scary Angel, and finally a tired Angel – a human angel. This was my final primary take on the Angel – tired of the monotonous life of this job in the in-between of Heaven and Hell with so much power and knowledge and only human souls to interact with.

The rehearsal process added on more elements to the Angel; she is a begrudging, tired mother-figure whose been hurt with each and every cycle she witnesses. Her heart has crusted over but awakens each time despite her will to be detached. I also added on theatrical, grandeur elements to the Angel for when she is all about the job, or when she is freed from the weight of her bag. The Angel's power comes from her bag – a symbol of her job, her task, and ultimately, her burden. Everything, for the Angel, leads back to the bag and the cloaks; she cannot escape.

The interpretation of the Unborn and the Dead were two sides of the same coin; the only difference is which one has the cloak. The cloak is power and as it shifts between the Dead and the Unborn, so too does the power of a given scene. The Angel's power is above the power of the Cloak; for the Unborn and the Dead, the Angel is the deity. In the absence of the Angel, scenes between the Unborn and the Dead are a competition for power. The Unborn tries to claim power by association with the Angel but the Dead has the Cloak and knowledge.

The Unborn wants knowledge of the world; her blessing and curse is curiosity. Her curse is meeting the Dead and truly wants to be on the right path – laid down by the Angel but muddled by her interaction with the Dead. Both the Dead and the Unborn get in each other's way in their pursuits of their wants – in their journey to the next life. And the Angel watches it all.

Core Emotional Experience

I wanted the audience to experience the pressure of time, a hint of existentialism, driven by the cyclical nature of my interpretation of the script. The emotional push was existentialism but also to think; I did not want this show to be easy on them. My interpretation was not intended to let them sit back and absorb nothing; I wanted to engage them.

Vision of Reality

The world is the in-between of Heaven and Hell, represented by two doorways. The in-between is essentially an abandoned road – a place of constant movement and impermanence. Nothing

will remain the same; nothing lasts – except for the Angel. The Angel seems to be the highest being in this world; but she too is stuck to the in-between. She alone will remain when the dust settles and everything around her changes (fig 1).



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[Fig 1]

PROGRAM – DIRECTOR’S NOTE

As a creative artist, I’ve always been fascinated by time and perceptions of life and death. In my first endeavor as a director-choreographer in high school, I came up with a senior dance project that chronicled how death as a being, concept, and consequence appeared in my life - starting with my Grandma Marge and up till the end of high school with a rather scary lockdown event.

The Cloak - with characters named the Angel, the Unborn, and the Dead - caught my attention because of its language and an inherent sense of cycle and repetition. The Unborn will become the Dead, and the Dead becomes the Unborn, and the Angel watches endlessly in time. I had a question after reading the script for the first time; one I carried into each moment of working on the show. I offer this question to the audience now: If we weave *The Cloak* in life, what do our cloaks look like at this point in the cycle of time between life and death?

SELF-EVALUATION / REFLECTION

Process:

The process went well – mostly. I loved that my cast got to be very close to each other in such a short time. I think this can be attributed to the first group rehearsal where we chatted as humans and artist first before jumping into the work.

I did not anticipate the influence of one actor on the rest of the cast. I somewhat regret casting Zara on the grounds of character tone and professionally. My ideal Unborn was Audrey but there was a miscommunication between Caz and I on who they wanted or not. Zara posed a lot of challenges to my place as a director (and Audrey's stage manager authority) by giving notes, telling other actors where to go, and a significant amount of attitude when I pushed back against this. This led to a slight souring of cast relations towards tech.

Aside from cast relationships, the actual rehearsal process for the show was great. I liked the structure of paired rehearsals during the week. This let me work on developing character relationships and craft the specifics of the scene. The whole cast rehearsals on weekends also helped in addressing entrances, linking the cycles, and creating throughline motifs (physically, vocally). I think this structure of rehearsal / blocking helped me have enough capacity to be picky and make sure each character had something to do even when the main focus wasn't on them. I wanted this show to be repeatable but also engaging for an audience; so, each time an audience member came to the show more than 1 time, there was something new to see and observe; and the meaning of the show would deepen.

Product:

The shows went well! The audience giggled at times I didn't expect but I'm glad I prepped my cast on holding for giggles or laughter. I am / was very proud off the work I saw my cast display for an audience. But as for all directing, with each run I noticed things I could've applied my detail-work to, or a new motif that would build towards to the theme of the show – such as more work with the bag motif, the theatricality of the Angel's monologues, and use of sound.

I did notice that my actors' energy was off both days. Part of this might have been from having no break between tech, dress, opening, and closing – on top of the illnesses underscoring these days. But they delivered on what we worked on regardless and were consistent to the characters we developed during the process.

There was only one moment that I would have wanted to work on or change entirely but what was presenting during the run was acceptable. I wanted the Angel to have a sense of violence; and more than just reaching for the Dead's neck / Cloak. Gael showed me a very angry, violent version of the Angel during auditions (per my request, and I fell in love with that side of the Angel) but the Angel I casted did not have the capacity to play with the violent side of the Angel. The actor was not comfortable with staged or implied violence of that kind; so, I pivoted to a

level of violence that the actor was comfortable with. Lesson learned, I suppose; be careful about wording in audition calls to cover bases on intimacy and combat.

This script almost feels Shakespearean where it is very open to director interpretation; so, I would go the direction of Buddhism and Japanese traditional theatre as a new challenge. A few audience members told me that *The Cloak* reminded them about Buddhism and their perspectives on death and rebirth. I took a class on East Asian Buddhism this quarter so I could see the parallels. In this version of *The Cloak*, I liked that it was more neutral in terms of religious creed or affiliation. If I could do this show again, I would like to explore the Buddhist elements of this show and lean into a Kabuki / Noh narrative of the angry or vengeful ghost.⁵

⁵ I'm writing a paper for a final project on how Buddhism influenced Kabuki and Noh Theatre.