

On Directing Githa Sowerby's *Rutherford and Son*

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Abstract

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This thesis documents the pre-production process of directing a production of Githa Sowerby's play *Rutherford and Son*, and includes initial research, play analysis, script preparation notes, visual research, discussion of the design concepts, images of said designs, and production photographs.

RUTHERFORD AND SON PRE-PAPER

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT AND GOALS

1. Why you've chosen the play

I think it's a beautiful play that highlights a particular struggle against patriarchal capitalism's dominance in society. The play shows the way that the father of a house can silence all of those around him in the name of "what's best for the family" when that really may be what's best for him, his values, and his business. It shows the way that children are turned into investments, a family is turned into a business, and a living room into an office. Everything that is personal is commoditized. The pressures of capitalism are all around, and in order to survive, Rutherford turns his children into commodity.

I immediately recognize my father in the Rutherford character. The way that fathers can lay down the law of the family and force the family to get in line because of how hard they work and the way they provide for the family. The way that particularly my father, who has so much privilege, uses the way he lifted himself from working class to middle class to say that everyone has a fair shot at life if they work hard. My own father's value system is frustratingly narrow, as he is unable to see the struggles of those around him. Still he is also a caring and hardworking person that I value, and in that way I can empathize with the Rutherford character. He is trying to provide for his family, and Sowerby doesn't paint him as a villain but as a human with tremendous flaws that causes great pain for his family. She points to the dominating outside pressure of capitalism to show why he does what he does. I think that leads to the beauty of the play.

2. Areas you hope to develop

- Working from the actors impulses and drawing the best out of them
- Spending more time at the table and using that time productively and efficiently
- Developing a process of unearthing character and relationship from the text with the actors in a way that encourages their discoveries
- Conquering my fear that realism is boring or that I will make it so
- Continuing to work on storytelling through realistic stage business
- Working with the set designer to come up with a ground plan that naturally supports the action of the characters and storytelling through physical relationships
- Thinking about sound and light earlier in the process
- Refining the compositions around the major events and reversals of the play
- Thinking about tempo earlier and having a clearer sense of where the rhythm and tempo of the play belongs before we've reached it in process

3. Moments most excited about

- Janet confronting Rutherford
- Mary making a deal with Rutherford at the end

4. Moments most afraid of:

- The part of the play that is most personal to me, the part that I think is beautiful and dangerous about it, is the way it really critiques the role of the father in the

family. I love my own father, and yet I see so many ways in which his views and ways of going about life are harmful. He explains away socioeconomic injustice because of his stubborn belief that hard work is the primary factor in any individual's success. Talking about that personal connection to the play feels uncomfortable. It feels vulnerable in ways that I struggle to be when talking with my collaborators. I also wonder how best to articulate this. Going into the process, this will be an opportunity to challenge myself and bring in the personal.

- I am also worried about casting Rutherford. This role is so central to the play and logistically it is proving difficult to find someone who can commit to the strange rehearsal schedule that we have laid out. I need to cast an actor who will bring the full humanity to this role, so he doesn't just become an emblem of a societal evil, but is a human with deep flaws who himself has been shaped by the pressures of a patriarchal capitalist society.
- Once I had a cast and decided to cast black actors in the Rutherford family roles (which in itself was a process in which I encountered constant resistance from myself) this added a new fear of addressing race in the rehearsal room. I want to address this casting choice head on in our rehearsal process, and am excited about the opportunity to challenge myself to open the room to this discussion of race and how it factors into a period piece like this when the characters weren't written as black characters.

THE PLAY

5. Title:

Rutherford and Son is the name of the play and gives insights on the world the audience is being let into. Even though this is the story about a family that includes multiple sons and a daughter, the singular son is used in the title. Richard has already abandoned the family business at this point, and all that matters to senior Rutherford is loyalty. So the singular son suggests that one son, John Jr., remains as the possible inheritor of the family business. John also has a son, the future hope of Rutherford, and Rutherford Sr.'s father is also ever-present as a portrait on the wall. So the play is dealing with Rutherford and Son, four generations deep. The title also inherently excludes daughters, and highlights how women are cut out of certain family roles in patriarchal society including in family businesses. It implies the thing Rutherford always puts first, the company. The company and the family are synonymous in a sort of way. The title serves as context, not endorsement, of the norm, an exclusionary context that both Janet, Mary and each of Rutherford's sons will push up against.

6. Story of the play/Synopsis:

Mary has recently arrived to her new husband's father's home in Northern England. The home is dominated by her father-in-law, John Rutherford, who refuses to speak to her on account of her lower class, but Mary finds some comfort in taking care of her child, and relating to her new sister-in-law Janet. Patriarch Rutherford owns the local glass factor and exerts an oppressive authority over his children as he does his employees. When Mary's husband, John

Rutherford Jr., discovers a metal formula, he wishes to sell it to his father to make a new life for himself. Rutherford, after discovering his foreman has been having an affair with his daughter, and eliciting from John Jr. that he'd let Rutherford go to the dogs in order to get his way, goes behind John's back. He convinces his foreman, Martin, to give him the recipe in the name of the company. Rutherford, once he knows the metal recipe is secure, confronts his daughter Janet about dating his lower-class employee at the factory, and kicks her out of the house. Janet dreams that she will run off with Martin, but discovers Martin is more concerned about her father than he is for her. Martin reveals he has given John's metal recipe to Rutherford, and John seeing this as an act of thievery, steals 23 pounds out of Rutherford's cashbox and runs off, promising to send for Mary. Soon all three of his children have left the house, and only Mary and her baby son remain. Mary sees Rutherford for all of his faults, but also sees the only opportunity to protect her son, and drives a hard bargain with Rutherford to insure her and her son's future.

7. Main action or spine:

- To fend off the cold of capitalism, lest it steal away our dreams and our humanity.

8. Characters (Character Name – **Character spines** – Obstacle;):

- Rutherford – **To stoke the struggling family business in order to fend off the cold.** His obstacle is that his children are rebelling against his wishes, and business is struggling, with loans unpaid, strikes abounding through the region, and the bank controlling the

business decisions. Rutherford is the protagonist and functions in some ways like a tragic hero without a fully fulfilled tragic ending (no recognition and catharsis, just compromise).

- Mary Rutherford – **To escape to a warmer future for herself and her son.** Her obstacle is that her husband isn't particularly motivated or good with business, she isn't sure his idea is worth anything (and once she realizes that it is, she is not sure he is business-minded enough to make anything of it) her father-in-law doesn't like her, and she, as a lower-class woman, cannot make the money to provide for her son while also taking care of him.
- Ann Rutherford – **To tend to tradition in order to keep the family's reputation held in high regard throughout town.** Her obstacle is that the children have begun to rebel against their father's tyrannical ways, and the Rutherford business isn't doing as well as it once was.
- Janet Rutherford – **To reignite her joy.** Her obstacle is that her father has kept her away from the men and women of the town all of her life, aspiring that she'd meet a higher class match. She has fallen in love with her father's working-class right hand man. She is also a 36-year old woman, past what society sees as her prime.
- Young John Rutherford – **To forge a new way forward in order to break away from his father's chilling rule.** His obstacle is that he isn't the best with business and Rutherford Sr. believes that he is owed for the investment he put into John Jr.
- Richard Rutherford – **To shelter the souls of his community.** His obstacle is that his father's moral system centers on hard work, not God and compassion, and that point of

view undercuts his work with his parishioners. Additionally, the town sees him as a fool, and having a sister who sleeps around will only further sully his reputation. His father is not hearing out Mrs. Henderson, who could spread gossip about Janet throughout town.

- Martin – **To serve loyally and keep the fires of Rutherfords burning.** His obstacle is that he has fallen in love with Janet, and he is beginning to doubt that Rutherford is always in the moral right.
- Mrs. Henderson – **Wants to protect herself and her family from the permanent cold by securing her son's job.** Her obstacle is that she is lower-class and a woman (neither of which Rutherford respects), she is furious with Rutherford, and she is a bit drunk.

This is Rutherford's world and Rutherford's space, and Rutherford is our tragic hero, in pursuit of something he believes will help his family that in turn drives all of them away. Mary and Janet, the women of this world, provide a lens into the action though. Mary gets the most stage time, while Rutherford speaks the most. On every page in which the character is present Rutherford speaks (60 out of 60 pages), while for 27 of the 72 pages in which Mary is on stage she doesn't speak but observes.

9. Themes

- Capitalism steals away our humanity and our dreams.
- The constant drive of capitalism drains the world of the warmth of humanity. It is a moral chill.

- When a family is run like a company, and children treated like investments, people's worth comes from commodity rather than their humanity.
- It's easy to turn yourself into a cog in the capitalist machine, where "duty" keeps you blindly moving forward in service to corporation over kinship
- Class lines are reinforced as a way of maintaining authority and power
- Fathers punish their daughters and their sons in vastly different ways
- When the family unit is a patriarchy, the daughters are not equals to the sons
- Fortune often comes at the luck of the draw, but managing that fortune requires ambition and vision
- Oppression and inequity can be found in many of the "customs" and "traditions" of a place
- Women are as strong if not stronger than men
- One may become stronger and harder to the world in order to protect the people they love
- There are serious consequences to lowering your class status
- The race to the top leaves many behind
- Class is a temporary illusion and an excuse for selfishness and oppression
- A family is not a company even though it can be run like one
- Father doesn't always know best
- The seed of the patriarchal society is laid in the patriarchal home
- Money doesn't equal happiness
- There are different ways of putting family first, but the best is with love

10. Genre

- Realism leaning toward naturalism, with a touch of melodrama

11. Conventions

- Psychologically driven
- Characters shaped by their social & economic environments, but also by their inherited class privilege
- Middle and working class characters
- Unity of space – single location for whole play
- Within acts, unity of time (though small time jumps in between each act)
- Recognizable and historically accurate setting and costumes
- Photorealistic elements – illusion of fire and rain
- Thrust stage means 3 missing walls (3 fourth walls) – no direct address or acknowledgement of audience
- Moments of sentiment
- Strong plot twists
- Clear emotional peaks
- Characters have romantic dreams that are destroyed beyond imagination.

12. Significant Given circumstances

- The Rutherford house isn't right in town.

- The Rutherford family owns the glassworks, a center of commerce in the region. Essentially all the men in town work here.
- The Rutherfords can walk to the factory in a few minutes.
- Rutherford's grandfather started a potman, but began the process of lifting his family above their class, a process continued by Rutherford's father and himself.
- Seven years ago the business started to struggle, and five years ago Rutherford had to take out a loan. Because of that loan, Rutherford no longer has full control of the business, as the banks have a say.
- Strikes are popping up throughout the region, including at the Rutherford's coal supplier.
- Rutherford's suffered a strike once, but Rutherford stopped it by going into the works and showing the men he could shovel coal too.
- Child labor is legal.
- The Rutherfords live in northern England where it is often winter 5 months a year.
- It is December
- Mary has been living in the Rutherford house for 3 months
- Tony is 4 months old.
- The Rutherfords have a servant named Susan.
- According to Ann: Janet has gone from passionate to quiet.
- Janet has been leaving the house for hours (Dick and Mary have noticed this) at a time to see Martin, with whom she is having a secret relationship.

- Mary lived in the warmer south (Devonshire) as a child, and then worked most of her life in London until she moved to Grantley
- Mary and John lived in London prior to moving back north where both Tony and John were sick. John moved back before Mary came along.
- Rutherford's wife, the mother of John, Janet, and Richard, is gone (unspecified, but we decided for our production that she was dead).
- Rutherford runs a glassworks business
- Dick is a member of the Anglican Clergy
- Dick has heard rumors around town of Janet's affair, first from Lizzie Winter, then from the working men. He believes Mrs. Henderson knows about the affair, and will use it against the family if she does not get her way.
- Janet and Martin started this relationship three months ago, but Janet has been fond of Martin since she was a little girl (taken from given circumstances of original 1912 script).
- Martin has served Rutherford Glass Works loyally for over 20 years.

13. Significant relationships

Since the family is a family, and since Martin is in a way like part of the family (though also not at all accepted in this way), all of the characters except Mrs. Henderson have relationships that are somewhat significant. Here I'll outline the most vital ones though:

- Rutherford and Mary – Rutherford doesn't speak to Mary, and resents her for being below her son. Mary sees Rutherford as the warden of a house that is like a prison.

Rutherford holds the keys to the potential escape plan: if John can get his father to buy his metal recipe, she can leave the oppressive house for something better. Right now, tolerating Rutherford is a necessary evil, to keep her husband and son out of the cold and not dying from illness.

- Rutherford and John – Rutherford sees John as weak, but also as the necessary heir of the family business. Rutherford invested in a year of private school for John and expects a return on that investment. He also expects John to serve in an apprentice role until he can no longer run the company himself. John resents having had to ask his father to return to the family home, after Mary's insistence. He does not want to inherit the works, but would like to create something of his own. His dream of selling his metal is a bit like dreaming of getting rich without the hard work that comes with it, but it also serves as a rejection of the grind of capitalism that his father enacts. John does not want to be sacrificed to "Moloch."
- Rutherford and Janet – Rutherford has presented Janet with a multitude of contradicting constraints. He will not let her marry below her class, but didn't provide her with the education to go above her class. He doesn't want her to act like a servant, but expects all the chores of the house be done. He asks her to do menial tasks like removing his boots for him. He doesn't see her plight, only what he has provided for her, and views her affair with Martin as the ultimate betrayal. Meanwhile Janet resents her father for all of these contradicting expectations. She has started showing active disdain for her life in Rutherford's home. She never had easy access to joy, because she was kept away from not only the common men but the common girls she could have

played with when she was younger. She believes that Rutherford has stolen her entire life away from her up until this point.

- Rutherford and Dick – Rutherford doesn't believe that religion is particularly important, so sees Dick's work as a clergyman as insignificant. Dick deplores this attitude, because not only does it deny him his worth, but it also makes his job - reaching out to the men who work for Rutherford – significantly harder. Dick wants to be respected by his father, but his father bullies him endlessly.
- Rutherford and Martin – Martin has worked for Rutherford for decades. He enjoys Rutherford's respect, and has been lifted to a higher position in the works because of Rutherford's respect. Rutherford shows that respect because he knows Martin is utterly loyal. He trusts Martin to serve him dutifully and see things the way he does.
- Rutherford and Ann – Ann serves as the head of household, presumably because Rutherford's wife is no longer around, and because Janet does a poor job at it. She may have been serving this way even when Rutherford's wife was alive though, given the way she honors her brother and tradition. She is aligned with her brother in values, but not status.
- Mary and John – Mary and John had a very happy life when they first lived together in London, despite being much poorer. Mary dreams of some day being that happy again. Both John and Tony got sick in London, and so Mary insisted John seek to return home. John resents this, and wants to find a way to escape. Mary would also like to escape, but encourages John to get specific about his plan, rather than dreaming that the invention will solve all. Mary not believing in John deflates him, as no one in his family ever

believes in him either. Eventually Mary sees that John does not think multiple steps ahead and makes the decision that is right for her child even though it might not keep him united with his father.

- Mary and Janet – Mary and Janet defend each other in different ways, and find solace in each other. They each find the house intolerable for different reasons, and give each other strength as they try to find their own bit of warmth in it. Mary is kinder to Janet than Janet is to Mary.
- Mary and Ann - Mary and Ann spend much time near each other, but don't have much in common. Mary hopes to get Ann's respect, but Ann disdains the way Mary entered the family and works to punish Mary for hurting the family's reputation.
- John and Martin – John trusts Martin like his father trusts Martin. Martin wants to be loyal to John as well, but he is first and foremost loyal to the good of the business, which he has dedicated his life to. Martin is at once a mentor to John and also lower status than him. When Rutherford convinces Martin that giving him John's recipe will be for the good of the company, Martin finally obliges.
- Janet and Martin – Janet loves Martin deeply. She knows her father would disapprove so she keeps the relationship a secret. Martin cares for Janet as well, but feels a deeper dread at Rutherford finding out. For Janet, she knows he will disapprove and there will be consequences. For Martin there is more of a crisis of conscience about going behind Rutherford's back. Janet throws herself under the bus to Rutherford in order to preserve Martin's career, to no avail.

- Janet and Ann – Janet and Ann do not get along. While Ann is perfectly fine playing the supporting sister role, Janet deeply resents the role she has been assigned as part of the family. Janet does her duties, but refuses to do them properly as Ann commands her to.

14. Structure of the play

The entire play takes place in a single setting, the great room of the Rutherford family home. The play has a three-act structure, with each act completing a unity of time. There are small time jumps between the acts. The first act is slightly longer than acts two and three. I was originally hoping for just one intermission, and worked with putting it in the middle of act two, just after Rutherford has found out about Martin and Janet and right before Martin enters. After realizing the show was running at three hours long, we decided to restore the two intermissions at the end of first and second acts.

15. Language

The characters speak in Geordie accents, which would have sounded strange even to the Londoners for whom the play was first performed. It is a working class accent, and reflects the way that the family's working class origins is with them even still. Mrs. Henderson and Ann, as the least educated characters, have the thickest Geordie accent. Mary speaks in a different accent, making her the outsider in a strange world. Our production attempted to embrace a toned down dialect, more general north country, so as not to be alienating to the audience but still to denote the more rural working class sound for the characters (full Geordie is very hard,

even for the British to understand, let alone an American audience). We ended up cutting the dialect, and I will discuss this more in part two.

There are many long speeches in the play, driven by both emotional and intellectual arguments. Particularly in the first act, some of these long speeches are expository, and it will be important to keep them driven by action and objective in order to keep the forward drive of the play.

16. Rhythm and mood

Overall the play has a somber and tense mood, but it doesn't start that way. The fire is alive and the sky starts in twilight. Many of the characters are unhappy with their circumstances, including Mary who eventually describes the house "like a prison", but the first act is also full of banter and moves at a clip. Mary begins Act 1 with hope: hope that she can perhaps convince Ann to like her, and then when that fails, hope that she and John will escape with the fortune from John's invention. Act 1 ends with the boxing match that is John and Rutherford's argument about John's metal recipe.

The household becomes colder and darker as the play progresses into Act 2. This act is more irregular compared to the gradual ramping up of Act 1. While Richard's discussion with Rutherford is more methodical cautious and bumbled, slowly accelerating once the stakes of Mrs. Henderson's soon-arrival ramp up, Mrs. Henderson crashes into the play and pushes the rhythm even faster. Her departure, with the revelation of Janet's secret, fills the rest of Act 2 with moments of suspension as Rutherford lures the recipe out of Martin and the audience isn't sure when he is going to explode. The explosion comes at the end of Act 2 with Janet

confronting Rutherford and really laying into him. She parallels Mrs. Henderson in an ironic way, as her circumstances will fall to Mrs. Henderson's level with her departure at the end of the play.

Act 3 begins full of hope and tenderness, and then all that warm air is sucked out as Janet's hopes are dashed and Martin commits to marrying her only in order to "right her". When Martin subsequently reveals his betrayal of John we reach the final explosion, the climax where nearly all hope is lost. Mary fights for the last shred of hope of her and John having a life together, but unable to convince him to return the money he has stolen, lets go of that hope as well. We are left in the chill of the Rutherford house, now empty of a whole generation of children, to watch Mary fight one last time for her and her child's life, employing the cold-blooded reasoning of Rutherford in order to survive.

17. Reversals

- Mary realizes that John's idea might really be worth something when John reveals Martin believes in it.
- John demands his price to Rutherford.
- John reveals that he will sell the recipe to the highest bidder.
- Rutherford realizes that Martin has John's recipe.
- Dick wears Rutherford down and he answers the door for Mrs. Henderson.
- Mrs. Henderson stops begging and reveals to Rutherford that Janet is with Martin.
- Rutherford promises to settle with John.

- Martin gives up the recipe to Rutherford.
- Janet insists her father hasn't truly risen up after he confronts her about the affair.
- Janet wakes hopeful for her future free from her father.
- Janet decides to leave without Martin's help, after he reveals any intention to marry her has to do with his loyalty to Rutherford.
- Janet recognizes that Martin will always be more loyal to her father than to her.
- Martin reveals his betrayal to John and Mary.
- John decides to steal Rutherford's money out of the cashbox.
- Mary decides its best to let John go without her and adopts Rutherford's way of thinking in order to protect her child.
- Rutherford discovers the emptied cashbox.
- Rutherford must truly speak with Mary for the first time

18. Climactic Moment

- Martin reveals his betrayal to John; his loyalty to Rutherford has stolen away the dreams of all the others in the room.

19. Crime of the Play

Mary hardens herself and "sells" her child in order to survive. This is an act to be partially admired - she has done what she needs to secure her and her own child's warmth in a bitter cold world - but should also make the audience question whether or not this is

really a positive outcome. We root for Mary's survival and ability to stand toe to toe with Rutherford, but know that she is subjecting herself and her son to all of the capitalist pressures that have crushed every member of the Rutherford family. We are implicated in our rooting for Mary. Rutherford has spent the play commodifying human beings, his own children, and Mary in turn does this when she uses her son as a bargaining chip.

20. World of the Play

Cold. The play takes place in Northern England where it is "winter five months of the year" and where the sun seems to rarely shine. The Tyneside region is rainy and gray in the way that Seattle often is. This literal cold stands in for another insidious cold: the lack of human warmth that exists in a capitalist patriarchy. That being said, the characters, each in their own way, are trying to fend off this cold. They are creating pockets of warmth that give them hope and purpose. These pockets include the fireplace far from Rutherford's desk where the women gather, the butterfly-bow adorned hat Mary makes for baby Tony, the money the men work for in order to pay for the coal that literally heats their houses, the warm embrace of Martin that Janet longs for, the escape away from Tyneside that John and Mary dream of, and the word of God, that Dick believes in even as he has resigned himself into the literal frigidness of his unheated bedroom, because he cannot bear the deplorable moral chill that his father brings to the home.

THE PRODUCTION

21. Tentative Rehearsal Schedule Plan

Monday, December 3 rd –	4 hours - First read & designer presentations
Tuesday, December 4 th –	Dialect workshops (no Fefu actors)
Monday, December 10 th –	8 hours - Table Work Act 1
Tuesday, December 11 th –	4 hours afternoon - Table Work Act 1 4 hours evening - Table work Act 2
Wednesday December 12 th –	3 hours morning – table work act 2 5 hours afternoon – Table work act 3
Thursday, December 13 th –	3 hours morning – Finish table work act 3 5 hours afternoon – Begin rough staging act 1
Friday, December 14 th –	3 hours morning – Continue rough staging act 1 3 hours afternoon – Finish rough staging act 1 2 hours afternoon - Stumble through act 1
Saturday, December 29 th –	Off-book deadline. 3 hours morning – Begin rough staging act 2 5 hours afternoon – Continue rough staging act 2
Sunday, December 30 th –	3 hours morning - Stumble through Act 2 5 hours afternoon – Begin rough staging act 3
Monday, December 31 st –	3 hours morning - Continue rough staging Act 3 3 hours afternoon – Rough staging act 3 2 hours afternoon - Stumble through Act 3.
Wednesday, January 2 nd –	3 hours morning –Reviewing/testing Act 1 staging 5 hours afternoon –Reviewing/testing Act 1 staging
Thursday, January 3 rd –	3 hours morning - Reviewing/testing Act 2 staging 2 hours afternoon – Reviewing/testing Act 2 staging 3 hours afternoon - Stumble through Act 1 & 2
Friday, January 4 th	3 hours morning –Reviewing/testing Act 3 staging 5 hours afternoon –Reviewing/testing Act 3 staging
Saturday, January 5 th –	3 hours morning - Stumble through full play. 5 hours afternoon – Work Act 1 & pattern set
Monday, January 7 th –	4 hours evening - Work Act 2 & pattern set staging
Tuesday, January 8 th –	4 hours evening - Work Act 3 & pattern set staging
Wednesday, January 9 th –	4 hours evening - Run through & Notes
Thursday, January 10 th –	4 hours evening - Work notes
Friday, January 11 th –	4 hours evening - Spacing rehearsal & run through w/ light over

Saturday, January 12th – 8 out of 10 tech rehearsal (sketch in lights for acts 1 & 2)
 Monday, January 13th – Tech – sketch in lights for act 3
 Tuesday, January 14th – Tech – Run through
 Wednesday, January 15th – Tech – work moments acts 1 & 2
 Thursday, January 16th – Tech – work moments acts 2 & 3
 Friday, January 17th – Tech – run through & notes
 Saturday, January 18th – First Preview
 Monday, January 19th – Work notes from first preview (likely w/ no tech staff support)
 Tuesday, January 20th – Second preview
 Wednesday, January 21st – Opening

22. Ideas about the shape of rehearsals/strategies and techniques

As a director who has resisted the table, but definitely saw it's advantages recently while working on *The Lover* I would like to try to spend three to four days at the table. This is a large play with intricate characters and the actors understanding their motivations and circumstances will be key to the staging process. I am interested in the ways the table can feed the actors' understanding of character and events so that that understanding can in turn feed the stage activity once they get on their feet.

23. Staging Challenges

- There is a lot of activity in this play, more than in anything I've staged before. Setting the table occurs over much of the first act, along with knitting. Keeping track of all of this activity and ensuring it serves to reveal inner character rather than distracting from the story will be key.
- There are three major staging areas with poetic significance: the fireplace & seating area, the desk & window, and the dining table. The fireplace is a place of warmth where the women settle and contrasts with the desk area, which

watches and looms over the entire room. The desk is situated near the window for light, but this location also makes it the coldest spot in the room. The table exists as a place that is set up for gathering, but those gatherings never come in this play. In the first and third act, place setting is a major component, but dinner doesn't occur in either act. The table becomes a place where Mary and Rutherford meet and really speak for the first time, when Mary lays out her bargain to Rutherford. Using all three of these areas, while keeping their poetic significance clear, could be a challenge.

24. Design concepts and breakdown

Costume design:

The costumes, designed by Chanté Hamann, were grounded in realism, and were linked to the character's relationships to each other, to their given circumstances, and to the encroaching cold around them.

Mary was to begin in a blue dress. The idea in our design discussions was that Mary still has a great deal of hope at the start of the play, and has not yet acquiesced to the dark colors which dominate the Rutherford family's wardrobe. Janet wore a dark purple that would carry the somber feeling of the house while also lifting her out of the dark house slightly. Rutherford and Martin were linked with similar earth tones in their costume, with Martin in working class fabrics and silhouette compared to Rutherford's powerful frock coat. John begins in a smoking jacket, a rebellion against the somber ways of the house, but also connoting a relaxedness about the character and fitting his circumstance of being recently ill. Dick appears first in his shirtsleeves, with no visitors expected he is more casual in Act 1.

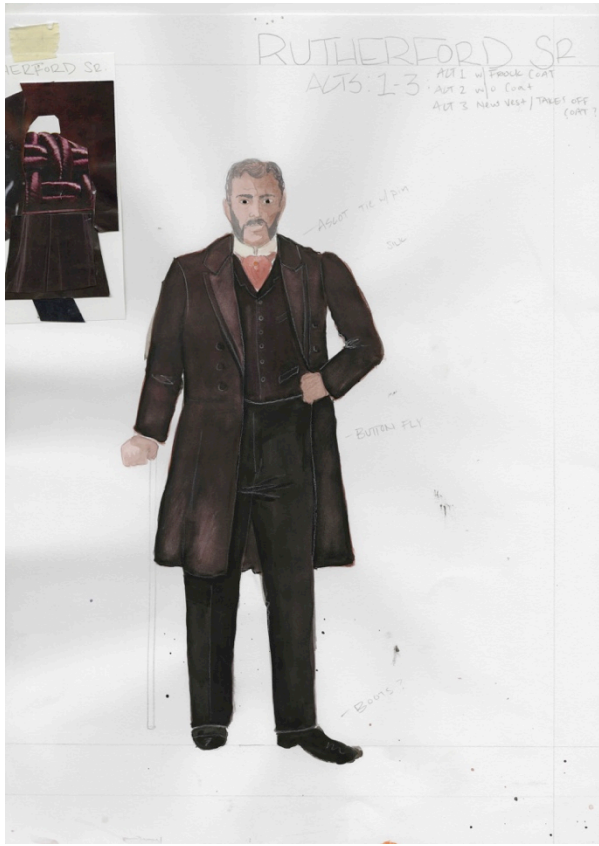
In Act 2 we see Rutherford in his shirtsleeves, working late into the night, while Dick has his coat on, knowing – unlike his father – of Mrs. Henderson’s impending visit. Mrs. Henderson is the lowest class character with little money for clothes, but a need to keep warm when traveling, so she is bundled in many layers. John is again in a smoking jacket. Janet meanwhile is nearly done with her tasks for the day, and is in her nightgown for the night. She unexpectedly appears before Martin in this, as she does not know he has been called to the house.

In Act 3 Mary is in a warmer and stronger dress, with the bolder color of green. Janet dresses in a much more delicate fabric than in Act 1; her confrontation with her father has freed her, and now she is ready to run off with Martin. This dream is shattered when Martin is unable to shake his loyalty to Rutherford, and Janet ventures into the cold rain in her delicate shirt and skirt with just a shawl for protection from the elements.

Sketches:



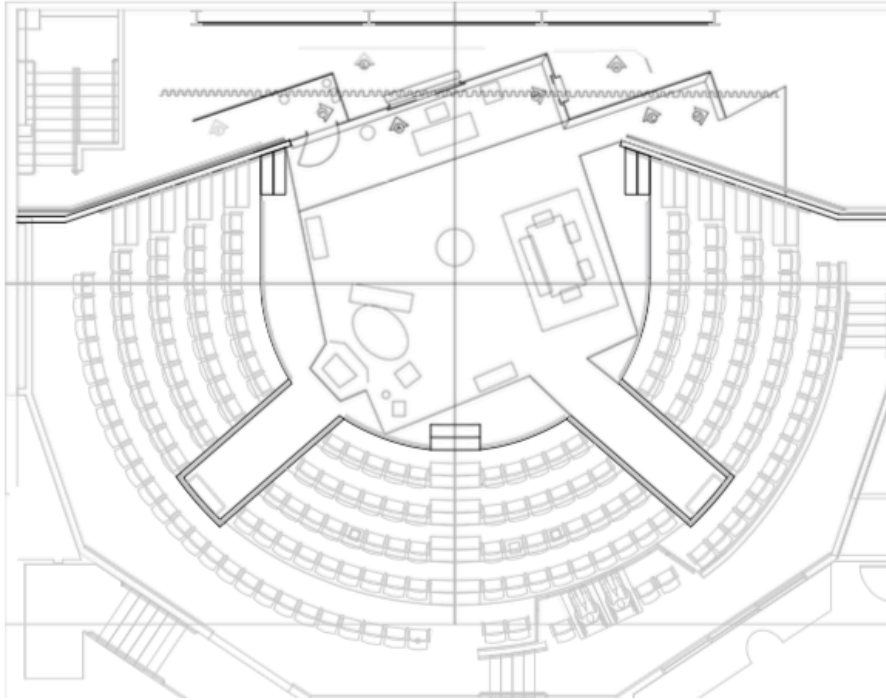




Scenic Design:

The set, designed by Adair MacCormack, is comprised of three primary areas on the stage. The first is the desk area. It looms behind the other two areas, facing them, and elevated. Family life is always under the purview of the business. The desk is also immediately in front of the window, and is associated with the coldness of the surrounding landscape, the moor and the fells, represented by a painted backdrop behind the window. The second area is the fireplace, and the settle and armchair around it. This is the area where the women “sit and sew all day.” It is an area of warmth, being by the fire, but stuck in a downstage corner is an area of relative weakness. It is not a space that the women can fully own, the men easily move into and out of it, and Rutherford’s slippers and pipe live in this area, making him ever-present even in the women’s area. The third area is an in-between space – the table. Neither immediately near the window nor the fireplace, this is a limbo space exposed directly to neither cold nor heat. It is a place of waiting, the whole first act sees the table being set, but dinner is never served, the family business delays and delays until appetites are spoiled and the food is likely cold. At the end of the play, this more neutral area is the area of the final bargain, the place Mary meets Rutherford to present her terms. Another significant space near the table is the sideboard, an area where Janet is sidelined for much of the first act as she sets the table. Dick also spends much of his time here when speaking with his father, as he too has been sidelined in the family. This design was created after an design where the room askew to the theater, and there was no elevated area.

First model groundplan:



First model photo:



Original rehearsal groundplan:

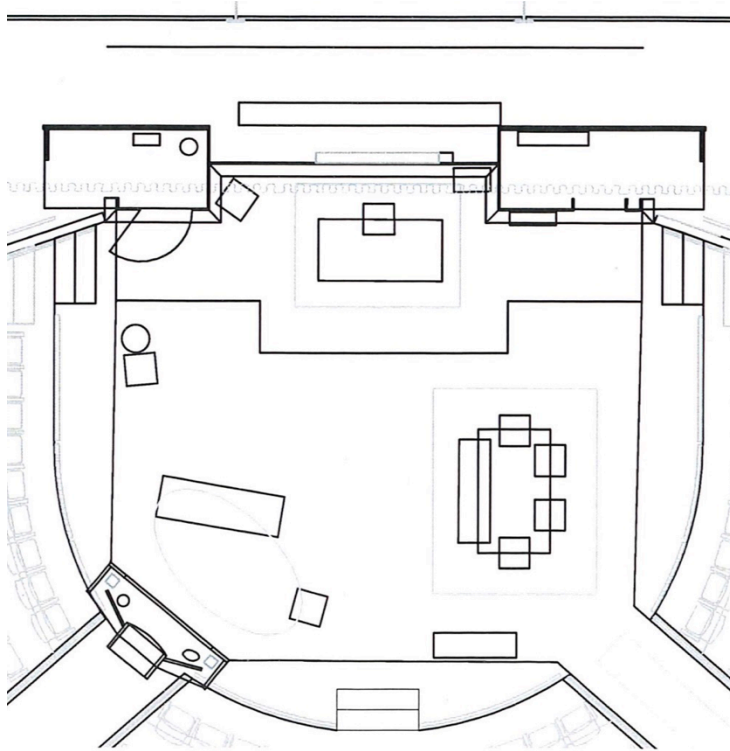


Photo of set model with original rehearsal groundplan:



Revised rehearsal ground plan:

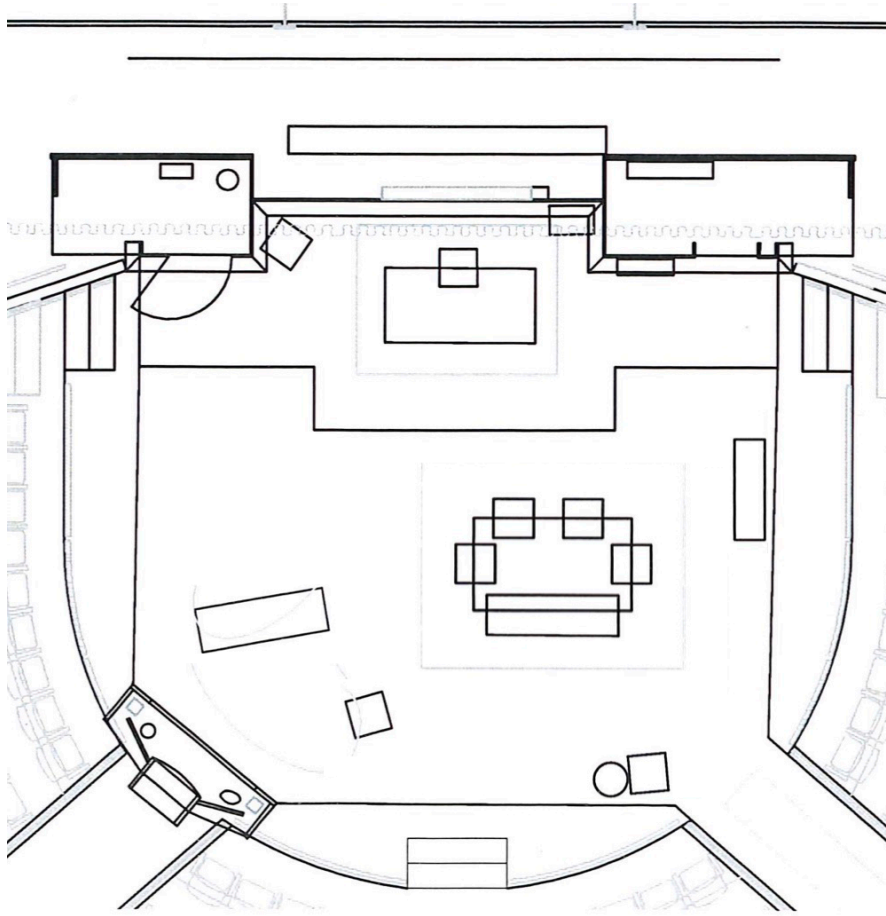


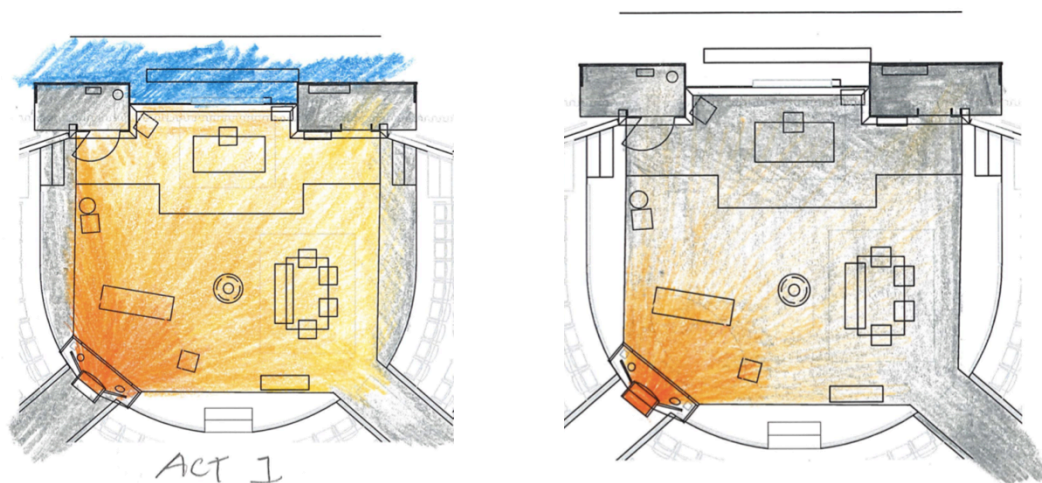
Photo of set model with revised groundplan:



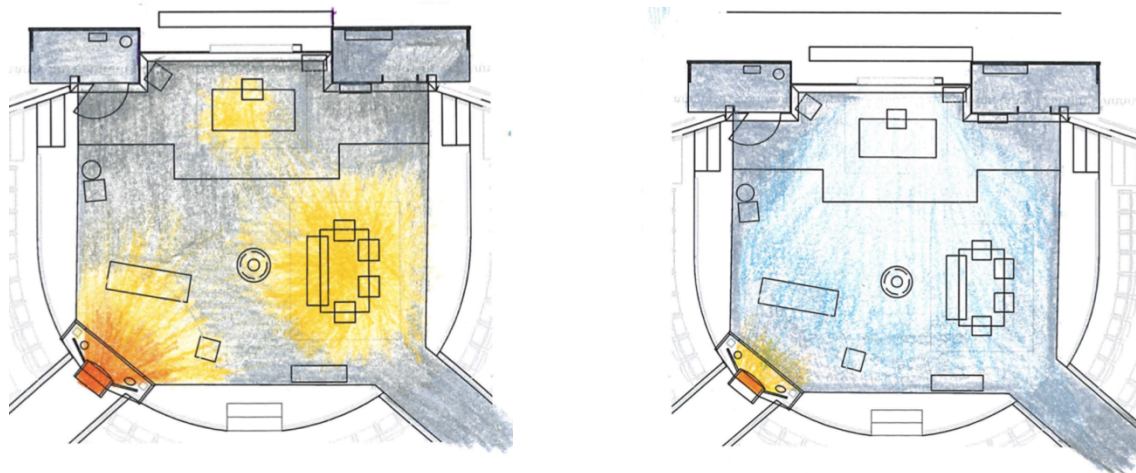
Lighting Design:

The lighting, designed by Ranleigh Starling, was to ground the design in realism, embracing the limited areas of light in the room. The first two acts occur at night, and the idea for the lighting was to represent the few sources (the fireplace, lamps, window, etc.) and only supplement with fill to the extent that it still felt like the light was coming from those sources. The idea served to further highlight the coldness of the outer window and versus the warmth of the fire, as well as amp up the presence of the surrounding darkness in the house.

Act 1 Lighting Sketches:



Act 2 & Act 3 Lighting Sketches:



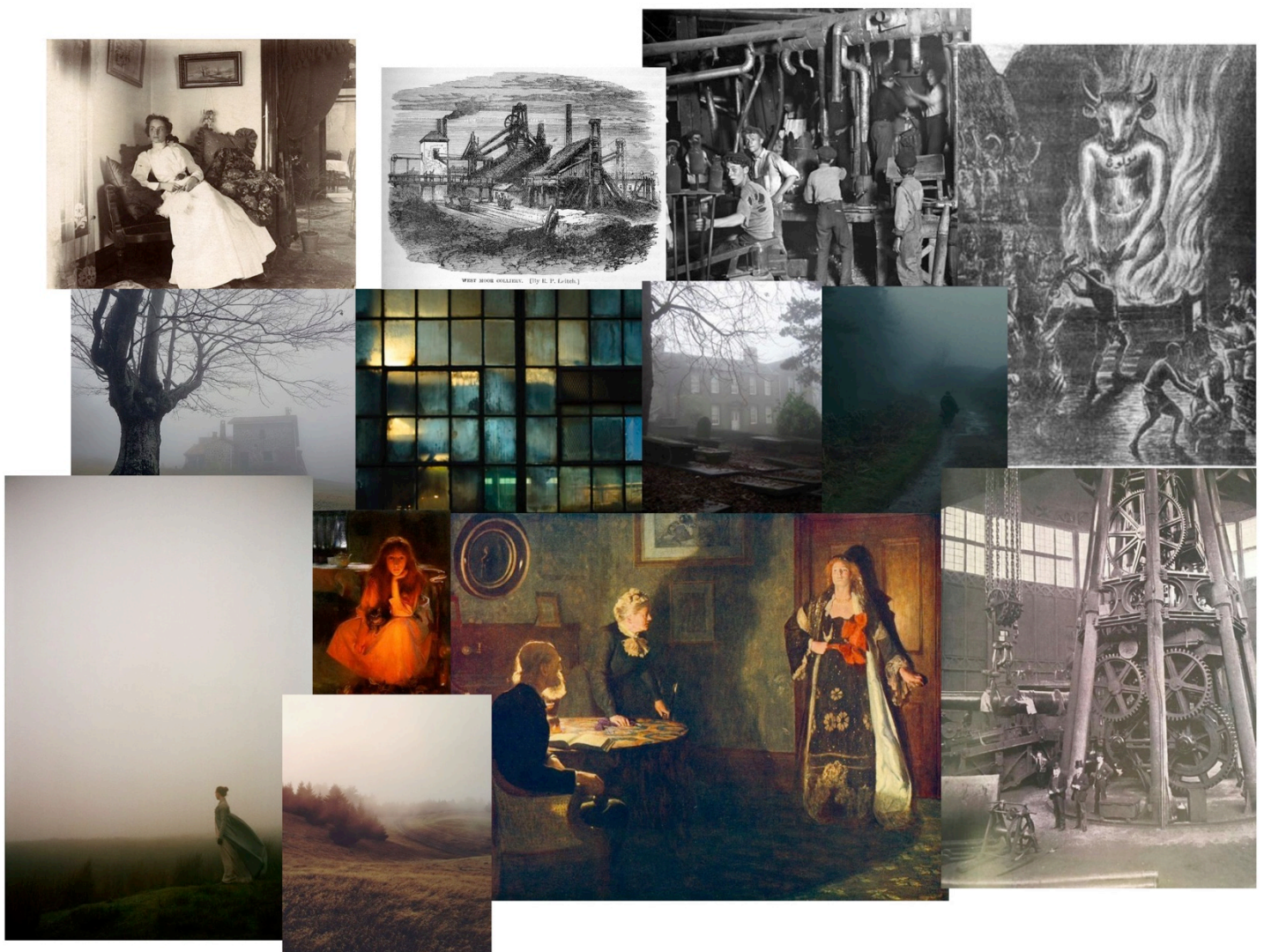
Sound Design:

There was no sound designer assigned to the production of *Rutherford and Son*, so three members of the team; Adair (the set designer), A.D. Kassing (the assistant director), and myself; worked together to design the sound. I found the music for transitions, while Adair found and built out the diegetic sounds, including the wind, rain, and fire sounds. A.D. mixed and built out the sounds in QLab, and worked through tech altering levels, and finding new diegetic sounds if the ones Adair had found were not serving us.

The overall concept for the sound design was to embrace the dichotomy of the cold exterior, as opposed to the warmth of the fire. The music that accompanied the transitions was an attempt to bring in that same dichotomy, with cold quiet wind instruments, countered by romantic builds in the melody of the bagpipes. The majority of the music was selected from a single film soundtrack in order to keep it sounding of a world, and this soundtrack was chosen for its ability to summon the sounds of the north through the bagpipes, as well as the contrasting sounds of cold quiet, and romantic sentiment.

25. Collage of initial visual research

For this process, I experimented with providing less visual research to the designers in our early meetings, to encourage them to explore their own visual ideas and not squash their impulses with too much visual information. Still there were particular images that stood out to me, as good period reference, or in getting to the emotional core of the piece. A select few of those images are collaged below.



26. Production photos (photographed by Jordan Pope and Kyler Martin):







