

“The Adaptation and Direction of *The Winter’s Tale* by William Shakespeare”

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A thesis

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School of Drama

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**Abstract**

“The Adaptation and Direction of *The Winter’s Tale* by William Shakespeare”

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Chair of Supervisory Committee:

Valerie Curtis-Newton

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This thesis documents a portion of the capstone assignment for the Professional Director Training Program. It specifically includes the text analysis and concept that led to the adaptation and direction of a full-length play for the School of Drama’s mainstage season, and reflections on the impact of three years of graduate study on that process. The production in question ran February 13-23, 2025, at the Floyd and Delores Jones Playhouse on the campus of the University of Washington.

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## **Creative Team**

Director & Adapter – Kate Drummond

Set Designer – Pete Rush

Costume Designer – Antonio Torrez

Lighting Designer – Thorn Michaels

Sound Designer & Composer – Kyle Levien

Stage Manager – Megan Kay Wright

Technical Director – Ojin Kwon

Production Manager – Jeff Larson

Props Master – Andrea Bush

## **Cast**

Autolycus – Sebastian Wang

Leontes – Jerik Fernandez

Hermione / Shepherdess – Marena Kleinpeter

Polixenes – Minki Bai

Paulina / Shepherdess – Betzabeth Gonzalez

Perdita / Servant – Adriana Gonzales

Camillo – Yeonshin Kim

Shepherd / Astraia – Taylor McWilliams-Woods

Florizell / Dion – Kyler Simons

Clown Son / Emilia – Tess Raz

Antigonus / Dorcas – Finn Jordan

Cleomenes / Mopsa – John Austin

Mamilius / Shepherdess – Svea Raas-Bergquist

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## Director's Statement/Goals

I want to make work that makes us better people. To be “better,” to me, is to be more empathetic, more brave, and more resilient. The world today is one of clear-cut categorization, born out of fear and reactivity. Why should I try to understand someone who is debating my fundamental human rights? It is easier and safer to stay in an “us vs. them” mindset, to close ourselves off to the possibility of empathizing with those different from us. But we, as individuals and as a society, are stronger when we believe we are capable of change.

This, I believe, is a superpower of theater as an art form. When we are given (or are giving) a second chance, we are fundamentally *reimagining* — we are choosing to believe there are versions of someone, of the world, of ourselves that we haven't seen yet. Stephen Greenblatt includes this quote in his analysis of second chances in Shakespeare, and I included it in my director's note as a strong summation of my point of view on the subject:

*“To believe in second chances is to believe that lives can to some extent be put right,  
that the future can improve — and improve upon the past —  
that what has been lost can be recovered.”*

In my adaptation and direction of *The Winter's Tale*, I set out to create a fairy tale about second chances, to foster a new blossoming of our human capacity for grace, for forgiveness, and for change. Leontes is the clear lightning rod for this theme. He begins the play like a Greek tragic hero: succumbing to his pride and jealousy, causing the deaths of his wife and son, the loss of his daughter and best friend, and plunging Sicilia into chaos. Leontes does not follow the expected

arc for a tragic hero, however — instead of exile, or suicide, or perhaps gouging his eyes out, Leontes instead grieves for *sixteen years*. His period of remorse is interrupted by the providential return of his lost daughter, Perdita. In the source material (Robert Greene's novel *Pandosto: The Triumph of Time*), Leontes fails to take the chance to make a different choice and unwittingly condemns his long-lost daughter to death (after having some dark, incest-y thoughts).

But *The Winter's Tale* imagines a new path. Shakespeare's Leontes survives his trauma, learns from his mistakes, and succeeds in taking the second chance he's offered — and the world magically rights itself. His wife reawakens, his family is (mostly) reunited, the kingdom is healed. This is the world I want to live in: one in which we make brave, empathetic choices in the face of impossible odds, and one in which a happy ending is always possible.

A major point of growth for me in grad school surrounds context; “how do we know what we know?” has become a refrain for me in my artmaking. When I assert that *The Winter's Tale* is a play about second chances, I know that because this theme appears in every character and at every stage of the story. One of the challenges of the text is the amount of time we spend without Leontes. He is offstage for nearly half the play and returns primed to be changed. So how are we the audience meant to understand the action of taking a second chance?

In the original text, Autolycus is a kind of rogue thief who appears in Bohemia, causing mischief and robbing everyone in sight. Toward the end, he has this incredible scene with the Shepherd's Son, in which he asks the son's forgiveness for his earlier wrongs. This unlocked for me a new potential in Autolycus: we get to *see* him change, without interruption. I identified him as a foil for Leontes: another example of a second chance taken. In my adaptation, Autolycus becomes

our (unreliable) narrator who no longer believes in magic and sets out to tell a story about getting ahead by being cunning and selfish. He becomes our constant, our context — we learn with him that second chances are always possible, and that he has the power to change his own life.

Classical text forges a link between us and humans hundreds of years apart from us; it presupposes a universality of man. If we can relate to Shakespeare, surely we can relate to each other. If the thesis project is meant to be an “introduction to the professional theater world,” then *The Winter's Tale* appeared a clear choice because of how it provides space to expand our sense of self and recognize ourselves in others.

On my early reads of *The Winter's Tale*, I was struck by how unconventional it is structurally. It has this miraculous ending that is critically regarded as a little unearned, it is full of narration and offstage action, and it spans almost two decades worth of character evolution while following essentially just one family. This story felt both vast and very specific; and it moves from tragedy to comedy, which is a movement reflective of my hope for humanity. We will never live in a world without challenge or strife, but perhaps we can live in a world that moves *through* that, with a persistent hope that “better” is on the horizon.

*The Winter's Tale* is one of a series of “romances” written by Shakespeare late in his life, next to *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Tempest*. This new style of play seems determined to “show how the miraculous can manifest itself in our everyday lives,” and often told “instructive stories about upper-class people, chiefly knights and ladies.”<sup>1</sup> Common themes include “love turning to hate,

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<sup>1</sup> Giles Block, *Speaking the Speech*, p301

and then seeking forgiveness,” “families reunited against all odds,” and individuals embarking on dangerous, often lonely adventures.<sup>2</sup>

I set out to create a production that posits that a miraculous dream of a better future could be just as real as the tangible memory of a painful past.

## So, why adapt?

As I imagined all the many facets of my artistry, I felt a drive for my thesis to be something in my voice. I lead a devising company; I am a writer, teacher, and creator; an increased vocabulary in dramaturgy has been a major takeaway from my time in grad school. Adapting allowed me to be all those things, and to make something that really reflected *me*. It also was a new challenge — I had never adapted a classical text before.

There are Shakespearean scripts that I believe need “fixing” to be successfully played for a contemporary audience as anything other than a museum piece. *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Measure for Measure* come to mind; perhaps *Merchant of Venice* as well: all scripts that view identity or society in ways that we have grown out of or evolved past. That is not how I see *The Winter's Tale*. I believe that the core of this show is absolutely one that our contemporary audiences need — and so in adapting, my hope was not to “fix” this play, but to *reveal* how vital a story it is for our world today. Thinking of this adaptation as a “revelation” helped me identify the elements I wanted to keep and make more potent, and where I needed to fill in the blanks to

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<sup>2</sup> Giles Block, *Speaking the Speech*, p310

make those elements shine. I wanted to emphasize its core themes and structure, its perspective of the possible world we could create, and its belief in magic.

For the last three years, I have been practicing how to marry the academic, dramaturgical side of my work with the more visceral and energetic play I like to do in the rehearsal room. These are both parts of my artistry, and *The Winter's Tale* represents a collision of these two: deep, supported research and analysis giving way to playful improvisation; a “reverent irreverence” for the text. I am discovering that disruption is a core element of my artistry. I want to make work that shakes us out of our everyday routines, that unfolds in surprising ways and forces us to step outside of our comfort zones. We cannot grow from a space of comfort and stasis; to be truly better, we must be willing to *change*. *The Winter's Tale* uses surprise and denial of expectations as core meaning-makers, and so I wove those into the adaptation itself, in Autolycus's modern text, the changing role of sound and music, and the massive pendulum swings of genre and style united by a clear point of view.

## **Play Analysis: Reimagining A Fairy Tale**

### The Title: “The Winter's Tale”

The word “tale” was used by Elizabethans to describe a story that was “too unbelievable or didn't have a clear moral aim;” a “winter's tale” was understood similarly to the modern phrases “an old wives' tale,” implying a silly fairy story or frivolous piece of gossip which only the

elderly, the young, or the foolish would repeat.<sup>3</sup> This, paired with the persistent structure of narration throughout the play, supports my read of it as a fairy tale told by an unreliable narrator.

Our minds open more to possibility when we're presented with something that makes us gasp, like a true magic trick. This is the purpose of fairy tales, and of romances as a genre: they put us in a position of childlike wonder to meet a core human need to believe in the impossible, as a way of reimagining our present reality.

For a modern audience, the title of *The Winter's Tale* also calls to mind “winter” as a season. Winter implies cold, snow, a barren land bereft of growing things, hibernation, and long darkness — all things also associated with evil or danger in fairy tales (e.g. the miles of thorn bushes in *Briar Rose/Sleeping Beauty*, the thick, dark woods of *Hansel and Gretel* or *Little Red Riding Hood*, and the perpetual sleep of *Snow White* and *Sleeping Beauty*).

### Why a Fairy Tale?

From my first read, I was struck by how much magic *The Winter's Tale* contains. Beyond Hermione's miraculous resurrection, there was Paulina's apparent curse on Leontes, her desire to “turn into a bird” to join her dead lover Antigonus, the prevalence of the Oracle at Delphi, Antigonus's invocation of birds to care for the baby Perdita, Mamillius's death as a result of Leontes blaspheming Apollo, the Shepherd believing Perdita to be a “changeling” with “fairy gold” — Mamillius even tells Hermione a fairy tale about goblins as a bedtime story.

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<sup>3</sup> John Pitcher, introduction to Arden *The Winter's Tale*

Fairy tales often have one plot, rather than many interwoven plots; they often span a period of time defined by a curse or prophecy and are often narrated by an omniscient presence. I defined Polixenes's initial visit as being for the baby shower of the unborn princess, cast Paulina as an actual witch and made literal her curse of "ten thousand winters," and introduced thunder and lightning to mark Apollo's influence. Most importantly, I elevated Autolycus to the role of narrator and reframed his "rogue" plot to be directly related to the lost princess Perdita.

Fairy tales are how we make sense of the world around us, how we learn to face our fears, and how we understand what it means to be a human in community. While modern fairy tales are often codified for children, adults need fantastical stories to learn from too. In fact, adults were the target audience of the early fairy tales of Charles Perrault (*Tales of Mother Goose*, 1697).<sup>4</sup>

### Autolycus as the Narrator

Anne Besson describes fairy tales as "simple folk's alternative to myths and epic poetry," which "offered entertaining or terrifying stories that included moral messages to a broad audience."<sup>5</sup> In *The Winter's Tale*, Autolycus provides an everyman example of second chances as a foil to the royal reunions and forgiveness of Leontes. I landed on Autolycus as the narrator after considering multiple other options, including a version where Mamillius narrated the show.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Anne Besson "From the Aristocracy to the Playground: A Short History of Fairy Tales"

<sup>5</sup> Anne Besson "From the Aristocracy to the Playground: A Short History of Fairy Tales"

<sup>6</sup> In this version, I used the II.i storytelling text as a framing device. When Mamillius died in the trial scene, we would realize the narrator wasn't Mamillius after all, but in fact *Perdita's* future son telling his family history.

While this idea was narratively compelling,<sup>7</sup> it fell afoul of a major lesson I had learned directing Kate Hamill's *Vanity Fair* in 2024:

The narrator must have an immediate and actionable stake in the events of the play.

The Manager in *Vanity Fair* does not matter in the present day of the play; he knows it all is happening on a loop, and so any immediate stakes must be manufactured by the actor. This leads to the audience not particularly caring about this character. So, I knew that for *The Winter's Tale* I needed a narrator with something to prove or achieve. Stylistically, I pulled from *The Emperor's New Groove* and *A Muppet Christmas Carol*, which both have narrators playing in the scene until they suddenly take to the camera and offer an aside. I gave the designers these reference points early on, to communicate how Autolycus would operate.

The scene that confirmed Autolycus could meet this need was his interaction with the Clown Son, originally at the end of V.ii after Autolycus has witnessed three nameless gentlemen report a series of moving reunions between Leontes, Polixenes, and Perdita. Until this point, Autolycus is a rogue thief causing disruption and mischief, second only to Leontes in his constant commentary to the audience. In this last scene, however, he does something new when he asks for forgiveness. Autolycus *changes*, he learns a lesson.

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<sup>7</sup> I overheard a student who entered late and missed the first scene trying to convince his friends at intermission that Autolycus was "going to turn out to be that lost baby." It was fun to hear the friends who *did* see the exposition scene correct him, and also to see how supported this original idea might have been!

## The Story of the Play

For ease, elements of the story that are unique to my adaptation are **bolded**.

### Part 1 — Sicilia:

**Old Autolycus is reminiscing on his life, now that he has a visitor. He states that everyone only gets one shot in their life and sets out to prove that being cunning is the only way to guarantee your life is good. He tells the story of how he made his fortune, beginning when he was sixteen years old playing in the Sicilian court.**

**The play jumps back in time to the baby shower of the unborn princess of Sicilia, expected to King Leontes and Queen Hermione. King Leontes hears young Autolycus playing and hires him onto his royal train as a bard for when they visit Bohemia the next summer. He charges Autolycus to tell a story to attempt to delay the departure of his best friend, King Polixenes of Bohemia, who is set to leave the next day.**

Autolycus fails to convince Polixenes, so Leontes charges his wife, Hermione, to do the same. When Polixenes agrees to remain in Sicilia at the Hermione's behest, after declining Leontes's similar request, Leontes becomes convinced that Hermione and Polixenes are having an affair. Leontes orders his advisor Camillo to poison Polixenes. Camillo instead warns Polixenes, and the two of them flee to Bohemia.

Their escape confirms Leontes's suspicions, and he confronts Hermione, barring her from seeing Mamillius and throwing her in jail to await a trial. He sends two emissaries, Cleomenes and

Dion, to Apollo's Oracle at Delphi to confirm his suspicions. The stress causes Hermione to deliver her baby early. With Hermione's blessing, Paulina takes the baby to Leontes to appeal for him to see reason.

Leontes, who has not been sleeping, has decreed that he will see no one. Paulina comes to him anyway, followed by her husband, Antigonus, and several other lords and advisors, who counsel her not to confront him. Leontes rejects the baby. He decides against executing the child and instead sends Antigonus into exile with the baby.

Leontes holds a public trial for Hermione to prove he is not a tyrant. Hermione pleads her innocence and defends her honor. Cleomenes and Dion return from the Oracle, with the message that Hermione and Polixenes remained faithful to Leontes, and a prophecy that Sicilia will be heirless until "that which was lost is found." Leontes rejects this as falsehood. A servant arrives instants later to declare Mamillius dead, at which news Hermione too dies. Leontes immediately repents, and Paulina curses him and the kingdom to suffer eternal winter until Hermione lives again.

## Part 2 — Bohemia:

Antigonus delivers the baby to the shores of Bohemia and has a vision of the dead Hermione, who instructs him to name it "Perdita." He is then eaten alive by a wild bear.

Leontes falls into a state of perpetual mourning for Hermione and his two lost children.

Perdita is found by an elderly Shepherd and his Clown Son, who has moments before witnessed the mauling of Antigonus. The two simple shepherds believe Perdita to be a changeling child and raise her as their own. Along with the baby, they find a box full of money, which they believe to be fairy gold and agree to keep secret.

Sixteen years later, King Polixenes of Bohemia and Camillo, who is now a Bohemian advisor despite the many repentant letters he receives from Leontes, discuss how the king's son, Florizell, has been absent from court. The prince has been sneaking out to see Perdita, whom he believes to be a shepherdess. Polixenes and Camillo plot to disguise themselves, attend the sheep-shearing festival, and catch Florizell in the act.

On his way to purchase food for the festival, the Clown Son is accosted by a disguised Autolycus, who pickpockets him and then plans to follow him back to the festival.

At the festival, Florizell declares his intention to marry Perdita. Autolycus is in disguise as a traveling bard, and offers to sell ballads to the Clown Son, who he knows has no money. The Clown Son, desperate to impress his current and ex-lover Mopsa and Dorcas (respectively), pulls out the secret gold to pay for the ballads. **Autolycus spends the rest of the party attempting to steal the gold. After Mopsa, Dorcas, and Perdita sing karaoke using the purchased ballads,** Polixenes teases Florizell about his wooing techniques, leading Florizell to make a cringey proclamation of love in front of everyone. Seeing their love publicized, the Shepherd announces that they'll be married there and then. Polixenes confronts Florizell and begs him to stay the wedding until the father of the groom can be brought; when Florizell refuses, Polixenes reveals

his identity, shuts down the wedding, and threatens the lives and livelihoods of Perdita and her father, the Shepherd.

Camillo helps Florizell and Perdita flee to Sicilia and then reveals their escape to Polixenes to facilitate his own return to his home country. **In exchange for the fortune Perdita brought with her from Sicilia**, Autolycus reveals their flight to the Shepherd and Clown Son, who follow in suit to Sicilia to clear the Shepherd's name.

### Part 3 — Sicilia, Again:

Back in Sicilia, Leontes's current top advisor Cleomenes is worried that the kingdom is heirless, but Leontes and Paulina refuse to move forward and instead cling to Hermione's memory. Florizell and Perdita arrive at court and appeal to Leontes for safe harbor. Cleomenes discovers that Polixenes is present in Sicilia and has demanded the immediate capture of his son and the wayward shepherdess.

Here, Autolycus as the narrator reveals that Leontes is about to sentence Perdita and Florizell to death, to win back the trust of his friend Polixenes. He tells the audience that this is the moral of the story: that once cycles of tragedy have begun, they cannot be stopped. When he restarts the action, however, he is proved wrong. When Florizell learns of Camillo's betrayal, **he encourages Perdita to run away. Instead, she appeals directly to Leontes for help, demonstrating her empathy for Leontes's mistakes and belief that he is capable of change.**

**Leontes names her his new heir without knowing she is his daughter, making her a princess and qualified to marry Florizell.** Instants later, the Shepherd, Clown Son, Polixenes, and Camillo enter the throne room and reveal Perdita's true lineage, via the baby blanket and letters the Shepherd found with her. Tearful reconciliations abound.

Paulina reveals a newly completed statue of Hermione, which comes to life and reunites with Leontes and Perdita. Perdita announces that she and Florizell will be married immediately, **and a wedding rapidly takes shape. Autolycus approaches the Clown Son and asks for forgiveness for the wrongs he committed in Bohemia, offering to return the money exchanged in the last act. The Clown Son rejects the money and instead swears that he'll vouch for Autolycus's character. Even after Autolycus warns him that he is "a dishonest man," the Clown Son vows that he'll swear anyway, so that Autolycus might become a better man.**

**Autolycus is invited to officiate the wedding and puts down his money box to do so. The play ends with everyone getting a second chance: at love, at family, and at community.**

## **The Main Action**

The core action of *The Winter's Tale* is to seize second chances. The design framework views second chances through a lens of seasons changing, reflecting whether characters succeed or fail in their pursuit of second chances by how close they are to spring (success) vs. winter (failure).

# Themes

## Theme 1: Second Chances

*The Winter's Tale* is a play about giving and taking second chances: can we recognize them when they appear? And what do we do about that? An overview of second chances in the play:

- Autolycus begins as an old man engaging in a “final reminiscence:” a second chance to contextualize his life and convince us (and himself) that he lived it well
- Leontes and Polixenes are “playing like boys,” as if to relive their childhood friendship<sup>8</sup>
- Leontes and Hermione are having their second child
- Polixenes escapes death due to Camillo’s warning; Camillo gets a second chance at living honorably in Polixenes’s court
- Baby Perdita is found and raised by the Shepherd, a second chance for them both: Perdita gets a second father, and the Shepherd a second child
- In the original, Autolycus first robs the Clown Son individually, and then pickpockets everyone at the party. In the adaptation, the same second chance is given, but escalated to robbing the Shepherd of Perdita’s inheritance gold
- Mopsa, Dorcas, and the Clown Son clearly have history. There’s text evidence for a past relationship between the Clown Son and Dorcas as well as the Clown Son and Mopsa, and my staging implies an ongoing involvement between all three<sup>9</sup>
- Polixenes and Camillo attending the sheep shearing festival is a second chance to parent young Florizell, and try to relate to him
- Camillo persuades Florizell to flee to Sicilia so that he can return; he then tells Polixenes, a reversal of his earlier choice *not* to tell Leontes about Polixenes’s fleeing Sicilia

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<sup>8</sup> I.i.SD57-58: “POLIXENES appears next to LEONTES. They seem as if they were boys again; wooden sword fights and shouting and rough housing.”; I.i.104-105, Hermione: “Our King and that of Bohemia have rooted betwixt them then such an affection that even the heavens seem to continue their loves.”

<sup>9</sup> Dorcas: “He hath promised you more than that, or there be liars.” Mopsa: “He hath paid you all he promised you. Maybe he has paid you more, which will shame you to give him again.” IV.ii.89-91

- Polixenes reuniting with Florizell in Sicilia gives them a second chance at their relationship, after Florizell flees court (both to woo Perdita, and to attempt to marry her) and Polixenes interrupts the wedding
- The statue of Hermione reincarnates as Hermione herself
- Perdita and Florizell get married in V.iii, after their first attempt at a wedding in IV.ii is interrupted by Polixenes

The presence of a second chance necessitates a *first chance* — an opportunity not fully realized. In his new book *Second Chances, Shakespeare, and Freud*, Stephen Greenblatt notes that there is “in almost all of Shakespeare’s tragedies a moment in which the hero is offered the glimpse of an escape route, a way to avert his fate and seize instead upon a different outcome. The moment of crisis is often signaled by a warning or omen.”<sup>10</sup> In my production, the “omen” was often thunder.

## Theme 2: Grace

Early on, forgiveness was the lens through which I was viewing the play. In preparing for rehearsals, I began moving away from forgiveness because it is reactionary: it comes at the *end* of an action. I wanted the impetus of the action, the thing that sparks change, which led me to the taking of a second chance.

However, grace is a vital part of this equation. It is Perdita’s act of grace that provides Leontes with his second chance, and the Clown Son’s act of grace that provides Autolycus with his. Grace is the giving of unearned forgiveness; it is the brave act of imagining that someone’s future could be different than their past, without proof.

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<sup>10</sup> Stephen Greenblatt with Adam Phillips, *Second Chances in Shakespeare*, page 59

Hermione's grace is self-evident (even explicitly named by Leontes in V.iii<sup>11</sup>), and it is often pointed to as evidence that Leontes should be punished somehow — how can we forgive him when she was *so clearly* innocent? But Hermione herself seems determined to see the best in Leontes, and to offer him multiple chances to change. When she is first publicly accused and sent to prison, she answers Leontes with a persistent belief that his delusions will end:

“How will this grieve you,  
When you shall come to clearer knowledge, that  
You thus have published me!” (II.i.48-50)  
  
“I never wished to see you sorry, love;  
Now, I trust I shall. — Adieu, my lord.” (II.i.63-64)

Even in the trial to determine her fate, her love for Leontes is foremost in her mind:

“The crown and comfort of my life, your favor,  
I do give lost, for I do feel it gone  
But know not how it went.” (III.i.58-60)

Because Leontes cannot hear her, the first half of *The Winter's Tale* is a tragedy, where “second chances are invariably refused when they are still possible and longed for when they are not.”<sup>12</sup>

### Theme 3: Kingdom vs. Self

In his deep dive on *The Winter's Tale*, Giles Block says that in Shakespeare's romances, “the repercussions of the actions of the leading characters [...] move outward into a world that ripples

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<sup>11</sup> “Chide me, dear stone, that I may say indeed / Thou art Hermione; or rather, thou art she / In thy not chiding, for she was as tender / As infancy and grace.” Leontes, V.iii.18-22

<sup>12</sup> *Second Chances*, p65

and vibrates in surprising ways, as a result of those actions.” At the heart of *The Winter's Tale* are royal families whose lives dictate those of their respective kingdoms. When Leontes and Hermione are harmonious and joyful, so too is Sicilia warm and happy;<sup>13</sup> and when Leontes is desperate and lost in his grief, so too is Sicilia plunged into “still winter lasting.”<sup>14</sup>

A profound concern about whether Leontes is a tyrant emerges over the course of Acts I-III, beginning when he accuses Hermione of being a traitor who is plotting against his life. It makes sense that a kingdom ruled by a God-appointed monarch might be anxious about tyrant kings; after all, Leontes's kingdom is irrevocable. Even his queen is second to him, since he can imprison her. This collapsing of kingdom into king is reflected in language, as Leontes is referenced as “Sicilia” (and Polixenes as “Bohemia”).<sup>15</sup> The Elizabethans believed it was “the subjection of reason to passion” that made a monarch a tyrant, who, “in letting loose the forces of disorder within himself, causes them to sweep over the entire kingdom.”<sup>16</sup>

Paulina comes close to explicitly calling Leontes a tyrant in II.iii:

PAULINA:

I'll not call you tyrant,  
But this most cruel usage of your queen,  
Not able to produce more accusation  
Than your own weak-hinged fancy, something savors  
Of tyranny, and will ignoble make you,

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<sup>13</sup> “*The entire kingdom seemed to swoon for them. / The more they loved each other, the more love / They pumped into Sicilia...*” Autolycus, I.i.40-43

<sup>14</sup> “*A thousand knees ten thousand years / Together, naked, fasting, / Upon a barren mountaintop / Amidst still winter lasting, / Could not move the gods to look / Upon thy sorry state.*” Paulina's curse, III.i.145-150

<sup>15</sup> “*This coming summer, Sicilia means to pay Bohemia the visitation we justly owe him...*” Leontes, I.i.29-30

<sup>16</sup> *Leontes a Jealous Tyrant*, Paul N. Sigel — from *The Review of English Studies*, Oct. 1950, Vol. 1 No. 4, p303

Yes, scandalous to the world.

LEONTES:

Out of the chamber,  
With your bear of a wife! Were I a tyrant,  
Where were her life? She durst not call me so  
If she did know me one. Away with her!<sup>17</sup>

We next hear the word in the trial scene, as Leontes declares that holding a trial proves he is *not* a tyrant,<sup>18</sup> and Apollo declaring him as such through the Oracle's decree.<sup>19</sup> This theme persists through Bohemia as well. Prince Florizell pursues a woman he believes to be a shepherdess and declares his willingness to remove himself from royal succession upon his first appearance:

FLORIZELL:

Or I'll be thine, my fair,  
Or not my father's. For I cannot be  
Mine own, nor anything to any, if  
I be not thine. To this I am most constant,  
Though destiny say no.<sup>20</sup>

Polixenes's anxiety around legacy and the stability of his kingdom leads him to pursue Florizell to the festival, and yet he too throws Florizell's royal status into question immediately.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *The Winter's Tale*, II.iii.116-125

<sup>18</sup> "Let us be cleared / Of being tyrannous, since we so openly / Proceed in justice..." Leontes, III.i.4-6

<sup>19</sup> "...Leontes is a jealous tyrant, his innocent babe truly begotten..." Cleomenes, III.i.99-100

<sup>20</sup> *The Winter's Tale*, IV.ii.31-35

<sup>21</sup> "For thee, fond boy, / If I may ever know thou dost but sigh / That thou no more shalt see this knack / [...] we'll bar thee from succession." Polixenes, IV.ii.243-246

Can we separate the king from his kingdom? How do we respond to tyrannical behavior, without furthering cycles of violence? The people surrounding Leontes (Camillo, Hermione, Antigonus, and even Paulina) push against the evil in his paranoia and take actions to avert tragedy as best they can: Camillo sacrifices his home to protect Sicilia (and therefore Leontes) from committing regicide; Antigonus sacrifices his life to save Perdita's. In this way, they too serve something larger than themselves: the greater good of their kingdom, and of humanity.

#### **Theme 4: Truth vs Perception**

The question of what is true is present throughout *The Winter's Tale*: Leontes is driven by an obsession with the truth of Hermione's fidelity; Antigonus questions the reality of the ghost he sees in his dream; the secret of Perdita's identity provokes commentary from everyone who sees her;<sup>22</sup> the source of the Shepherd's wealth is kept hidden; the question of whether Hermione has really been resurrected hangs in the air.

Even the language of the play seems to constantly hint that it may be fiction. Autolycus starts the play off saying, "What a gull Honesty is! And Trust, his sworn brother, a very simple gentleman,"<sup>23</sup> and agreeing to tell us the "truth" of how to get ahead in life.

Further discussion below in Patterns, regarding the repetition of the word "tale" in the script.

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<sup>22</sup> "This is the prettiest lowborn lass that ever / Ran on the greensward. Nothing she does or seems / But smacks of something greater than herself, / Too noble for this place." Polixenes, IV.ii.132-135

<sup>23</sup> *The Winter's Tale*, I.i.6-7

## Conventions

### Convention 1: Narrator

Many of the emotionally resonant, climactic, and cathartic moments happen offstage, and are then reported onstage. To understand how the telling of the story impacts the action, I first cataloged the instances of narration present in the original text:<sup>24</sup>

- 1.1: Camillo and Archidamus, noblemen from Sicilia and Bohemia respectively, discuss the friendly visitations of their respective Kings (and lay out some exposition).
- 2.1: Mamillius begins to tell a fairy tale to Hermione; then, we hear a report from Leontes's lords that Polixenes and Camillo have fled in the night.
- 2.2: In the original jail scene, Hermione does not appear onstage. Her premature birth is reported to Paulina by Emilia and the Jailer.
- 2.3: Mamillius's illness occurs entirely offstage: his status is reported by a Servant in 2.3, and his death is reported in 3.2 by that same Servant.
- 3.3: Antigonus tells baby Perdita about his dream, in which the ghost of Hermione appeared and instructed him to leave the baby on the shores of Bohemia (and foretold his imminent demise). The Shepherd's Son then tells a story of what he's just seen offstage — the ship of the Mariner sinking in the storm, and the bear devouring Antigonus.
- 4.1: Act 4 begins with the soliloquy by personified Time, in which the play jumps forward sixteen years. More on this below in [Conventions: Time Jump](#).
- 5.1: The arrivals and offstage actions of Florizell, Perdita, Polixenes, Camillo, the Shepherd, and his Son are reported by Cleomenes and a servant.
- 5.2: This scene is the pinnacle of narration in *The Winter's Tale*, containing the report of a remarkable number of offstage events from Autolycus and three nameless Gentlemen:

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<sup>24</sup> I have used Arabic numerals here to differentiate these original scene numbers from those of our adaptation script, for which I will use Roman numerals to note scene numbers

- The Shepherd reports to the King how he found Perdita, and how Leontes and Camillo realized who Perdita was, how they found the Queen Hermione's jewels and the letters of Antigonus to confirm her identity
- The reunion of the two brother kings
- Leontes asking Perdita's forgiveness for the death of her mother, and his thanking of the Shepherd
- The report of Antigonus's death by bear, and Paulina's heartbreak at his loss and joy of the princess' return
- The existence of a statue of Hermione being kept by Paulina, and the intention of them all to visit this statue so Perdita can see her mother

In my adaptation, I housed much of this narration with Autolycus and thereby centralized the story through one narrator (rather than many). I also had the impulse to put much of this action onstage, using a “show don't tell” strategy for the weight-bearing events of the play — particularly once the story had moved beyond Autolycus's understanding.

My intention in casting Autolycus as the narrator and including him so actively in the first half is to introduce the assumption that the expected end is inevitable *and* open the possibility of it changing. In reflecting on the act of storytelling, Stephen Greenblatt notes: “Once they have occurred, events take on an air of inevitability, but if we re-enter them imaginatively, as Shakespeare's play invites us to do, we can recover a sense of contingency.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Second Chances*, p60

### Time Jumps:

In Act IV, *The Winter's Tale* leaps forward in time sixteen years. In the original text, this leap warranted the character of Time delivering a rhyming, sixteen-line speech articulating the jump. In this adaptation, the time jump is heralded by Autolycus as part of his narration.

Time moving forward also comes with some visualization of inversion, as a way of cementing the shift into a “topsy-turvy” second half. In the original text, Time flips an hourglass, “[preparing] the audience for the unusual, turning upside down of social order: peasants become nobles, prince is a shepherd, what is dead returns to life.”<sup>26</sup> Autolycus, by contrast, sings a song with a syncopated rhythm while miming a ticking clock with his hand, showing the second hand moving forward and subsequently backward in time with the metronomic rhythm of the guitar.

### **Convention 2: Direct address**

Another classic Shakespearean convention is direct address, or the speaking of characters directly to audience members. This has also become a hallmark of my work; in my mission to make work that makes us better people, I embrace direct address as a way of making the audience complicit in the actions of the characters by forging a direct link between them.

Speaking to the audience is not an action taken by every character in Shakespeare's work. Shakespearean characters come to the audience when they need someone to talk to, and their onstage counterparts are not sufficient to fill this need. Soliloquies are born out of isolation. It is significant to note, then, that the only two characters with multiple, true soliloquies in *The*

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<sup>26</sup> Introduction to Arden *The Winter's Tale*, John Pitcher

*Winter's Tale* are Leontes and Autolycus. This distinction sets them apart as the driving forces of their respective acts; Leontes's actions drive the first half of the play (Acts I-III), and Autolycus's the second (Act IV).

There are notable exceptions to the Leontes/Autolycus monopoly on audience access:

- The Shepherd speaks alone onstage just before finding the baby, addressing the audience as he bemoans the youth that chased away his sheep<sup>27</sup>
- Camillo has two major asides, one in Sicilia<sup>28</sup> and one in Bohemia.<sup>29</sup> Both asides mark turning points in the plot, as Camillo makes a decision that will betray his status in hopes of a better future outcome

Put all together, the instances of direct address in *The Winter's Tale* serve to send up a signal flare that something is *changing direction*, providing the audience context for the many reversals and decisions that define the wide pendulum swings of this story.

### Convention 3: Parallelism

My impression of *The Winter's Tale* being a “streamlined” story, and therefore well-suited for a fairy tale adaptation, comes primarily from its many instances of parallelism:

- Leontes and Polixenes mirror each other's mistakes, as they both allow their wounded pride to blind them to the true needs of their families and kingdoms
  - Their eruptions are mirrored in form, as they both seem to ignite into rage at a moment's notice

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<sup>27</sup> *The Winter's Tale*, IV.ii.25-29

<sup>28</sup> *The Winter's Tale*, I.i.360-365

<sup>29</sup> Folger, *The Winter's Tale*, IV.ii.359-363

- In *response* to each of their eruptions, Leontes and Polixenes have structurally mirrored statements of understanding and empathy. They can both forgive *each other* more readily than they can forgive themselves:

- *I.i.424-430, Polixenes:*

“This jealousy  
Is for a precious creature. As she’s rare,  
Must it be great; and as his person’s mighty,  
Must it be violent; and as he does conceive  
He is dishonored by a man which ever  
Professed to him, why, his revenges must  
In that be made more bitter.”

- *V.i.191-197, Leontes:*

“Bohemia’s heart I know as ‘twere mine own;  
This dire offence is for a son he holds  
In dearest reverence. As he is King,  
Must his duty be great, and as he hath  
No queen, so must his heir be dearly held;  
And as he hath no wife, must his son be dearer.  
I am friend to him and you. I will to him.”<sup>30</sup>

- Both of their eruptions banish their heirs and risk the loss of their sons — Leontes *does* lose both Mamillius and Perdita; Polixenes almost loses Florizell.
- Leontes and the Shepherd are in parallel as Perdita’s fathers, and both allow their disappointment at her (perceived) betrayals to be spoken in violent terms:
- Camillo twice makes a promise of action that he then reverses, each time fleeing abroad
- Florizell flees Bohemia; Perdita was whisked away from Sicilia sixteen years prior
- Musical celebrations occur in Sicilia’s first act and Bohemia’s fourth

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<sup>30</sup> This is original to my adaptation. In the original text of *The Winter’s Tale*, Leontes’s line is as follows: “*I will to your father. / Your honor not o’erthrown by your desires, / I am friend to them and you. Upon which errand / I now go toward him.*” (V.i.282-286)

The effect of these many parallels is to create the impression of universality in the world of the play: this story, while about these specific characters, feels like it is about *all of mankind*. It also creates a sense of “echoes,” which I’ll expand more on below in Patterns.

## **Convention 4: Music, Dance**

Music and storytelling recur throughout *The Winter's Tale*, as miniatures reflecting the larger action of the play. Autolycus uses music to move the story forward and call attention to important moments (such as underscoring the bear attack or singing through the time jump).

In the original text, music featured more prominently in Bohemia: Autolycus’s clowning appears in song, and he disguises himself as a seller of ballads. This adaptation expands the role of music to become a constant presence and uses different musical styles to define the worlds of Sicilia vs. Bohemia. The adapted Autolycus begins in Sicilia, and so the more delicate guitar-strumming defines the music of that kingdom. This Bohemia has a much fuller, more complex and rhythmic sound: contemporary pop music.

The appearance of music and dancing in the sheep-shearing festival is a convention of pastoral comedy that disrupts the action. The mash-up structure of Mopsa and Dorcas’s karaoke number makes it both familiar and surprising: audience members recognize parts of it without being able to predict what’s coming next. The content of the karaoke numbers reflects the themes of the story: unrequited love, ambition, and second chances (mash-up), discovery of identity and belonging (Perdita), and love triumphing over all obstacles (Florizell).

This underscoring of theme resonates out from individual to group, beginning with the character singing and colliding with the modern audience's experience and familiarity, in the same way that Shakespeare's romances echo out a theme of love miraculously emerging triumphant.

## Convention 5: Genre Shifts & Inversions

Perhaps the most potent way that *The Winter's Tale* manifests its motif of disruption and surprise is in its persistent, world-shifting changes in genre. It begins as a classical tragedy: "a story of exceptional suffering and calamity, leading to the death of a dominant figure in high social standing,"<sup>31</sup> perhaps following in the footsteps of the earlier *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear* as a political tragedy with themes of power, treachery, and succession.

Tonally, the story makes a massive reversal in III.ii, when Antigonus is eaten by the bear. This is a moment we encounter twice: first at Antigonus's tragic end, hearing his death cry ("*I am gone forever!*"),<sup>32</sup> and then shortly thereafter by the Clown Son's comedic retelling ("*how the poor gentleman roared and the bear mocked him*").<sup>33</sup> In the sheep-shearing scene, there is another reversal of genre when Polixenes rips off his disguise and condemns the marriage of Florizell and Perdita. From there on out, the play pendulums back and forth in genre, denying the audience any chance of anticipating what the end will be.

This shifting of audience expectations is especially potent because *The Winter's Tale* itself was an adaptation of Robert Greene's earlier novel, *Pandosto: The Triumph of Time*. Shakespeare

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<sup>31</sup> Hunter, p123

<sup>32</sup> *The Winter's Tale*, III.ii.51

<sup>33</sup> *The Winter's Tale*, IV.i.53

makes several notable changes, the first among them to invert the kingdoms of Bohemia and Sicilia so that anyone familiar with the material would be in unfamiliar territory immediately.

Playing with genre is conventional for romances, and contributes to their miraculous endings.

With each unexpected twist and turn, the scope of the world and its possibilities expands, until it is large enough to allow for Hermione's impossible resurrection in V.iii.

## Who's Who; Significant Relationships

Character	Super objective	Obstacles
Autolycus	To prove he did it right	He's lonely
	<i>Autolycus is the main character and lens. His change in perspective over the course of the play guides ours as an audience.</i>	
Leontes	To protect his legacy	His own jealousy
	<i>Leontes is the protagonist. He goes through a fundamental change in status and perspective from the beginning to end of the play, and his actions influence every other character.</i>	
Hermione	To protect her family	Her husband's jealousy
Perdita	To belong	She doesn't fit in
Paulina	To champion Hermione	Her own pride
Camillo	To do a good job	He misses home
Antigonus	To provide for the kingdom	His moral compass
Cleomenes	To secure the kingdom's heir	Leontes messed up and everyone is mad at him
Polixenes	To be admired	His son is naughty

Florizell	To be his own person (who is married to Perdita)	He doesn't fit in at the castle (the girl he wants to marry is a shepherdess)
Shepherd	To be successful	He's super, super old
Clown Son	To get it right	He's usually wrong

Smaller Characters:

- Mamillius
- Dion
- Emilia
- Mopsa
- Dorcas
- Shepherdesses

Significant Relationships

- Leontes vs. Hermione
  - The fracturing of their love sets the events of the play in motion, and their family represents the health and success of Sicilia as a whole. It is important to understand that their love is, initially, pure and unassuming. Their relationship is built on deep trust and love, such that when the apparent betrayal comes, it is shattering — and that Hermione persists in her objective to protect Leontes, as a member of her family, despite his opposing action.
- Leontes vs. Polixenes
- Hermione vs. Polixenes
- Leontes vs. Camillo
- Leontes vs. the Nobles (Antigonus, Astraiia, Cleomenes, Dion)
  - The leadership of Sicilia is lateral, with consultation expected and welcomed from the nobles. This is evidenced in the group engagement with convincing Polixenes

to stay, and the directness with which the nobles disagreed with Leontes's proposed imprisonment and persecution of Hermione.<sup>34</sup>

- Paulina vs. Hermione (vs Leontes)
- Perdita vs. Florizell
- Paulina vs. Antigonus
- Shepherd vs. Clown Son
- Polixenes vs. Camillo
- Autolycus vs. Clown Son

## The Structure of the Play

### Structure

The play takes place over two weeks, sixteen years apart. This allows for both the acute compression of time *and* the sprawling cycles of a generation. While *The Winter's Tale* is in Shakespeare's conventional five-act structure, its pacing is unusual. The first three acts in Sicilia condense the entire arc of a conventional tragedy into one week. The fourth act launches sixteen years forward into Bohemia, and includes the massive sheep-shearing scene, making up almost a quarter of the entire length of the play before an abrupt return to Sicilia in the fifth act.

Autolycus's narration contains pop-up scenes, creating an almost montage effect as he weaves the various threads together into a single, streamlined story.

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<sup>34</sup> Camillo: "I would not be a stander-by to hear / My sovereign mistress clouded so [...] 'Shrew my heart, / You never spoke what did become you less / Than this.'" (I.i.308-312); Antigonus: "Be certain what you do, sir, lest your justice / Prove violence, in the which three great ones suffer: / Yourself, your queen, your son." (II.i.67-69); Cleomenes: "Your grace, this vow does fly i'the face of law; / A kingdom heirless! You must marry —" (V.i.50-51)

## Language

The text tells a story of status and circumstance: the royalty speak primarily in blank verse (iambic pentameter), due partially to their higher status and primarily to the heightened emotional drama they are navigating. Verse is the “emotional expression of thought;”<sup>35</sup> the preponderance of verse in the Sicilian court, particularly between Hermione and Leontes, reveals how their words seem to flow straight from the heart. Neither of them plots or strategizes; instead, their words beat with the ardent desire to be heard by the other. By contrast, the lower-class shepherds mostly speak in prose (typical of Shakespearean clowns), as do Polixenes and Camillo when plotting to spy on Florizell. The rhythm of prose is disruptive, breaking up the steady beat of the blank verse and complicating the pace of the show.

A third hallmark of Shakespearean language is rhyming verse, the language of “lovers; of magical spells; of encapsulated wisdom; of discoveries.” Rhyme “brings together two unconnected words, but once a rhyme is heard, it’s as if these words have always secretly belonged to each other and that some truth has now been revealed to us.”<sup>36</sup> Autolycus’s narration is peppered with rhyming couplets, giving it the sense of magically unveiling something that is true to win our trust and establish to the show’s fairy tale tone.

Approximately 25-30 percent of this adaptation is added text, of which the majority was written by me. In addition to the rhyming verse, I chose to give more contemporary text to Autolycus. I did this for two reasons: first, my intention was for the narrator to sound more like the audience,

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<sup>35</sup> Giles Block, *Speaking the Speech*, p13

<sup>36</sup> Giles Block, *Speaking the Speech*, p176, p182

and therefore to feel more like one of us. Second, specifically at the beginning of the play, I targeted a mix of heightened and modern language to give the audience's ears time to transition. It's important to me that Shakespeare feels like it's for us, today — not like it's archaic, or requires translation.

This addition of contemporary text isn't out of keeping with Shakespeare's language, either! Like Shakespeare's other late romances, *The Winter's Tale* has a lot of direct or everyday language structured poetically. For instance, the opening exchange in V.i contains phrases like “*you have done enough,*” “*forgive yourself,*” and “*I cannot forget,*”<sup>37</sup> which sound remarkably modern. In recognizing the vocabulary Cleomenes and Leontes use, perhaps we are meant to feel closer to them and empathize with their experience. Especially this late in the play, speaking this bluntly reveals that these powerful men are worn down, reduced to their most base needs.

### Rhythm / Mood

The rhythm and mood of *The Winter's Tale* oscillate dramatically over the course of the play, swinging from fraught political family drama to whimsical pastoral comedy from the third to the fourth act, and to an almost exultant magic in the fifth act. Music is peppered through both the original text and my adaptation, giving a persistent sense of a cyclical harmony. Almost like a Greek chorus, images appear and disappear, and characters leave and return.

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<sup>37</sup> *The Winter's Tale*, V.i.1-10

Structurally, there is also a remarkably high number of “ragged” lines (in which the thought shifts come mid-line, as opposed to “end-stopped”), and shared lines (in which two characters split a verse line). In ragged line-endings, the “thoughts and lines [of the character] are no longer running smoothly together,” thereby “capturing the sound of emotional disturbance.”<sup>38</sup> This gives the impression that characters are speaking faster than they can think, tumbling over each other. From the language, we understand stakes and urgency.

Giles Block says that in *The Winter's Tale*, “Shakespeare is drawn to moments — important moments — which are fleeting and delicate and arise seemingly out of the smallest of incidents.”<sup>39</sup> Leontes’s thoughts are speeding ahead of him, a result of his literally racing heart.

In his soliloquy in II.iii, his focus shifts in the same line:

“And down-right languished. Leave me solely: go,  
See how he fares: Fie, fie, no thought of him.” (II.iii.23-25)

In this line, “he” refers to Mamillius, and “him” refers to Polixenes, reflecting a massive reversal in focus in the middle of a single breath.

All of this gives the rhythmic effect of a play that tumbles forward, constantly disrupting and reinterpreting itself. This is a play without transition, leaping from impulse to conclusion on a heartbeat’s turn; the first and third acts afford no chance to catch our breath, while the middle pastoral act seems to luxuriate in love and playfulness. The play blusters, explodes, and wanes, nearly mirroring the seasonal shifts we’ve drawn as design inspiration.

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<sup>38</sup> *Speaking the Speech*, p37

<sup>39</sup> Giles Block, *Speaking the Speech* p309

## Patterns / Symbolism

### Recurring Images / Echoes

*The Winter's Tale* has a dramatic number of recurring images and sounds, almost like echoes.

John Pitcher discusses this in his introduction to the Arden, noting as an example:

“There are twenty-four instances of [the word] ‘bear’ in *The Winter's Tale*, used in various ways in ten of the play’s fifteen scenes, e.g. ‘Bear the boy hence’ (2.1.59), ‘the bear mocked him’ (3.3.98), and ‘bear no credit’ (5.1.178).

[...] In Act 3, for instance, the ‘bear’ (3.3.57 SD) appears just before the baby, a *bairn* (68), is found wrapped in a *bearing* cloth (112), [...] and in ‘one of its myriad senses, the sound signals the most urgent concern of the play,’ the *bearing* of legitimate heirs’ (de Grazia, ‘Homonyms’, 144).”<sup>40</sup>

This pattern of parallelisms and echoes throughout *The Winter's Tale* contributes to the oscillating rhythm discussed above: when we recognize something returning, it makes evident that we have diverged from that thing in the first place. This goes on to draw attention to the second chances present in the play, as it primes our audience attention to notice things repeating.

### Recurring Images / Language

- Tale, story
  - Word “tale” appears 7 times:
    - 2x in II.i (“Pray you sit by us, and tell’s a tale” “A sad tale’s best for winter.”); Hermione + Mamillius

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<sup>40</sup> John Pitcher, introduction to the Arden *The Winter's Tale*; emphasis added

- 1x in IV.i, Time: “So shall I do / To th’ freshest things now reigning, and make stale / the glistering of this present, as my tale / Now seems to it.”
  - 1x in IV.iv (Autolycus, “Here’s the midwife’s name to’t, one Mistress Taleporter, and five or six honest wives that were present. Why should I carry lies abroad?” re: the author of an old midwife’s tale.
  - 2x by Gentlemen in V.ii
  - 1x by Paulina in V.iii
- Honesty, Cuckoldry, Lying
  - Bear (bairn, bearing, bare, etc.)
  - Pregnancy or “Bigness”, Babies, Children
  - Nature, Flowers
  - Stone (appears 11x)
  - Ocean, Expanses, Ship Voyages

## **Autolycus’s Money Box**

To give a clear arc of Autolycus’s action over the course of the play, I created the symbol of the money box. This item represents the link between the Leontes/Hermione/Perdita storyline, and Autolycus. It is sent away with Perdita when she’s banished, found by the Shepherd, and ultimately stolen by Autolycus.

At the end of the show, it represents the difference between his past (cunning, selfish) and his possible future (honest, generous). At the end of the play, he must choose whether to walk away with it again, or to put it down and join the celebration of Perdita and Florizell’s wedding.

## **The Canopy & Shadows**

Another symbol that emerged from our design work was that of the overhead canopy, and its twin vertical strip along the upstage line. The canopies were symbols of Leontes's emotional and mental state, helping visually track how the heart of the kingdom was changing and breaking.

When Leontes fantasizes about what Polixenes and Hermione are doing behind his back, the ceiling canopy sinks and closes in. This helps the audience experience the claustrophobic, panicked feeling Leontes is experiencing as his heart races and he tries to chase away the distressing, intrusive images in his mind. The shape of the canopy mirrors that of Hermione's pregnant belly, symbolizing the idea that his heirs and legacy are at risk.

We played with shadows in different positions relative to the curtain, juxtaposing Leontes's own practical shadow in front with "imagined," distorted shadows of his delusions from behind. This created a sense of scale: by casting shadows from both sides of the partition, performers could grow dramatically bigger or smaller than each other, providing immediate visual contrast. (In the trial scene, the shadows created a scale disparity between Leontes and Hermione. Because the light came from low front light, Hermione's shadow could become larger and loom over Leontes as she crossed downstage into her powerful final position.)

When the top canopy ultimately crashes to the ground following Hermione's death and Paulina's curse, it is the shattering of Leontes's world as we know it. This massive design gesture, this destruction of the symbol that has defined his delusion, helps us believe him when he wails his

repentance over Hermione's dead body. It also destroys the possibility that the world can be fully restored to what it was before.

It is this understanding of the symbol of the canopy that made it such a difficult decision for me to send the canopy back up in Act V, when Hermione reappears. This remains one of the largest compromises I made in the production process of this show, and one that I continue to interrogate. With a second chance of my own, I would push for additional options for how to conceal Hermione's final rise as the statue, with an ideal answer being one that allowed the center platform to be playable and the statue concealed *without* needing to resort to a return of the canopy.

## **The World of the Play**

Contemporary audiences picture "fairy tale" to mean roughly 1480s Italian early Renaissance, and so that period provides footholds for the costumes of our world. Costume conversations led to the distinction in our production that Sicilia is a mountainous region. By contrast, Bohemia is a pastoral region, primarily exporting livestock and furs. The two have a long-standing symbiotic relationship, and both kingdoms are made stronger by trade with the other. Their mutual impact is visible in the everyday life of the common people, and tapers away when their connection is severed by Leontes threatening Polixenes's life.

The changing of seasons is a significant factor in the story of the play. Sicilia is plunged into eternal winter by Paulina's curse, after Hermione dies at the trial; Bohemia is in summer during the "sheep-shearing" festival.

## Magic

Magic is a major element of the world of the play. We explored at length the operating rules for magic in this world, specifically focusing on *who has power* and *where that power comes from*.

Paulina is a clear, corporeal force of magic in Sicilia; we see her cast two literal spells (the curse plunging Sicilia into “perpetual winter,” and the resurrection of Hermione in the statue).

The other major presence of power in *The Winter's Tale* is in Apollo. His Oracle at Delphi is sought out for guidance. When Leontes disregards Apollo's decree, he is immediately and harshly punished with the death of Mamillius, which triggers his prayer to Apollo for mercy.

This direct address to Apollo implies a world in which gods wield power over our lives, but also one in which our fate is not fixed. Why pray if your destiny is already sealed?

Digging deeper into the Greek mythology of Apollo, his influence on the world of *The Winter's Tale* becomes even clearer. Classically, Apollo is the god of music, the sun, prophecy, healing, and herds/flocks. The only other god mentioned by name is Mercury, who is the Roman counterpart to the Greek Hermes, god of financial gain, travelers, messengers, and trickery/luck — and whose origin story involves robbing Apollo of his cattle. Autolycus references being born under Mercury in Act IV, establishing a counterpoint to Apollo's almost monotheistic presence in Acts I-III. In this way, the god of tricksters and the god of prophecy are counterposed, further supporting the read of Autolycus as a sort of rogue-ish foil for Leontes.

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## The Design Process

My conceptual vision of *The Winter's Tale* was one of a “classical fairytale” world that would be disrupted. I pitched the team on there being one main story (that of Leontes, Hermione, and Perdita), with Autolycus’ narration functioning as a “b-plot.” While much would change in the script following this date, my two-sentence summation of how these plots wove together in our initial design meeting was:

*Autolycus is wrong about the story. He thinks it is “good people get fairy gold; bad people get bears.” He learns a lesson, which is that people can make mistakes and make up for them.*

I talked about my instinct for magic tricks and wonder, including the below Madeleine L’Engle quote, and pinned the idea that we would use heightened reality to learn about ourselves.

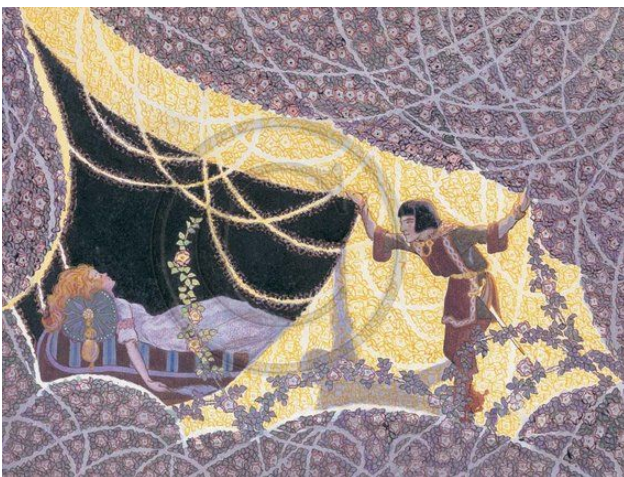
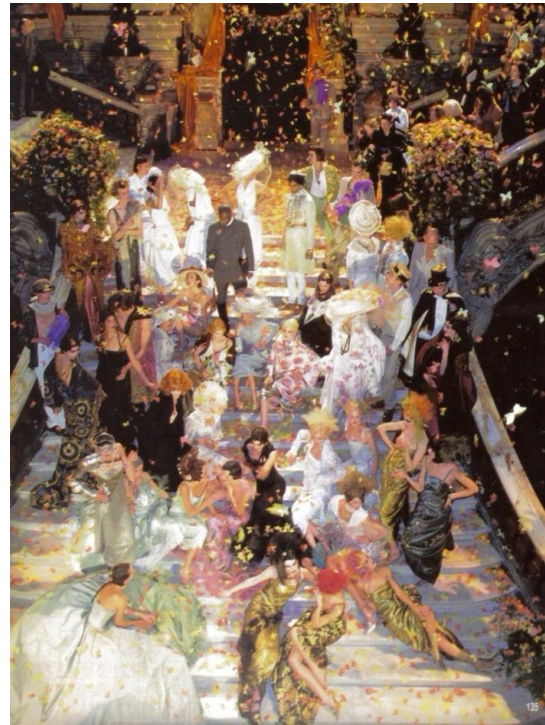
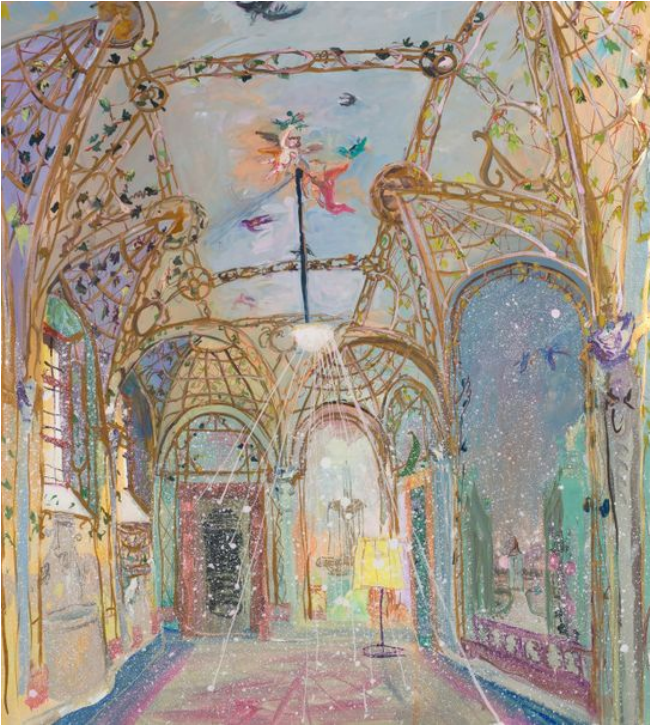
*“A story where myth, fantasy, fairy tale, or science fiction explore and ask questions moves beyond pragmatic dailiness to wonder. Rather than taking the child away from the real world, such stories are preparation for living in the real world with courage and expectancy.”<sup>41</sup>*

I described how *The Winter's Tale* appeared to be fundamentally curious about how stories can end in a surprising way, citing the prophecy, resurrection, and enormous genre shift as underpinnings of this main action.

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<sup>41</sup> Madeleine L’Engle, *Madeleine L’Engle Herself: Reflections on a Writing Life*

In this initial meeting, I shared some core images<sup>42</sup> that had been informing my exploration of the world in the adaptation and pre-production process:

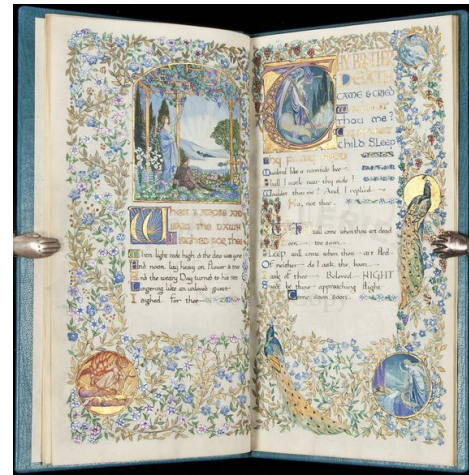


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<sup>42</sup> Upper Left: Jane Irish, *Museo di Casa Martelli* 2013; Upper Right: John Galliano, *Dior* 1998

<sup>43</sup> Lower left: Margeret Noble, *Briar Rose*; Lower right: Errol Le Cain, *Thorn Rose*; Next Page: Illuminated manuscript of *To The Night & The Cloud*, calligraphed and illustrated by Jessie Bayes

As a group, we identified some consistencies, and the design team reflected what was resonating for them. A sense of maximalism and fullness appeared consistently, using visually noisy patterns to fill in “blank” space. This led to a sense of cyclical repetition that also resonated with the themes of the play, which beget the idea of seasons changing. There was also a sense of threshold appearing throughout, a passage through something dark and dangerous towards something desired. So, winter began to stand in for the dark, dangerous forest, and spring stood in for the hope of a new day.



The scenic world latched onto the storytelling framework of the play, and Pete took away the gilded fairytale books and draping of fabric. Antonio and I discussed a fantasy slant on 1400s Renaissance looks, which reflect an archetypical understanding of classical fairytales. Thorn began examining images of sharp contrasted shadows and shapes, and Kyle worked to collide the play’s echoing gravity with its playful notes through thick rolls of thunder and disruptive modern sounds. This all came together to create a world of scale, spectacle, and contrast.

## Scenic Design:

*The Winter’s Tale* has a lot of inherent demands for the scenic design, which informed my early conversations with Pete:

- Transformation from Sicilia to Bohemia (and back): Because we made a choice to fully realize the design world (as opposed to a more “minimalist” design where we teach the

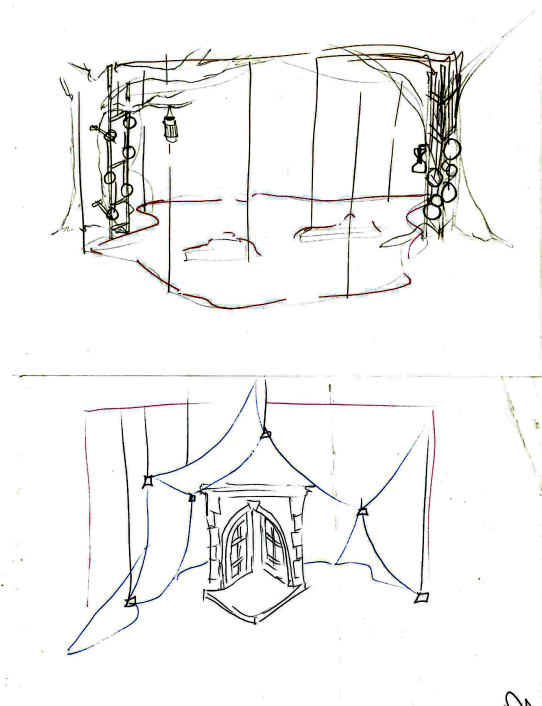
audience to track location via words alone), we needed to create a full scenic change between Acts III and IV to communicate the change in location; and then reverse that change going into Act V, when the action returns to Sicilia.

- The locations we needed to hit in Sicilia included public space, the prison, a court room, and interior/private space. However, the pace of the first three acts is so fast that I really wanted minimal scenic changes — so, I initially asked for a unit set for each kingdom, which could be changed over during intermission.
- Statue Reveal: To really stage the magic of Hermione’s resurrection, it was important to me that we *reveal* the statue, which meant not seeing the actor walk into position.
- “Second Chances.” To reflect the spine of second chances in the design world, we discussed seeing things return (such as scenic elements of both Sicilia and Bohemia combining in Act V) and including elements that implied transformation over time.
  - In the early design phase, Pete used a tree for this symbolism — bare branches versus seasonal flowers would show the passage of time, and cyclical death and rebirth via the annual miracle of things returning in spring.

### Early Discussion/Scenic Journal:

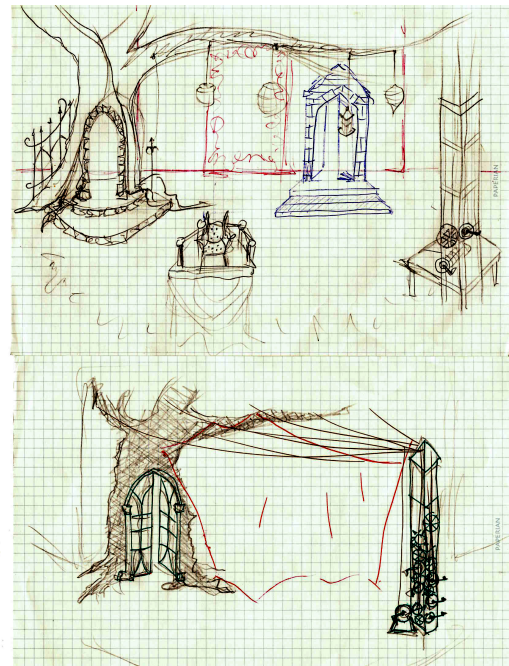
At the designer table read, Pete presented a first draft idea of the scenic design. It was a rough sketch of a huge white fabric, rigged on multiple pick points between a giant, fairytale tree (UR) and a tower with theatrical rigging.

The main impetus for this design was the stage direction that the world “erupts into life.” Under



the tarp, we would reveal a door and throne via the trap/lift, as if the world is taking shape as the story is being told.

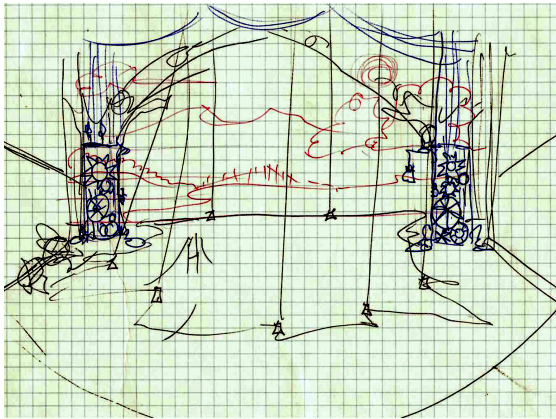
I really liked the tree research that Pete brought in, given the season-change theme present throughout the play. It creates a physical representation of this (maybe more metaphorical) action. We discussed the opportunity for snow, autumn leaves, maybe even spring flowers budding. The drop also created a major point of change throughout the show: it would become interior architecture for the Sicilian palace; it could fall to the ground to become snow when Paulina casts her curse; it would raise all the way up to become swooping parachute sky for Bohemia. It can catch movement from the wind (giant fangs in the grid and vomms) and provide space for shadow play (the Bohemian bear attack).



My first reaction was that this was a VERY cool design. I liked the big, metaphorical gesture. It appealed to my own (maximalist) aesthetic, and I liked how much the stage would change over the course of the show. I voiced to Pete some initial concerns about:

- Sightlines: How would the revealed scenes under the raised pick points be visible throughout the deep thrust of the Jones?
- Architecture: The only playable scenic elements were a single throne (Leontes), the door, and the tree. I worried this wasn't enough to stage the action of the play.

It did feel like a shift from the world I imagined when adapting the script. I tried hard when writing the adaptation to imagine REAL SPACE. I thought hard about the scenic worlds of *Fat Ham* (Seattle Rep) and *The Bed Trick* (Seattle Shakespeare). Both shows had realistic unit sets that sustained a lot of action, both realistic and fantastical. The context of what “real world,” psychological behavior looked like created a strong foundation for the huge, fantastical moments that played out.



But I didn't say any of this to Pete on that day. In retrospect, I think I abdicated some of my directorial voice in doing so. I had an instinct of what was right, but he was a *professional* and it felt good to have a collaborator present a big idea. Maybe if I'm being honest, I wanted it to work

because it felt BIG and flashy and thesis-worthy.

In our last meeting, before our prelim conversation, we discussed what the major priority points for the canopy were. For me, that included:

1. The ability for it to create Vertical Architecture in Sicilia
2. Dropping all the way down during Paulina's curse to become Snow
3. Physically changing for a new Bohemian sky

Pete likes it starting on the ground, to “reveal” the story — but, I have (and shared) an instinct that this is giving away our big move immediately.

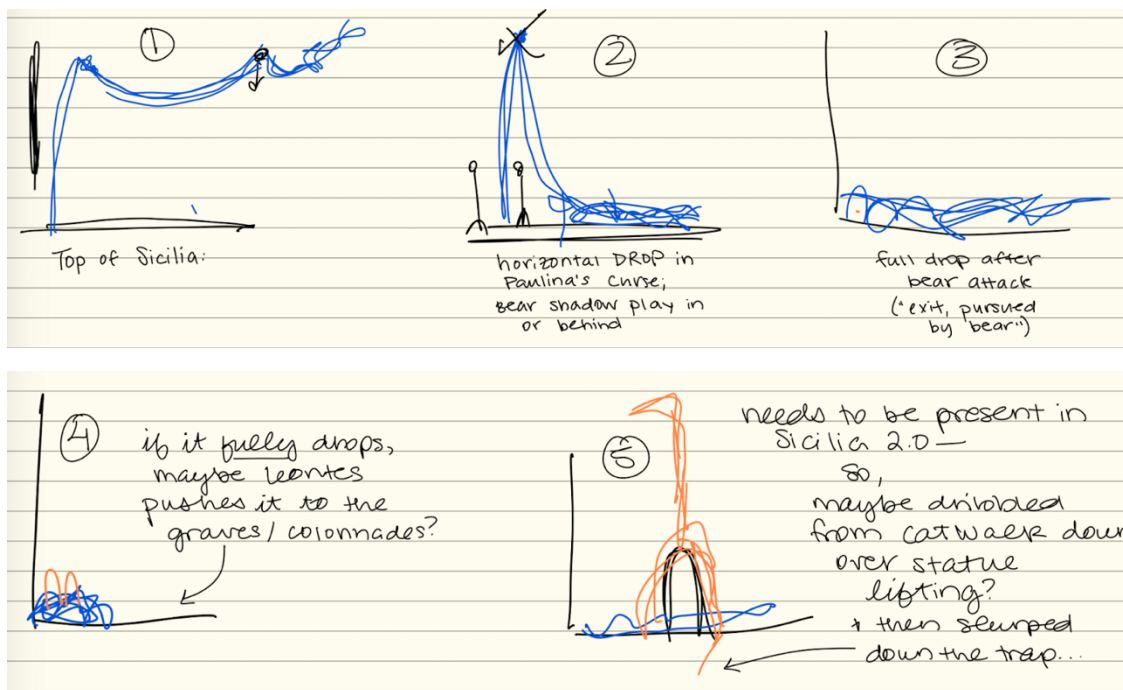
At the prelim, we get the anticipated feedback that this presents major obstacles — for lighting positions, crew numbers/skills, rigging capabilities, etc.

We also got feedback that there is a dearth of sittable/playable architecture — feedback which feels like a confirmation of my initial concerns. Any sense (naïve or otherwise) that “maybe Pete knows something I don’t” fades away. Of course he doesn’t.

I called a design meeting with Pete and Thorn, and sent ahead the following via email:

- With the shrinkage, I’m not sure the tarp/drop is winning us as much as it’s costing us right now. I’m hoping to scratch our chins about the moments it’s really juicy, and extrapolate from there how it fits into the world (and how else we could achieve the other things it was doing)
- I also have a developing suspicion that a big/impact physical location for Autolycus might not be the thing we want? When he’s the focus, we’ll want him more mobile — and when he’s “in world,” I think we’ll want him to be able to deliver lines from anywhere onstage. So, if the drop starts to shift, I wonder too about this rigging location...?
- I think our throne room space wants a little more. Rereading the script, essentially all of Act 1 happens in (or could happen in) the throne room, and I think we need a little more architectural help understanding what that space is.
- I’m curious about moving the initial placement of the throne to somewhere less central — and maybe we watch Leontes carry it on for the courtroom? Or maybe Hermione gets sent up there instead?

At this meeting, I pitched an adaptation to the big drop that achieves 2/3 of my “juiciest” images:



This proposal went over well with Pete and Thorn, and we moved forward — although the adjustment was made to imagine it as two drops, rather than one piece.

In preparation for our final ground-plan conversations, I did some space research to find a more inherently active space to pivot the throne room to. I think “throne room” has not been serving us, because it is an inherently presentational, empty space. Instead, I pitched a pivot to “winter garden,” which would imply a lot more playable architecture in the space (beyond just tables and chairs, which were feeling unspecific).

I shared the following images as how I was imagining Sicilia changing between acts:

**Sicilia, Beginning of the Play —**



**Sicilia, After the Curse / Canopy Caved In —**



**Hermione Rebirth Sicilia:**



This pivot also led to a reassessment of my spine. As I brainstormed garden imagery, in search of something more muscular, a few new images emerged. Perhaps the idea of “pruning” was useful? The act of letting go of what’s dead, to encourage new growth. That certainly made sense of Act V/the climax, but it didn’t account for the jealousy and pride of Acts I & IV. Similarly, “weeding” focused on the wrong action, and “cultivate” felt too weak/too close to “bloom.”

To water the seeds  
[of growth] [of second chances]

I arrived at “water” as the metaphoric verb that felt best. There was a great resonance with the season change images we’ve been exploring; and several core images (Hermione falling and emerging from the trap) felt suddenly much more supported. I will admit that I didn’t articulate

this specific spine in the rehearsal room. “Water” felt useful to communicate with the design team, but less useful for actors. I instead used verbs like “seize” in the rehearsal process.

11/10 (After final scenic meeting):

In our previous conversation, Pete asked me “so what do you want to see?” This felt like a warning sign that he was no longer wanting to sit in the driver’s seat of his design. I acknowledge this is maybe some baggage I have, around designers throwing in the towel, and my own fear. I felt like we were working in a weak zone of mine.

At that point, I didn’t trust my instincts around ground plan and the scenic world. So, I storyboarded the events of the play and sat down with Pete to map through the action together. The meeting went well. Surprisingly, a few of the adjustments I thought were going to be “non-negotiable” — like clearing the center platform and eliminating the corner balustrades — were things I followed Pete’s instinct to keep. It was *extremely* helpful to map through the action for every scenic element, especially regarding whether the platform would raise/lower between scenes in Act I. By the time we discussed what returned to stage in Act V Sicilia, Pete was saying things like “let’s see what we feel like we need” — the jazz vote of confidence I was hoping for!

I did continue grappling with the ground plan, ultimately resulting in some changes early in the tech process, which I’ll discuss below. In rehearsal, the ground plan felt more like a series of experiments and provocations; I felt more than I ever have before like I was “playing with the dials,” to use Val’s phrase, and seeing what happened. I started with *way* more furniture in the first scene than I thought I needed, and experimented with how it changed actor behavior. Over

the course of rehearsals and into tech, I removed items and adjusted the pictures to be more clean, sharp, and intentional.

This paring down of the scenic elements meant that I would be relying on lights to shrink the action when we used portions of the stage, a decision that I didn't see through on the lighting end, and which ultimately resulted in muddiness and too-wide apertures in final staging.

## **Costumes**

The costume design arc was generally smooth and successful. Antonio and I were able to get aligned quickly about how the costumes operated in the show. We determined that costumes would be one of the biggest signifiers of the kind of story we were telling, and therefore that costumes would communicate archetypical fairytale aesthetics.

Our early conversations were about the magic in the world, the genre and style, and the statue. One major lesson I learned in my time in graduate school was the vitality of visual research throughout the design process, as a way of ensuring the designer and I are picturing the same thing. We explored how seasons changing and temporality could show up in costumes, looking at images of dripping candle wax, icicles, and veiled statues.

While this was useful in aligning on tone and style, I wanted to find a referential, historical foothold so that we weren't needing to construct an entirely new world. My hope was that in doing this, we would create a more cohesive world. We had been discussing archetypical fairytale costumes as including things like pointy hats, doublets, empire waists, and ornate details. I knew that there was likely a period in history that these costumes were drawing from,

so I searched for real-world, historical images that reflected the look we were referencing, and found this image:



This is from *Hours of Mary Burgundy*, a 1477 “book of hours” or prayer book.<sup>44</sup> This image struck me because it contained both the costume aesthetics I was imagining, and an ornate gilded border that reminded me of our fairy tale research. While this image is from the Netherlands, further investigation in this period led me to Italy as the fashion trendsetter of the era. I shared this with Antonio, and they returned with initial sketches that felt very reflective of the world we had been discussing.

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<sup>44</sup> *Hours of Mary Burgundy*, Master of Mary of Burgundy and Simon Marmion, 1477.

Once we established this firm foundation, we returned to our initial conversations about magic. We wanted to communicate to the audience that we weren't trying to tell a story about historical 1400s Italy; rather, that we were using that as a launchpad to dream further in a more heightened world. Antonio used tools like gilding, expanding our period references, and adding fantastical detailing to achieve this exaggeration of the world.

Some magical elements that survived to production:

- The royal crowns were all made of natural materials and gilded to sparkle. We pointed at our dramaturgical designations of Bohemia and Sicilia, using plant-life (fir branches, berries, and twigs) in the crowns for Hermione and Leontes, and animal bones (antlers) for Polixenes and Florizell
- Everyone in the sheep-shearing festival, except for Polixenes, is decked in flowers, as if their clothing literally sprouted joyful celebration
- Paulina's costumes reference fantasy witches, with cobwebs making lace and an ahistorical bustle referencing a black widow spider in the final act
- Autolycus's Bohemia costume exists entirely out of the historical period, referencing instead Freddy Mercury, matadors, and other playful performers
- The ruffs worn by Sicilian nobility are similarly bending historical rules, referencing Elizabethan time instead to complicate our audience understanding of "when" we are

In the early sketches, Clown Son's hat had candles attached. This was initially a whimsical detail Antonio added, which I really liked but found to be a little isolated — so we brainstormed additional ways for this move to show up. To do this, we first defined it as "fairytale Flintstones:" period-appropriate (if not historically accurate) solutions to modern utilities. Beyond the hat candles, we brainstormed sundial watches and hourglass pendants as additional costume options in this style. This also led to one of my favorite additions to the show, which

was the karaoke town-crier cone. Pete and Thorn felt adamant that we shouldn't see a modern microphone in the sheep-shearing festival. In my previous work, this kind of anachronism hasn't bothered me, but I wanted to heed the advice of my design team and allow myself to be surprised — and thus, the karaoke cone was born to amplify voices without seeing electricity onstage.

The candles, sundial, and hourglass did not make it to production. While we did experiment with the candles and hourglass in rehearsal, they ultimately proved too disruptive to the action and weren't telling the story we were hoping for. They felt more confusing than magical, so we cut them as we moved into tech.

### World-building, Relationships

I was very happy with how costumes built out the world and deepened the relationships in the script. Specifically, I loved Antonio's care with the Leontes/Polixenes story.

In our world-building conversations, Antonio and I focused on distinguishing the dramaturgical rules of Bohemia vs. Sicilia as a way of understanding the landscape of the play, both geographically and economically. This led to furs being a major point of story, as we landed on animal products (fur, wool, etc.) being something Bohemia traded to Sicilia. This led Antonio to design fur coats for the two kings in Act I, which we endowed with meaning by establishing that Leontes's coat was a gift from Polixenes. This provided a point of business for Jerik in removing and regarding the coat when he first began to suspect his friend's infidelity. Additionally, we established that Polixenes would leave his coat behind when he fled, and Leontes would wear it

in Act V. This visually told the story of Leontes missing his friend, an important plot point that isn't afforded text to highlight it.

The biggest question mark in costumes was how we would create age in the Shepherd. Because disguises (and specifically disguises with beards<sup>45</sup>) were an established part of the world, the fidelity of the Shepherd costume became important. How could we be clear that this was a *real old man* (played by a 20-something actor wearing a fake beard), right next to a *fake old man* (played by a 30-something actor wearing a fake beard)? We had the old Harry Smith beard available, which looks quite real even up close. Knowing that was our baseline, we considered options beyond the beard, including age make-up and more obstructive costume pieces.

Ultimately, the beard felt like the best combination of allowing us to suspend our disbelief about Taylor's age and not interfering with her ability to perform. Having determined that the Shepherd *should* have a realistic beard, we decided to make the disguise beards for Polixenes and Camillo much more costume-y and clearly fake. That led us to the "carpet beards" and silly glasses that appeared in performance.

## The Statue

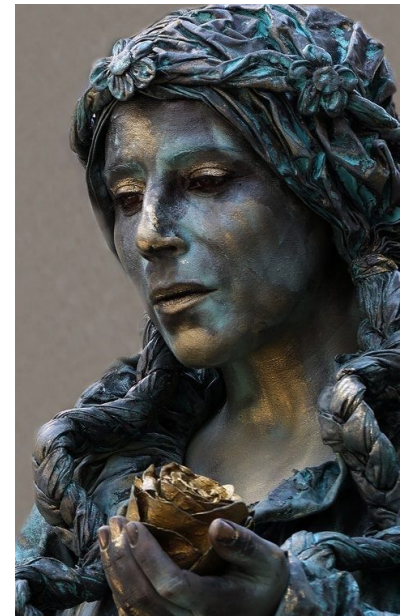
Making Hermione into a statue in Act V was one of the largest feats the costume design had to achieve. It was important to me that the statue was clearly not human, to make it clear that Hermione magically reincarnated in the statue and eliminate the read that she had been hidden by Paulina for sixteen years.

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<sup>45</sup> "By my white beard, / You offer him, if this be so, a wrong." Polixenes, IV.ii.218-219



With season changes as a foothold for the design at large, we were drawn to a sense of accrual in the statue. Antonio found this image (left) of a marble statue in an alcove, overgrown by autumnal vines, which felt in keeping with the themes of rebirth and decay we were exploring in Sicilia. This ultimately informed the positioning and scenic elements of the statue reveal.



Antonio identified bronze as a material that would allow us to tell a story of change over time, because of its oxidation. Bronze also is close to Marena's natural complexion and is reflective light — which meant we'd get a lot of pay-off onstage and be insulated from the need to cover her entirely.

## **Music and Sound**

As discussed about in Conventions, we used music as a tool wielded by Autolyclus to move the story forward and call attention to significant events or reversals. Kyle was in rehearsal consistently, experimenting with underscore and what kind of sound was associated with Autolyclus's narration.

The sound design was initially split into four designations:

1. Autolyclus's diegetic music
2. Paulina's magic, and Apollo's interventions (thunder, wind, curse droning)

3. Practical sound effects (baby crying, sheep bleating)
4. Non-diegetic sound associated with Autolycus's narration, particularly marking his asides or "out of time" moments

The effects of the baby and sheep were enormously useful in creating real triggers that the actors could respond to and helping the audience track what was happening with what were essentially puppets. I will admit that we added a few baby cries in moments when the action was dipping (such as Paulina convincing Leontes to look at the baby, or Antigonus delivering the baby to Bohemia), to inject immediate urgency and stakes into the scene! Similarly, the thunder and wind created architecture and events for the actors to respond to, which allowed us to materialize the impact of Apollo's will on the action of the play.

In the original text of *The Winter's Tale*, Paulina apologizes to Leontes immediately following her curse in the trial scene. I cut this in the adaptation because I felt this kind of immediate reversal wasn't useful in a streamlined fairy tale story; instead, I placed her self-reflection and apology in Act V. I still wanted to understand why the apology was present in the original, however — and this investigation ended up informing the sound design for III.i, the trial scene.

To clarify why Paulina might be repentant following the curse, we created the given circumstance that Paulina drew her magic from Apollo. Because Hermione and Mamillius's deaths were in part triggered by Leontes blaspheming Apollo, Kyle suggested that Apollo might amplify the power of the curse beyond Paulina's original intentions. Kyle recorded his own voice speaking the second half of the curse, and laid it under Betzabeth's live, modulated vocals. This allowed Betzabeth to explore a motivation of wanting to double down on her decision to avoid

feeling guilty. I also liked the idea of Paulina lashing out more violently than she intended, because it made her fallible and nuanced, and therefore needing a second chance to use her magic for good at the end.

### Autolycus's Narration

At first, we used his guitar riffs to punctuate the play's twists and turns. It was an invented given circumstance that Autolycus used to be a bard in the Sicilian court, so his return to guitar in telling us the story was related to his objective to prove he had done things right the first time around (that his first chance was good enough).

Based on the logic that Autolycus was "singing us a story," Kyle used music primarily under Autolycus's narration. He picked a floaty guitar sound in the moments when Autolycus seemed to stop time, which did give the aural sensation of a freeze or slowing down of things. This matched the action onstage, which often included actors going into a slow-motion state of movement, as if they were moving through molasses. While this made good sense in isolation, when it was combined into the full run, it had the impact of slowing the pacing of the entire show down. This is something we adjusted in Tech — more discussion below.

### **Lighting**

Much of our early lighting conversations were defined by practical considerations surrounding the canopy logistics. Prior to this scenic prelim, I talked to Thorn about the use of light to help distinguish the Sicilian and Bohemian spaces, and to give us a window into whether we were in

real or imagined space, as the show moved in and out of both Autolycus' storytelling and Leontes' delusions.

I think we succeeded in creating distinct world and communicating perspective through the lighting design but fell short on effectively chambering the space for more contained scenes. In tech, I specifically encouraged a shrinking of space for the jail scene. We didn't have similar conversations for the other chambered scenes, meaning that we spent a long time with the full stage as apparently active space despite the staging being contained to a subset. I also theorize that the broad lighting expanded some scenes that, in the studio, had been more contained — without the obstacle of darkness to bump against, I wonder if the performers began to expand into more general wandering.

In retrospect, I left some lighting looks as “good enough” in favor of pushing harder on some scenic and sound adjustments in tech. I had an instinct for more carving of the space, specifically to split the Sicilian throne room into parts for some scenes and injecting more texture/otherworldliness into the reunion dance scene. It was useful to see the impact of not pushing for that — a constant “full aperture” of the world, that made it difficult at times to track the specific action of smaller moments — and it is a lesson I anticipate making good use of in the future.

## “Design Inspired Breakthroughs”

### Tone of the Bear Attack:

It was clear from the beginning of the adaptation process that the intermission break, if there was one, should land between the Bear Attack and the Time Speech (between Acts III and IV). I chose to place it immediately following the Bear Attack (III.ii), so that we would be tossed into intermission on a cliffhanger or high energy moment.

I understood the bear attack as representing the shift into comedy — perhaps reminiscent of the bear-baiting sport happening nearby. In the early days of adaptation, I was convinced that our bear attack should be *scary*. The bear attack is encountered again in the Clown Son/Shepherd scene, where the frightened son comedically recounts the horrible eating of Antigonus. Given that, I imagined the initial bear attack as the first bookend. True horror is challenging to achieve on stage, and so I imagined moments that would create shock or surprise. Perhaps Antigonus drops through a hole in the trap, or a giant bear trap snaps up from the ground?

Given the canopy structure, we decided on shadow puppetry as the method of bear attack. Once we began playing with the shadow play in the room, it was clear that the shadow puppetry was going to elicit a large response from the audience. As we played with the shadows, I began to suspect that the bear should be played for laughs — that the bear *itself* should tip us into comedy, rather than operating as the final moment of tragedy. Based on this, I reordered the text in the bear attack so that Autolycus’ song underscored the action, which increased the “jauntiness” and therefore the laughter.

This reached its logical conclusion when Finn and I were conferencing on the preceding Antigonus speech, which had begun to feel a little flat of action. Hypothesizing that the comedic genre shift could begin even *earlier*, I recommended a new set of givens and action for the speech: what if Antigonus has no previous baby experience, and to settle her down, told her a spooky ghost story. This lit this scene up! I would not have discovered this angle had we not been playing with shadow play in rehearsal, and had I not chased the energy that the design suggested.

## **Rehearsal Process**

### **Casting & Doubling**

Before casting *The Winter's Tale*, I first needed to set the doubling scheme. There are 26-28 speaking characters in the play as originally written, depending on how you combine servants, lords, and shepherds. I wanted the style of performance to avoid meta-theatricality and create the sense that we were seeing into a world of its own — so, I hoped to minimize the doubling necessary. My goal was for the audience to view each character as their own complete person, rather than seeing an actor transform into multiple characters (as in *Vanity Fair*). Practically speaking, a cast of 28 with no doubling is not viable. Early in my process, before the adaptation process began in earnest, I met with the costume shop to find out the parameters for cast size and learned that 12-13 was the hard limit for how many performers could appear in the show.

Ultimately, I condensed the characters in the script down to 19-20. My next step was to consider the doubling. Because there are 12 characters that speak in the final scene of the play, that

dictated the total number of performers needed and the distribution of characters. With that benchmark set, I allocated the remaining 8 characters in such a way as to eliminate any doubling within the same country — every actor had at most a “Sicilian” character and a “Bohemian” character, and those that appeared in both places (Polixenes, Camillo, and Autolycus) did not double.

I cast Leontes, Hermione, Autolycus, and Perdita first. These characters felt like the pillars on which the play stood: Leontes and Hermione drive the action in the first half, Perdita drives the action in the second, and Autolycus is the constant pushing us forward.

Jerik and Marena were clear choices for Leontes and Hermione because of their significant Shakespeare experience; Leontes specifically has some of the most complex text in the canon, and I had resolved already to practice staying out of it as far as micro text work was concerned. I did consider them each for other things (including an unconventional option of Marena in Leontes) but felt that ultimately there was no one else who I *knew* could better handle these heavy-hitting parts.

Sebastian surprised me the most in auditions. I read all eight of the graduate actors for Autolycus, because he was the character that would most transform depending on the performer — and because he was the character I felt the least confident on what I needed to bring him to life. While he wasn't initially on my short list for Autolycus, Sebastian seemed to click into the role immediately, playing and building on the callback sides. His musical ability was a huge boon and ended up opening the door to significantly more music in the narration than I'd initially planned.

Adriana was a bit of a surprise as well. Perdita was a type I hadn't seen her in previously, although it was one that I hoped she'd succeed in based on some of the work we did together in *Vanity Fair*. The spirit of playfulness and naturalism she brought to the heightened text resonated with my conception of Perdita, and she too felt like a natural choice after callbacks, despite her more limited Shakespeare experience.

### Sicilia/Shepherdess Doubling

Looking back, I might have made a different choice with regards to doubling extra shepherds and shepherdesses into the sheep-shearing festival. In this production, I chose to double Marena (Hermione), Betzabeth (Paulina), and Svea (Mamillius) as Shepherdesses to fill out the crowd scenes and chose *not* to double Jerik (Leontes) in the same fashion, leaving him as the only actor not present. I did this at first because I wanted to experiment with a durational ritual completed by Leontes throughout the second act. My impulse was to see him visiting the graves of Hermione and Mamillius throughout the act, so that as an audience, we would not be able to forget his ongoing mourning.

We staged this and ran it a few times successfully in the studio. It was challenging to quiet the downstage action enough to throw focus to this happening upstage, and because it didn't trigger any action in the sheep-shearing scene, I found that it was frequently dropped or marked by the performers. Rather than dedicate a portion of our limited time to strong-arming the vision in my head, I chose to let it go and cut it as we entered tech. Looking back, I think this was the right choice for the production, but the adaptor in me is disappointed not to have been able to see this idea come to fruition.

The biggest impact of this choice was not seeing Jerik as a performer again until Act V. I regret not at least experimenting with doubling him in as a shepherd along with Marena and Betzabeth, and seeing what impact it might have had on the storytelling to see a different version of Jerik and Marena happy and dancing at the festival. This may have come into conflict with my intention to minimize our visible doubling — we spend *so* much time with Leontes in Acts I-III that we may not have been able to forget who he was in Act IV, in the way I think costumes *did* help us suspend our disbelief on who Marena and Betzabeth were — but having not tried it, I'll never know for sure.

### Young Mamillius

From the outset of my production process, I had an instinct to cast a young actor as Mamillius. This was in part in line with my desire to minimize doubling and shrink the suspension of disbelief I was asking for from the audience in their conception of these characters. While the casting limitations set by the school's expectations meant that my options in telling a generational story with characters like the Shepherd were more limited, I felt that the loss of a child would pack a harder punch if that character was clearly younger than the others onstage. The story I hoped for in this casting was that Mamillius was innocent, and as a child, entirely at the mercy of the choices made by his parents and the adults in his life. Additionally, the theme of "second chances" is strongly reflected in the anxiety around an heir and legacy that defines much of the action in the Sicilian court; so in this sense, given the option to demonstrate a different generation in one way onstage, I chose to cast a younger Mamillius over casting an older Shepherd.

## **Pre-Tech Rehearsals**

### Week 1 – Table Work, Design Presentations, Initial Explorations:

Day 1 (Monday): First Rehearsal Presentations + Read Through

Day 2 (Tuesday): “Event Read” Table Work through Acts I-III & Shakespeare Basics

Day 3 (Wednesday): “Event Read” Table Work through Acts IV-V

Day 4 (Thursday): World/Relationship and Character Table Work

Day 5 (Friday): Staging Exploration for large group scenes (I.i, IV.ii, V.ii)

Our first week landed before Winter Break, and we would be breaking for three weeks before returning for “regular” rehearsals. Because of this, I operated under the assumption that detailed tagging work would not be retained over the break. Instead, my strategy was to deeply build a shared understanding of the world and style, so that when we did return, we would be able to move faster.

I anticipated that this would be especially beneficial for setting up the many large group scenes. A deep well of character and relationship givens would put the cast in the driver’s seat of building meaningful moments for themselves, so I could focus on staging the “spotlight” events of each scene. This is how I plan to help those moments feel “full.” During this exploration, I assigned composition prompts to create playful “falling in love” montages. These provided a baseline for the choreography under the “Sicilian exposition song,” but also served as a character and relationship exploration tool. I saw the reverberations of this early “love” exploration all the way through rehearsal in the relationships onstage, and believe this early work set us up for success in creating deep and whole characters.

During tablework, we went over some “Shakespeare basics” in which I shared with the cast how I approach working with Shakespearean verse. I highlighted for them my big picture goal, that the text is *active* and *purposeful*, and articulated my belief that Shakespearean characters speak as they think (rather than acting between the lines). I assigned them all to have done a full paraphrase by the time they returned in January and encouraged them to pay particular attention to marking where the thought and action shifted in their text.

Before our last pre-break rehearsal on Friday, I had a character conference with Sebastian (Autolycus). We made some exciting discoveries and decisions around Autolycus, particularly regarding *why* he is telling this story.

**Autolycus — Major Events:**

**First: Leontes asks him to Sing**

**Last: Autolycus gets Perdita's money from the Shepherd**

In our final 12/13 rehearsal, I added a movement exploration of the V.ii reunions, because with this new concept of Autolycus' storytelling arc, it no longer makes a ton of sense for Paulina to take over the narration here — which was already a shaky place for me in the adaptation.

We discovered that a heightened movement language feels supported in this beat — I think the slow tempo was particularly effective at zooming in on the emotional details of each successive reunion, in the same way the narration was. We also discussed how, perhaps the montage language in use earlier earns us this exploration late in the play.

I also had a successful (almost complete) design team meeting immediately prior to this rehearsal, where I was able to download them on these changes and brainstorm a few adjustments. It became clear in this meeting that Thorn had not completely absorbed a few of the 12/9 script changes, so it was good to catch that! Generally, it was rewarding to experience how smooth this first week felt with design so solidly in place.

### Week 2-4 – Staging and Stumbles:

As with *Vanity Fair* and *Airness*, I planned a rehearsal arc that involved staging a rough first draft quickly. Even moreso than in those shows, I felt it was important to get the entire show on its feet as quickly as possible. Most of the cast had extremely limited experience working with Shakespeare. Based on this, I had a suspicion that connecting with the action of the show physically was critical to establishing a complete understanding of the sequence of events.

I mapped out a plan that brought us through a rough staging of the first half (Acts I-III) in the first week of staging, and the second half (Acts IV-V) into a stumble through our second weekend. In retrospect, this came with some major successes and a few things I would do differently if I had another pass.

### Exploration and Generation in Rehearsal

I included several full group generation exercises in the early weeks of staging, building on the exploration we did before winter break. My theory was that I could build a strong foundation for the group scenes by allowing time for the ensemble to explore the spatial, kinetic, and emotional relationships of their characters outside of the context of scenes. This would prove especially

useful for the characters without lines, such as the nobility and palace staff in the early Sicilia scenes, and the nameless shepherdesses in the sheep-shearing scene.

In the first week, I ran warm-ups in the form of Viewpoints exercises. We started with moving through space in flow, exploring the Sicilian throne room set and beginning to inhabit it as the character. I then introduced shape through psychological gestures, which allowed actors to explore the physicality of their characters. I also did some sneaky objective work here, by prompting them to create a gesture related to another person. This resulted in some immediate activating of relationship, and the gridwork shifted from being isolated to interrelated.

Building on this, I introduced a prompt to feel the magnetic attraction or repulsion to different characters and explore how it changed their movement through space. This fostered a larger kinetic response to seeing each other, which I was then able to build on in staging to create the heightened scale of performance state that Shakespeare calls for. My final stage in this Viewpoints warm-up was to explore the changing of time. I asked the actors to create four iterations of their gesture, one for each season with summer mapping on to “hold everything the way it is” and winter mapping on to “strain to return to normal.” They then explored these four gestures on a loop, finding the connective tissue between “comfort” and “yearning.”

These gestures were incorporated into the choreography in the Reunion dance, as a way of introducing themselves to each other. This prompt of “introduction” created a physical dramaturgy for the reunions by codifying it as a meeting of new versions of themselves.

As discussed above in Design Inspired Breakthroughs, another major point of generation I explored in the room was the bear shadow-puppet. The style of the bear sequence was pretty wide open at this point of rehearsal; all I knew for sure was that Minki and Yeonshin were the most available actors to perform the bear given that they weren't in the trial scene immediately preceding it, and that the canopy would fall at the end.

On the day that we finished the trial scene in our rough block phase, I decided to run some group composition devising for the bear shadows which I would use to stage the shape of the scene. My goals were to help narrow the scope of possibility, and to achieve a full exploration of the moment when it occurs chronologically in the play to help the cast (and me) conceptualize how it fit into the chain of events. I split the cast into three groups of 4 and sent them off with two light sources each — the actual LED flood lights for the group with Minki, Yeonshin, and Finn, who would ultimately perform the piece, and clip lights for the other two groups.

### Character Conferences

I used character conference and external-to-rehearsal conversations more for *The Winter's Tale* than I ever had before. Conferences allowed me to give more direct notes and hear what obstacles the actors were running into, which informed the work we did in the rehearsal room.

I ran the first round of conferences early in the process, while we were still staging. My goal was to land the conferences right before our full stumble-through. Individualized touch-bases here allowed me to ensure performers with less Shakespeare experience, like Yeonshin and Adriana, were successfully tracking through the event chain and character motivations. The second round of conferences came after the designer run, once I had the opportunity to see how the cast were

navigating the full arc of the show. It was at this stage that I conferenced with Marena and Jerik for the first time. My final round of conferences was during tech, following our first preview.

In all these conferences, I strived to be direct about what I was seeing and offer ways forward in deepening the work and increasing the connection they were finding with the other people on stage. Looking back, I think these were mostly successful. The conferences allowed me to do detail work without losing rehearsal time, and to help keep objectives sharp and directed. That said, I do wish I had pushed Jerik harder to explore the racing mind of Leontes, and his shifting targets. I gave these notes in the conference, but didn't push harder when they weren't showing up in the run. I don't think we succeeded in telling the element of Leontes's story that he is second guessing his choices throughout, and relitigating the issue in his own mind straight up until he literally litigates it in the trial scene.

## **Tech Process**

Ground plan details changed on the first day or so. Unlike in *Vanity Fair*, it felt very clear to me what needed attention scenically to activate/ignite the space for actors. Specifically:

- Moved platform benches from flat horizontals to upper diagonals, to open more of the center platform for triangular action
- Replaced center fountain with a lower topiary, and placed it further upstage so that the topmost platform became playable
- Cut the café table/chairs in Sicilia
- Moved the “bear drop” further upstage by “swooping” it back, then relocated the tall topiaries to pin the bear drop and mask the ground. This opened the upstage passage, and the sightlines to the door and colonnades from the sides

It did feel like there is good deepening of the acting work happening, and I had a laundry list of notes and nudges that I worked as we went.

Sebastian was REALLY finding some footholds for the overall Autolycus arc. He played with an opinion shift between “Old Autolycus” and “naïve Autolycus.” I introduced the tool of adlib and repetition in his asides/narration in rehearsal, which helped forge a more active relationship with the audience present in the space.

With the number of design elements and moving pieces at play, tech was slow going. I had targeted Thursday 2/6 as our first dress run, which would allow a full day (Friday 2/7) for notes preceding our first Preview on Saturday 2/8. While making it to the first preview is always a goal, it felt especially necessary for *The Winter's Tale* because of the massive genre shift in the second half of the show; I wanted to see how the twists and turns played for a naïve audience, to inform any necessary adjustments to the style and energy of the first half.

On Tuesday 2/4, we only got through 8 pages in our rolling tech process. On Monday night, I had begun to notice more frequent holds being called by stage management than I might have expected for rolling tech. When I asked what we were holding for, “lights” was usually the answer. This was in line with my expectation, given Thorn’s articulation that she had limited programming time outside of tech, so I hadn’t pressed the issue that day. Now, however, it was clear that things were slowing down to such an extent that our run timing was in jeopardy.

A major learning curve for me in grad school was the appropriate lane for directors in tech. In my previous experience, I often was serving as both producer and director — and so, moving us

forward *was* my responsibility. I have learned in my graduate studies that my part in upholding tech timeliness is more from the passenger seat: containing my notes and works to natural holds in rolling tech, knowing when to ask to see something again versus moving forward, and trusting the expertise of my team to manifest the work. In many ways, I feel that I succeeded in applying this lesson in *The Winter's Tale* — I gave big picture notes at the beginning and stayed out of the way until there was something for me to respond to.

However, if I had it to do again, I should have piped up about the timing on Monday night. Having worked with this stage manager before, I could have anticipated that the slowing down was due to a worry surrounding cueing, rather than due to necessary time for designers to work. I also knew that to program scenes, Thorn needed to see them in space first — so this emerging trend of holding the instant we hit something new, waiting for notes to clear from the previous moment, running a small chunk, and holding again for programming was *not* serving the articulated purpose of lighting catching up on programming. In retrospect, I believe my hesitation was a matter of calibration. I was trying to execute a learning goal (keeping my nose out of it), and in doing so, disregarded my instinct that intervention was needed.

After a frank discussion of timeline and priorities Tuesday evening, we realigned in our working strategy and confirmed that running Thursday was critical, regardless of how far we'd gotten in cueing. Tech from there on ran smoothly, and we re-established our expected pace, making it to the final scene change in Act V the next evening.

## Dress Rehearsals, Previews, and Reflections

To be blunt, both the first dress rehearsal on Thursday night and the first preview on Saturday felt *rough*. On Thursday, the energy in the first act was severely dragging, and there were lots of errors cropping up — including almost literally every cue called late. Because we hadn't finished teching and had never run the major moving transitions (the lift, the canopy) in time, however, Friday's work time was mostly signed away to finishing that process. I managed to squeeze some works in, fixing some spacing problems that had emerged when we strung the pieces of the first act together and pushing actors on cue pick-ups and stakes. That said, the first preview on Saturday was largely the same event as Thursday, albeit more smoothly executed given the practice. It felt as though the play would come to a halt and then restart between each major event; the audience was essentially asleep.

In the interest of utmost disclosure, I felt incredibly down after Saturday's preview. It didn't feel like the show I directed, that we had been playing with in the studio — this show felt soulless, sad, and *asleep*. I found myself spiraling that night. In this moment of spiral and spin-out, I experienced one of the most salient results of my graduate studies: I let myself have a good cry, and then I resolved to keep my foot on the gas and *push*.

There were two days and one rehearsal before our next preview. I did consider proposing canceling preview #2 in favor of another day to make adjustments but decided that wouldn't serve the overall goal. The team needed to run the show, so whatever adjustments I was going to make needed to be executable in Monday evening's work session.

I determined that the most effective adjustments I could make structurally were to the sound design, and the moments of narration. While all the individual elements had been working in the rehearsal room and in isolation, when the sound design was executed in full there had emerged an effect of literally *slowing to a stop* every time Autolycus had an interjection or piece of narration. This in turn was leading Sebastian narrating in a contemplative tone. Even he knew it wasn't working — after the preview on Saturday, he approached me and tearfully apologized, affirming he could do better. I assured him (and still believe) that the problems with pace and energy he was feeling were not his fault; that it was a problem in the fundamental conception of his interjections, and that I could help him fix it. Sebastian was impeccably prepared; this preparation plus his articulation of feeling like things weren't working affirmed for me that he could handle the eleventh-hour adjustment.

Kyle and I met on Sunday and spent two hours re-designing the sonic world of the show. I adjusted the logic of Autolycus' interruptions — rather than “stopping time to explain,” he was instead so into it that he couldn't help but erupt with an aside. We also shifted the logic of the underscore so that, instead of exclusively marking moments of magic or Autolycus' interference, it became a tool he was actively using to inject the world with stakes — to make us, the audience, trust him or buy into what he was trying to sell us. I paired this with an instruction to Sebastian to take more ownership of *all* the technical elements. When the canopy moved, that was him; when the fog emerged, he summoned it.

There was still the matter of implementing these changes, however. I proposed essentially cue-to-cueing through the adjusted sound design, to make sure we had touched all the changes and

confirmed they worked prior to Tuesday's preview. I know that it is not my responsibility to run the room — and, I knew that given their already shaky handle on cuing, having the stage manager run the room additionally to processing all the adjustments in cues and timing was not going to be successful. I strategized with Jeff, the production manager, and confirmed a plan in which he would support in running the room so Megan, the stage manager, could focus just on cueing and their performance responsibilities. I also created a run-sheet document that included all the sonic changes and staging adjustments for Autolycus, and how I anticipated those affecting lights, scenic, and the rest of the cast.

I scheduled a conference with Sebastian Monday afternoon, to go over the adjustments with him and make sure he felt prepared and on board.

On Monday night, I began the night with a pep talk. I was blunt with the cast about how the run Saturday night felt, and what we had done in the meantime to structurally shift the show. I told them that we were keeping our feet on the gas, and that it would take focus and grit to shove the show to the place we knew it could be. While they all agreed Saturday had not felt good, I do think it surprised them to hear me be as frank about it “not going well,” that it felt like “they weren't actually acting *on* each other” and that the show felt “boring and asleep,” given my typical more-flies-with-honey approach. That said, I could also tell that my feedback resonated immediately. Adriana repeated back that she had felt like she was in a “fishbowl” all of Saturday night, and Jerik agreed that the pacing “wasn't good yet.”

Monday evening's rehearsal felt like a miracle. We stayed on schedule, and we rechoreographed the reunion scene and cued through *the entire show*. The vibe was incredible — there was a

palpable feeling of possibility and achievement in the room. It was a big win for everyone. I am extremely proud of the work we achieved that night. I would not have had the guts to push that hard that late in the game prior to my grad school learning; and even if I had been brave enough to try, I wouldn't have known what to fix. It was incredibly gratifying to be able to diagnose the issue, address it with exactitude, and keep the spirits in the room hungry and energetic at the same time.

### Other Compromises in Tech

Beginning when we encountered it during rolling tech, I suspected that the reunion scene (V.ii) was still not working. It was difficult to track focus in the scene, as the choreography and music competed with the dialogue. I had tried sharpening the focus in the studio by moving the dialogue further from the choreography and amplifying the dialogue, but it was still hard to see. By the previews, the scene was still feeling muddy and unclear. It was obvious to me that something needed to change, but we had incredibly limited time.

To clarify the dialogue and focus attention on the existing, disparate moments of reunion, I would have needed to distill and simplify the choreography. With only one working night of tech left and much of that night already accounted for re-teching sound, I determined that there wasn't enough time to pursue this angle. I also wanted to use the opportunity of my thesis production to run the experiment of this scene: how would the audience respond to this big of a disruption, suddenly shifting the language to dance? I suspected they would track with Autolycus in being confused by the sudden change, but I didn't know what would come next.

So, I decided to do the opposite. Instead of simplifying the action and clarifying where the audience should look, I decided to create a scene that gave the audience permission to look *anywhere*. I called Taylor, Adriana, and Yeonshin on Sunday evening, and asked them to meet me in studio 202 to rechoreograph the scene. In an hour, we restructured the existing choreography into a repetitive, cyclical sequence out of which would burst the two reunions I determined were necessary to move the story forward and maintain my vision — the Polixenes/Leontes reunion, which only exists in this scene, and the Antigonus/Paulina ghost reunion (this was an addition of my adaptation, but one that I believed was critical to the spine I was pursuing about second chances).

The other major point of compromise with our limited time in tech was the decision to cut the curtain call jig. In my original conception, I wanted to add a pop-music jig to curtain call. My goal for this was to embody the miraculous joy of *all* the characters, since we only really get to see Perdita and Florizell wrap up their conflict. Part of my impetus in doing this was how little time we get with Hermione in the final scene of the play — the script doesn't afford us a chance to see her truly reconcile with Leontes after their long time apart. The jig would have given us closure and ended the play on an "up" note. As it ended up, the existing curtain call (at best) plateaued the action, and at worst was a bit of a dip.

### Final Preview and Dress Rehearsal

Tuesday's preview represented a significant step forward, but the overall energy still felt low — as if a "mute" pedal was pressed for the play. I wanted to incite the cast to a more energetic,

playful approach. I sent out written notes to this effect and then planned a speech for the top of our rehearsal on Wednesday.

My speech contained the following:

1. Get After It Run: I described our run on Wednesday's dress rehearsal as a "get after it" run. I shared with the cast that this is normally a time I'd ask for an *Italienne*, removing all air from the piece and driving through the action at the highest pace possible — but, that I found *Italienne*'s to be middlingly helpful when it comes to Shakespeare, because the focus on pace risked flattening the dynamics of the complex text.
  - a. Instead, I described this as a run where their goal was to "get in trouble," to crank the dials of their work all the way up and see what happened.
  - b. As opposed to an *Italienne*, where the goal is to remove all pauses, I recommend substituting any pause with a vocalization instead, to keep the energy flowing forward. I paired this with an emphasis that "O"s should always be fully embodied with larger-than-life feeling.
2. Greek Tragedy: I reminded the cast of our style conversation in tablework, that the first half (*Sicilia* Acts I-III) was more Greek tragedy than it was realism. Part of my logic in making this analysis was my knowledge that the graduate actors had studied Greek tragedy as a part of their first-year studio exploration.
  - a. I offered Musical Theater as a reference point for the style in Bohemia, as another theatrical genre which heightens action beyond pedestrian expectations and embodies a BIG NEED in action and words.
3. Your Need is Bigger Than Your Words: I pulled in a Declan Donnellan technique, which is the idea that the character's need is always bigger than the words they have access to. I pointed out that because this play has heightened text, bigger than pedestrian or everyday words, then the needs these characters have must be *even bigger* than our everyday wants.

- a. I tied this into a prompt to play the need, rather than playing the words. This was in part because some actors were still struggling with the Shakespearean language.
- b. I used the Donnellan exercise that this phrase originates from to inject action into the Camillo/Leontes scene in I.i. This scene had my attention because it was the first scene in the play with only two characters. It was setting the tone for play, because it was dragging, and the need was feeling muted. This exercise was “No, There’s You, There’s Me, and There’s the Space.” We ran this exercise in the lobby before the run, so that Jerik and Yeonshin could feel the shape of the scene when they were just playing the actions and not worrying about the words.

The final ingredient I added for this dress rehearsal was prompting the observers — design team, ushers, and production staff — to be as vocal in their responses as they could manage, to help give tactile feedback to the performers. The resulting run was *excellent*. Honestly, I think it might have been the best run I saw. The events were clear and full, and the action sprang forward with clarity. I could see the cast egging each other on, challenging each other to go further and swing harder. While this sense of play persisted through opening and the run, I don’t think we ever achieved the same, unified drive as in that last dress rehearsal.

## Conclusions

*The Winter’s Tale* was a massive project to take on. I am proud of the show that happened; we found an amazing balance of telling a coherent story, creating a design world that was dramaturgically supported and cleanly integrated, and navigating complex staging moments with ease and clarity. I set out to achieve a large-scale production, and I believe we accomplished that. I also think we left some detail work on the cutting room floor; in retrospect, I sacrificed some

ideas that would have really made the piece shine, including Leontes's arc, the specificity and chambering of the lighting design, and how the scenic design limited action.

I find myself comparing this process to that of last spring's *Airness*, a show where I did feel able to zoom all the way in to ensure every single element of that show was airtight in its service of the spine. *Airness* was objectively a smaller, simpler show, so there were fewer elements to account for. It was also an existing script that already worked, as opposed to *The Winter's Tale*, which I was actively adapting. Where *Airness* was succinct, *The Winter's Tale* was sprawling. It was both a greater challenge, and a greater learning opportunity for me — and I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to direct these two plays essentially back-to-back. *Airness* was a chance to apply the skills I'd learned in grad school; *The Winter's Tale* was a test of what I could be capable of. As I prepare to graduate and begin pitching scripts around town, I'll admit that I'm looking more for *Airness* scripts... but it has been a huge boon to learn that I can make *The Winter's Tale*, if I want to.

Zooming out, my grad school journey was about discovering who I am as an artist. I am reflecting on my callback interview for this program: a Zoom call that included a portfolio review in which Val asked me for the spine of each of my previous productions. I didn't really know what a "spine" was. I had the general sense that it was "what the play is about, phrased as a verb statement." For every show, I articulated some variation on "*to find yourself*" or "*to discover who you really are*" or "*to belong*." Val, accurately, remarked that these were all the same. In retrospect, I think that was the spine I articulated because it was the central question of *my* artistry, and what I needed out of grad school.

When I applied to grad school, I knew what kind of art I wanted to make insofar as I knew how it felt to make it, and how it made me feel to watch it. I could look back on things and say “yes, that was it” or “no, that wasn’t it,” but I didn’t have vocabulary to articulate why. My primary tool in directing was to talk myself into ideas, as a way of discovering them. While this is useful tool in my own brainstorming and research, it wasn’t serving me in collaborative processes. I was essentially ensuring that I was the only person who would know what was going on at any given point. I am walking away from grad school with a crystallization of my mission as an artist, and my point of view as a director. I am now able to communicate ideas directly and succinctly, to distill a play into its fundamental action, and to use that spine to guide my process.

*The Winter’s Tale* felt like communication bootcamp for me — because I was adapting and directing, I was constantly downloading to the design team and cast. It was gratifying to experience how much my skill in this area has grown, and to see the return on my investment.

I am a multi-hyphenate artist, and all those hyphens inform my work. Grad school has been an invaluable opportunity to distinguish directing as its own part of my craft, rather than it being a generalized lump-sum total of everything else. In *The Winter’s Tale*, I worked this new muscle by really separating out my adaptation and analysis work from what I was bringing into the rehearsal room. Earlier in this paper, I’ve detailed a depth of analysis and research that allowed me to prepare for this play and feel confident in my understanding of it. Almost none of that made it into the rehearsal room in that form; unlike in *Vanity Fair*, I even decided not to distribute a dramaturgical packet for this show, because I determined that everything the actors needed to know was either apparent in the script, or something we would encounter in tablework

or staging. Instead, my strong understanding of the script translated into a curious and playful approach to what was possible, and a willingness to take risks and allow myself to be surprised.

Val talks a lot about this idea of directing being like jazz. Using this metaphor, before I came to grad school, I think I was a very proficient noodler: I could feel my way through and my instincts were good, but I wasn't doing anything on purpose, so I couldn't really play with others. Grad school has taught me the fundamental skills I need to riff, collaborate, and let go and play.

## Appendix: Notes from Program (Director, Dramaturg)

As with previous shows, I served as my own dramaturg. I included the following notes in the program, to give audience members a look into my process both as director and dramaturg/adaptor:

### Director's Note:

*“To believe in second chances is to believe that lives can to some extent be put right,  
that the future can improve — and improve upon the past —  
that what has been lost can be recovered.”*

—Stephen Greenblatt, Second Chances: Shakespeare and Freud

*The Winter's Tale* is a play about second chances, and whether we can forgive each other (and ourselves) for doing something that feels unforgivable. It is easy to hate, and close ourselves off to possibility. Hating is safe. It is much harder to wonder, to open ourselves to “what if”? When we are given (or are giving) a second chance, we are fundamentally *reimagining* — we are choosing to believe that there are versions of someone, of the world, of ourselves that we haven't seen yet.

Our world today is one that needs reimagining, and so I have reimagined this play for today.

My adaptation of *The Winter's Tale* is a fairytale about second chances, because fairy tales teach us how we should treat each other, and how we should respond to adversity. They are simple, symbolic representations of the big, messy, complex challenges we face in our adult lives. When we “play pretend” about princesses and dragons and centuries-long curses, we imagine a world where good triumphs over evil, where virtue is rewarded and wickedness is punished. We remind ourselves that this world is never truly lost.

In adapting Shakespeare's original play, my hope is not to "fix" it, but to *reveal* how vital a story it is for our world today. And so, this is a revelation of *The Winter's Tale*: of its core themes and structure, of the magic that awaits us if we choose to believe, and perhaps even of the world we could create.

Decades-long winters are of our own making; as long as we can imagine it is possible, spring will always come.

— Kate Drummond (Director & Adaptor)  
UW MFA Candidate in Directing, '25

## Dramaturg's Note:

### WHAT'S A "PROBLEM PLAY" ANYWAY?

*The Winter's Tale* (1610) is a "problem play," which means it doesn't fit cleanly into the two major categories for Shakespeare's other work, "comedy" and "tragedy." This is not lazy labeling; so-called problem plays are in fact part of a *new style* that was emerging at the time: the "romance," a genre defined by denied expectations (not by kissing, confusingly). In *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare is fundamentally curious about how stories can end in surprising ways — and how he can manipulate genre to keep his audience on their toes.

So, when considering what happens in *The Winter's Tale*, we should first consider what doesn't happen.

**\*\*\* Spoilers ahead!!! If you don't know how this play ends, maybe read this after the show! \*\*\***

As in classical tragedy, Leontes succumbs to his fatal flaw, and the dire consequences of his actions plunge Sicilia into chaos. What do we expect to happen next?

*The Winter's Tale* is overflowing with Greek allusions, tropes, and names. So, if Shakespeare is writing a Greek tragedy, then after succumbing to his tragic flaw, Leontes will blind himself, or be exiled forever, or die horribly offstage... but instead, he just grieves for sixteen years.

Maybe Shakespeare is going for a one-for-one adaptation of his source material? *The Winter's Tale* is based on Robert Greene's novel *Pandosto: The Triumph of Time*, published just 20 years prior in 1588. If this is *Pandosto*, then Leontes, unable to move past his grief after sixteen years, will fail to take the chance to make a different choice, and will unwittingly condemn his long-lost daughter to death.

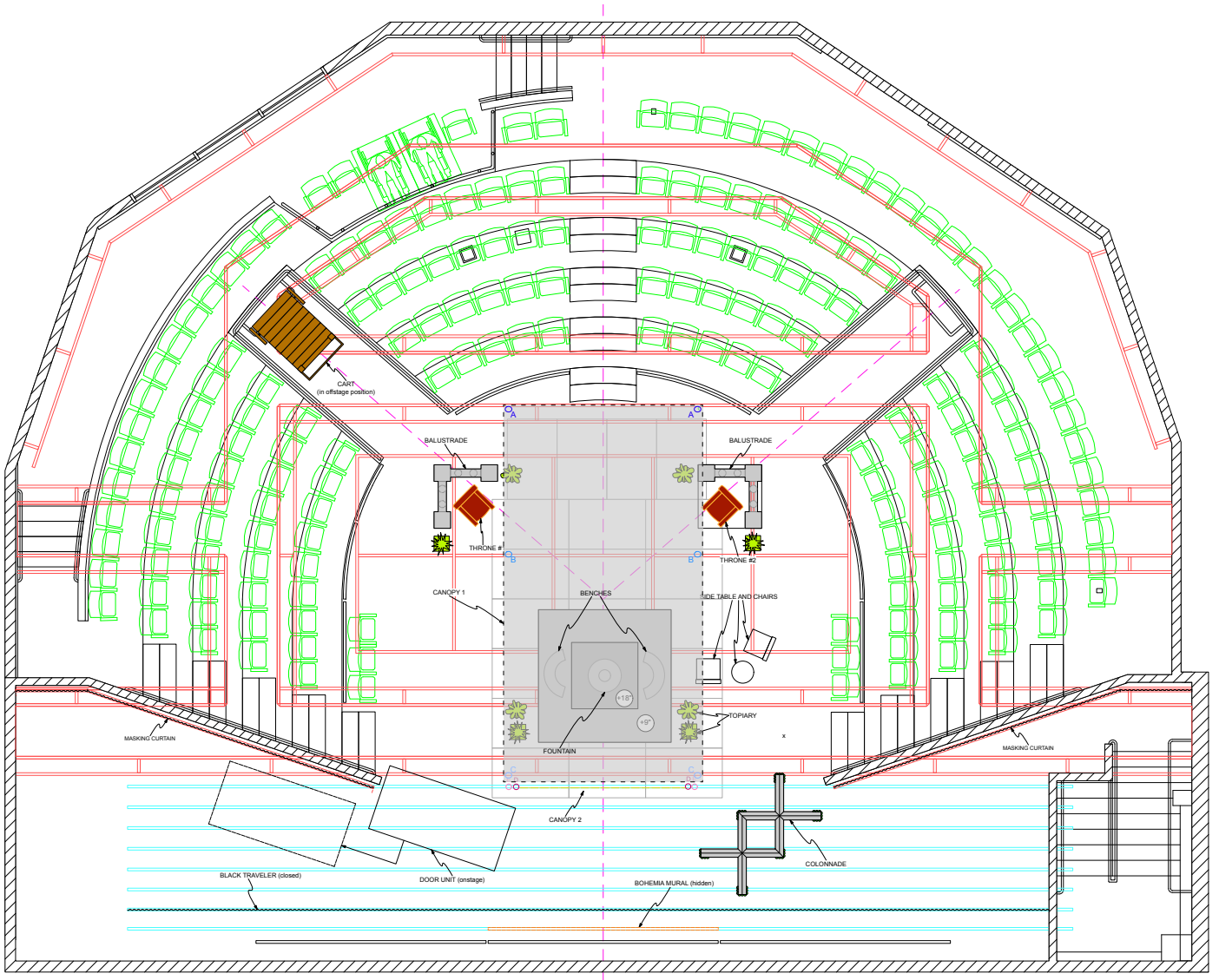
But Shakespeare imagines a new path. His King Leontes survives his trauma, learns from his mistakes, and succeeds in taking the second chance he's offered — and the entire world is better for it.

John Pitcher describes “romance” as the literary form that “lets us have it both ways: [...] the counterfactuals (the what if) persist alongside the facts (the what happened).” Maybe in *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare offers that the “what if” dream of a better future could be just as real as the “what happened” memory of a painful past.

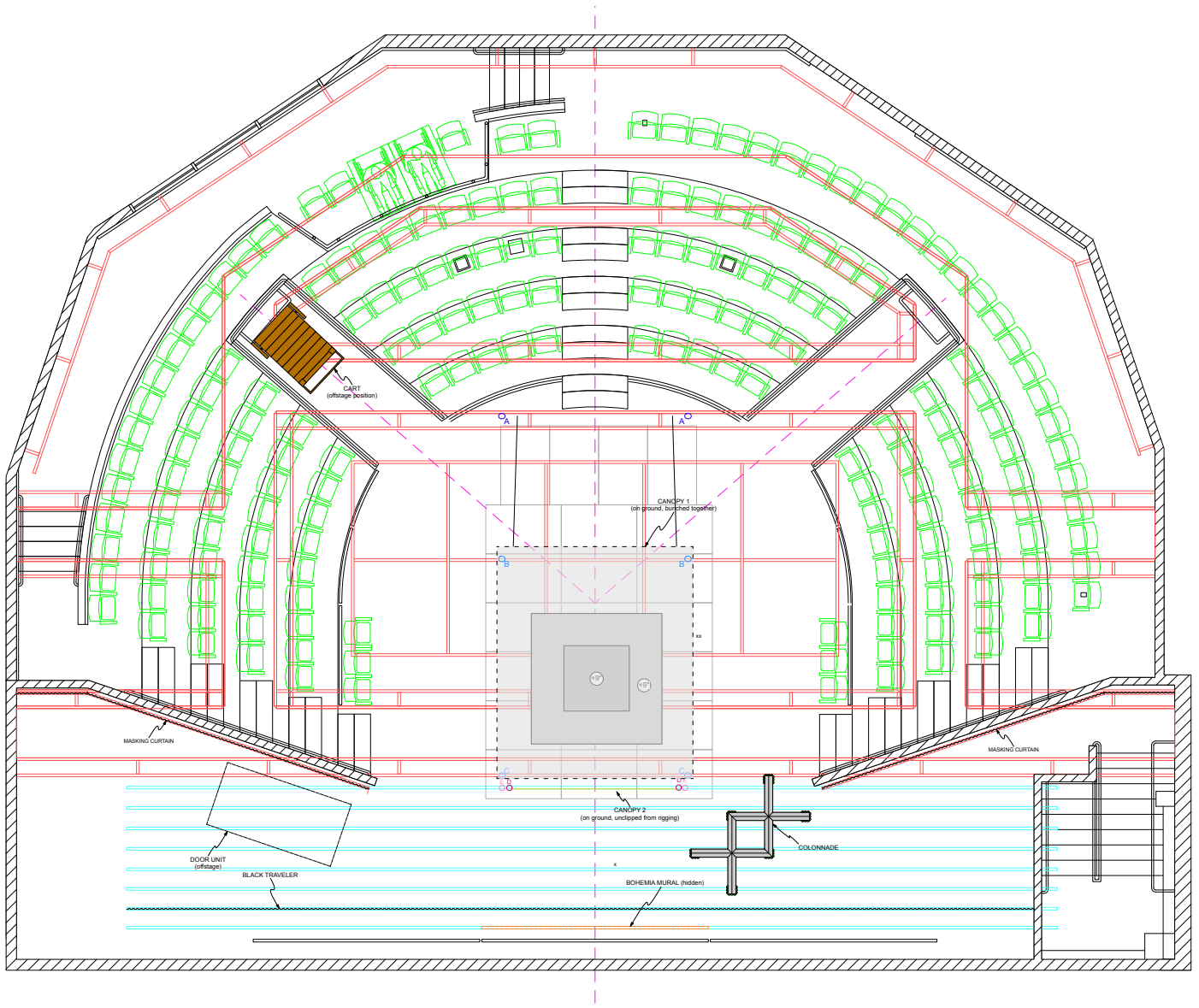
# Appendix — Design Progression

## Ground Plan

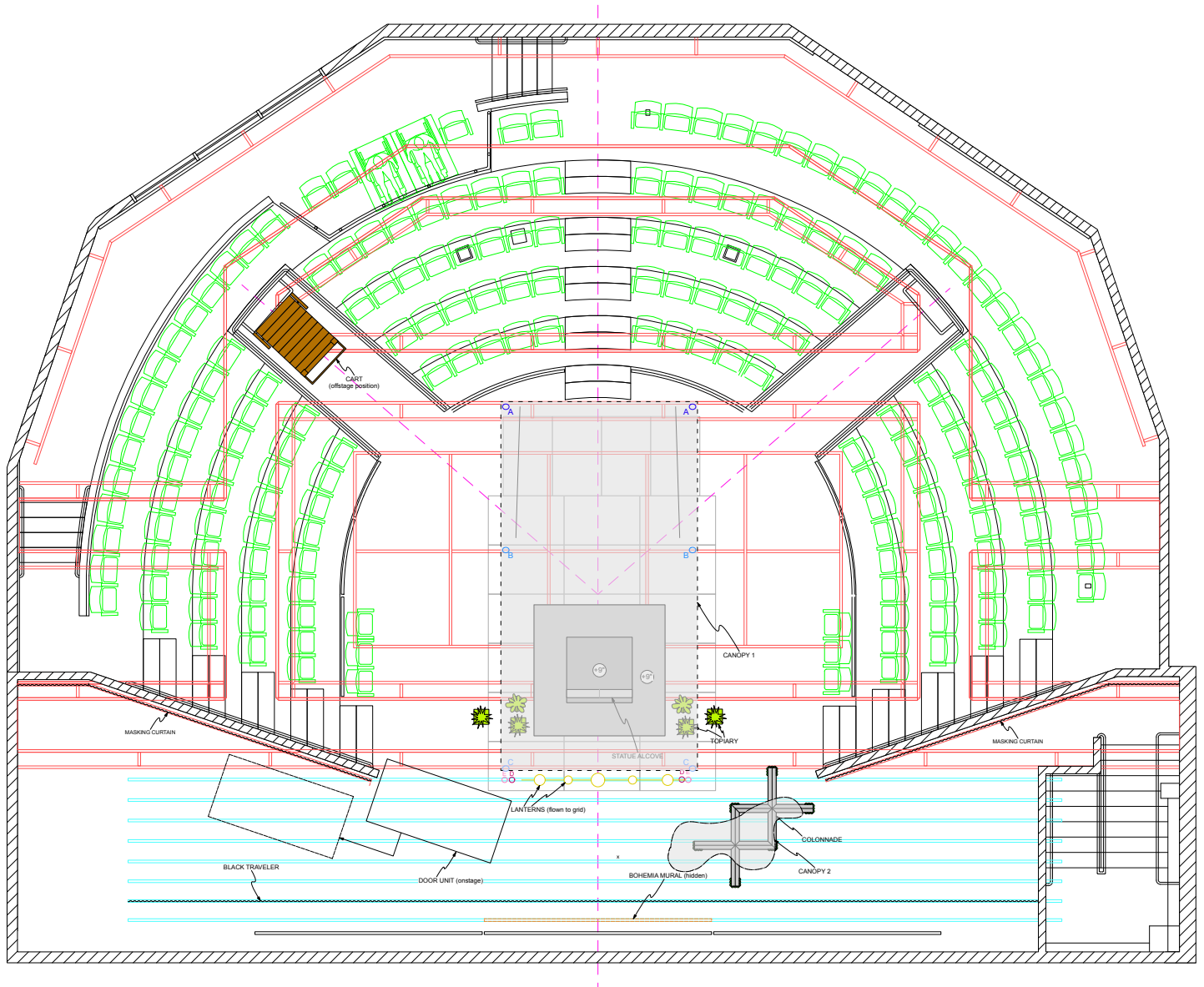
### ACT ONE (SICILIA):



ACT TWO (BOHEMIA):



ACT THREE (SICILIA):



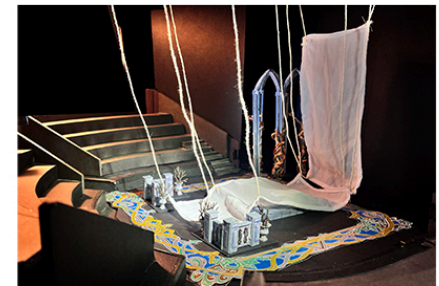
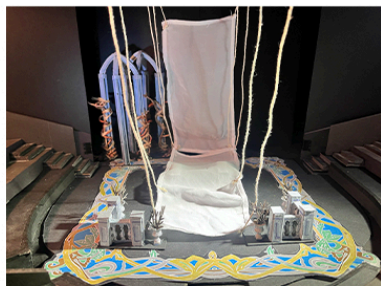
Model Shots



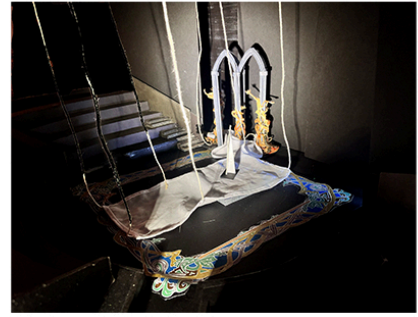
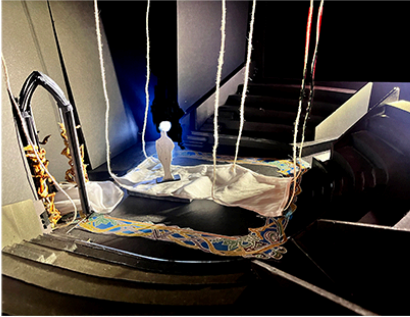
SICILIA THRONE ROOM



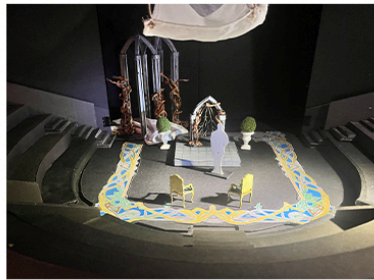
SICILIA TRIAL ROOM



SICILIA END OF ACT I



SICILIA: TOP OF ACT 2



SICILIA: HERMIONE STATUE

Costume Renderings

# Prologue



Polixenes      Hermione      Leontes      Autolycus



# Trial

Dion Cleomenes Autloycus

Astraia

Paulina

Emilia

Hermione

Leontes



# Sheep Shearing Festival

Clown

Shepherd

Clown

Shepherd



# Return to Sicillia



# Reunion



**Production Photos**

















