

Hamlet Scenic Comments

Group One Schenley Group

The park setting was clearly very influential for your storytelling, which is exciting. The image of the ghost stranded in the dried up pond was very successful as was the way that you communicated that it was Hamlet's father by unveiling the statue and the Ghost simultaneously. The gulf the pond created between Hamlet and the Ghost was very useful and a good set up for the rest of the play. I wish there could have been a way that you'd communicated why Hamlet could not reach the ghost. I sensed that it floated between the battlements, but if I didn't know the play then I might wonder about that. The unwrapping of the "old administration" was a useful device. It really set up the circumstances of the play well: "out of sight, out of mind", particularly Gertrude's position. It's also a scene where the situation is made clear to Hamlet and so the unveiling is a good visual metaphor. It made Hamlet seem extremely lonely and abandoned, which was effective in communicating the kind of dilemma Hamlet would face throughout the play. One thing that you could have thought a little bit more about was audience placement. It would have been much more useful to have Hamlet up close and personal as what is really going on dawns upon him. It was less important that we see his relationship to Horatio and Marcellus close up in that scene. In fact a better way to reveal scale may have been to have the scene begin with the audience close to the statue, then zoom out to the ghost and then to the battlements so that we would not only see Hamlet's reaction more clearly, we'd also have a sense of the scale of the world and what is at stake revealed at a better time. I was really struggling to hear what was going on and because of that and the distance between us and most of the important action, I really only understood generally what was happening. Therefore most of the story was revealed through the scenic parallels and gestures that you created rather than the words. Ideally, those things are there in support of the words and you get a lot more depth of story if you are a closer witness.

Group Two On Stairs near the Kresge

The stairs were a great setting for this scene...they felt like a journey to and from sanity to me. Starting the scene out of our sight was an interesting choice an one that would have been more successful if we had know WHY it was happening out of our sight and that we weren't missing something that we were meant to be seeing. Oddly enough, it's harder

to hear when you can't actually see what is happening. Having only the characters and not the audience have a complete view of the world makes us feel a little bit as though we are going mad, since there are parts of the story that are not completely revealed to us. Having the torn pages of the fall into Hamlet's soliloquy was a choice that seems as though there was a lot of intent to it and I wasn't sure what it was. Were you already revealing Ophelia's madness or echoing Ophelia's imminent worries about Hamlet's mental health? You chose an ideal place from which Claudius and Polonius could spy. Unfortunately, I realized too late that I should be watching them, watch the interaction between Hamlet and Ophelia. How could you have clued me in better that I should watch them spying? They were up there with coats and backpacks and I almost felt like they were out of the action. The stairs made a wonderful dynamic for Hamlet to push Ophelia force Ophelia downward, his feigned madness sparking her real madness. One thing I was of two minds about was the audience on the stairs. At some points I felt like we were all imaginary people there, conjured by his impassioned, manufactured insanity, which was a good thing. At other times, I felt like an intruder in the scene and wondered why I wasn't acknowledged if Hamlet really isn't mad. It would have been good if you'd found better ways to tell me how to look at things, what I should and should not actually see and where you wanted my attention. What kind of devices could you have used?

Group Three

Near Studio for Creative Inquiry

The space was a very interesting choice because the farther one gets into the chamber the farther down one goes in levels. You used it in a clever way with Hamlet dragging Gertrude down and having the only character remaining elevated be the ghost. The device of the mirror as arras and of Hamlet stabbing himself was a gorgeous image. I just wasn't entirely clear how the sword pierced the mirror to kill Polonius and I know that would have been a hard thing to realize. The sword, itself, was a particularly lovely creation. It looked like it might belong in a world where swords could pierce mirrors. The image of the broken glass was also successful. I wanted the mirror to be in a place where I could see it more clearly. The bed, however, at the center of all of the action was very successful. This is the scene when we realize that Hamlet's attachment to his mother might not be entirely normal and having that bed front and center emphasizes that fact and also demands that the betrayal of King Hamlet be recognized. I wanted to be able to see Polonius better. Somehow I needed to know where Polonius was. He was hidden from me where I was sitting. How could you have used the space better for that and for the placement of the mirror? The scale of the space that you chose felt

exactly right for this scene. The light streaming in the window did not. This is a very private scene revealing some very private things about Hamlet's feelings for his mother. You've chosen to put it in her innermost bed chamber. How could you have dealt with the light and the window in a way that made this feel more like a private place? Having the ghost stand on a level that Hamlet, Gertrude and Polonius never visited was good thinking. You had him floating above them, separate, but in the same space. You chose a physical relationship where I had no trouble believing that Hamlet saw him and Gertrude didn't.

Group Four

Upstairs in Music School Balconies

One of the difficult things about having a "long shot" in site-specific theater is that you need to find a way that everyone gets the information you are attempting project across that distance. I would have missed Ophelia on the balcony altogether if I didn't already know she was going to be there. The theater is like a camera lens. How do you draw my focus out to the balcony and then pull it back in again? I loved that you tried to focus in and out, but what could have made it work better? I appreciated watching the deterioration of Ophelia's world. I desperately wanted to see her drown in the Saran Wrap in the end and I heard someone else make a comment about that, as well. I saw you working to create a fragile environment that paralleled Ophelia's state of mind, one that completely breaks down. This was a great idea, but I would have also liked to see how you could use the same brittle world ultimately destroy Ophelia, turning on her as the people she cares about most do. Also, this is a scene where Gertrude's character is really revealed. She doesn't want to see Ophelia and only agrees to an audience when she considers public appearances. How could Gertrude have driven some of the breakage of the world? It becomes clear in this scene that if she is not complicit with Claudius she certainly craves cares far less about those around her than she does about appearances so we again wonder how much of this situation is due to Gertrude's actions or deliberate inaction. The other thing that happens in this scene is that Claudius manages to align himself with Laertes. How does this world serve that part of the scene? When choosing a space for a site-specific piece like this, thinking about an appropriate audience/story relationship is critical. There were about ten people who got to see the story as you'd intended and the rest of us didn't. How could you have orchestrated audience placement better so that we all saw the context for the entire story? For you and for all of the groups, when you pick a space that is a public thoroughway, you have to choose how you are going to deal with the traffic. Either you

have to somehow acknowledge it or plan around it. Ignoring it makes for disruptions in the rules of the world. The audience spends more time wondering about how they are supposed to respond to people walking through than they do paying attention to the action. I know that I was constantly on the move, trying to stay out of people's way.