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Scenic and lighting design of Dunlop and Dale's Scapino

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THE SCENIC AND LIGHTING DESIGN OF
DUNLOP AND DALE'S SCAPINO

By
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A.B. University of Calif., Santa Cruz, 1973
Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the degree of
Master of Fine Arts
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The Scenic and Lighting Design of Dunlop and Dale's
Scapino (69 pp.)

Director: Richard H. James

This thesis is concerned with the design of the scenery, lighting, and properties for Dunlop and Dale's play, Scapino, as presented by the University of Montana Department of Drama/Dance, November 8-11, 15-18, 25, 1978. The production was performed in the University's Main Hall at the Great Western Stage, a thrust theatre seating approximately 150 people. The thesis covers the creation and execution of the above elements, but is not directly concerned with the duties performed by the technical director, except as necessary for clarity, nor does it cover the costumes, makeup, or sound. It also discusses the design problems and solutions created by the participation in the American College Theatre Festival, the most significant being touring and the need for conversion from the thrust stage to a proscenium stage.

It provides the reader with needed background and an understanding of basic terms. An investigation of the literary aspects of the script and how they relate to production style, and the demands and needs of the script, and the production approach taken is covered. It formulates specific goals and needs for the scenery and lighting designs.

The thesis also traces the processes of developing and refining appropriate design solutions. These sections document the processes, through the use of both research and creative experimentation in the areas of spatial needs, geographic and travel information, and historical scenic precedence. It also describes the specific solution chosen, that is, one of a semi-theatrical, yet realistically based multi-level set.

The areas of design execution and modifications are also detailed, but do not cover construction techniques in any detail. Finally, an evaluation of the success of the design approach and execution are presented. Included are comments from audience members, actor reactions, faculty criticisms, and director and designer comments. These views concentrate on the excellent movement patterns within the set, and problems of unity of style within the production.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

This thesis describes the design of the scenery, lighting and properties for the play, Scapino, as presented by the University of Montana Department of Drama/Dance, November 8-11, 15-18 and 25, 1978. It includes the creation and execution of those designs, but will not be concerned directly with the duties performed by the technical director, except as necessary for clarity. Additionally, it will not cover the design or execution of the costumes, makeup, or sound, except in so far as they relate directly to the project.

In 1978 the University of Montana Department of Drama/Dance lost one production space, a theatre in the Venture Center building basement. This led to the opening of a new theatre space on the second floor of the original Main Hall building. Built in 1897, the oldest structure on the University of Montana's campus was to be a part of the birth of a new and exciting theatre. The new theatre was under the leadership of Alan Cook, Associate Professor of Drama, and was named the Great Western Stage Company. Professor Cook wanted to open the new theatre with a fun, playful production which would capture the audience. The play chosen was Scapino, a modern adaptation by Frank Dunlop and Jim Dale of Moliere's farce, Les Fourberies de Scapin.

One of the first problems was the design of the theatre itself. The second floor theatre in the old Main Hall was originally built as
a shallow proscenium stage,\(^1\) which was approximately 13 feet deep, 40 feet wide, and proscenium arch height of 15 feet. The seating was originally located on both the main floor and in a stepped balcony. The change from the room's past conversion to quasi-offices to that of a functional theatre was to rest with the department's design/technical staff. This group, in conjunction with the department's acting/directing faculty, decided to convert the space into a thrust stage.\(^2\) The stage would extend 18 feet past the present stage lip and be 18 feet wide at its midpoint. The proscenium arch would be closed in from 40 feet to 30 feet. The seating for the new theatre was to be limited to only the main floor, which was estimated to hold between 125 and 175 persons.

Finally, it was further decided that this production would be the department's entry in the American College Theatre Festival\(^3\) for 1978. Thus, all elements of the production had to be planned with the possibility of both touring and converting to a proscenium stage.

The production was to be directed by Professor Cook, the costumes were to be designed by the faculty costumer Richard Donnelly,

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\(^1\)Proscenium stage—the most common type of stage arrangement. The audience sits on one side of a rised area and views the stage through a picture frame opening.

\(^2\)Thrust stage—a stage form in which the audience sits on three sides of a peninsula-shaped performing space.

\(^3\)American College Theatre Festival—a theatre festival organized under the parent organization American Theatre Association, consists of regional and national competition, also called A.C.T.F.
and the technical direction was to be by the staff technical director, Gary Fassler. The author was to be responsible for the design of the scenery and lighting, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Fine Arts degree in Drama.

The following definitions will be used in this thesis:

**DIRECTOR**—It is under his leadership that the production takes form. "The director is responsible for the interpretation of the play and the choice of style in presentation. It is through his work that the acting and directing are shaped to express the idea and the theme of the play. It is his responsibility to see that settings, costumes, props and lighting are in accord with the acting and directing and that all express the idea of the play." ⁴

**SCENIC DESIGNER**—"The scenic designer's most significant function, then, is that of a manipulator of stage space in its relationship to the human actor." ⁵ It is with this background and an investigation of the definitions of Gillette, Jones, Parker and Payne ⁶ that the author defines Scenic Designer as a collaborating artist concerned not only with the translating and reinforcing of the playwright's and director's approach to the play in visual terms, but


⁶Gillette, op. cit., p. 8; Jones, Robert Edmund. *The Dramatic Imagination* (N.Y.: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1941), p. 78; Parker, W. Oren and Harvey K. Smith. *Scene Design and Stage Lighting* (N.Y.:
additionally seeking the higher goal of manipulating the stage space and performer into an appropriate environment. It is no longer enough to make a singular visual statement; design must also become a tool for an actor's communication.

**SCENERY**—This is a visual three-dimensional environment for the action of the play. It can be described as "... a series of two- and three-dimensional units that are usually placed on stage to enclose the acting area. When painted, rigged, and lighted they form the background for the action of the play."^7

**LIGHTING DESIGNER**—"... collaborates closely with both the director and the designer in planning the lighting of a production. Duties include planning the lighting plot, determination of the number and types of instruments to be used, placement and mounting of these instruments, set-up of the control-board, and development of a control-board cue sheet."^8

**LIGHTING**—Can be described as a fluidly selective atmosphere of dimensional illumination appropriate to the style of a specific production. ^9

**TECHNICAL DIRECTOR**—Is responsible for the coordination of the technical aspects of production. He is "responsible for translating

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^7 Gillette, op. cit., p. 4.

^8 Ibid., p. 11.

the designer's plans into working drawings and for the division of the setting into units of scenery capable of easy handling and shifting. He perfects the designer's general scheme for shifting scenery and solves in detail the problems concerned with construction and rigging.\textsuperscript{10}

**PROPERTIES**—Consist of "... all practical or decorative parts of the design that are not structurally a part of the setting. They fall into several classifications. ... trim or decorative props, which help the designer establish the period, nationality, and locale of the setting, ... set or floor props... including all of the furniture normally used by the actors or used by them while onstage in the performance of established stage business."\textsuperscript{11}

The intent of this project is to serve both as a study of the creative processes of the design of Scapino, and of the production problems encountered in designing for the Great Western Stage Company's Theatre. It will also cover the problems of touring and of conversion from a thrust stage form to that of a proscenium.

\textsuperscript{10}Gillette, op. cit., p. 9.

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., p. 5.
CHAPTER II
ANALYSIS OF THE PLAY

The Frank Dunlop Young Vic production of Scapino by Frank Dunlop and Jim Dale is based on Moliere's play Les Fourberies de Scapin.

Frank Dunlop founded the Young Vic in 1969 as part of the National Theatre of Great Britain. He has been Associate Director and Administrative Director of the National Theatre. He has directed at the Old Vic, London's West End, and produced Sherlock Holmes for the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Dunlop's first season at the Edinburgh Festival won him major attention when he succeeded in getting the reigning Pop singing star, Jim Dale, to take on a Shakespearean role. It was during Dunlop's second season at the festival that he sought Dale's multiple talents for a production of Scapino.  

Jim Dale is best known for his Oscar winning son "Georgy Girl." He has been at one time or another a Pop singer, actor, and a comedian. Dale has been described as a slim, athletic, energetic, and versatile performer, who has mastered the art of comedy and entertainment through years of experience in the British Music Halls.

Dunlop, in talking about his version of Moliere's classic, says, "We added music, and it got bigger and bigger and bigger through

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rehearsals. So much so that, at the moment, about two-thirds is close to Moliere, and then there's another third which is improvised additions and music."

Dunlop, in the formation of his young company, was deeply concerned with producing a group devoted to bringing the classics to the common people. Dunlop, in talking about his Pop Theatre, says, "It was short for Popular... we wanted to bring the classics to ordinary people, people who couldn't afford to go to established theatres and those who were too shy to go." This goal has apparently met with success, since Clive Barnes said of Dunlop's Scapino, "It is a homogenous and legitimate view of Moliere that makes Moliere live for today's audiences."

It is important to look into the background of Scapino since this modern version owes much to Moliere's original. Moliere, the great French playwright, is known for his development of great comic masterpieces. One of his major developments was in the area of comic dialogue. His dialogue was not witty for its own sake but appropriate to the character and situation. Moliere relied heavily on characterization. His targets were the ridiculous conventions of life, the faults in the structure of society and the frailties of human nature.

\[^{13}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[^{14}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[^{15}\text{Ibid., p. 15.}\]
Molière wrote *Les Fourberies de Scapin* in 1671. It was late in his life and at a point when his favor within the court was at a low point. It was during this time that Italian comedy troupes were recording large successes in Paris. In an effort to ease both the pressures from the court and the successes of the troupes, Molière sought to beat the Italians at their own game. Molière adapted the troupes' Commedia dell' Arte characters and situations. The most popular of the situations were broad comedies revolving around love and intrigue, disguises and cross-purposes.

The basic plot-line of *Scapin* is not only rich in the Italian comedic heritage, but it can trace its roots back to the Roman play *Phormio* by Terence. This is not unusual, since many theatre historians consider Roman comedies and Atellan Farce and Mime as the basis of Commedia.

The basic plot of Dunlop's version, *Scapino*, involves the escapades of a master trickster, the servant Scapino. The play is structured in such a way that the audience is told what tricks Scapino is to play, and is then invited to share his adventures.

The story revolves around the love affairs of two sets of young lovers and their quest to stay together against the wishes of their fathers. This problem is solved by the clownish servant Scapino and his side-kick Sylvestro, who deceive the fathers with tricks and

17 Commedia dell'Arte—A popular Italian comedy form of the 17th century, relying on stock character, situations, and improvised comic gags.

lies. Once this problem is dispelled, the servant Scapino goes on to get a bit of revenge on his master, the miser Geronte. This is done in a true commedia fashion with the sack trick. In the sack trick, Geronte is told that his life is in danger and that he must hide in a sack to avoid his enemies. Once in the sack, various mythical enemies, all played by Scapino, assault the sack until Geronte realizes what is happening. The play concludes with a series of revealed identities that leave Scapino clearly holding the bag for all his deeds. As the play finishes, Scapino triumphs by faking a near fatal accident in which he gets the fathers' unconditional absolution for all crimes committed.

The play Scapino is constructed in the farce form, but deviates from it by adding an interesting subtext to the nature of the piece. The farce form can be defined as a play based on situation. It has the externals of comedy and emphasizes antic more than language or character. Its primary intention is to amuse by its invention of situation and incidents which embroil the characters in a way that excites laughter.\(^{19}\)

In an effort to get a better understanding of the nature of farce, it can be generally divided into two types. The history of farce-comedy is divided into either Aristophanic or Plautian forms. The first form, Aristophanic, is "a veritable hodgepodge of humorous, satirical, critical and aesthetic appeals; it conforms to no rule for

well-made plays; its structure is loose and episodic; ... it introduces music and song, and depends upon elaborate costumes and scenery." The second form is of more importance to our understanding of Scapino. The Plautian form of farce is characterized by the use of regular act and scene divisions, stock characters, an intrigue of lovemaking or domestic infelicity carried on by means of broad jokes, absurd situations and slapstick beatings. Scenically, "it does not depend upon operatic elements and elaborate costuming and scenery."

Moliere's farces are of the Plautine type. It is with this understanding that we view Dunlop's Scapino. While it is true that Scapino satisfies many of the elements of farce, it does deviate from the norm, through the use of an extremely strong central character, Scapino himself. Scapino rather than being embroiled in improbable situations, generates and controls very specific processes, which allow him to gain what is needed. This strong central character adds much to the subtext of the play. Scapino is a rather complex character who controls the course of the play's action. He talks directly to the audience and shares with them his special hi-jinxes. While he is a rogue, he must be a loveable one, with which the audience can quickly identify. In Scapino's controlling of the situations, he actually can control the reactions of the other characters. In this way he becomes a sort of circus ringmaster putting his characters through their paces for the entertainment of his audience.

21 Ibid., p. 5.
It is through the character of Scapino that the audience is exposed to the joy and zest for life that man must have to survive. Scapino is the kind of person who lives life rather than passively sitting off to the side and watching life pass by. Scapino is the type of a person who must experience life, for he would rather die than not. Scapino says to Sylvestro, "Because it makes me happier still to risk my chance... Look, I've never been stopped by danger. I just can't stand those boasters who are so busy working out the risk they are going to take, they don't take any." 22

While the basic farce plot of Scapino has been around since the early days of Roman Comedy, Dunlop's play has a totally modern flair to it. Scapino reads and plays like a modern variety sketch. It employs many modern language references and this up-beat pop feeling is one of the key differences between it and Moliere's version. Additionally, it must be noted that while Moliere's plays are of the Plautine form, Scapino is a mixture of both farce forms. The play makes use of music and song. These songs and the direct audience interaction created give the play a looser structure in which the audience's reactions play a major role.

As a final thought about the deeper nature and popularity of the basic plot, John Gassner has suggested a meaning for Scapin. Gassner says, "Only theatrical illusion can give us an illusion of happiness, for the real illusions of human nature are dead ends. This is doubtless for the ultimate meaning of Les Fourberies de Scapin,

in which the happiness of two couples is ensured by a rogue, who in fact is a kind of stage director of life." In Scapino we can experience the same feelings. In essence, if things don't go right in the real world, plan and scheme as we may, at least there is some satisfaction in seeing it all fall together so neatly in the world of make-believe.

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23 Dunlop and Dale, The Frank Dunlop Young Vic Production of Scapino, p. 15.
CHAPTER III
PRODUCTION APPROACH

After completing the initial reading and analysis of the script, the designer, director and costumer met for a series of production conferences. The purpose of these conferences was to establish the directoral approach to the play and the production style.24

The first concern was to discover the essence of what makes Scapino work for an audience. Before addressing this question, a few guidelines were expressed by the director. The first regarded touring. Director Cook felt that although the production might tour as an American College Theatre Festival entry, that the primary focus should be placed on making the production successful in its original showings. The touring aspects were to be considered fully, yet remained secondary in purpose. Secondly, the production should reflect the talents of the production staff and performers and not be merely a duplication of the original production. The original production was to serve as a strong guide, but only a guide.

In the beginning, the discussion of the essence of Scapino moved in two directions. The first major statements about the play involved the mood or feeling one got from reading the script. The play seemed to communicate a festive theatrical mood. This feeling

24 Production conferences started in late September, 1978, and were originally begun between the designer and the director. The costumer joined the meetings soon thereafter.
related to the dramatic style of the play. This style was predom-
inantly theatrical in nature, and did not rely on a "slice of life"
representationalism, or elements of illusion. The style instead
depends on a set of "theatrical" conventions, and is highly present-
tional. Thus, the festive mood was one in which the audience was
actively expected to participate and share moments with the perform-
ers, and not sit as isolated observers.

This mood seemed to come forth in a variety of ways. These
ways included: (1) a circus type atmosphere in which Scapino acts as
a ringmaster of life, (2) a modern commedia flavor, which gives a
sense of spontaneity and improvisation to the moments, and (3) a
special joyful theatricality that seemed aimed at involving the audi-
ence. This included entrances through the audience, the sharing of
performance and audience spaces and the addressing of the audience
in a subjective manner.

The second major statement revolved around a similar, yet dif-
ferent feeling. This was that the play must be a fun experience for
all involved. It seemed to relate in part to the underlying nature
of the play as expressed by John Gassner.25

In the consideration of these two points, a single guiding
statement was formulated. This statement became the corner-stone
of the production approach. The statement was, "This is a fun place
to be."26 This brief statement was to relate not only to the com-

munication between the performers and the audience, but also to the relationship of the performers and their stage-space and costumes. An exchange of mutual feelings between the performers and the audience that brought out the joy and fun of that very moment was to be sought. This would require manipulation of the audience in such a way as to constantly let them share the private moments of the character Scapino.

In an attempt to further set the bounds of a "fun place to be," the designer approached the idea of a "fun place" as a place where many things could happen in a spontaneous fashion. This spontaneity creates a sense of excitement that becomes fun and child-like. The fun place becomes akin to a colorful child's world of make-believe, or a boardwalk fun house, in which movement, color, distortion, and excitement create a light-hearted carnival atmosphere.

Scenically the concept of a "fun place to be" began to touch upon several basic considerations. The first of these was the relationship of the performer to his playing space. The second was the relationship of the playing space as a tool for the actor's communication. Finally, there was the traditional relationship of the visual statement, as it related to both the needs of the play and the audience's understanding of the environmental context.

Before these scenic considerations could further develop, it was necessary to settle the basics of the locale and time. The locale at first seemed like an easy question to settle. The script called for a dock-side cafe located on the Bay of Naples. The Bay of Naples location had been the setting for Moliere's version as well;
therefore it seemed natural to accept the locale without question. However, when investigating the text of the play, there appeared only sparse reference and use of the specifics of locale. It seemed that the play wasn't really dependant on any specific place. Why couldn't the adventures of Scapino happen just as easily in dock-side San Francisco? This line of questioning led to an important understanding regarding the scenic requirements of the play. The thing that was abundant in the text was not the specifics of locale, but rather a constant Italian flavor. What exactly was this flavor and why was it important to the action of the play? The answer to these questions seemed to rest in a stereotyped picture of Italians and Italy.

The Italian personality seems to be characterized by a great passion for the living of life. They sometimes seem to carry to extremes their loves, desires and hates. When such elevated passions are carried one step further, they begin to approach farce. It was here that an understanding of why Italian became important. It became clear that a stereotyped picture of Italy be expressed, so as to set up a point of understanding and departure for the characters of the play. This picture of Italy was to serve as the reality base for the audience's understanding of the play and the characters.

The actual choice of the Bay of Naples setting as opposed to another Italian port city became important only insofar as it expressed the "neapolitan" flavor of a mixture of styles and items. The word "neapolitan" was not meant to actually describe the appearance of Naples. Director Cook used the word "neapolitan" in terms of the
following: (1) the sense of a grubby, exciting waterfront area with many types of things, (2) a mixture of styles which created a sort of layered feeling, in which the modern had been applied to the old, and (3) a motley colorful textured appearance.27

The actual nature of the locale was still to remain a dockside cafe, with a strong proximity to water. The director felt that spaces identified as water would be very important for the production. It was felt that these water areas could provide fun things for the actors to play with and the staging to encounter.

It was felt that the time period of the show would roughly follow the script. The only deviation was to expand it from a present contemporary time to a more generalized modern twentieth century feeling. This would then allow for a more divergent mixture of styles and items without becoming totally out of context or beyond the grasp of the audience acceptance.

In returning to the question of a scenic "fun place to be" the problems of the relationship of the performer to the stage-space began to touch such particulars as: (1) varied entrances, (2) multiple playing areas, (3) personal and neutral spaces, and (4) audience proximity. These items were affected by the form and limitations of the Great Western Stage, and were translated into a basic goal, that of maximum usage of the three-dimensional space.

As concern shifted to the question of the performer's use of

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27 This specialized definition of "neapolitan" evolved over the course of several production meetings, and became a general word covering many items, all of which did not necessarily mesh.
the scenic space as a communicational tool many points were explored. These included such things as scenery as environmental rather than background, usable as opposed to a decorative overlay, receptive to kinetic usage, and generally used with a maximum sense of confidence by the performers. The main goal was to allow the characters to use the scenery in such a way as to aid in their expression of feelings and thoughts on a physical level. For example, a dock piling must be able to be stabbed, sat on, kicked, stood on, hid behind, and not merely be a decorative representation of a dock piling for visual edification only.

On the purely visual level and its relationship to the audience, the scene design needed to be interesting for the audience to look at in and of itself. This was important when considering the Italianate information that would be contained in the set. It had to invite visual exploration on the audience's part, through the use of balance, point of interest, and a certain amount of surprises. A design which did this without over-powering the actors or compromising the staging was the desired goal. The balance of such a design needed a type which did not give a static feeling or an overly stabilized appearance to the general stage picture. The point of interest in the visual picture needed to be of a multiple type rather than a single focus. These many points of visual focus needed to be related so that they did not appear either too divergent or too centralized. In order to achieve these desired results, the basic tools of texture, color, line, balance and focus needed to be constantly worked together. The task was to be a bit more difficult, since the
primary use of color in the production was to rest within the domain of the costume designer. It was decided during production conferences that colorful costumes would be set off against a somewhat neutral scenery color in an effort to give clear focus to the performer. This was considered important because of the heavily layered "neapolitan" environment in which the actor was to be set. All of these visual considerations were aimed at producing an interesting stage picture which did not demote the actor's importance, but rather became his silent yet indispensible partner.

As a final comment on the nature of the scenic elements, the discussions were directed to the question of how real or unreal the scenery and costumes could be. This was discussed in terms of the overall production approach and became a question of how theatrical or stylized the production would become. The director generally felt that while extreme departure from reality would work with this play, he wanted to take a more moderate approach. Early in the production conferences the discussion of major abstractions was explored as a method of getting into the play. As the conferences progressed and characters began to be defined, their realities began to shape the nature of the design realities. It was here that some conceptual problems emerged.

The director wanted a mixture of approaches to the overall production, seeming to want a caricatured actor played off against a semi-theatrical set. The designer was tending toward a theatrical, yet semi-realistic approach, and the costumer was moving toward extreme stylization with the use of true commedia designs. It was
finally established by the director that such divergencies were not to be considered a serious problem, and that a sense of diverse theatricality was the goal. One of the problems was that each member of the production team had a slightly different definition of theatricality. In an effort to gain some insight as to level of illusion, or reality, and its relation to the play, the designer gained much from Dunlop's comments on this problem. Dunlop said, "In spite of the exaggeration and farcical style... things should have a kind of humanity and reality. The set may use some theatrical conventions... but it moves toward reality—with a sense of humor—rather than toward the abstract or the surreal. The lighting is subtle and appropriate to the times of day and night and the varying moods of the play. Costumes and makeups, however, are the most realistic of all."\(^{28}\)

The subject of stage properties was also discussed during production meetings. It was decided that the properties could span a range of period styles, as well as design styles. The governing statement was that the items should have a strong beginning base in reality. It was felt that the properties could be somewhat theatrical. The major concern regarding them was that they were able to meet the needs of the actor at that given moment. Further, it was desired that the properties lend themselves to a theatrical type of animation.

As the production meetings moved toward a conclusion, the lighting design was discussed. The director expressed two points

\(^{28}\)Dunlop and Dale, The Frank Dunlop Young Vic Production of Scapino, p. 13.
about the lighting. First, Act I was to begin in the early morning and progress to mid-day, while Act II was to take place during the evening hours. The director felt that this was important for both the mood of the show, and because of the "fun" of the time changes. Secondly, the lighting was to be unobtrusive and not heavily colored. This was so as not to call attention to the lighting itself. It was felt that heavily colored lighting in which there were many obvious changes, would pull focus from the actors and present unnecessary visual stimuli. The designer was for the most part in agreement with the director on these points.

The designer wanted to capture in the lighting the feeling of the intense and crisp Mediterranean sunlight. The light should be clean, bright, sharp, and slightly colored. The lighting needed to do this without approaching a probing feeling. The type of light desired was the kind which gives one the feeling of wanting to get up and move, to enjoy life. It is in no way hot or oppressive, but rather bright, warmish and causes colors to jump out with a brilliance not often seen.

The designer, while agreeing with the director on the evening mood of the second act did not feel that the entire act needed such a low key mood. The designer felt that while the opening of the second act made good use of the evening setting, that a continuation of the evening setting in a realistic progression to later night was not appropriate to the increasing pace as the act continued. It was therefore agreed that the lighting need not stay in the realistic manner, and could change to meet the needs of the acts. It was de-
cided that the lighting of the second act would begin at evening levels and gain intensity as the pace increased. The lighting would reach a bright "comic" level similar to the first act by the time the act reached its peak. The director agreed to this approach and found it to be in accord with the pace and moods of the second act.
CHAPTER IV
FROM PRODUCTION NEEDS TO DESIGN SOLUTIONS

In the evolution of design solutions many processes take place. The major ones involve either a type of background research, or creative experimentation. In the design of Scapino both of these were used.

The methods used followed three basic paths, all of which were devoted to the gaining of material by which the production needs could be met. The first path was of a creative experimental nature and concerned the development of a series of generalized jetty arrangements. These arrangements were not concerned with the development of specific spaces, or a set ground plan. Instead, they were concerned with maximizing the playing spaces, creating interesting traffic patterns, varied entrances, and audience to stage relationships. This development was tied directly to the stage size and form.

As the development of these arrangements continued, over 50 plans were created. These were thought-out for both ground plan possibilities and the three-dimensional qualities. They were also considered in terms of the restrictions imposed by the touring nature of the production. These problems and needs were broken down into

29 Ground Plan—a scaled mechanical drawing, a top view of the set.
30 Traffic Patterns—a diagram of blocking and movement possibilities open for the director's use.

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three broad areas. First, there was the transportation and handling considerations; second, the set-up and support problems; and finally, there was the stage conversion problems created by the move from a thrust stage to a proscenium space.

The transportation and handling problems required that the scenery break down into easily manageable units, the total amount of which could not exceed 1000 cubic feet by A.C.T.F. rules. It was also necessary to build the units stronger than normal because of the increased handling that they would take.

The set-up and support problems required that the individual units be assembled quicker. The total set-up time would be limited to only four hours. This time was also to include load-in and lighting. Due to this time factor, the units had to be self-supporting and not require extensive pre-set-up or complex bracing and tie points.

The stage conversion needed to be accomplished without major or serious alterations to the set or blocking patterns. Thus, the playing area units had to be of a somewhat flexible arrangement. As a partial solution to this problem, the major thrust stage relationships of height and depth were lessened and a more proscenium approach using the horizontal plane was employed.

In conjunction with these touring problems, the other production needs were also evaluated in each of the 50 arrangements developed during this creative experimental stage.

In considering the arrangements, most were strong in one or two ways, but few had a good balance of all the desired elements.
Those that did were often heavily dependant on massive amounts of platform levels. This was not considered acceptable for touring. A large supply of platforms would require a longer set-up time, as well as a good-sized truck to transport.

A second problem area concerned the amount of actual playing space. It was discovered that while the arrangements made good use of the full three-dimensional space, that the actual playing areas were quite small because access stairs required a large percentage of the space. The final factor which negated the use of many platforms was the production budget. The scenery budget was set at $500 and was to include all supplies used (see Appendix 2). Stock scenery was available for use at no cost.

Thus, only a few arrangements met the desired goals without relying on extensive platforming. These were characterized by a down-stage jetty area surrounded by water, with some form of down-stage entrances. The middle ground often utilized a second major playing area. This area was often characterized by sea-walls and mooring berths. This middle area when viewed in connection with the down-stage space often resulted in a shifting of the proscenium frame appearance. This shifting caused the thrust form to become a more extended stage apron space, thus resulting in a semi-thrust stage space. The up-stage space was comprised of two-story structures. This upper space also represented the rear boundaries of the playing space.

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31 Stage Apron—the part of the stage extending beyond the proscenium arch.
One element that existed in each arrangement was the small and cramped nature of the playing spaces. Many of the spaces were smaller than normally used on stage and therefore gave a slightly exaggerated appearance to the space. The designer decided to try and make use of this exaggeration, as an aid in achieving a semi-theatrical feeling. Therefore, whenever possible, items were to be made smaller than normal. Director Cook also felt that this type of an approach might aid the performers in achieving an exaggerated movement style. He specifically requested that some of the upper sections of the two-story structures be quite small, but still usable.32

This investigation of possible arrangements also led to consideration of items the actors might use. This resulted in the development of such things as: (1) ropes to swing on, (2) pipes to slide down, (3) ladders, (4) balconies to jump from, (5) swinging doors to play with, (6) pilings to stand on, and (7) a boat to play on. The space was to become an actor's playground.

The investigation of the physical space and possible jetty arrangements proved to be very valuable in moving toward solutions to certain production needs. Among these needs were maximum use of the three-dimensional space, the achieving of a good dock-side/water relationship, and becoming a potential actor's tool. This investigation did not provide a fixed workable design, but rather it provided the foundation for more detailed development.

A new line of research was started that involved gaining an

understanding of the Italian flavor. This was done through the use of Italian travel sources, contemporary Italian newspapers and magazines, and general geographical information. The concentration was placed on gaining a feeling for coastal villages, dock-side areas and the essence of the city of Naples. What was it that made these places interesting and unique? One answer to this question was the bright sense of the Mediterranean sea and sky. Another answer was the used appearance of all the structures. The buildings were often white-washed, and seemed to be a composite of years of human use. This often resulted in a structure which had several styles within it. This feeling of the new existing side by side with the old was very apparent when modern advertisements were juxtaposed with the ancient stone and plaster buildings of Italy.

While exploring the modern Italian advertisements, another idea was formed. Italy began to be expressed with such words and images as Fiat, Cinzano, Godfather, red checked tablecloths, busty women, Berra Peroni, and gelati. The designer began to see in these advertisements and their relationship to the crumbling walls a type of mood or feeling that might solve several of the design needs. It was at this point that walls textured with newsprint began to be considered. The idea was that Italian newspapers would make up the walls and surfaces of the design. This would serve to give the walls a textured neutral surface which was clearly Italian and of a modern twentieth century nature. The stage space was for the most part close enough to the audience to allow them to read the basic news headlines, as well as major advertisements. Thus, the audience would be intro-
duced to the words and images which suggested Italy. To make the
statement a bit stronger without getting overly stylized, large ad-
vertisement size letters spelled out key word-images. It was felt
that this type of visual treatment would help establish the Italian
flavor, define aspects of locale, and clarify the time period. The
overall effect would also have a theatrical fun mood to it. The dir-
ector also felt that the use of the newsprint would help accent the
verbal and word oriented fun of the script's language.

The aspects of the dock-side area were noted and explored.
One of the noticeable things about the dock-side area was its fun
and exciting, yet grubby, nature. The thing that characterized the
area was its collection of varied items and mixture of styles, all
of which were directed at the living of life. The nets, boats, pil-
ings, tires, and ropes were all the result of a group of people mak-
ing a living from the sea. In this way most items had a deep sense
of humanity attached to them.

The dock-side cafe with its outdoor tables and banners ex-
isted not because of its quaint locale, but because it served as a
way of life for the people who lived there. The space was therefore
of two separate natures. First, the space had its original designed
nature or purpose, and secondly the space had its newer adapted use.
Thus, the space was able to become whatever its inhabitants desired
it to be, regardless of its originally designed purpose. A deserted
alcove might become an open air market. It was just this type of use

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that the director wanted on the stage. The director wanted a small market space to be incorporated on the set. This space would act as a prop dispersal area.

The human quality of the dock-side became important to the understanding of the nature of the play's subtext, and to the space itself. In the end, this line of investigation led to a defining of specifics of the space. It helped provide solutions in the areas of:

1. a grubby, well used, spontaneous feeling,
2. a mixture of styles,
3. a sense of humanity,
4. a stereotyped Italian flavor,
5. a vision of a dock-side cafe.

In turning now to the final research path, the designer began to consider the historical precedents. Scapino's roots are securely based in the commedia form. The settings for the commedia were generally whatever was available at the time, and in fact they required little scenery. The standard setting when used was a rudely indicated street between two rows of houses. This type of setting brought to mind Serlio's fixed architectural setting for comedy.

Sebastiano Serlio published Architettura in 1545. This was the first Renaissance work to devote a section to theatre. In it Serlio designed fixed settings for comedy, drama, and satyric scenes. His comic setting is similar to that of the commedia stage, that is, a street between two rows of buildings and a large open forestage. Within the framework of Serlio's design the designer began to see a

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34 Brockett, op. cit., p. 113.
35 Cheney, op. cit., p. 195.
solid base that would add a historical, as well as visual, context to the stage picture. The designer began to interpret Serlio's design and translate it into a form of the jetty arrangements.

The process of translation began by incorporating the up-center entrance and the building structures on each side. On the stage-left side the cafe building was placed, and on the stage-right there was a second building. The large open forestage area was worked into a jetty space. It was here that major scenes which needed good audience contact could play.

Hand and hand with the progress being made in the area of background research, the area of creative experimentation also progressed. This began with the investigation of the elements of pure design and how they related to the mood and specifics of Scapino. The elements of design are line, color, shape, texture, and space. These are then organized according to five principles of design which are: (1) balance, (2) proportion, (3) emphasis, (4) rhythm, and (5) unity.³⁶

The element of line in Scapino was seen in terms of a dynamic mood. The designer wanted to use many short lines which moved in several directions to imply a type of spontaneity, a frivolous mood. He also wanted to have a flowing feeling to the line; therefore items which had a softer curved nature were employed. It was further desired that the general direction of the line be vertical, and therefore more uplifting, as opposed to horizontal and stable. In consider-

ing the element of color a subtle neutral color was desired. The colors needed to be of a white-washed tone, that did not pull focus from the actors. It was felt that with most of the area devoted to a neutral tone, what bright colors were used in the design would have great contrast. The designer felt that these bright bits of color would give a theatrical effect to the design without becoming overpowering.

The concept of shape is directly related to line. It can be said that the enclosing of space with line creates shape. The basic shapes used in Scapino were of a blockish form. The overall size of the shape was to be small enough so as to not overpower the actors. The designer also wanted some shapes to be smaller than usual, so that the actor, when standing next to them, would appear farther away. It was felt that this would give focus to the performer in the small and visually complex set.

The use of texture in the design was considered very important. It was this element which would give the grubby, spontaneous human appearance to the space. The texture was also important because it would break up the general neutral color of the set, and thus add variety to the stage picture. It was felt that through the use of textured newsprint, the essence of ancient crumbling walls would be captured. The nature of the texture itself was a possible problem, since it could add a torn and threatening feeling to the design. It was hoped that through the use of texturing of a small size that the

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overall stage picture would appear used, human, spontaneous and fun.

The use of space in Scapino was considered in terms of how an actor's size and the scenic size could be manipulated to express the farcical mood of the play. This was seen in terms of making the set smaller and thus causing the actor's movements to be exaggerated by comparison. Another aspect of space that was of concern was the audience and stage relationship. Both the designer and the director wanted to have an intimate actor/audience relationship. It was felt that this was very necessary for the mood of the play. It would allow the audience to more easily join the action of the play and thus become more of the feeling of a music hall.

All of these design elements were worked into the ideas developing during the investigative research period. The end result was a design based on the needs of the play Scapino. The design was concentrated within the framework of Serlio's comic setting, which was specialized, environmentalized and attuned to the restrictions of touring problems which would be encountered.

The design had a down-stage area which was the main jetty area. This was a major playing space with good audience contact and actor focus. This was due to the sparse amount of scenery, which allowed excellent sightlines. This area was to contain one cafe table and two chairs, which were to be moveable so as to increase the space for the second act's bag trick. There were to be two down-stage entrances, one left and another right. These were intended to provide passage to other "off-stage" jetty areas. These entrances were to have major use since they increased the actor/audience contact, and
thus promoted a festive theatrical mood. The entire down-stage area was to be surrounded by water. This water area was to be represented by wave forms painted in the rich light blue-green color of the Mediterranean Sea. This painted sea area was to be the only major colored area in the entire set. It was hoped by the designer that because the color was located on the bottom of the overall stage picture that it would give an uplifting feeling to the design. It was felt that such an uplifting might overcome some of the more blockish and geometric like shapes in the design. The sea area was also to add greatly to the theatrical style of the design. This was due to the fact that it was the most stylized and convention-based element.

The down-stage area was joined to the up-stage area by a bottle-necked passageway. The passageway was an opening in a fully three-dimensional sea wall. This wall consisted of the architectural wall, mooring pilings and tires. These walls were designed as several separate units, which could be shifted to allow for a wider or smaller opening. Thus, they could be readjusted for the thrust to proscenium stage conversion.

The sea wall provided two mooring berths, one on each side of the stage. The stage-right berth was open, and the stage-left contained a small boat. The bottle-necked passageway gave the down-stage a strong focus. Additionally, it made the traffic pattern appear to be confined. The fun came when performers broke the apparent traffic pattern by using the two mooring berths as passageways. The boat further animated the area because it was to be rockable and made for heavy use. Up-stage of the sea wall area was another playing
space. This space was not as large as the down-stage area, but was placed one step above the down-stage area. Because of the large amount of platforming required, this raised relationship between the down-stage and up-stage area would not be used on tour. Therefore, the space up-stage of the wall would be on the same level as the down-stage space on a proscenium stage.

A second table was placed in the up-stage area, where it could be approached from three directions: directly up-stage from between the two basic buildings, from stage-right by a ramp system which moved around the stage-right building, and from the stage-left side by a steep set of stairs connected to the cafe building.

The stage-left building contained an open-work bottom with a set of swinging doors representing the cafe entrance. The top of the building consisted of two small one-person basket balconies. These balconies were designed so that a person could jump from one to the other. The space between the two buildings was to appear unpassable, yet it was to be designed so that a person could, with a slight running jump, span the distance. Additionally, the space would also be crossed with a ladder. The stage-right building consisted of a bottom alcove, which would become the market area. The top of the building was devoted to a large balcony arrangement. The dominant line in these buildings was a vertical one. However, once the newsprint was added to the surfaces, the result was a massive amount of short dynamic lines within the general building shape.

Finally, while the distance between the two buildings needed to be small, for the crossings to work, the buildings were designed
so that the distance separating them could be flexible. Thus, on
tour they would be farther apart in order to increase the overall
stage width. This would mean all crossings would need to be reworked.

The walls of the buildings were to form the general background.
They were to be of a semi-two-dimensional nature, making use of the
newspapers for texture. The advertisement word-images were to be
applied to these walls. In addition, the design was to include such
items as clothes lines, boat banners, and strings of lights. These
items, in conjunction with the walls, gave a motley, but festive tone
to the design.

Many smaller design items were used on the set. These included
a street lamp, which helped to motivate light in the second act.
There was also a pipe structure which tied the two buildings together,
and served as a fireman's pole for the actors to slide down. Included
in this pipe structure was the possibility of a rope swing. The rope
swing was of a questionable nature, due to the touring aspects of
the show, which restricted secure ground ties. This also created
problems for the buildings themselves.

The possibility of distracting movement in the structures had
to be seriously considered, and solved early in the construction pro­
cess.

During this period the lighting concepts were also beginning
to be translated into specific solutions. Due to the thrust stage
form, the lighting needed to be more three-dimensional in nature than
might be normally used on a proscenium stage. A normal thrust stage
lighting area might contain anywhere from three to four instruments.
Under the limitations of power, mounting positions, and equipment this approach was not possible. Therefore, it was decided that several smaller than normal lighting areas would cover the stage. Each of these areas would use two instruments, separated by more than 90 degrees. This was done in an effort to more fully surround the actor with light. In addition to this, it was felt that a general wash of backlighting would help fill out the three-dimensional needs, while also helping to set the actor off from the background. It was felt that in order to get the clean, bright look desired, a minimum of colors would be used, and possibly none at all. Any used, however, would be chosen to highlight colors in the set and costumes. It was hoped that an increased feeling of depth might occur in the textured surfaces if color filters were chosen carefully. The question of the evening mood of the second act seemed to best be solved by the use of a general cool wash of light. This light would basically provide a color tone, and not be the primary visibility for the scene.

As the design solutions began to form into the final plans, a series of ground plans and renderings were developed and presented to the director for consideration. The designs were also discussed with the costumer to check for any possible conflicts. At this point there appeared to be some problems regarding style choices and line. These related to the clean, sharp lines of the scenic structures and the softer lines of the costumes, plus the different degree of theatrical style employed in each.

After further discussion the problem of line was solved, but the style differences continued. It was at this point that the dir-
designer, and costumer had a final production meeting. During this meeting the director decided that the style differences were not great enough to cause problems, and that the variance was in line with his desire for a mixture of styles.

With these discussions behind, the designer completed the designs after making some minor corrections. These designs were represented in a full color rendering, a detailed ground plan, and a frontal elevation. These materials then served as the basis for the creation of detailed construction drawings.
CHAPTER V
EXECUTION OF THE PRODUCTION DESIGN

Certain tasks must be completed before the actual execution of the design can begin. These involve the preparation of construction drawings, the selection of materials, and the budgeting for the scenic units. These duties were shared in this production with the staff technical director. Thus, it became the responsibility of both the designer and the technical director to see that the proper preparations were made before the actual construction began.

The designer began his work by first preparing a set of working drawings. These drawings were then discussed with the technical director and changes were made where necessary. The nature of these changes will be discussed in this chapter. From these conferences and the designer's drawings, a set of shop construction plans were created by the technical director.

THE SETTING

The construction began with the basic flats to be used for the wall sections (see Drawing 4). Flat frames of the necessary sizes were pulled from stock and reworked to include angled tops. When the needed flats were not in stock, or in the case of the door and window flats, the units were built. The construction was of a standard

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38 Working Drawings—detailed construction drawings used in the building of scenery by the shop (see appendix for all drawings).
1" x 3" type.

The completed flat frames were then covered with nylon mosquito netting. This material was chosen over standard scenery muslin because of the low cost and because there was a good supply on hand. A good surface was not needed since all flats were to be covered with newspaper. Once the flats were covered with the netting, they were given a coat of backpaint. This was done to seal the wood and to act as a type of flame retardant.

The next step in the process was the application of the Italian newspapers. The primary source for the newspapers was the Italian Consul in San Francisco. The newspapers were glued on to the netting with wallpaper paste which proved to be an excellent glue, as well as acting as a tightening agent. Once dry, the newspapers were securely attached and the surface was extremely tight, thus providing what seemed to be a strong bond for tour handling requirements.

The tiled roof sections for the flats were created by using sections of Sono tube. The sections were stapled to backings made of 3/8" ply. Once completed and painted, these roof sections were bolted to the tops of the appropriate flat units.

After the wall flats had been constructed and painted, then the units were either bolted, loose-pin hinged, or stage jacked as

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41 Sono Tube—a thick cardboard tube used as concrete forms.

42 Loose-pin Hinge—a hinge, in which the connecting pin between the two halves can easily be removed.

43 Stage Jack—a triangular 1 x 3 frame, placed on the back of a flat to support it.
needed for support. The actual assembly was done after all platform structures were built. It primarily involved bolting the flats to the building platform structures, or in the case of upper level flats, loose-pin hinging to the platform tops.

The next step in the construction process involved the conversion of the existing thrust stage to the configuration necessary for the production (see Drawing 3). This adaptation was done with stock 6" platforms of varying sizes. The platforms were not legged when used on the existing stage. This resulted in the necessary 6" rise on the upper playing area, as desired. Where the platforms did not meet the existing stage, legs were used to reach the audience floor. The adaptation process also required the construction of a few odd size plugs. These were constructed of a standard type, 6" high. The tops of all platforms were padded with Ozite rug padding to deaden the sound and were then covered with scenery muslin.

The next step in the construction process was the building of the dock/sea-wall units (see Drawing 6). This construction was done by the designer himself, since the dimensions and appearance were governed by the irregular nature of the materials used. The sections were made of a 1" x 10" base, with a 16" high sea-wall where needed. Pilings were added to the bases as needed. The pilings were made of left-over log ends from the construction of log cabin homes. The log ends were secured to the bases with lag screws. Finally, 13" tires were

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45 Lag Screw—a large wood screw resembling a hex head bolt.
added to the units. The tires were held in place with bolts and wire wrappings. Once all of the necessary items were attached to the units the sea-wall and base sections were covered with newspapers. The sections themselves were bolted together where possible and for tour purposes would be loose-pin hinged. After painting, the units were delivered to rehearsals for use in developing stage business.

Next came the construction of the onstage and escape stair units (see Drawing 6). The escape stairs were to be of a simple cut-carriage construction. The rise and tread pattern was to be a 9" rise and a 10" tread. This odd rise and tread relationship was chosen because of the limited stage depth available. Height had to be gained as rapidly as possible in order to reach the desired final height.

The treads were to be built of 3/4" plywood and there were to be no riser facings. The stairs that did not touch the ground, but rather spanned two platform levels, were to be attached by resting within a cleat system (see Drawing 6). This style of construction was changed by the technical director during the building process to a support structure based on legs. The reasoning behind this was due in part to budget, construction time, and a lack of a pre-trial setup fitting. The onstage step units were constructed in a similar manner, except that they included riser facings. Once constructed, they were padded in an irregular manner. The padding was intended to break up the sur-

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46Cut-Carriage—a stair construction method, in which the rise and tread relationship is cut from a single board or stringer. This stringer is then used to support the actual tread of the stair and runs parallel to the slope of the stair.
face, and thus give a stone-like contour to the units. After being padded, the units were covered with muslin, which provided a surface for the gluing of the newspaper. It was realized at the time that the newspapers would wear off with use, but it was felt that this might give a crumbling stone appearance to the units.

The construction process continued with the building of ramp units and platform levels (see Drawings 5 and 6). The escapes utilized stock 6" platforms, legged as needed, which were then padded. The ramp units were built in a similar manner using 3/4" plywood tops. The ramp units were raised to their respective heights with support legs. The side facings of the ramps, as well as the onstage stair units, were to be made of 1/4" plywood. This was changed to 1/4" pressed wood board because of the reduced cost.

The next construction begun was the double level structures, or houses (see Drawings 1 and 5). Both the stage-right and the stage-left houses were to be constructed in a similar manner. The bottoms of the units were to act as support bases for the upper levels. The bottoms were to be built in a standard platform style, with a height of 6". The bases were designed to accommodate a slip-in support post structure, which would provide the primary framing for the upper level and allow rapid setup on tour. The actual design of the stage-left unit was different than the stage-right unit because of a bottom level

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47 Cleat System—an interlocking method of putting two units together, so that one rests inside a locking section of the other.

48 Pressed Wood Board—a type of compositional sheeting, also known by the trade name of masonite.
ramp area. This ramp section was needed because a bicycle had to be driven into the cafe.

The support post structure was originally designed to be made of wood, using 4" x 4" posts. This method was chosen because of cost factors. This was changed after consultation with both the technical director and the faculty designer. The reasoning behind this was due to two major factors, one regarding the visual quality of the heavy 4" x 4" posts, and the second related to the questionable strength of the limited support points. As to the visual qualities, it was felt that the heavier 4" x 4" posts would not be in keeping with the light and spontaneous style of line desired. In the area of strength, it was felt that with such a small number of points, only a metal structure would provide the necessary support. The decision was made to use a steel support structure made of 1 1/2" steel tubing. The tubing would attach to another metal frame which would hold the upper level in place. This would be done by bolting the upper level to the metal frame. It was felt by the technical director that our budget would only handle this if other expenses were kept in check.

The upper levels were to be constructed in a manner similar to stock platform tops, except the normal padding would not be added, in an effort to trim costs. Additionally, the under bracing was to be dependant on the needs of the steel support structure. The actual specifics of this were handled by the technical director.

The units once completed were outfitted with the necessary balcony railings. Due to the pressing time factor, the stage-right unit's
railings were bought pre-made. This railing was then reinforced with additional metal bracing to take the heavy use it would receive. The stage-left unit's basket balconies were built as separate units. These were then bolted on to the upper level. The railings for these were constructed of 3/4" plywood. The difference in the two types of railing materials was noticeable, but not overly distracting.

The construction now concentrated on the smaller remaining units. One of the major ones was the small boat. This unit was constructed by the designer from rough sketches. The boat was to be small, 5' long and 30" wide, yet as real as possible. The bottom, stern and bow were made of 3/4" plywood. The sides were constructed of 2" strips of 1/4" plywood applied in a ship-lap fashion. The mast for the boat was made of 1" pipe wrapped with burlap and secured to the bottom of the boat with a pipe flange.\(^4\) Construction continued, concentrating on the burlap curtains for the door openings. These were made of natural burlap panels hung on 1" x 3" wooden battens. The battens were then bolted to the backs of the appropriate flats. The stage-left on-stage balcony (see Drawing 2), was to have a set of window shutters. This was changed to burlap curtains because of actor needs. The construction of the swinging cafe doors for the stage-left house was accomplished by laminating 1/4" plywood strips within a 1/4" plywood frame. The doors were then hung on cafe door hinges and bolted to the steel support posts.

As work concluded on the smaller items, a second ship mast was

\(^4\)Pipe Flange—a threaded pipe support, which can be mounted with bolts or screws.
constructed out of 1" pipe and covered with burlap. This mast was supported with a light tower base.\textsuperscript{50} A street lamp was also built in a similar manner. This unit was U-bolted\textsuperscript{51} into a platform facing for support. Finally, a set of ocean waves were cut out of 1/8" pressed wood board, and covered with newspaper. These units would surround the down-stage area and be applied to the present stage facing. Additionally, old car tires were also applied to the general stage facing. The tires were mounted on 1/4" plywood circles with staples.

THE PAINTING

The painting of all units began as soon as each was completed. The painting was supervised by the designer and involved a series of steps. The first step was the application of a coat of backpaint to all raw wood surfaces, muslin areas, and platforms. The backpaint used was of a medium grey color which was a mixture of scrap latex\textsuperscript{52} and casein\textsuperscript{53} paints. The second step was determined by the individual units. The newspapered flats were finished using puddling\textsuperscript{54} and spattering\textsuperscript{55} techniques. The medium was very watered-down casein paint,

\textsuperscript{50}Light Tower Base—a heavy metal base used to support a tall section of pipe and lights.

\textsuperscript{51}U-Bolt—a type of treded rod shaped in a U, used to secure round objects to a flat surface.

\textsuperscript{52}Latex Paint—a water based paint using a synthetic rubber binder. It is known for its flexibility and durability. It is fast drying and permanent.

\textsuperscript{53}Casein Paint—the most popular type of scenery paint. It is a water based paint using a milk derivative binder. It is fast drying, permanent, and has excellent coverage.
much like diluted water-color wash. The colors used were Italian blue, "Naples Yellow" and a dirty grey-green. The actual amount of pigment in the paint was kept to a minimum so that the newspapers could still be seen clearly. The idea was to age the general appearance of the flats and to add a slight touch of color to the neutral tone of the newspaper.

The sea-wall and dock sections were treated in a manner similar to the flats, except the colors used were "Naples Yellow," Italian blue and a shade of aqua. The wave forms were also painted in a wet manner using Italian blue, blue-green, aqua and a blue-purple.

The floor areas and all units not newspapered were given a coat of dirty raw sienna and then spattered with "Naples Yellow" and a cream white. The exception to this was the water areas onstage, which were painted with the same colors used on the wave forms.

THE PROPERTIES

The trim props were added to the set during technical dress rehearsal week. These items consisted of signs for the cafe and market. Wine bottles, sausages, fish netting, cheeses, barrels and boxes were collected for the market area. The general set props consisted of such

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54 Puddling--a painting technique in which wet paint is allowed to flow and mix together.

55 Spattering--a painting technique, in which the brush is hit against the palm of the hand, causing a fine "dot like" distribution of paint.

56 "Naples Yellow"--a Grumbacher Academy water color hue, similar to a light orange yellow ochre.
such items as ship banners, clothes lines, barrels, boxes, and ropes. These props helped give atmosphere to the set, as well as serve the needs of the actors.

The set props consisted of an ice cream set table and two chairs. A 15 gallon barrel served as a second table. These items were chosen because of their softer curved lines, which gave an appropriate light-hearted feeling. Two wooden folding chairs were used with the barrel table. There was also a bicycle and wooden ladder. Most of these props were pulled from stock or easily found.

Finally, there were the hand props, which were fairly simple and easily found. The only ones which required extensive work were the slap-stick sausages and the fish. The sausages were constructed of a muslin tube which was stuffed with soft foam padding. The prop fish were cut out of foam padding. For a complete hand prop list, see Appendix 1.

THE LIGHTING

The lighting demands of Scapino were not severe. The first act was to begin with a sunrise and then move to bright daytime illumination. The second act was to take place at night and then move toward brighter illumination as the pace of the act increased.

The equipment available, as well as the newly created mounting positions, were the major determining factors of the design. An additional factor also developed as the lighting set-up progressed. This involved the amount of total power available for the instruments. It was believed that 24,000 watts were available; however the actual power
was determined by a 70 amp, 240 volt feed. Thus, the maximum power available was 16,800 watts which also had to include the house lights.

The equipment available for the production was as follows: 18 dimmers of which six were rated at a capacity of 3,000 watts and the remaining at 1,800 watts; 24 lekos of various sizes; and a small number of fresnel spotlights.

The stage was divided into eight basic areas (see Drawing for Light Plot). Downstage there were three areas, each lit by two lekos, one to either side. There were also three upstage areas. The stage-left and stage-right areas each employed three lekos and the center area used two lekos. Finally, there were two balcony areas; each of these employed two lekos. The eight basic areas served to give the stage a good, strong, even level of illumination. Each of the eight areas was controlled by a separate dimmer, thus allowing for good area control. The basic area lights were colored with half pieces of either Roscolene 803 (pale bastard amber) or Roscolene 804 (no color straw). The half pieces of color media were chosen because they seemed to give a more crisp feel to the light. They did this by only half filtering the light beam; thus the light had a punch similar to non-colored light. Yet, the beam still had enough color to cut the harsh qualities of "white light."

In addition to the eight areas, the lighting also contained

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57 Dimmer—an electrical device used to vary the intensity of the light.

58 Leko—a trade name for an ellipsoidal spotlight, utilizing an ellipsoidal reflector, shutters, and plano-convex lens, a high efficiency unit.
three general backlights. Each backlight was controlled by a separate dimmer. The lighting also contained a warm and cool wash. These warm and cool washes were of a pink and blue color respectively, and were comprised of a general soft frontal illumination. The warm wash was used to both tone the general illumination and provide the sunrise needs. The warm wash was provided by two lekos, controlled by a single dimmer and colored with Roscolene 835 (medium salmon pink). The cool wash was used for toning and as the basis of the evening lighting. This wash was provided by three 8" 1000 watt fresnel spotlights, controlled by two dimmers and colored with Roscolene 857 (medium blue). These units later received pieces of frost diffusion color media.

Also included in the lighting plot was a set of 6" fresnel spotlights used as cross-lights. These units were focused into the general stage center area. These units were to be used in the second act and were controlled by a single dimmer. The instruments were colored with Roscolene 842 (special lavender). This color was chosen because of its ability to blend with the evening blue light, yet warm up the general appearance of the actors' faces.

Finally, there was a single 6" fresnel spotlight focused at the

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59 Fresnel Spotlight—a spotlight which uses a fresnel lens; gives a soft but controllable beam of light.

60 Backlight—a lighting position, giving illumination to the rear of an object; aids in setting the object off from its background.

61 Cross-light—illumination coming from opposite sides of an object. The units are placed 90 degrees to the audience's axis, essentially side light illumination.
extreme downstage edge of the stage. This unit was used to illuminate both the actors and the wave forms located at the very edge of the stage. The unit was colored with Roscolene 858 (light green-blue).

Of the practical lighting units, the lamp post was controlled by a dimmer which also controlled a set of miniature lights of an Italian string type, which decorated the cafe entrance. As the lighting set-up progressed, it was discovered that the extreme downstage area was dim. This was due to its location and relationship to the mounting positions. To solve this problem, a single clip-on 150 watt R-40 floodlight\(^{62}\) was added to the plot. This unit was mounted on the front of the existing theatre balcony. The R-40 unit was also plugged into the same dimmer as the lamp post. Since the R-40 was only used in the first act and the lamp post and string lights in the second act, the units were replugged at the dimmer during the intermission.

Only a small number of light cues were used. This was because the director and the designer felt that a heavily cued show would hurt the flow of the scenes. In Act One there was a slow fade-up for the sunrise. This was done in a series of three steps, in keeping with the general flow of the action. In Act Two the scene began with an evening setting and then progressed through three slow changes. These resulted in an increased illumination, which was keyed to major plot progressions. This allowed the lighting to move from evening back to bright comedy lighting without drawing attention to itself.

\(^{62}\)R-40 Floodlight—a lamp which incorporates a built-in reflector, allowing a soft directional light beam. They are available in 150 watt and 300 watt sizes.
TECHNICAL DRESSES AND PERFORMANCE CHANGES

During the technical set-up period and the actual performances, several changes occurred. In terms of the lighting, this was an important period. It was during this time that the lighting cues were continually being worked on to smooth the transitions. Another concern was evening the light and filling the dim areas. It was also discovered during this time that the backlight really didn't perform as expected. This was because of their shallow positional angles and the large area that they needed to cover. Additionally, their light often spilled into the audience's eyes. The spill was corrected by keeping these units at a low dimmer level.

In the area of scenery, the most important problem was the amount of movement in the houses. The units were quite strong, but easily set in motion which was very distracting to the eye. This problem was overcome in two ways. First, additional cross-bracing was added to the support structures, and secondly, the actors toned down their very athletic movements. Another unit which provided many problems was the swinging cafe doors. The doors' construction and the hinges used in hanging them were too light for the heavy workout that the unit received. The doors were rebuilt and a different type of hinge was employed. This did not solve the problem, since the metal hinge pins were now being bent each night by the doors' continual use. A good solution was never found for this particular problem; therefore the doors had to be continually repaired.

Again due to the extensive use of the set, the sea-wall and dock piling units began to break down. These units were repaired and
strengthened during the run of the show. Additionally, these units were to be free standing if at all possible. However, due to their heavy use, they were secured to the floor with double headed nails. Because of these problems, when touring, a better method of supporting the units would have to be found, or the action would have to be toned down.

For the most part the properties were not a problem. Only two items received enough use to require attention. The slap-stick sausage which Scapino used was ripped open on one occasion and required rebuilding. Also, a few of the foam fish were torn and destroyed; therefore additional fish were constructed to replace the damaged ones.

Lastly, the onstage boat's mast was snapped off during a pre-show warm-up. This was quickly repaired by the technical director who welded the unit back onto the pipe flange at the bottom of the boat.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The intent of this paper was to trace and analyze the design process for Dunlop and Dale's Scapino. Particular emphasis was placed on the creative process and the resolution of the design. An attempt was made to show how the scenic forms related to the needs of the production and the influence that they must carry.

A firm understanding of the play's needs, research, and analysis creates a strong base, one on which any number of individual designs could evolve. While this design approach represents but one of these approaches to the play Scapino, it is hoped that the tracing of the creative process will aid others with similar projects.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of a design, the general comments and observations as expressed by the audience members are useful. The local newspaper drama reviewer, A. R. Moss, said, "The very excellent set and lighting design... consistently enhances the action on stage" (see Appendix IV). Other comments on the set and lighting from various audience members touched on the set's ability to handle extensive action and to play a major role in the actors' performances. One audience member also commented on the lighting, saying that he felt it was a very nice, even illumination that had a nice feeling to it.

Another source of information on the success of the design came from comments by the actors who were in *Scapino*. Suzanne Cook, one of the Italiano's, a group of secondary characters, said the scenery really helped her gain a hold on her character and the mood of the play. Several of the other actors also commented on how the scenery aided them in achieving specific moments on stage. Many of them also wished that the scenery had been up earlier, in order that they might have got more rehearsal time on it. The only part of the scenery that the actors felt uncomfortable with were the stairs on stage-left. They wished that some sort of railing had been incorporated into them for safety purposes.

During the critique session with the A.C.T.F. judges several good comments were made about the scenery that help gain a perspective on its effectiveness. The judges thought that for the most part the design was good and appropriate to the production. They did, however, react to several specific items. The judges felt that the stage-left stair unit needed to have a railing for actor safety. They also commented on the color of the set and its relationship to the costumes by questioning the separation of color. They felt that the set could have used more color and that this would have helped strengthen the festive mood of the visual picture. The judges were also concerned about the touring aspects and the production's ability to convert to a proscenium stage form.

In a general critique session held after the production closed, several new items were mentioned. A graduate assistant in the Art Department commented on the set's delicate visual balance, which allowed
for many excellent points of visual focus. Several of the comments at this session concerned the production's diverse visual, as well as production styles. Many of the Department of Drama/Dance faculty felt that the production's visual elements, sets, lights, costumes, makeup, and even acting style did not mesh to form a clear production style. While this problem seemed to be expressed only by theatre people and not by the general viewing public, it does represent one of the major problems of the production. This might be the result of theatre people's concern for a consistency of production elements. It almost seemed that the general public was more willing to take part and enjoy the zany "off-the-wall" mood created by the juxtaposition of the many diverse elements and the theatrical approach used. It seemed that theatre people had a tendency to view the production with a more "critical eye," and therefore sat as an objective viewer rather than a subjective one. Even with this, the production team failed to work from the same concepts. While they operated from the same verbal concept, they failed to sufficiently define the terms collectively. This resulted in three similar, yet somewhat different approaches to the play.

The director did not feel that the extent of differences was harmful to the production. The scenic designer felt that the scenic approach was in accord with the director's style, and the director concurred. The scenic designer did not feel that the costume and scenic design approaches meshed well, because of the differences in the degree of theatrical style. The local reviewer A. R. Moss said, "The costumes... are appropriate in style to the play, but a few tend to
overpower the actors who wear them."\(^{64}\)

At the heart of the visual design problem was the very question of where the production's base of reality rested. The costumes were comprised of both extremely abstracted pieces and street-wear off the "rack" items. The set was mostly based on a lightly toned sense of the theatrical. Combined with these items was an acting and directing style which varied from "music hall to lightly realistic." The production team was never truly able to agree on the level of reality and then stick to it.

In a retrospective meeting with the director, Alan Cook, some of the production problems and success were discussed. It was felt that the major success of the setting was its dynamic ability to provide exciting movement patterns for the director and actor and provide for a good audience/performer contact. It was indeed a "fun place to be," for the actors onstage. It was felt that the properties were also a major success. The director felt that they added much to the business of the show and were appropriate to the production approach. The only complaint was that they were not present early enough in rehearsals. The director felt that the actor focus within the scenic environment was strong and that the extreme grubbiness and sense of spontaneity were right for the production.

In terms of the lighting, Director Cook expressed the feeling that the lighting had that clean, crisp mood desired. He further felt that the evening lighting of the second act and the changes of levels

\(^{64}\)Ibid.
as the act progressed greatly helped to set the correct mood. The designer felt that the lighting did indeed achieve the desired goals, but possibly a more theatrical concept might have done the same, while helping to close some of the style gap.

Other comments on the lighting were less favorable. The costume designer felt that the lighting had far too many shadow areas. The faculty scenic designer commented that he felt the lighting on the set was far too bright during most of the show and thus distracted from the acting.

The major problems that the production suffered from seemed to again center on the diverse production elements. The director felt that the production would have had a better unity if more time had been available and a less eclectic approach taken. A second major problem was the scenic sightlines to the upper balconies on the set. These were blocked off by the low height of the permanent audience balcony. It was felt by the director that a serious error had been made in this area. It might be added that this was due in part to the A.C.T.F. contest aspects of the production, which required it to play on a large proscenium stage.

As to the touring and proscenium conversion problems, these are of a more speculative nature, since the production was not selected for regional competition. The director did, however, feel that in converting from the present thrust staging to a proscenium form, much of the jetty and water area would be lost. It was felt that the production and setting could make the conversion, but only at the sacri-
fice of the jetty feeling and more importantly the excellent performer to audience relationships that would be hard to keep in a proscenium form.

The designer felt that for the most part the design was workable for tour, and would take the handling imposed by the limited number of performances. There were, however, serious questions related to set-up time demands. It was felt that some items would need to be reworked slightly to make the set-up move faster. These reworkings would be due primarily to the abbreviated construction methods used on some units by the technical director, in an effort to meet the show's original production dates. One of the items which would be of benefit in the tour situation was the ability for the lighting needs to be easily handled with a standard light hang, which would be used by the A.C.T.F. host theatre. Thus, some time would be saved in this area.

In conclusion, the scenic designer feels that the production was successful. The design could have been improved, however, if a stronger effort had been made toward resolving the style problems. The designer feels that a better design would have resulted if a greater degree of theatricality was used in the set, while still retaining the strong sense of reality and humanity. A movement in this direction would have also eased some of the style differences.

As a closing comment, the scenic designer would like to express a truly rewarding joy in the collaborative process that he shared with the director. Although the final product was not as pure and strong as the shared verbal concepts expressed by the director and designers, the developmental process experienced by the designer was one of the
most rewarding experiences of the entire project.
APPENDIX I
PROPERTY LIST

Act I: 3 tablecloths -- Waiters

Broom -- Waiter

Bag of clothes and pins -- Waitress

Bicycle -- Carlo

Bicycle parts -- Waiters

Chocolate bar -- Sylvestro

2 cokes and glasses -- Sylvestro

Sword -- Argante

Order-pad and pencil -- Headwaiter

Napkin -- Waiter

Fork -- Waiter

Plate of spaghetti -- Waiter

Bottle of wine -- Waiter

2 wine glasses -- Waiter

Plate of bread -- Waiter

Shoeshine kit -- Carlo

Plate and bill -- Headwaiter

Pocket change -- Sylvestro

Pocket change -- Scapino

Umbrella -- Geronte

Sausage -- Leandro

Sausage -- Scapino
Act I:  Drinking straw -- Scapino
      Coil of rope -- Waiter
      Wooden ladder -- Scapino
      Pocket money -- Leandro
      Telephone -- Carlo
      Assorted foam fish and fishing gear -- Waiters
      Pocket calculator -- Waiter
      Bicycle chain -- Sylvestro
      Wallet and money -- Argante
      Key -- Geronte
      Wallet and money -- Geronte
      Swim mask -- Leandro
      Swim mask -- Ottavio
      Swim fins -- Leandro
      Swim fins -- Ottavio
      Snorkel -- Leandro
      Snorkel -- Ottavio
      Hangmans-noose -- Leandro
      Watch -- Scapino
      Wig -- Scapino
      Italian newspaper -- Carlo

Act II:  Sausage -- Scapino
      Bracelet -- Leandro
      2 ice cream cones -- Waiter
      Sack -- Headwaiter
**APPENDIX II**

**BUDGET**

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*This amount includes additional quantities of supplies bought in preparation for up-coming shows. The estimated cost of materials used directly for Scapino is $625.

1This amount is the estimated total cost of materials used only for Scapino.
APPENDIX III

PHOTOGRAPHS
APPENDIX IV

REVIEW
UM's 'Scapino' an impetuous, comedic romp

By A.R. Mos Art Reviewer

The University of Montana's production of "Scapino," a Moliere farce updated by Frank Dunlop and Jim Dale, is an impetuous romp of considerable charm.

Although the director and actors apparently had trouble deciding whether to play in Commedia style or something more reminiscent of Monty Python, overall it's an agreeable way to spend an evening.

Scapino is a character out of Greek comedy handed down to us via Commedia dell Arte and immortalized by Moliere. Scapino is the original wily servant who will do almost anything to gain his own ends, but who has a soft spot in his heart for young lovers and invariably gets into all kinds of scrapes trying to assist them. In short, he's a lovable scamp.

In this play we have not one but two sets of star-crossed lovers to aid and two comical fathers to foil. The plot is complex but inconsequential — in this type of play it's a foregone conclusion that everything will come out all right.

In one wild caper, Geronte, one of the famous fathers in question, has been lured by Scapino into hiding in a sack to elude some mythical enemies he believes are out to kill him. Scapino then assumes the role of several different hired assassins and beats on Geronte in the sack. Ultimately, Scapino becomes a whole British regiment with the help of the audience and, as the commander, he orders Scapino to "Tell me where Geronte is — or I will attack your sack." The sack groans and collapses on the floor. It's funny because it's given time to play.

As Scapino, Bob Hall makes a good start on the character. The role requires the agility of a gymnast, the timing of a stand-up comedian and the concentration of an Einstein to keep it all together. For a first try he does okay.

Jerry McGarity as Sylvestro, Scapino's friend and cohort in crime, once again proves himself a promising actor. His Hells Angel-type, hood, is well done, but I hope he'll let himself go more and carry the parody to its absurd extreme.

Wayne Crouse and Anthony Doyle are well-cast as the two fathers, though both need to flesh out the comic buffoonery of their parts a bit more. Thomas Gebbie and Joe Arnold are the love-sick males, and Donna Leggert and Sheila Conney are the ingenues they're after. The two sets of lovers are uniformly farcical and 우리나라.

David Mandella contributes his fine farce to the proceedings along with an intriguing ability to do the old tablecloth trick with superb finesse. Mary Thillen, Darryl Brandbrook, Suzanne Aline Garret Meyer and Phil Jordan round out the competent cast.

The staging of this show is fine, the sight gags and jokes all will succeed if the actors will open up and let this timeless farce work with them.

The costumes by Richard Donnelly are appropriate in style to the play, but a few tend to overpower the actors who wear them. The very excellent set and lighting design by Michael Brooks consistently enhances the action on stage.

Review

Overall it's an enjoyable way to spend an evening.

Scapino is a character out of Greek comedy handed down to us via Commedia dell Arte and immortalized by Moliere. Scapino is the original wily servant who will do almost anything to gain his own ends, but who has a soft spot in his heart for young lovers and invariably gets into all kinds of scrapes trying to assist them. In short, he's a lovable scamp.

In this play we have not one but two sets of star-crossed lovers to aid and two comical fathers to foil. The plot is complex but inconsequential — in this type of play it's a foregone conclusion that everything will come out all right.

The story is mainly a device on which to hang a series of comic interludes; there are double takes, double talk, double entendres and lots of sight gags. Such a "zoup de force" requires a very solid understanding of style, and that is where the weak points show in this production.

Broad comedy should be played consistently broad. Subtlety is confusing when the audience is reveling in a vigorous duel fought with two oversized salamis in one scene and another is played with delicate nuances of facial expression and gesture.

Director Alan Cook has employed many sight gags and devices to keep the pace up. There are wonderful Commedia dell Arte scenes in and out, up, and down, and in a madly chamber, and some humorous underwater scenes. (No, I'm not going to explain how it's done.) The pace and the energy are certainly up, but in the latter part of the action I sometimes found myself wishing the actors would complete their takes and double takes rather than rushing past them. In visual comedy that's tantamount to swallowing the punch line.

In one wild caper, Geronte, one of the fathers in question, has been lured by Scapino into hiding in a sack to elude some mythical enemies he believes are out to kill him. Scapino then assumes the role of several different hired assassins and beats on Geronte in the sack. Ultimately, Scapino becomes a whole British regiment with the help of the audience and, as the commander, he orders Scapino to "Tell me where Geronte is — or I will attack your sack." The sack groans and collapses on the floor. It's funny because it's given time to play.

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The staging of this show is fine, the sight gags and jokes all will succeed if the actors will open up and let this timeless farce work with them.

The costumes by Richard Donnelly are appropriate in style to the play, but a few tend to overpower the actors who wear them. The very excellent set and lighting design by Michael Brooks consistently enhances the action on stage.

The Great Western Stage debuts with this production. The new theater is on the second floor of Main Hall. As a small intimate theater, it provides a new alternative to the Masquer Theater. The new theater is a thrust stage whereas the Masquer is built arena style. The drama department faculty and students have put a lot of time and energy into transforming the ancient lecture hall into a theater; their efforts have paid off.

"Scapino" will play this week through Saturday and Wednesday through Saturday of next week. Performances start at 8 p.m. Reservations can be made by calling 243-4581.
APPENDIX V

PROGRAM
University of Montana
School of Fine Arts
Department of Drama/Dance
present
The Great Western Stage Company's
Premiere Play

MOLIERE'S

SCAPINO

adapted by Frank Dunlop and Jim Dale

November 8-11, 15-18  8 P.M.
A new theatre in Old Main
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DRAWINGS