An Experimental Theatre Approach to a Mormon Theme Using the Work of the Open Theatre as Prototype

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AN EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE APPROACH TO A MORMON THEME

USING THE WORK OF THE OPEN THEATRE

AS PROTOTYPE

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

Experimental theatres have been founded in all parts of the world: the Polish Laboratory Theatre, the San Francisco Mime Troupe, the touring Living Theatre, England's Theatre of Cruelty, and New York's Open Theatre. Experimenting with techniques and operating on a shoestring, they have pumped life into the supposedly dying theatre. Disappointing to me, the subject matter of their productions has tended to be profane or despairing. Yet a glance at their techniques reveals a freshness of approach that prompts a second look.

The question is, can these experimental techniques be turned to a goal different from that for which they were created? Can they be used to express Mormon religious beliefs rather than popular or political ones? To answer this question, I created the experimental play, An Afternoon's Work, using the approach developed by the Open Theatre. The name "Open Theatre" refers to a group of actors under the direction of Joseph Chaikin in New York City who originally came together in 1963 and decided to be "open" to any experimental work. The method, as described in Pasolli's A Book on the Open Theatre, starts with exercises in which "every one exercise leads to ten others and the work is embodied in our

mistakes, discussions, thoughts and discoveries."¹ A few years ago, the Open Theatre produced _The Serpent_, created largely from improvisational work. Dealing with Biblical themes, it concerned itself with man's exile and alienation. I started with the theme, "Ye must . . . become as a little child or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God,"² and used similar methods to create a fifty-minute play.

The purpose of this thesis, then, is to describe and evaluate those methods which produced _An Afternoon's Work_, in order to provide others with guidelines to producing future plays of this type.

**Scope**

The creation of this experimental Mormon play will be placed in perspective by a brief comparison of the ideology behind experimental theatres, the Open Theatre in particular, with Mormon ideology. The thesis will discuss the four main items which contributed to the creation of the play: the work of the actors, the work of the director, the techniques used, and their refinement. Audience response will be documented, and recommendations and conclusions will conclude the thesis.

In order to examine the process used to create _An Afternoon's Work_, three things were employed: (1) a day-by-day log (a summary of which is included in Appendix A); (2) a tape-recorder to document the verbal part of the session; and (3) critiques by the cast of the various exercises, written at the conclusion of the rehearsal sessions.


²Joseph Smith, trans. Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City, Utah: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1966), III Nephi 11:37. As with other quotations from III Nephi, this scripture can also be found in the New Testament.
In order to evaluate the success of *An Afternoon's Work*, three things were used: (1) questionnaires filled out by the audience after the performance (sample included in Appendix B), (2) a count of the house on three successive nights, and (3) a recording of the play in its entirety (revised script included in Appendix C).

**Limitations**

In this thesis I hope to describe a pathway for interested persons to follow. It is my belief that the accurate observations in my work can provide the interested individual with some measurement of what the actors, the director, and the techniques can contribute to a future production. However, as in any creative work, the immeasurable factor of personality is strong. I was the sole observer of the process, as well as the molder of that process. There is no doubt my personality affected the result. For this reason, no firm prediction can be made from this thesis. Another person, using the same methods, is not guaranteed success; on the other hand, that same person might succeed using different methods. It is, in fact, impossible for me to say just which among the many factors were responsible for the result: personality, refinement process, cast, or some other factor. My task is to mention all the ingredients and let the reader discern for himself.

Other features distinguished this production which might not be duplicated in a further study. In the first place, time was limited by scheduling difficulties and by busy student schedules. I was not able to experiment for as long a period as our prototype.

Secondly, although improvisationally created, the show was not improvisational in performance. Following our prototype, my company and
I did not begin with a set structure, but we ended up with one.

Thirdly, the environment in which we worked had some distinctive characteristics. Brigham Young University is a predominantly apolitical or conservative campus. The university standards are as follows:

High standards of honor, integrity, and morality . . . are required of every student. . . . [Students must] subscribe to a campus-wide code of personal neatness. For their physical well-being, students and staff members alike pledge to avoid tobacco, alcohol, coffee, tea and harmful drugs. Similarly for the well-being of the University, BYU people pledge constructive progress. Student disturbances and destructive acts are not part of the educational process at BYU.¹

¹Welcome to Brigham Young University, pamphlet published by Brigham Young University (Provo, Utah, December, 1969).
CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND

Theory and Practice of Experimental Theatres

The greatest influence on experimental theatres today has come from two books: The Theatre and its Double, by Antonin Artaud, and Towards a Poor Theatre, by Jerzy Grotowski. The one has provided theory and inspiration; the other, the techniques.

Artaud, the apostle of the "Theatre of Cruelty," advocated as early as 1938 a new type of theatre, one which would be as sweeping in effect as the plague.

In the theatre as in the plague there is a kind of strange sun, a light of abnormal intensity by which it seems that the difficult and even the impossible suddenly become our normal element. . . . It releases conflicts, disengages powers, liberates possibilities. Like the plague, the theatre is cruel, because it leaves nothing in its wake "except death or an extreme purification . . . for impelling men to see themselves as they are, it causes the mask to fall, reveals the lie, the slackness, baseness, and hypocrisy of our world." Language does not have the power of the plague to "shake the


organism to its foundations and leave an ineffaceable scar."\(^1\) Words generate reflection and thought, and are the medium of books. Theatre demands a new language; it should be "a space thundering with images and crammed with sounds";\(^2\) a place for sensuous images and nonlinguistic sounds which bypass the mind and affect the spectator with immediacy. "The public thinks first of all with its senses and . . . to address oneself first to its understanding as the ordinary psychological theatre does is absurd."\(^3\)

Artaud's theories have become popular. Grotowski, in his work with the Polish Laboratory Theatre, has put some of them into practice. Grotowski states that "The essence of theatre is the actor";\(^4\) he has devised a new method of actor training, in which the actor explores possible gestures, movements and associations to express the "poetry of the senses" that Artaud advocated. The actor's range of voice and body is widened beyond that of a normal actor's. He becomes the master of unusual nonlinguistic sounds and difficult acrobatics.

In this search for a new theatrical language, the script is no longer venerated. Artaud wrote, "Written poetry is worth reading once, and then should be destroyed."\(^5\) In Grotowski's version of *Akropolis*, the time and place are changed, and from the vision of hope intended by the author is created "a tragi-comedy of rotten values."\(^6\) Experimental theatres around the world have been influenced by these two men. In many

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 77. \(^2\)Ibid., p. 87. \(^3\)Ibid., p. 107.  
\(^4\)Grotowski, *Poor Theatre*, p. 175.  
such theatres the script is either abandoned or rearranged beyond recognition. Critic Kenneth Tynan describes a British experiment in this way:

After student revolt this is actor revolt. The text, chosen perhaps for its feebleness, becomes a pretext for guerilla warfare, in which the audience is surrounded, infiltrated and dive-bombed by the players. Their class enemy... is the author. "To the tumbril with the wordsmiths!" is the evening's implicit message... And the director, instead of supporting the king, joins forces with the mob. The result is civil war: non-verbal theatre shouting down verbal theatre, and achieving a state of deafening deadlock.\(^1\)

Along with de-emphasizing the script, experimental theatres are searching for new nonverbal methods of communication.

It has not been definitely proved that the language of words is the best possible language.\(^2\)... It is essential to put an end to the subjugation of the theatre to the text and to recover the notion of a kind of unique language half-way between gesture and thought.\(^3\)

In the search for a new language actors explore other arts. The Open Theatre uses an exercise in which the actors use their voices as instruments in an orchestra. Charles Marowitz, director of the one-time "Theatre of Cruelty" in England (1966), had his actors paint their reactions to improvised scenes.\(^4\) Movement, however, seems to receive the most emphasis.

Dance expresses movement feelings which cannot be put into words. Every movement we make is accompanied by diffuse emotional states which cannot be verbalized.\(^5\)

Movement uses the actor's whole being in an expressive and nonverbal way.


\(^2\)Artaud, Its Double, p. 107.  \(^3\)Ibid., p. 89.


Behind the desire for this nonverbal communication lies a desire for nonintellectual ways to work. Verbal communication makes experience intelligible and within the bounds of rationality; to work without verbalized thought puts one in touch with subconscious and irrational areas of experience. In Grotowski's training, "thought must be excluded." Viola Spolin, whose book *Improvisation for the Theatre* lists many innovative techniques, constantly advises actors not to plan ahead but to trust their intuition. The Living Theatre, an itinerant experimental theatre founded in New York City by Judith Malina and Julian Beck, carries this idea to an extreme and purposely throws out all objective thinking. "Our thinking is conditioned by a corrupt society," says Mr. Beck.

Another view of experimental goals is given in *Time Magazine*.

The contemporary theatre is undergoing both an identity crisis and a crisis of survival. It is trying to discover its pre-verbal origins and it is trying to isolate what it is that theatre can uniquely do that films and television cannot do. This has led in two directions, one sacred, the other profane, both of which have always been at the heart of theatre. With Jerzy Grotowski and the Polish Laboratory Theatre, the emphasis is on the sacred, on a lacerating spiritual intensity, a stripping to the soul. With *Hair* and *Oh! Calcutta* the emphasis is on the profane, on Dionysian revels, a stripping to the body.

Although not a part of the ideology of Artaud or Grotowski, many experimental theatres embrace the profane; in fact, this phase of their

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output has received much notoriety. The secular has been substituted for the sacred; in some theatres politics substitutes for the sacred. The Living Theatre, for instance, was founded for the express purpose of overthrowing our "corrupt society." In their original play, Paradise Now, they asked audience members who had paid their income tax to leave. At one time in jail, at another time forced to leave the country, Judith Malina says, "I don't think we came to a breakthrough in the theatre until we became frankly political."¹ Steve Friedman, a member of the San Francisco Mime Troupe, says, "We believe that the American government is the most efficient and thorough form of Fascism the world has ever known... and must be changed by any means necessary."² Political education classes are offered actors in the Troupe, in which they are exposed to works by Marx, Lenin, and Mao. Joseph Chaikin, director of the Open Theatre, states, "The mode of behavior which a theatre chooses to emphasize is a political choice, whatever the content. To accept naturalism is to collaborate, to accept society's limits."³

Their political choice seems to stand for freedom from these supposedly intolerable limits. In Paradise Now, actors from the Living Theatre say, "I cannot travel without a passport, I cannot take off my clothes, I cannot smoke marijuana." However, Artaud foresaw that this "freedom is dark, and infallibly identified with sexual freedom which is


also dark, although we do not know precisely why." The sexual freedom in the avant-garde theatre has received the most publicity. The 1969-70 Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature lists these articles on experimental theatres: "Naked Craze," "Nude Brood," and "Sex as a Spectator Sport." Robert Brustein, director of the Yale School of Drama, dubs this theatre "a springboard for calisthenics, puberty rites, group therapy and a prolonged orgy."2

Sex and violence seem to go together. Political revolution entails violence. Artaud's "Theatre of Cruelty" has sometimes been interpreted to mean a hostile treatment of the audience or a shocking display of gore on the stage, to the intent of making the spectator a more dedicated revolutionary. Charles Marowitz interprets "cruelty" to mean violence to the actor's and audience's self.

The cruelty that Artaud referred to (this is a truism worth repeating) did not refer exclusively to torture, blood, violence, and plague--but to the cruellest of all practices: the exposure of mind, heart, and nerve-ends to . . . the existential horror behind all social and psychological facades.3

Either expressing an inner or outer cruelty, the theatre again seems to be a place for dark powers. "It is not in the theatre that dark powers can be controlled; more likely that these powers will turn the theatre to their own ends."4

Certainly in this dark array of revolution, sexuality, and cruelty, Mormon religious doctrine would be hard pressed to find a place.

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1Artaud, Its Double, p. 30.
4Grotowski, Poor Theatre, p. 124.
As a Mormon, I accept certain dark powers as part of the world in which we live, but I do not condone them. I do not welcome them into the theatre. I accept society's limits as a welcome control of these powers and believe man's criticism of himself to be more important than his criticism of society.

Fortunately some types of experimental theatre have led in another direction: the sacred. Grotowski's "stripping to the soul" aims at precisely this inner criticism. He writes:

We are concerned with the spectator who has genuine spiritual needs and who really wishes, through confrontation with the performance, to analyze himself. We are concerned [with speaking] . . . to him who undergoes an endless process of self-development, whose unrest is not general but directed towards a search for the truth about himself and his mission in life.1

The Constant Prince, performed by the Polish Laboratory Theatre, revolved around the suffering of a Christ-like figure. Similarly, The Serpent, by the Open Theatre, concerned itself with the Biblical themes of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel. The Serpent was well received by the critics: "It recognizes the necessity to blend word and image, to speak to the audience's intellect and sensibility as well as to its emotions, to do everything to a unified purpose."2 Although of doubtful spiritual intent, its concern with Biblical subject matter aroused my interest in the Open Theatre and caused me to study it further.

The Open Theatre as Prototype

I chose the Open Theatre as my prototype because of all the experimental theatres in this country it seems to produce the most

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1Ibid., p. 40.

seriously artistic work. Vietrock by Megan Terry, América Hurrah, Terminal and The Serpent by Jean-Claude van Italie have come from its workshops. Although these plays do have political overtones, they are less polemical in subject matter than those produced by the Living Theatre or the San Francisco Mime Troupe. Also, unlike many experimental theatres, the Open Theatre has remained in operation for eight years. Along with the Polish Laboratory Theatre, it has developed and made available to others new acting techniques. In general, their theatrical goals seem to be applicable to Mormon purposes.

A distinction must be made here between theatrical goals and ideological goals. Experimental theatre goals are concerned with the new theatrical form: nonscripted, nonverbal, and nonintellectual. Ideological goals are concerned with the message that form is expressing: political revolution, sensuality, shock, or despair.

Joseph Chaikin has defined the goals of the Open Theatre as follows:

To redefine the limits of the stage experience, or unfix them. To find ways of reaching each other and the audience. To encourage and inspire the playwrights who work with us. To find ways of presenting plays and improvisational programs without the pressure of money, real estate, and other commercial considerations which usurp creative energy. To develop the ensemble.¹

"To redefine the limits of the stage experience," Chaikin, like Artaud and Grotowski, searches for nonnaturalistic and nonverbal methods of communicating. All the arts--dance, painting, music--have revolutionized their medium by finding abstract ways of interpreting the world around them. Theatre has remained more realistic. Chaikin sets a new goal:

¹Chaikin, "The Open Theatre," p. 191.
"to make something theatrical out of something abstract."¹ "To find ways of reaching each other and the audience," the Open Theatre borrows methods from modern psychology, such as sensitivity training. "To develop the ensemble," the actors dispense with the star system. These and other methods are described in detail in _A Book on the Open Theatre_.

"To encourage and inspire the playwrights," the Open Theatre has worked with playwrights Megan Terry, Jean-Claude van Italie, and Michael Smith. While Chaikin's aim, like Artaud's, is "to break through language in order to touch life,"² he does not condemn language. Lastly, "to find ways of presenting plays . . . without the pressure of money," he follows Grotowski's ethic of a "poor theatre" and "works without props, costumes, or scenery."³ The actors' bodies can be props, their own clothing the costumes, and simple benches and stools the scenery.

I felt these goals could be adopted for our purposes. The goal of encouraging playwrights especially appealed to me. Some experimental theatres feel a playwright encroaches upon actor creativity, but the Open Theatre is willing to work with someone who will give their experimentation meaning and structure.

I must admit that I am unsure of the exact relationship between director and playwright in the Open Theatre workshops. The relationship between actors and playwright is very close, so that an interchange of ideas easily occurs. Playwright Megan Terry attended many workshops for _Vietrock_; and as the actors exchanged personal stories and newspaper accounts that dealt with Vietnam and "the essense of violence," Megan

³Chaikin, "The Open Theatre," p. 194.
Terry "worked to expose these qualities, then formalized them."\(^1\)

To achieve this goal of encouraging playwrights, I asked a student playwright, Jerry Argetsinger, to attend our rehearsals. Coming only in later sessions, he provided helpful suggestions and rewrote one crucial scene, but his playwrighting skills were never fully utilized. The formalization of our show was accomplished by the director rather than by the playwright.

In its ideological goals the Open Theatre could not serve as our prototype. Although the ideology is never explicitly stated by Chaikin, it is implied in their plays. \textit{Vietrock}, for instance, is an indictment of the war in Vietnam, and \textit{America Hurrah} an indictment of the American way of life. As Mormons, we are entitled to a variety of political views, but we do believe "in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law."\(^2\) Again \textit{The Serpent} is a "ceremony of mourning"\(^3\) and \textit{Terminal} a nightmare of death; we believe that "men are, that they might have joy."\(^4\)

All experimental movements, Chaikin says, "agree that we are stunned creatures living in an untenable world."\(^5\) He admires the directors of the Living Theatre, in which he was once an actor, because they "express the nightmare within them, there is no gap between their

\(^1\)Megan Terry, "Vietrock," \textit{Drama Review}, 11 (Fall, 1966), p. 197.

\(^2\)Joseph Smith, \textit{Articles of Faith} (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1966), Number 12.

\(^3\)Pasolli, \textit{Open Theatre}, p. 125.

\(^4\)Book of Mormon, II Nephi 2:25.

life and their work. That's marvelous."¹ In his view, man has two sides: the political or social self, and the inner self, which is lonely and unhappy.

Introspection is most often morbid because we understand that this inner man is trapped. . . . Emphasis on the inner self which bypasses the social self results in the discovery of one's deep sense of misery.²

The work of the Open Theatre is directed towards both the inner and political self. Terminal concentrates on this inner misery but was to be performed for the Philadelphia Resistance to the Vietnam War to raise money for the cause. The Serpent contrasts man's alienation with the Kennedy murders. Misery in both cases seems to be linked to the existing order.

The Mormon faith encourages me to have faith in my inner self, in spite of loneliness or unhappiness with the existing order. "We may say that we follow the admonition of Paul--We believe all things, we hope all things we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things."³ Although I chose to work in this new mode of theatre, I considered this choice apolitical. My purpose in using experimental techniques was to change man's spirit, not his politics; to reach his inner self and alleviate his misery, not expose it. Politics and misery may have their place in the theatre, but so do spiritual qualities of faith and hope.

At the root of these ideological differences, I believe, is our belief that life has a purpose. The universe has a plan and it is up to

¹Chaikin, "The Open Theatre," p. 197.
²Chaikin, "Interview/Fragments," p. 146.
³Joseph Smith, Articles of Faith, Number 13.
man to discover and obey it. Christ said, "I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect."¹

Through repentance and obedience to the laws of heaven, man can eventually achieve perfection. "The glory of God is intelligence";² through an eternal progression man can come to know the truth of all things. Thus while many experimental theatres are expressing despair at the purposelessness of life, a Mormon-oriented theatre would seek to strengthen an audience's faith and hope by uplifting and ennobling their spirits; it would seek to encourage them to this specific purpose.

The following outline should make clear some of the differences between experimental and traditional theatre techniques, and experimental and Mormon ideologies.

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²Joseph Smith, Doctrine and Covenants (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1966), 93:36.
Techniques

<table>
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<th>Experimental</th>
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<td>roles</td>
<td>tasks</td>
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<tr>
<td>product</td>
<td>process¹</td>
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Block as soon as possible

Final decisions as soon as possible

I take orders

Just as we rehearsed it

My many years of professional experience convince me that

Nothing is ever the same²

Ideology

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<th>Mormon Experimental Theatre</th>
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<td>makes a rational point as well</td>
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<td>creates political revolution</td>
<td>creates a spiritual revolution</td>
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<td>nakedness of body</td>
<td>nakedness of soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exposes misery</td>
<td>alleviates misery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uncovers dark powers</td>
<td>careful! encourages powers for good</td>
</tr>
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A Visit to the Open Theatre

Over Thanksgiving vacation I had the opportunity to visit the Open Theatre and to view a run-through of *Terminal*. I had phoned Joseph Chaikin and told him I planned to apply his techniques to Mormon themes. Too busy for an interview, he cordially invited me to attend a rehearsal, and said he was very interested in what I was doing, and would I explain it to the cast? He mentioned that they might allow me to attend a closed rehearsal for *Mutations*, a work then in the formative stages.

On Thanksgiving Day, at 10:00 A.M., I went to their headquarters in "The Space," 344 West 36th Street. Mr. Chaikin's attitude had changed. No longer so interested, he resisted my attempts to talk; no mention was made of my attending a further rehearsal.

Nevertheless I was able to question some members of the cast between their warm-ups and rehearsal. One girl, Tina, was obliging; others were less so. A CBS man, who overheard a conversation, said, "You can't do it... You're going to rub a lot of people the wrong way. You're going to run smack into Brigham Young!" I did not feel welcome.

From Chaikin's comments in the *Drama Review* and from Tina, I can partially reconstruct the rehearsal period for *Terminal*. Tina told me that they rehearsed for about a year, starting from scratch and working every day (including Thanksgiving) from ten-thirty to four o'clock. The morning (ten-thirty to noon) was spent in classes chosen by the cast. For instance, they learned the voice techniques of Linkletter and Grotowski, and the movement of Murray Louis. "There is no perfect technique for us," said Tina. "Each is a style and we don't want their
style. . . . We have no rules, but we set a goal. We take aim and then try to get there."

For **Terminal**, the aim was clear: to express feelings about death. To this end, the actors visited real situations, such as a murder trial, a mortuary, etc. Kneeling in front of each other, they told of past experiences with death. They improvised scenes based on these materials. Three collaborative playwrights visited the workshop and worked up scripts. The actors used various techniques, such as described in *A Book on the Open Theatre*, in an attempt to express this material in a nonnaturalistic way.

Before the run-through, the group gathered around Chaikin to discuss some details. Besides the six cast members, the public relations man was also present, plus the technical man, the costume mistress, the drum player (the theatre wasn't totally "poor"), the assistant director Roberta Sklar (with whom Chaikin conferred on everything), and about eight guests, who, like me, had been invited to watch the run-through.

The room didn't have the buzz of excitement which I associate with creative work. With subdued voices and solemn faces, the cast reviewed the sequence of scenes. An undisguised sheet of paper was taped to the stage floor with the sequence on it. Chaikin asked two members of the cast to switch roles for one scene, which apparently was easily done; he reviewed the intent of one scene; he received all suggestions by saying, "Let's try that; let's try that."

The room was painted black; furniture was nonexistent (the audience was expected to fend for itself); lighting from an overhead pipe created a proscenium-type playing area; the costumes were carefully
sewn together from white rags (one actor was stripped nude to pass through death); percussion instruments lay to one side; some benches and tables were scenery.

Terminal

There was definitely something stunning about it. The acting technique shone through splendidly. All six actors, with one exception (he was new), were consistently alert and alive. They all had amazing voices and used the reverberating walls to macabre advantage. There was no plot, only a dream-like series of images, announced in succession at a microphone. Movement was seemingly random but would suddenly congeal into choreography. The tempo was stupifying; words would be repeated over and over with mesmerizing effect; any change was startling. Two sticks tapping together sounded like irregular drops of water, marking off the slow passage of time.

The effect of a year's thought was evident. Each gesture was performed with great intensity of purpose, although that purpose was not always clear. The play had more meaning for the actors than for myself, yet their thoughts almost seemed palpable in the electrically charged atmosphere. Some of the images were freaky, such as "The Dance on the Graves of the Dead" in which some actors slowly placed black tape over their vacant eyes.

Although I had found my previous communication with the cast dismaying, I found this communication more dismaying. They portrayed a sense of starkness, of emptiness, of living death. There was no joy in these people, only a "deep sense of inner misery." I did not know how they wished to affect their audience. Did they wish to ignore us,
irritate us, or make us miserable? At times the images bordered on satire, yet the laugh was stifled in my throat. I hesitated to react, yet these images affected me powerfully; their subconscious visions of hell seemed to be communicating directly to mine. Perhaps they desired such communication, like a nightmare shared between us. Yes, they achieved that.

While Terminal seemed a frightful dream, it was excellently done. It enhanced my belief that the techniques used by the Open Theatre had power to communicate. It strengthened my determination to proceed with my own Mormon experimental show, to reject their ideology and turn their techniques to new ends.
CHAPTER II

REHEARSAL PLAN

Preparation

There is no way to prepare fully for the unknown of the experimental theatre. Experimental "groups work in sessions that are not classes (where what is taught is already known by the teacher) or rehearsals (which are preparations for a planned production)."¹ Following the example of the Open Theatre, I began with no script. When rehearsals started, neither the company nor I were acquainted with the techniques. We had only an idea. Taking a scripture from the Book of Mormon, we wanted to explore in what way "ye must . . . become as a little child or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God."²

The director must prepare in one way. He must have a vision of what this type of theatre can be. For this purpose, no amount of reading can substitute for seeing live productions. Comings and Goings by Megan Terry, performed at the Cafe La Mama in New York City in 1968, was the first production which sparked my interest. It had no plot except to explore in an amusing way people's comings and goings; short skits connected by dancing and rock music formed the structure of the show. Its improvisational techniques and light-hearted spontaneity inspired

¹Chaikin, "The Actor's Involvement," p. 150.
²Smith, trans., Book of Mormon, III Nephi 11:37.
me to attempt my earlier experimental production, Twelve Mistakes in Rapid Succession, performed at Brigham Young University in April, 1970. The twelve scenes concerning man's relationship to his environment were sometimes amusing, sometimes startling, sometimes obscure, but they encouraged me to further experimentation.

I saw Alice in Wonderland in the fall of 1970. The program stated that the work of the "Manhattan Project," under the direction of Andre' Gregory, "has been made possible by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation" and that the "Project has been in existence for two years." The product of all this time and money was disappointing. Some ingenious moments had been devised (such as when the caterpillar smoked his pipe), yet the allusions to pot smoking, the filthiness of the costumes, and the food-throwing tea-party didn't seem to add up to anything. I left the theatre wondering why they had bothered.

These productions, coupled with my own artistic sensitivity, combined to form a new vision, similar to, yet different from, those I had seen. I imagined a "poor" theatre where imagination supplied the props and costumes; a nonverbal theatre, where the emotions were suggestive, not explicit; a controlled theatre, where the actors were in command of every detail; and a loving theatre, where the cast was a unified team. My own conception was the guiding light of our show.

It is imperative that I mention here the amount of prayer that went into my preparation. In my desire to make this a Mormon-oriented

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1Alice in Wonderland opened to critical raves, however. Clive Barnes, critic to the New York Times, wrote in his review (October 9, 1970, Sec. 1, p. 43), "... reveals the horror beneath the skin... Great! Oh yes, and thankyou!"
show, I consulted the Lord often and received much inspiration and
guidance from Him, and from others. The final result was definitely a
collaboration of many minds; I cannot take all the credit for its suc-
cess; my main achievement was my determination to try it.

Schedule

The six-week rehearsal period included more time than was
apparent. One vacation gave me time to think through the show, and
another allowed the cast to rehearse intensively.

I. FIRST and SECOND week: "Training Period"
   Rehearse two hours every other day: Mon., Wed., Thurs., Sat.
   Survey various experimental techniques; discuss theme.

II. CHRISTMAS VACATION: cast dismissed.
    Director decides how to express theme.

III. THIRD and FOURTH week: "Searching Period"
    Cast the show.
    Rehearse two hours every other day: Mon., Wed., Thurs., Sat.
    Search for suitable techniques to express theme.

IV. EXAMINATION PERIOD: cast dismissed.
    The director chooses which techniques to use.

V. FIFTH week: SEMESTER BREAK: "Structuring Period"
    Cast rehearses six hours every day for five days.
    Put show together.

VI. SIXTH week: "Polishing Period"
    Cast rehearses two hours every day for six days.
    Polish the show for performance.

In the early stages of rehearsal I chose to rehearse only every
other day, because I felt we needed rest days in which to become com-
fortable in this new idiom.

My decision not to cast the show until the training period was
over was to provide me with two weeks of sifting; interested people
would have a chance to see what it was all about, and less interested
people would have a chance to leave. In order to get enough people, I
had to recruit several times after rehearsals began; new people arrived as late as the seventh session. Out of the eighteen people who came, nine remained. I will refer to these nine henceforth by their first names.

Deenaz P. Coachbuilder
Bill Drake
Kathy Ensign
Cornel Gaytan
Del Mandarino
Brad G. Maurer
Lucy Miner
Douglas Payne
Katey Zundel

Of this number, one Indian girl (Deenaz) was not Mormon but Zoroastrian by faith. This posed no problem. Nine in the cast proved an optimum number. It was large enough to suggest a crowd, but small enough to maneuver easily. The uneven amount lent itself to interesting asymmetrical patterns.

The rest of the schedule went as planned with some exceptions. We started to put the show together early, which gave us extra time to polish. As it turned out, this time was badly needed.

During Semester Break, we discovered that to rehearse six hours on one day is too much, especially during the formation of the show. The creative process demands too much energy. The actors became drained and quarrelsome at the end of one such session. A three-hour creative rehearsal in the morning, and a two-hour run-through in the afternoon was possible, but more is not recommended.

We also found that as we proceeded we had to go slower in order to refine the exercises. If twenty minutes were spent exploring an exercise during the training period, at least an hour and forty-five minutes were spend developing it during the searching period, and probably
a good three or four hours were spent setting and polishing it for a
seven minute performance.

Performance

Three were scheduled:

February 11, Thursday
February 12, Friday
February 13, Saturday

at 5:00 P.M., the Margett's Arena Theatre, Harris Fine Arts Center,
Brigham Young University. An informal arrangement of chairs, benches
and boxes were set up to accommodate sixty people on three sides of the
playing area; overflow was seated on the platforms, the floor, or addi-
tional chairs set up for that purpose.
CHAPTER III

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE ACTOR

Actor Creativity

In the new theatre, the actor's creativity is the primary tool from which the play is constructed. "Creativity, especially where acting is concerned, is boundless sincerity,"¹ says Grotowski. The actor's skill is not to hide himself behind characterization but to stand figuratively exposed, his inner self revealed. It is his task to bare his soul, so to speak, to the world. It is a hazardous task, one which demands courage, but one which makes the spectator stand up and say, "Bravo!"

Antonin Artaud inspired this acting method; Grotowski gave it form. The one says the actors should be "victims burnt at the stake, signaling through the flames."² The other says:

The important thing is to use the role as a trampolin, an instrument with which to study what is hidden behind our everyday mask—the innermost core of our personality—in order to sacrifice it, expose it.³

The Living Theatre describes acting as "an event in which we would always ourselves be experiencing it, not anew at all, but something else each

¹Grotowski, Poor Theatre, p. 261.
³Grotowski, Poor Theatre, p. 37.
time ... different from what we called acting."¹

Instead of talented actors in the conventional sense, I found I needed people who possessed these qualities:

1. boundless enthusiasm
2. no "acting" habits
3. little self-consciousness
4. trust for others
5. self-discipline
6. group spirit

1. With boundless enthusiasm, an individual is motivated to acquire the other necessary qualities. The sessions which caused the most enthusiasm also were the most productive.

2. In this new method, the actor cannot act--he must be. In our production, the actors portrayed a facet of themselves, whether playing adults or children. Some of the cast questioned whether students were really adults. The purpose of the play dictated our decision. If the actors were to lead the audience from what they were to where they could be with a child's eyes, then "adult" had to be defined as "what they were."

In the several instances where the actors didn't play themselves, the results were inferior. When asked to play little children, two participants, Katey and Del, became extremely mischievous; they treated adults with a total lack of respect, talking back and throwing things at them. When told that this portrayal seemed unrealistic, they commented that they had had better self-control as children but were

¹Malin and Beck, "Containment Is the Enemy," p. 25.
presently acting out their secret desires, in the manner of the fictional "Walter Mitty." This side of their selves had to be studiously avoided in order for them to achieve insight into their actual personalities.

Another improvisation called upon the actors to become less-than-ideal parents. These scenes were cliche. Surprisingly, when the actors played ideal parents, the scenes became convincing. As less-than-ideal parents, the actors seemed to be copying people they had seen on television; at any rate they had no empathy for them. As ideal parents, they were sincerely striving to portray that which they hoped would one day be themselves.

3. Only one of my actors had trouble with self-consciousness. Although she wanted very much to work with us, she was easily distracted or embarrassed by other members of the group. She grew more and more uncomfortable until she left the group of her own accord.\(^1\) It is impossible for an actor to express himself freely when he cannot ignore curious eyes or forget about what he looks like. For this reason some experimental theatres like the Open Theatre do not allow visitors in the early stages of their work. Although our rehearsal room was not immune from strangers, my actors didn't mind; fellow actors posed more of a threat.

4. Each actor must learn to trust the others; he has to overcome any fear that his self will be rejected. A climate of warm openness must be established to "enable the actor to undertake the most extreme efforts without any fear of being laughed at or humiliated."\(^2\)

\(^1\)Her discomfort was partially due to the fact that she realized her self-consciousness, but this realization only made her more self-conscious.

\(^2\)Grotowski, *Poor Theatre*, p. 47.
The Book on the Open Theatre includes two trust exercises, designed to build this climate, TRUST IN A CIRCLE and BLIND RUNNING.⁴ Simply working with each other over an extended period of time also builds the actor's confidence. Viola Spolin suggests that the director can contribute to this climate by an attitude of acceptance. Refraining from giving either approval or disapproval, he trusts the actor to make the discoveries himself.

5. If our actors had been more self-disciplined, many problems would not have developed. Grotowski stresses reticence.

Even during breaks after which we will be continuing with the creative process, we are obliged to observe certain natural reticences in our behaviour and even in our private affairs.

... Private ideas of fun have no place in the actor's calling.²

Again, the actor doesn't have "the right to correct his partner unless authorized by the work leader,"³ says Grotowski. Del found he was physically bruised by the other actors, unintentionally, during the harried blocking period. In his exercise critique, he wrote: "It seemed that all too often, when we had the chance to do what we felt--it turned into some type of violence. This really depressed me sometimes."⁴ Human beings can learn to control their actions. If the actor is not committed to politeness, punctuality and reticence, the director must impose the discipline on him.

Katey wrote: "After pondering over this problem I've decided it

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1Pasolli, Open Theatre, pp. 25 and 26 respectively. See Appendix A, EXERCISES AND TECHNIQUES, pp. 89, 92.

2Grotowski, Poor Theatre, pp. 258-59.

3Ibid., p. 259.

4Del Mandarino, exercise critique. The actors at this point felt they were competing for positions and parts in the final production.
would have been better for you to get angry, throw fits, and yell and scream at anyone who was five minutes late."\(^1\) Lateness in our group was a problem which I dealt with in various ways. At first, I let it pass. Later I became angry and singled out the individual for rebuke. Next, I asked the group for their suggestions on the problem. Understanding its seriousness, the group thereupon improved, but a few individuals persisted in spite of threats and cajolings.

Other discipline problems included talking during rehearsals when silence was requested and absenteeism for less-than-satisfactory reasons. As director, I felt personally responsible for this problem. If I had insisted on a strict discipline from the beginning, the difficulties might not have arisen.

6. Somehow, through trust and self-discipline, the cast must develop a group spirit. Because the actors work from their true feelings, personality conflicts can interfere with performance. Human nature is such that some conflict seems inevitable. The question is, how to deal with it?

The egotist who inwardly is saying, "Look at me! I'm the best!" destroys ensemble work. So does an actor who prefers to work alone. One of our exercises, ORGANISM, demands that everyone form a group in which no one is to lead, all are to follow. Brad wrote, "Each of us had to give a little and submit to the group in order to achieve a sense of unity."\(^2\) This exercise revealed one member who would not give up leadership and who caused the others difficulty. He had to learn to

\(^1\)Katey Zundel, exercise critique.

\(^2\)Brad G. Maurer, exercise critique.
subordinate his will to the group.

Two in our group had a minor personality conflict, which meant that neither could play a scene opposite the other. Dedicated to the other cast members and to the play, both members were able to conceal their differences except from the director.

A more serious obstacle to group unity were the bad feelings which arose during the working period itself. Faithful members of the cast resented those few who were always late, or had excuses to be absent, or would not concentrate during rehearsals.

Conflict is highly probable in experimental theatre, where emotions and personalities are subject to constant pressure and exposure. Often the work requires that all cast members lower facades and express total trust of other cast members. When these attitudes of trust are abused through short temper and lack of consideration or self-control, hurt feelings and bad attitudes can develop.¹

A possible way to avoid this problem, Brad continued, would be "either a decrease in lengthy day-long rehearsal periods, which contribute greatly to worn feelings and thin patience, or more unified intimate cast projects outside of rehearsal."²

Despite these drawbacks, by performance group morale was high. Audience members commented on the group spirit. To the question, "What about the show was most successful in your opinion?" they replied: "The extreme inter-action of the cast in matters and feelings that are deep within us all."³ "The love it communicated (among cast members--toward audience)."⁴ This group spirit was created more by a unity in

¹ibid. ²ibid.
³Bonnie Elaine Thurber, audience questionnaire.
⁴Christine Smith, audience questionnaire.
goals than by friendships. Everyone in the cast wanted the same thing: the success of the show.

Selecting the Company

The company was formed by a survival of the fittest. The individual who was willing to come to eight rehearsal sessions without knowing whether he would be accepted or not tended to be the type of individual I was looking for. If he survived the ordeal, so to speak, he possessed the necessary qualities. The normal try-out, which tells the director something about the actor's skill at characterization and line-delivery, would have told me nothing; an interview would have told me more, but not even the eight-session training period told me all. No cast is perfect, but the sensitive director will find a way to use each actor to best advantage.

Advantages

The advantages of using the actor's self as a springboard are that his performing power is thereby increased. The audience noted that "the kids were exceptionally believable most of the time--like they believed it."1 The inexperienced actor is best at playing himself. He sounds sincere when he is sincere, spontaneous when he is spontaneous. Improvisational techniques force him to be both.

Robert Brustein argues that the gifted actor can make any part spontaneous and sincere. He asks: "Should the interpreter preempt the function of the creator? . . . I would not go out of my way to watch Olivier improvise, although I think he's the greatest actor in the

1Gail Argetsinger, audience questionnaire.
I was unaware of many aspects of myself which realized more fully, would have helped me earlier to develop more convincing and realistic, full acting techniques. It also helped me gain more naturalness and confidence. Improvisation inspires creativity which promotes confidence in the participating individuals.

Aside from the performance value, this new technique provides the inexperienced actor with excellent training. From learning how to imitate himself, the actor is able to imitate others with more accuracy. Although the technique is new, its purpose is old: to place the actor's body, voice and spirit under his control. Brad wrote:

A supreme educational tool. ... Previous to experiencing the group improvisation ... I was unaware of many aspects of myself, which, realized more fully, would have helped me earlier to develop more convincing and realistic, full acting techniques. ... [It] also helped me gain more naturalness and confidence. Improvisation inspires creativity which promotes confidence in the participating individuals.

Comparison

Several differences between the actors in An Afternoon's Work and those in other experimental theatres are apparent. Rebelliousness seems to typify other experimental actors. "An artist is a human being engaged in rebellion." Some of my actors, such as Del, Katey, and Doug, fit this definition in the sense that they were nonconformist,


3Maurer, exercise critique.

nonpassive members of society, but others had fewer conflicts with their religion or their world. In general, they all somewhat passively followed my lead, not knowing enough to disagree. At times I would have appreciated a more questioning spirit; but, if we had argued every point, we would have never progressed.

While my actors were free from some inhibitions, other inhibitions were kept. Their nakedness was spiritual, not physical. Grotowski writes, "The spectator understands, consciously or unconsciously, that such as act [the actor's performance] is an invitation to him to do the same thing." While most audiences can empathize with the actor who reveals his feelings, a Mormon audience, I believe, would have a hard time empathizing with the actor who reveals his body; they themselves are not so willing. The inhibitions which our moral code imposed upon us were, in my opinion, no detriment to our audience's enjoyment.

Inclined to approach theatre as an avocation, my cast was not willing to go to the extremes of self-sacrifice advocated by Grotowski. They lacked a fanatic devotion to the cause that typifies politically dedicated groups. Again, I doubt if they would be willing to work every day without pay, as actors do at the Open Theatre. Like most amateur actors, they took the work lightly until they felt the performance drawing near. Their dilettante attitude was both an advantage and a disadvantage.

The actor who, in this special process of discipline and self-sacrifice...is not afraid to go beyond all normally acceptable limits, attains a kind of inner harmony and peace of mind. He literally becomes much sounder in mind and body, and his way of life is more normal than that of an actor in the rich

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[conventional] theatre.\(^1\)

The actors in our company did not go beyond acceptable limits. They weren't martyrs "signaling through the flames." But they did find acting a therapy which was fun.

I've enjoyed the whole deal! After a practice I went home relaxed, not tired, not full of energy either, but with a peaceful feeling.\(^2\)

Thank-you ever so much for a beautiful, growing, learning experience.\(^3\)

I would personally like the opportunity to act and work in this style of theatre more extensively.\(^4\)

I felt we were well rewarded in our effort--that this play was terribly hard, very exciting, sometimes depressing, but in the end triumphant.\(^5\)

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\(^1\)Ibid., p. 45.

\(^2\)Douglas Payne, exercise critique.

\(^3\)Lucy Miner, exercise critique.

\(^4\)Maurer, exercise critique.

\(^5\)Zundel, exercise critique.
CHAPTER IV

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE DIRECTOR

Creation of Play

Because of the experimental emphasis on actor creativity, I thought my job would be simply to act as guide while the actors collectively created the show. My job proved to be far more demanding. Collective creation takes too much time. Other experimental groups such as the Open Theatre and the Living Theatre take a year or more to rehearse. Our six-week rehearsal period was probably laughably short in comparison with theirs; certainly it caused me to shoulder most of the responsibility. 1

Through discussions of the theme, I hoped my cast would come up with a concept for the show. While they had many good ideas, I soon realized that no unified structure would be forthcoming. Cyril Northcote Parkinson describes the laws governing group activities in his amusing book, Parkinson's Law. 1 "The Law of Triviality," which we operated under, states that no committee or group ever discusses an important subject, such as whether $10,000 should be allotted for a new generator, or how a play should be constructed. They agree quickly to whatever the chairman suggests, the problem being remote from their immediate needs. But should the chairman bring up a minor subject, such as whether to

install a new candy machine, or what kind of prop to use, then everyone has an idea. One solid hour is spent discussing that!

Partly to justify my decision to abandon collective creation, I noted that some collectively-written plays suffer artistically. The San Francisco Mime Troupe says, "We make all artistic decisions jointly." One critic writes, "Its work is vitiated by propagandistic simple-mindedness, and by sheer bad workmanship." Alice in Wonderland, created by the group improvisation of the Manhattan Project, seemed to me haphazardly constructed and obscure in meaning. Robert Brustein writes: "In a theatre . . . only one man can be responsible for the decisions affecting the development of many. . . . No theatre has ever been run by committee or democratic participation." I was that responsible man. Perhaps, in conceiving and unifying the show myself, I assigned to the director the responsibility which the Open Theatre delegates to its playwrights. At any rate, I alone was willing to do the work.

I became possessed by the show. It occupied much of my waking--and sleeping--hours, as I tried to visualize an effect or to imagine what a certain exercise would look like. It amazed me that some idea I had been mulling over for days could be tossed out in rehearsal without a second thought. "Over-preparation is important. There should always

be too many ideas, more than can possibly be absorbed.\textsuperscript{1} The creative process for me consisted in rejecting many more ideas than I selected.

Over Christmas I took it upon myself to prepare an outline of the show. This outline of ideas pertinent to our understanding of heaven provided the framework of spiritual goals on which to hang our techniques. I discovered that it was essential to give the cast these smaller goals before their own creativity was sparked. When I told them to "build the kingdom of heaven," they were at a loss; but when I asked them to construct a door to this kingdom (using their bodies), their imaginations worked overtime.

My greatest contribution to the show was probably this outline. In time, the actors might have developed everything else, but I suspect that only one individual can ensure the play's unity and meaning.\textsuperscript{1}

\textbf{Other Tasks}

Aside from the task of outlining the show, five other tasks fell to me:

1. Conducting the sessions
2. Analyzing the exercises
3. Creating new exercises
4. Writing transition scenes
5. Polishing the play as the director of a conventional script would do.

1. My job in conducting the sessions was primarily to create a climate agreeable to actor creativity. I tried to treat the actors with

\textsuperscript{1}Jearnine Wagner, \textit{A Place for Ideas--Our Theatre} (San Antonio, Tex.: Principia Press of Trinity University, 1965, p. 191.)
respect and encouragement. There were three factors involved in conducting the sessions which hindsight now enables me to analyze: a) warming-up the actors; b) insisting on a calm, quiet atmosphere; c) leading the discussions.

a) Chaikin writes:

Each meeting begins with a warm-up exercise that has come out of the work. This brings us together. We don't want to be alone reflecting on our problems. We want to work ourselves up to being together.¹

The actors were tired upon entering rehearsal; it took them some time before they could forget themselves in the work. I used various modern dance exercises and sensitivity exercises² to warm them up, but in the session in which we started with the same exercise that had ended the previous session, the atmosphere was noticeably relaxed and enthusiastic. In other sessions, the actors were often glum at first, a mood which I learned to ignore. By the end of the session the mood almost always had brightened.

b) Sessions needed to be conducted quietly and calmly.

It's difficult to express, but the actor must begin by doing nothing. Silence. Full silence. This includes his thoughts. External silence works as a stimulus. If there is absolute silence and if, for several moments, the actor does absolutely nothing, this internal silence begins and it turns his entire nature toward its sources.³

At one session, we used music which seemed to allow for inner quietude, but we never fully achieved this "internal silence." For one thing, external silence was not always kept, due to my lack of its enforcement.

¹Chaikin, "The Open Theatre," p. 194.
²See Appendix A, EXERCISES AND TECHNIQUES, p. 85.
³Grotowski, Poor Theatre, p. 251.
In later sessions, comments often occurred spontaneously as the actors worked.

It was all exciting up until the time that we started blocking. I got depressed during that stage of the play . . . . I think it was because there was too much bickering. There were too many directors. At first it was all right for everyone to give their ideas, but after the lines were set we needed to all calm down a bit.1

Group comments are helpful to perfecting performance, but the director must restrict them to the proper time and place: the discussion period after experimentation.

c) This brings me to the third factor involved in conducting the sessions: the discussions. These involved both the exercises and the theme. Because of my inexperience with this new form of theatre, feedback from the cast was very valuable to me. Because of my inexperience with discussions, I didn't always get it. Sometimes I could sense the cast's resistance to doing a particular exercise, but I didn't know why. Was it due to some personal problem, to not being warmed-up, or to some defect in the exercise itself? In the early sessions, the actors could not always articulate the nebulous feelings which had been aroused. In later sessions, they were more responsive. Bill wrote the discussions often "helped me realize what I was doing wrong and gave me hints on how to improve."2

In the hope that they would structure the play, I organized several discussions of scriptures related to the theme. These discussions led into arguments or strayed from the topic. For instance, the

1Mandarino, exercise critique.

2Bill Drake, exercise critique.
scripture, "Love suffereth long and is kind, love envieth not,"\textsuperscript{1} led to a discussion of boy-girl relationships, not of the kingdom of heaven. The scripture, "The natural man is an enemy to God,"\textsuperscript{2} caused so much disagreement that we dropped it. A later discussion of how we must become as little children widened the topic so that it would have been impossible to express every idea on the stage. Chaikin writes: "Sometimes we discuss the theme, but more often we do not, because the problem is theatrical and concerns the form, not its meaning."\textsuperscript{3} Since these discussions did not seem to be of help, I let them peter out. In the end, each cast member had to reconcile himself to the theme as best he might.

2. To analyze each exercise, I wrote down each day what we had done and taped the verbal part of the session. This data I took home to analyze. During the training period I tried not to think in terms of what would please the audience, but that great goal of a final performance continually pressed itself into my consciousness.

I should mention here my use of a tape-recorder. I used it at three points: a) to record improvisations between two people (You never knew when an improvisation might turn out just right. We returned to one improvisation and used it almost verbatim in the show.) b) to record the ad-libs from group exercises (For this, taking notes on paper worked almost as well. Original lines weren't so frequent that there wasn't time to write them down.) c) to record the whole show

\textsuperscript{1}I Corinthians 13:4.

\textsuperscript{2}Smith, trans., Book of Mormon, Mosiah 3:19.

\textsuperscript{3}Chaikin, "The Open Theatre," p. 195.
during performance so that a script could be made, and lastly d) to record the discussions. This last was not helpful. If discussions by chance were informative, we remembered the important points naturally.

In the later rehearsals, discussions were informative. The cast often helped me analyze the possibilities of an exercise and gave ideas on what to do with it. Instead of working on the idea immediately, however, I went on to something else. To save time in rehearsal, I preferred to work an idea out first in my own mind.

3. A new exercise must be strongly structured, so that the actors know just what to do, but simple enough to allow for a rich variety of interpretations. Most often my new exercises were either too complicated or too vague on first try. Here again, however, the group offered a gratifying amount of feedback; from experimenting with their ideas, I was usually able to salvage something workable.

One reason I became attracted to this type of theatre was I have a talent for improvising. Once I have a feeling to express, many possible means of expression come to mind. I discovered that the most effective way to create a new exercise was to try it out on myself first. I would go off alone and give myself commands, such as "imagine you are a tiny baby," and then analyze what occurred inside me emotionally. By improvising myself, I could refine the exercise before presenting it to be rehashed by the group.

4. I do not consider myself an able playwright, but I ended up writing some scenes to clarify the play's message, mainly since I alone knew what that message was. An improvisation can be exciting but it rarely proceeds the way you expect. Only a script can have a definite
purpose, starting at one exact point and ending at another.

Scripted comments between each improvised scene were used to clarify the outline for the audience. Although I conceived them, they went through many changes; suggestions from the cast were incorporated into them; rehearsals revealed their flaws. One crucial scene was rewritten by Jerry Argetsinger.

5. In polishing the play, I assumed all of the responsibilities of the director of the conventional play: cleaning up blocking, drilling line delivery, overseeing technical decisions. These details were not difficult, but it took more time than I had anticipated to set this "improvisational" show for performance.
CHAPTER V

THE TECHNIQUES

New mediums should always be promoted until some more effective medium is invented.¹

The techniques we used were created in an attempt to find a new and abstract theatrical form. Using the spontaneity, or inner life of the actor, they endeavored to formalize nonnaturalistic material that would affect the audience with similar immediacy. "Because improvisation makes use of the actor's intuition, it taps the actor's own inner dimension, making available that which it is difficult to reach by rational process."² The play is constructed, not from a text, but from this improvised material.

The majority of techniques which my company explored were from Robert Pasolli's A Book on the Open Theatre, but a few were derived from books, periodicals, and my previous experience in the theatre. Previous to our rehearsal period, I had taken a class in improvisation at Herbert-Berghof Studios in New York City; a course in mime in Paris, France; a course at McCarter Theatre, Princeton, N.J., which had exposed me to Viola Spolin's improvisational techniques; and a class in dance improvisation from the Physical Education Department of Brigham

¹Devendra Bhagat, audience questionnaire.

²Pasolli, Open Theatre, p. 13.
Young University.

Viola Spolin's book, *Improvisation for the Theatre*, has had a great deal of influence on experimental techniques. She approaches acting like a game and devises various rules for specific improvisations. I had used her techniques to teach several acting classes, always with good success. The Open Theatre borrows from her as well as from others. In using the Open Theatre as a prototype, then, we followed not so much their specific techniques as their specific way of working, in which every exercise "leads to ten others and the work is embodied in our mistakes, discussions, thoughts and discoveries."¹

The techniques we used fell into three categories: exercises to relax and sensitize the actor, exercises to find ways of expressing moods and feelings using sound and movement, and exercises for the same purpose using improvised words and actions.

**Sensitivity Exercises²**

The purpose of these exercises was to awaken the actor's inner awareness. It was most particular that they be performed in silence—once I turned off the lights as well—so that nothing disturbed the actor's concentration. Since relaxation and quiet put the actor in contact with his self at the expense of extroverted action, we used these exercises only at the beginning of the session. They warmed the actors up and prepared them for the other techniques. In later rehearsals we dispensed with them altogether and ended our warm-up period with more vigorous jumps and yelps, in order to turn the actor's energy outward.

¹Chaikin, "The Open Theatre," p. 194.
²See Appendix A, p. 85.
Many of these sensitivity exercises come from dance workshops. Some avant-garde dancers today are claiming that dance is nothing more than a delicious awareness of each kinetic moment. If so, our actors were training for dance.

It would have been helpful if the actors could have trained for dance as actors do at the Open Theatre. We began each session with only ten minutes of dance-like warm-ups consisting of easy jumps and stretches. As Cornel wrote, these "were too simple."

I would have preferred doing some specific exercises for different parts of the body that would be difficult and would really get us loosened up. It would have been good to do some travelling movements across the floor. About twenty-five minutes would have been enough time for all. Our "warm-ups," as we called them, did not extend our range of movement; but through sensitivity exercises, we did learn to use the range we already had.

Sensitivity to his own body enables the actor to connect his physical to his psychical dimension "so quickly that thought—which would remove all spontaneity—has no time to intervene." You will find some day that your body has started to react totally, that is to say it is almost annihilated; it no longer exists. It offers no further resistance, your impulses are free.

Sensitivity to yourself leads to sensitivity to the impulses of others around you. This sensitivity doesn't mean staring in the eyes of your fellow actor for all you're worth. It means being so well tuned in that you can

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1See Appendix A, p. 84.
2Cornel Gaytan, exercise critique.
3Grotowski, Poor Theatre, p. 35. 4Ibid., p. 238.
see him without looking. It means, in rare cases, being linked by a group rhythm which is regulated almost physiologically—by blood circulation or heart palpitation.\(^1\)

One warning: sensitivity sessions can deteriorate into "let's-touch-and-feel-each-other" sessions. Since sensuality was inappropriate to our purpose, we guarded against it. For instance BREATHING BODIES\(^2\) originally calls for the actors to "continue in couples . . . always touching each other with some part of their bodies."\(^3\) This part of the exercise was left out.

**Sound and Movement**

The cornerstone of our technique turned out to be an exercise called SOUND AND MOVEMENT. In this exercise the actors form a circle or two facing lines.

Anyone begins the exercise by doing a sound-and-movement of any sort, and he repeats it over and over as he moves toward someone in the opposite line. That actor begins to do the same sound-and-movement . . . . The two share the action for a moment. Then the first actor moves into the second actor's place in line and drops the action. The second actor is now the principal. He transforms the sound-and-movement into something of his own, altering it radically or minimally according to his impulse. He moves across the open space, directing his sound-and-movement toward someone in the opposite line. They share it briefly and then the third actor moves off on his own to repeat the process.\(^4\)

The first time we did this exercise we found it to be exhilarating. It surprised us with its possible variations. More than just a combination of sound and movement, moving on impulse seemed an expression of inner feelings which found in this exercise an uninhibited

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\(^1\)Marowitz, "Notes on the Theatre of Cruelty," p. 159.

\(^2\)See Appendix A, p.86.

\(^3\)Pasolli, Open Theatre, p. 113.  
\(^4\)Ibid., p. 5.
release. "While [this exercise] does not come out of emotional experience, it does lead into it. The action, in short, engages the emotion rather than the other way around." Katey wrote, "I loved it. So easy to get into the exercise, and to get so much emotion out quickly."  

The second time we did the exercise, the actors performed with greater abandon. The higher energy level again seemed a reflection of that person's psyche. As an observer, I was startled to see just how powerful those inner dynamics were. Thus just a percussive jutting out of arms combined with an excited expulsion of sigh-like sound conveyed a wild primitive sensation.  

The actors commented that each person had his individual way of moving and sounding, which were sometimes hard to mirror. SOUND AND MOVEMENT can "open the actor to the experience of emotions which are difficult for him; the kinetic statement which he receives from another actor may lie in alien emotional territory."  

The third time we did the exercise, we started with an emotion not previously dealt with, the emotion of sorrow. For some people the sound and movement had the power to bring back a flood of memories they would never consciously have chosen to recall. Karen burst into tears. Deenaz remembered in detail the time when her brother died and recalled the feeling of utter loss I felt at first understanding that he was actually dead. . . . My voice suddenly changed to what it had been when one of my dear room-mates held me tightly and I seemed to howl with the pain. . . . [Sound and Movement is] a dangerous thing to get into, as it has a tendency to get hold of one and control one.  

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1Ibid., p. 6.  2Zundel, exercise critique.  
3Pasolli, Open Theatre, p. 6.  
4Deenaz Coachbuilder, exercise critique.
As the intensity of the emotion increased, the sound and movement became more powerful; as a spectator, I felt the pain myself; it was all too real; I was glad when one of the actors transformed his sobbing into laughing, and the sound and movement continued its way among the actors on a more relaxed plane.

From our experience it would seem that SOUND AND MOVEMENT can express every variety of emotion that an actor possesses. Its power to communicate to the observer is tremendous; in spite of yourself you participate vicariously in his actions. Totally dependent upon the actor's goals and beliefs, it seemed an ideal tool for our theatrical purpose.

A variation, SOUND AND MOVEMENT IN PARTNERS, gives the actor conscious control; the emotion proceeds the action rather than vice versa. The actor makes an emotional statement, "I don't feel well," or "My mother loves me," and then seeks a sound and movement to suit.

The key word is "seeks." Rather than choosing and then executing an appropriate action, he looks for one while moving and sounding. When he has found one he moves toward any other actor and shows his statement. The partner responds by showing his own. The two then try to find a meeting point in their "dialogue," altering their individual statements to create one which they can share.  

Leading from an emotion to an action is more difficult. At first the actors rushed into it and substituted pantomime for the abstract expression we were looking for. They mimed the outer signs of conversation instead of working from their inner feelings. The transparency of their gestures was such that I could tell immediately when a statement was sincere and when it was merely tacked on.

1Pasolli, Open Theatre, p. 7.
The second time we attempted this exercise, I added Viola Spolin's SILENCE.

If the students are urgent, rushed, over-active, throwing themselves into scenes without thought, have them sit quietly on stage before they begin to play. They are to concentrate on exhalation, to blank out imagery, and are to sit quietly as long as necessary. . . . SIDE COACHING: "Release your shoulders; concentrate on exhalation! . . . Trust yourself! Stop thinking what to do!"¹

After sitting silently, the actors expressed themselves on exhalation; on inhalation they relaxed. As a further variation, the actors alternated expression and reflection to the slow clapping of my hands.

Also attempting to approach SOUND AND MOVEMENT from this conscious angle, the actors attempted emotional statements of love and of trauma. The attempt at love was successful ("I love the sun!") except for Brad and Cornel who couldn't find an object they loved. The attempt to express trauma was a failure. The actors became depressed and alienated from each other; the experience was traumatic. For one thing, trauma is not an experience you share with another. Doug, who entered into the feeling, did not associate with anyone. "I relived a time when my pet cat died, and after getting baptized in the emotion I wished that I had not, for it hurt as much now as it did then, and a sad experience is once too much."² Chaikin does not favor the recall of an emotion: "We don't begin with a sharp personal remembered experience because that keeps the actor with his recollection rather than freeing him into the situation at hand."³ We found emotional recall too potent

¹Spolin, Improvisation, p. 191.

²Douglas Payne, exercise critique.

³Chaikin, "The Open Theatre," p. 194.
to return to.

SOUND AND MOVEMENT definitely makes "something theatrical out of something abstract," and thus fulfills one of the goals of the Open Theatre. Related as it is to dance, it is far more abstract than words and actions, yet retains full emotional power. One clue to this power is its rhythmical repetition. Basic, primitive emotions seem to release themselves rhythmically. When a girl receives an important phone call, she doesn't just say, "He called me." She tends to jump up and down, turn round and round, or say, "He called me, he called me, he called me." Poetry, dance and music reach our deepest emotions through this same rhythmical power.

Most of the other techniques we used were variations of this basic exercise. For instance in CONDUCTOR one actor leads, while the others explore sound and movements related to, but not necessarily identical with, the leader's. In this exercise lay possibilities for all sorts of further variations, depending on how the leader wished to act, or the others react. Karen effected a jazz tempo for the purpose of entertaining the audience; to sound she added words; the others supported her. Deenaz moved gracefully; her fellow actors tried to make her more beautiful; Kathy was ignored; Del introduced "being" instead of moving and the others were at a loss as to how to relate to him. For the spectator CONDUCTOR was often satisfying; the use of the leader as focal point gave the stage picture unity.

In ORGANISM, the actors begin a sound and movement with their arms around each other; no one is to lead, all are to follow. The

\[1\text{Ibid.}\]
intuiting actors become cells in a headless life-form; no matter what
the formation, they lose their individuality. This exercise always
suggested living plants or rotating planets to me, never people. Some
of the cast enjoyed a new sense of togetherness; one was disturbed at
the prospect of merging his individuality with the group. ORGANISM did
seem mindless. Its members were ready to follow each other unthinkingly,
as in a mob. The slow movements and steady hum were alive and fascina-
ting, but they created an effect totally different from the sounds and
movements in CONDUCTOR.

SPLINTERED STATEMENTS and IT'S MINE\(^1\) are exercises which substi-
tute the spoken word for sound, and mime for movement, such as dribbling
an imaginary basketball and saying "The World is our Campus," (in
SPLINTERED STATEMENTS), or hiding a secret object, while murmuring "IT'S
MINE." Grotowski has written:

> The most elementary fault, and that in most urgent need of cor-
rection, is the over-straining of the voice because one forgets
to speak with the body. . . . My main principle is: Do not
think of the vocal instrument itself, do not think of the words,
but react--react with the body.\(^2\)

One of the strengths of joining sound with movement, or state-
ments with mime, is that an organic unity is thus achieved. In life you
don't react solely with the voice or solely with the body. When you are
talking, some tension in the body, some movement in the face reveal what
you are saying. Sudden intakes of breath, clicks of the tongue be-
tray your reaction. The actor who combines both voice and body uses
his whole being and achieves the degree of sincerity desired.

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\(^1\)See Appendix A, pp. 102, 90.

\(^2\)Grotowski, Poor Theatrë, p. 185.
Words and Actions

Words and actions are sounds and movements made specific, or statements and mime denoting a concrete time and place. Unlike the conventional theatre method, these words and actions are improvised. Viola Spolin defines an IMPROVISATION this way: two or more actors set up a who, where and what. In other words, they decide among themselves specifically who they are, where they are, and what they are doing. Then they improvise words and actions to suit.

When we tried our first IMPROVISATION in about the sixth session, the actors were more sincere than I had expected. Their background in SOUND AND MOVEMENT perhaps had taught them to trust their own impulses and not to copy others; at least it had prepared them to put their whole self into it.

As in SOUND AND MOVEMENT, an IMPROVISATION can look trite or convincing, depending on the degree of sincerity with which it is performed. In order to achieve insight into his own--and human--nature, the actor puts himself into an unknown situation and, with no idea of the outcome, allows the scene to take its natural course. If he concentrates on pleasing the audience or prefigures the outcome, all is lost.

Don't think of the result, and certainly not of how beautiful the result may be. If it grows spontaneously and organically, like live impulses, finally mastered, it will always be beautiful--far more beautiful than any amount of calculated results put together.\(^1\)

For example, a child was to chastise his parent for some fault that actually was a characteristic failing of the actor. This assignment

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 204.
necessitated a previous exchange between the two actors to determine their weaknesses and strengths. Katey's problem, she revealed to Del, was overeating. She set up a Who, Where and What: a mother cooking in the kitchen. Her son, Del, entered and tried to help his mother overcome her problem.

DEL: Mom . . .
KATEY: Hmmmm?
DEL: You're always mad at Dad 'cause he doesn't take you anywhere and you want to go on a diet, how come?
KATEY: (short pause) I eat because I'm nervous, O.K.?
DEL: Why are you nervous?
KATEY: (beating the bowl a little harder) Because I have a lot of things to do, all right?
DEL: I know why you're nervous. You're nervous 'cause Dad won't take you anywhere, huh. But if you went on a diet . . .
KATEY: Delbert!
DEL: Are you mad?
KATEY: Yes, I'm mad at you.
DEL: Why?
KATEY: 'Cause you know how nervous and upset I am right now. That's why I eat so much. You should try to help me. Clean up your room for me, will you?
DEL: Why do you always say that when you want to get rid of me?
KATEY: I have to make this cake, all right? Now will you go to your room?
DEL: (leaving) I'm never going to be fat.1

The scene was both amusing and touching, not so much because of the dialogue, but because of the groping for words which made their delivery ring true.

Other improvisations along this same vein were not as convincing because the parents did not let the children chastise them where it hurt. Brad accused Doug of not going to church, but Doug disguised the problem by pretending to be a Catholic; in his talk of the Catholic ceremony, he avoided the real issue. If we had had time, I would have insisted the actors redo this exercise.

1Transcribed from the tape-recorder.
Most of the exercises demanded that the actors not plan ahead. "In looking, only the brain works; the mind imposes solutions it already knows."\(^1\) One exercise, however, did ask that the actors arrive at a result before revealing it to the group. They were asked to write unstructured HAIKUS, or to find words to express their current state of being. One by one they rose to perform their HAIKUS for each other.

The prospect of sharing their preconceived creations was a bit frightening to the actors. We did not comment on the performances, aside from an occasional unsuppressed "Good!" creating a nonjudgmental atmosphere and boosting the actor's confidence.

"Here I sit, enveloped in a bubble, catching the echoes from the opposite shore, longing, drowning, unable to share: the problem is the futility of a communication breakdown."\(^2\)

"I'm so busy! I'm so happy! I want to do more! I want to do all!"\(^3\)

"Sun once: warm, close, free. Now far away, cold, expensive."\(^4\)

Lucy wrote: "A real insight to each individual in the group. A good feeling resulted and I think we each appreciated each other a little more."\(^5\) We used one of the Haikus in the production: "Smiles warm you, tears mellow you, frowns hurt."\(^6\)

In our surveyal of these three types of exercises: sensitivity, sound and movement, and words and actions, we found each category a powerful tool for self-expression. Each had the capacity to reveal the actor to the spectator in many varied ways. Sensitivity exercises

\(^1\)Grotowski, Poor Theatre, p. 245.

\(^2\)written by Karen Hyduke. Since the record of these HAIKUS was lost, these transcriptions are only approximate.

\(^3\)by Bill Drake. \(^4\)by Douglas Payne.

\(^5\)Lucy Miner, exercise critique. \(^6\)by Lucy Miner.
awoke his creative powers, the other exercises utilized them. The actors found these exercises "odd, unusual and exciting,"1 "not only as a form of therapy for us a people, but a useful tool for actors,"2 "great fun,"3 but sometimes, wrote one actor, "I was doubtful of its pertinence to the play until I saw the play in further stages of development."4 These techniques by themselves did not add up to a performance; they gave us an exciting means.

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1Zundel, exercise critique.  
2Ibid.  
3Drake, exercise critique.  
4Ibid.
CHAPTER VI

REFINEMENT

Outline

From a performance standpoint, these techniques look like bedlam. Some catalyst has to bring these techniques into a meaningful whole and refocus them toward the audience. It is difficult to say exactly of what that catalyst must consist; a large part of it in our show was the outline.

With definite goals in mind, one finds it is possible to extract some semblance of order from these raw materials. By restructuring exercises to fit an outline, refining them so that they have a build and a climax, and setting them so that they are repeatable, a purposeful form can be created.

An outline of goals must be set without reference to techniques. I had to block out all thought of what had worked and what hadn't and think solely in terms of what we wanted to say. I listed everything which described children and which led us to the kingdom of heaven. I unified this list in three ways:

1. by arranging the topics so that one led naturally into the next.
2. by creating a lead character who experiences them all.
3. by creating a guide who explains to the lead character the significance of each topic.

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Although this outline went through some changes1 before performance, here is a copy of the first draft.

THEME: What can we learn from little children which will help us attain happiness, i.e., the kingdom of God?

1. INTRODUCTION to establish the question

A child is born. He is told to be good. He wants to be good, but somehow he isn't. What can he do? Will growing up solve everything?

2. CHILDREN ARE DIVINE

He remembers his childhood and the song, "I Am a Child of God." He reads poem "Seed of Diety," by Carol Lynn Pearson.

A friend or guide helps him make the realization that we are all children in the eyes of God.

3. CHILDREN ARE CREATIVE

He remembers the games he devised when little, out of nothing--sticks and buttons. He remembers original sayings he came up with.

Scripture: "Little children do have words given unto them many times which confound the wise and learned." (Alma 32:23)

4. CHILDREN HAVE NATURAL INCLINATIONS

Children aren't always good. He remembers playing with neighborhood children; how cruel they could be to each other.

Scripture: "The natural man is an enemy to God." (Mosiah 3:19)

5. CHILDREN ARE EASILY CHASTISED

When they do wrong, they are submissive to punishment. Adults could learn from them.

Scripture: "Whom I love I also chasten." (Doctrine and Covenants 95:1)

6. VALE OF SORROW

Children feel intensely, their defenses are down. When

1See Appendix A for a more complete description of these changes.
chastised they become repentant, and repentance brings sorrow. They also experience many fears. Fears are not a happy thing, but adults experience them too.

Scripture: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Psalms 111:10)

7. CHILDREN ARE EAGER TO LEARN

Fear is cast out by knowledge. Children fear what they don't know, but they are not afraid to admit their ignorance. Adults think they know or don't want to know. They have to humble themselves, realize their ignorance, and try to overcome it. They can say, "I don't know but let's find out."

Scripture: "It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance." (Doctrines and Covenants 131:6)

8. CHILDREN ARE LOVING

Children are quick to forgive. They trust others. They need others, especially when sick or lost or scared.

Scripture: "Perfect love casteth out all fear." (I John 4:18)

But: "Trust not in the arm of flesh." (Doctrines and Covenants 1:19)

Adults have to transfer this need and absolute trust to one only: God. But they are to love everyone.

He realizes he needs someone too. He needs his Heavenly Father. He needs to love and serve others.

9. KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

This realization leads him to happiness.

What is this kingdom? Where you can do it yourself? (Children are anxious to "do it themselves.") Where you've finally grown up, by first becoming small?

It is where he retains the divine part of children: creativity, freshness, openness to new ideas, and a freely loving spirit.

Where he is reborn.¹

¹This outline was created late December 1970.
This outline was responsible for the show's religious message. The techniques in themselves were neither spiritual nor profane; they proved to be powerful vehicles of whatever expression was imprinted on them.

The choice of a lead character was an intuitive one but did enhance the spiritual message. The audience could identify with one person and thus become more deeply involved. When asked what moved them, one audience member replied, "Del's honest search for meaning in life." For some, his personal fulfillment became their own.

Two dramatic theorists advocate that a play elucidate an audience, that the hero undergo a change. John Gassner talks of the "powerful blending of passion with enlightenment"; Maxwell Anderson says:

If the plot ... does not contain a playable episode in which the hero or heroine makes an emotional discovery, a discovery that practically dictates the end of the story, then such an episode must be inserted.

The reason, he says, is that the audience demands that mankind "learn through suffering." Although both of these dramatic theorists were discussing conventional plays, I chose an attempted transfer of these principles to the experimental form. I structured the outline so that Del would make a discovery; after suffering some bad experiences, he would discover the good and, seeing the world as a little child, enter the kingdom of

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1Anonymous, audience questionnaire.


4Ibid., p. 512.
heaven.

Transitional scenes between Del and his guide (played by Brad) were structured toward this discovery. Without these scenes, the unfettered emotional expression of the actors might have left the spectator shrugging, "So what?" With them the spectator could see the point of each scene. For instance, after the first run-through of the play, Jerry Argetsinger, student playwright, noted that the symbol of the door at the end was unclear. At that climactic moment, it wasn't appropriate to stop and say, "This is the door to the kingdom of heaven." Jerry therefore rewrote the transitional scene between the introduction and the first scene, in which he linked "door" to the "kingdom of heaven," thus preparing the audience for the end from the beginning. Here is the before and after sequence, in part.

FIRST WRITE:

DEL: Why am I unhappy? Do I need to grow up some more?
BRAD: That depends. Do you want to grow up physically or spiritually?
DEL: You mean I can grow up spiritually?
BRAD: That's what it takes. Have you ever thought of consulting the Book?
DEL: What book?
BRAD: The Book.
DEL: I'll try anything once.

AS REWRITTEN:

DEL: Why aren't I happy? What's wrong with them?
BRAD: They're all frustrated.
DEL: How come you just happen to be the only one who isn't frustrated?
BRAD: Well, I've been through the door.
DEL: What door?
BRAD: It's a door everyone has to find within himself.
DEL: How can I find it?
BRAD: Have you ever thought of consulting the Book?
DEL: I'll try anything once.
The biggest challenge of the play was to refer to this scriptural material without being obvious or trite. We tried as much as possible to make abstract spirituality concrete. The scriptures were played by Doug, whose arms formed the pages of The Book. Conversion was represented by walking through a door. Although we didn't always succeed in our efforts ("Some of the spirituality was a little obvious"), the overall message was clear.

Restructuring

Techniques now had to be found to match the nine units listed on the outline. During the searching period, old techniques were restructured, and new ones created. For instance, to express CHILDREN ARE LOVING, I had chosen SOUND AND MOVEMENT. In order to create a more meaningful sequence we added a leader, as in CONDUCTOR. After some experimentation, we ended up with this structure: the leader starts a sound and movement, combined with a statement like "I love the sun!" He shares it with four people in a circle. The others change and expand this feeling into something of their own, such as "I love to lie in the grass," "I love life," "I love cats," "I love springtime!"

In the refinement process, my job, as outside eye, was to select those items which worked and to reject the rest. On first try most of the sequences looked dull, but the cast expressed a gratifying number of suggestions as to what to try next, and we tried those until we succeeded. For instance, the group suggested that, in the sequence just cited, one statement could lead to another, such as "I love the sun," "With all the colors," "Just like a rainbow," "I love clouds," "I love to fly!"

1Pond, audience questionnaire.
In restructuring the exercises, I found these guidelines helpful:

1. Simplicity. There must be plenty of room in each exercise for the actor to express himself without copying someone else or muddying the picture for the audience.

2. Transitions from one scene to the next can be the most exciting part, as the actors transform themselves from one role to another.

3. Definite rhythm and the use of pauses can clarify the stage picture. These choreographic tricks make even a nondancer’s movement look controlled.

4. Goals. If the actors know the mood and feeling they are aiming to express, they will come up with the means to express it.

In progressing from goal to goal, we changed and developed the outline in order properly to motivate the lead character. For instance, for EAGER TO LEARN we developed a new exercise, QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS, in which parents asked children questions which they might ask another adult, as if the parents were seeking comfort from their children because there was no one else to talk to.

Why does Nixon raise taxes?
’Cause he wants more money, like you.

What shall we do with all the water in the basement!
Go swimming . . .

Lucy, was it nice for me to trick them?
It’s fun!

When we put the play together, we had to drop the whole section in spite of its delightful possibilities. Somehow, after CHASTISEMENT and FEARS, Del wasn’t going to be in the mood to learn anything more about children. He was going to need help, fast!
For this reason we skipped directly to the unit on LOVE, which again had to be changed. The dynamics of the show at this point demanded that the focus be on the lead character, Del. SOUND AND MOVEMENT, with the accompanying statements, no longer built to the climax we needed. Using the best of the improvised material, I had to rearrange and choreograph the sequence until it said exactly what we wanted. One question and answer from the previous exercise was incorporated.

Deenaz, what is love?
Mmmmm . . . when a flower opens its petals?

Setting for Performance

Barbara Mettler, in her book on dance improvisation, mentions that only the very young or the very experienced should improvise in front of an audience. Amateurs and semi-professionals look their best when improvised material is set. It is also difficult to give an improvisation any definite meaning unless it is edited. Meaningful material has to be separated from the gratuitous. Lastly, since we wanted our production to have a similar outcome in terms of audience response on two different nights, it had to be repeatable.

I was afraid that in repeating an improvisation some spontaneity would be lost. Grotowski, however, says that "during a performance no real spontaneity is possible without a score." While some scenes were set more precisely, we found that in improvising some details could be left open to the actor's impulse as long as the sequence of events was

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2Grotowski, Poor Theatre, p. 234.

3See Appendix A for detailed description of setting each scene.
set. One audience member dubbed the effect "the infectiousness of rehearsed spontaneity."1

GROUP IMPROVISATION2 was used to show a child's NATURAL INCLINATIONS. The actors ran through it many times and after each run-through decided what to keep and what to change. In order for a scenario like this to achieve the proper build, the actors had to become in part directors. They had to know where to pause and where to grow in excitement; they had to listen intently to each other; they had to forgo some of their own ingenious lines so that another actor could be heard. They also had to concentrate on the scene's intent. In the GROUP IMPROVISATION, the name-calling which was started in jest, had to become in earnest, and end by frightening the participants themselves, as they danced around Kathy, chanting "Witch! Witch!

SPLINTERED STATEMENTS,3 on the other hand, was carefully set. In this sequence, statements and mimed actions were to delineate the world of an ADULT. (Although not on the original outline, it seemed needful to set off the world of a child with this contrast.) Many of the improvised sentences were amusing, but, as in most of these units, they did not build to a portrayal of the ADULT WORLD which we were aiming for. Therefore I recorded their statements, arranged the best of them into a climactic sequence, and dittoed off a sheet for them to memorize. Very slowly we choreographed movements to suit.

Since Katey was insecure about improvising, she and Del reworked and memorized the CHASTISEMENT scene previously quoted. Again, the

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1Brad Anderson, audience questionnaire.
2See Appendix A, p. 92. 3See Appendix A, p. 102.
thrust of the discovery to be made demanded a few changes; Del had to experience chastisement too. A coda--or addition--was made to their scene:

DEL: I'm never going to be fat.
KATEY: (walks over and slaps him. There is a moment of tenseness. Then KATEY relaxes; her anger is gone.) I'm sorry I hit you. But you have to learn when you can say those things to your mother, Del. You know I'm very busy and very tired. I need your help, not your criticism.
DEL: (beginning to cry) I'm sorry.
KATEY: Forgive me?
(They hug.)
KATEY: Come help me.
DEL: Mom, you're not fat.

The transitional scenes were the part of the play most like a conventional script. As in a formal play, Brad and Del delivered lines they might never have said themselves. Although necessary for the play's meaning, it was annoying to these actors to make quick changes between the freedom of improvisation and the restraint of the imposed script, between acting themselves and saying lines. This difficulty did not hinder their performance, however. Both actors managed to make their lines seem natural and true.

Only after much polishing and several run-throughs, during which many small changes were made, did the cast feel confidently able to repeat the show.

Technical Additions

Two techniques imposed from the outside augmented our spiritual purpose. Poetry written by young children was chosen to raise the level of the language and to demonstrate a child's creativity better than we

could ourselves. Music was chosen as a powerful nonverbal communicator; it could create an emotional refinement we could not otherwise have attained. Played by the harp, "The Lord's Prayer" by Albert Hay Malotte and simple tunes by Kabalevsky (to mention a few) created at times a childlike, at times an exalted, mood. Aside from these effects which had been created by others, we followed the doctrine of the Open Theatre. "We have ourselves and we want to work with that."  

In line with the ethic of the Poor Theatre, we performed on a bare but painted (blue-white) stage. We used one stool. I had originally intended to make rather involved costumes but was persuaded that rehearsal clothes better preserved the feeling of spontaneity. Some minor costume additions served to differentiate children from adults. Most of the technical effort went into the lighting, which, designed by R. Mark Read, created some stunning effects on the painted floor. Although the fifteen or so light changes no doubt enhanced the mood, we performed at a later date with minimal lighting and no painted floor; the magic of the show still held.

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1 Chaikin, "The Open Theatre," p. 194.
CHAPTER VII

AUDIENCE RESPONSE

In the three successive performances our audience grew in size. Attendance on Thursday was 85, on Friday 120, and on Saturday 140. After seeing a performance, one girl cooked dinner so her roommates could go the next night. Several people returned to see it again; a few came all three times.

The show moved them beyond my expectations. Many were moved to tears. Some stood on their feet to applaud. On the questionnaires\(^1\)--I must have received 200, at least--all the respondees indicated that they would like to see more theatre of this type. A sampling of their responses indicated various reasons why.

Question: "Would you like to see more of this type of theatre? Why or why not?"

Responses: "Yes. The actors had to do more, but mainly the audience had to do more."\(^2\)

"Hey, thanks, if that's adequate for making me feel."\(^3\)

"I couldn't take too many at once, it's too potent."\(^4\)

"The actors were constantly relating to my own feelings and expressions. Reality now makes more sense."\(^5\)

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\(^1\)Sample included in Appendix B, PROGRAM AND QUESTIONNAIRE.

\(^2\)Colleen Johnson, audience questionnaire.

\(^3\)Lynda McBride, ibid.

\(^4\)Karen Jones, ibid.  \(^5\)Don L. Woolley, ibid.
"There were moments of truth in it, truth that touched me to strive up."\(^1\)

"It's so real to life, yet abstract ways show it."\(^2\)

"It's a great way of expressing contemporary ideas."\(^3\)

"An effective teaching method for acting and living."\(^4\)

"Yes, there should be more of these shows performed throughout the country. Youth searches for identity and morality."\(^5\)

In general they seemed to like it because, as sound and movement had done for me, it involved them vicariously. It had the power both to touch them and to make them think. Some credited the cast for the believability of the show; others credited the accuracy of ideas.

Question: "What about the show was most successful in your opinion?"

Responses: "The genuine emotion, not just emotions portrayed but some seemed to be actually experienced by your cast."\(^6\)

"The allusions to real life were quite correct and believable."\(^7\)

"The feeling radiating from the actors finds your heart. You get so involved it's unreal. I felt like joining in."\(^8\)

"I didn't always like to admit I was and still am that way, but it's impossible to lie to oneself while watching this."\(^9\)

"The religious implications, especially of youth looking for meaning in life."\(^10\)

"Each idea was open for my own thought. The one thing that I feel is most successful in a play is if that play causes each member of the audience to think and consider the ideas being presented,

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\(^1\)Kathie Bascom, audience questionnaire.

\(^2\)Karen Jones, ibid.

\(^3\)Dorothy Loris, ibid.

\(^4\)Patsey McLean, ibid.

\(^5\)Lynn Adams, ibid.

\(^6\)Skvan Anderson, ibid.

\(^7\)Donald Gordon Draves, ibid.

\(^8\)Kathy Nichka, ibid.

\(^9\)Linda Christott [?], ibid.

\(^10\)Karen Prestwich, ibid.
not as the author or director conceives it but as the person
himself has experienced it."1

"The fact that I could 'see' everything in the play without
scenery is amazing."2

"The scenes were carried out in a 'naked form' where I could
supply the details through the remembrance of those scenes in
my life. Part of the experience of the play was founded by
the audience in my opinion; their imaginations could contrib-
ute to the emotions the players contributed. It just isn't
the type of play one can sit back and look at."3

Question: "Did anything in the show touch you? If so, what?"
Responses: "Chills, fought back tears."4

"Yes, yes--so natural; I wanted to touch them."5

"The ideas--man can be cruel--childhood ignorance is not the
answer--basically we need each other to be happy."6

"The middle part made me feel the confusion in Del's mind. I
felt as if I were him. The ending sent chills down my spine
and I felt inspired."7

"When I started to see what I hoped was your message. Like
Christmas!"8

"Words can't express the love I have for your actors although I
have never met you."9

"I had my head cleared a little--no a whole lot. ... this is
not the kind of thing I want to analyze--it was a very special
experience."10

One of the main goals in the show was to present spiritual ma-
terial in an uplifting manner. The audience response would indicate we

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1Alan Jones, audience questionnaire. 2Ramona Jones, ibid.
3Ginger Woolley, ibid. 4Bobbi Mommella [?], ibid.
5Melanie Miller, ibid. 6Skvan Anderson, ibid.
7Ramona Jones, ibid. 8Zac Odom, ibid.
9Katie Smith, ibid. 10Kristen Downey, ibid.
achieved this "affirmation of faith,"¹ as one respondee put it.

Question:  "Was the spirituality in the show effective?"²

Responses:  "It never entailed preaching to the audience, rather it seemed a group discovery of the players through the scenes of life's discontentsments which they portrayed."³

"There was enough opposition, enough of the problems presented, that it was believable. It wasn't undermined by a pat answer or solution or melodramatic conversion."⁴

"It was all so uplifting; by the time it was over I felt so happy and full of peace and love, I didn't feel like a stranger in the audience any more, but part of a group of loving people."⁵

"Heightened feelings--glad to be alive."⁶

"It makes you feel like there's hope. I felt so fantastic at the end. It's so rare to see such productions these days. Movies make you feel so blah, usually."⁷

"Hard to write down something communicated and felt by the soul."⁸

"Maybe not as much as the humanness."⁹

"It was conveyed on the emotional level, the most effective for communication. It wasn't abstracted but personalized."¹⁰

"The spiritual-questioning side of us is seldom mentioned except in church, yet it's very much a part of us."¹¹

"It could reach right into you."¹²

¹Linda Carr, audience questionnaire.

²This question now appears weighted, but the answers indicate that spirituality was present.

³Ginger Woolley, audience questionnaire.

⁴Anonymous, ibid.  ⁵Marsha Evans; ibid.

⁶Melanie Miller; ibid.  ⁷Kathy Nichka; ibid.

⁸Cathy Shinkoskey [?], ibid.  ⁹Joyce Jensen, ibid.

¹⁰Peggy Spute, ibid.  ¹¹Julie Ann Judy, ibid.

¹²Hal Rowberry, audience questionnaire.
Every scene in the show without exception was mentioned at least once as particularly touching or as most successful. Some scenes, however, were also on the 'least successful' list. Most criticized were the transitional scenes and the ending.

Question: "What was least successful?"

Responses: "[The transitions] would start to open up, the lines would begin to lead to something, then they would be cut short. By predictable responses, I suppose."  

"Some of the ideas were not fully explored. You'd introduce an idea and then leave it too soon."  

"The high pitched emotional scenes when they were screaming--actually it was effective but I got tired of it--probably because I can't relate to it."  

"The chaos was disorganized too much."  

"There were one or two trite things in it."  

"The moment of change--the moment when they 'found' what they wanted, the Kingdom--the change was clear and beautiful, but the cause, the reason was in my opinion weak."  

"Was anything answered?"  

"You offered no answers on the same level you asked the questions."  

"You set up a system of genuine problems, then gave us a cop-out solution of idyllic love and frankly I don't believe it. That may be the result, or a few moments, but love is hard work and yours was not."  

Their criticism enabled me to see flaws in the play which I might not have seen without them. From their comments I made some

1Ann Doty, audience questionnaire.  
2Cathy Watlers [?], ibid.  
3Kathie Bascom, ibid.  
4Terry Hemming, ibid.  
5Charles Burrell, ibid.  
6Joyce Jensen, ibid.  
7H. Hisner [?], ibid.  
8Ed Allebes, ibid.  
9Orson Scott Card I, ibid.
changes in the printed script; as the result of further rehearsals I probably would make more.

I was also gratified by these answers to "What was least successful?"

"Having the show end."  
"The actors should have come out for a second bow."  
"Can't think of a thing, my soul was filled."  
"I didn't have time to criticize, I was too emotionally involved."  

All in all, the show pleased them.

"There's no doubt about it, it was more than a success, it was a work of love; and that's hard to come by!!"  
"A classic!"  

It ennobled them in the main: "I feel much freer to run and jump and be a humble child of God." The message, that we must become as little children, came through for most, and their emotional involvement made it stick. "I could almost see the Kingdom of God, and what I did see was as a child would see it." The show also seemed to have succeeded in making "something theatrical out of something abstract": "I can definitely see advantages of symbolism over realism."  

Most of all, however, we succeeded in sharing our experiences. We communicated. Bill theorized in his exercise critique how this communion between actors and audience is brought about.

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1Nancy Heing [?], audience questionnaire.
2Mary Anderson, ibid.  
3Katie Smith, ibid.  
4Agnes Stewart, ibid.
5Bob Pomo, ibid.  
6Colleen Baker, ibid.
7Lynn Adams, ibid.
8Dave Bingham, ibid.
9Steve Dransfield, ibid.
CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The main similarity between our work and the work of other experimental groups like the Open Theatre lay in our desire to find a new theatrical form. Artaud asks, "Why not conceive of a play composed directly on the stage, realized on the stage?"1 Why not replace a script with a scenario, words with gestures, psychological analysis with abstract truths? Experimental theatres were attempting these goals; so did we.

The main difference in our work lay in our vision of the world. As Mormons, we believe that life has a purpose and that men need to be encouraged for that purpose. Our play, therefore, had a different content and message from most experimental works. It intended to teach spiritual values rather than political ones and to leave the audience ennobled rather than confused or unhappy.

Our six-week rehearsal period, short by Open Theatre standards, was compensated, in part, by the director's outside work. As director, I decided on the overall theme, outlined the major points to be covered, structured the show with transitional sequences, and chose the techniques to be used. The actors provided the raw material: the feelings, the

1Artaud, It's Double, p. 71

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gestures, the improvised dialogue. From their living responses the show was put together.

Our production was indebted to the Open Theatre for the development of the many techniques which gave these responses form. The techniques used were mainly two types: those which sought to portray an experience through abstract use of gestures and those which sought to portray an experience through the more concrete use of specific situations. The first type used sound and movements, more related to dance than to drama. The second used improvised words and actions, related to the commedia dell'arte. This material was all improvised but was later carefully edited, so that by performance, both types of techniques could be repeated to the same effect. From the comments on the questionnaires, passed out to the audience along with the programs, it seemed that to the degree the actors were honest and open, the audience was likewise. The techniques had power in proportion to the sincerity of the actors. These questionnaires also indicated that we succeeded both in putting across a spiritual message and in moving the audience emotionally.

Recommendations

I personally prefer the hectic fervor of six-weeks' work to a drawn-out period which strains the actor's enthusiasm, but time did limit our experimentation. With more time, a director would have more artistic choices available to him; the actors would be able to experiment with collective creation.

In selecting the company, I would recommend that there should be many interested people to chose from. The process of natural selection
can weed out those with less self-discipline; but due to my difficulty in securing numbers (I rounded up new participants on three separate occasions), I allowed some who had not faithfully attended the first sessions to remain. If I had felt confident about securing replacements, I would have dropped, even in later sessions, those few who proved unreliable.

Even if not self-disciplined, any human being who is enthusiastic about these techniques is able to be creative, it seems, as long as he is treated gently and his suggestions listened to. He needs constant prodding to reveal himself, but the results are rewarding to both him and the audience.

The director's most important asset is his conception of the finished product. Some of my acquaintances barely suppressed smiles when I told them what I was doing, visualizing perhaps a self-indulgent free-for-all. Others seemed overly enthused; I knew even less what they expected. I concentrated on what I visualized: a play of precise lines, honest searching, and delicate emotions. This vision guided my decisions.

I feel that either the director or some other organizing individual must be responsible for the show's unity. To create the framework for the play at an early date saves much groping. Before our play was outlined, for instance, we spent much time on ORGANISM. Only later did we realize it was not applicable to our purpose.

I feel only one individual can create that framework, but perhaps there are ways in which the actors can help. My cast approached the theme in only one way--through discussion of related scriptures. There are other possible techniques. For instance, the actors could have
gotten ideas from the direct observation of children on a playground or from relating personal experiences about their childhood to each other. These techniques the Open Theatre used in Terminal. For Mutations the actors in the Open Theatre were given a reading list related to the theme. The director too could profit from studying Discussion Leadership or Group Dynamics. I feel that if I had articulated better my questions, I would have gotten more satisfactory replies.

The voice and body techniques we surveyed were only a fraction of the vast world of possibilities. Of those we attempted, many we did not fully explore. For instance, we should have gone back and worked on CONDUCTOR until its possibilities seemed exhausted. Alwin Nikolais, modern dance choreographer in New York City, has his dancers improvise until they are bored, and beyond, forcing them to find something new. Grotowski tells his actors:

When I say "go beyond yourself" I am asking for an insupportable effort. One is obliged not to stop despite fatigue and to do things that we know well we cannot do. . . . We impose [limits] upon ourselves that block the creative process, because creativity is never comfortable.¹

My actors did not take that uncomfortable step; perhaps they would not have been dedicated enough to do so.

Deenaz wrote, "I liked the way the sessions were conducted--our discovering something, then stopping to look back at it, and discussing our feelings."² But, she added, the sessions would have been improved if we hadn't started something new each time. The actors needed to start with something known before proceeding into the unknown.

¹Grotowski, Poor Theatre, p. 248.
²Coachbuilder, exercise critique.
The initial improv. sessions seemed at times to lead nowhere. I felt like we were floundering and treading in water. We needed to repeat exercises more often and build one on another. . . . Many times there was not enough carry-over from session to session.¹

The actors floundered because the director floundered. I am able to summarize our discoveries now as if we were dealing in known quantities. At the time none of us knew where we were going, a realization I often found frightening. This fear of the unknown must be expected when dealing with the experimental. Grotowski too works in this way: "Any method which does not itself reach out into the unknown is a bad method. . . . It is after the production is completed and not before that I am wiser."²

Structuring and refinement were essential to the creation of the show. The spiritual experience undergone by some audience members was due to the fact that in the structure, negative scenes changed to positive, and the audience could identify with the lead character as he found fulfillment. This emphasis on the positive and on individual fulfillment is absent from experimental productions with which I am familiar.

Poetry and music were also uplifting factors, not banned from other experimental productions, but, as the rock music in Comings and Goings and the drum beats in Terminal exemplify, they are usually used for different ends.

In conclusion, through much hard work, the vision I had was in large measure fulfilled. An Afternoon's Work was not quite the honest

¹Zundel, ibid.
²Grotowski, Poor Theatre, p. 130.
search intended; the ending left something to be desired, but for some it had "commitment and artlessness,"1 "delicate wonderment,"2 and "great understanding."3 The audience was moved and their responses proved to me that experimental theatre techniques have great communicative powers.

The human animal is goal-oriented, says Maxwell Maltz.4 Where he aims determines where he will go; he chooses his means accordingly. Because our goal was spirituality, we chose the means to enhance that mood. Because we felt life had a purpose, our play had a purpose also. One audience member, who had seen other experimental productions, said that ours "was more structured and was apparently going in a direction";5 we had a direction in which to go.

Experimental theatre techniques are only the tools by which a human being may express himself. They are entirely dependent upon what he wishes to express. Scientific research has shown that fusion can release an enormous amount of energy from the hydrogen atom, useful alike for peaceful purposes or the hydrogen bomb. Likewise, these new theatre techniques can release an enormous amount of energy from actors and audience; it is up to the director to focus that energy toward misery and anger, or toward joy and hope.

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1Dr. Charles Metten, audience questionnaire. 
2Tawnie Olsen, ibid. 3Lorraine Box [?], ibid. 
5Katherine Farmer, audience questionnaire.
APPENDIX A

Exercises and Techniques
EXERCISES AND TECHNIQUES

The rehearsal period from December 1970 to February 1971 was divided into four parts: the eight-session training period, during which approximately two new exercises were surveyed at each two-hour session; the eight-session searching period, during which two or more exercises were structured each time for specific purposes; the intensive refinement period, during which the play was put together and one scene per session was set for performance; and the polishing period, in which the final details of production were attended to.

I will list the exercises and techniques in the approximate order we used them except for the warm-up exercises and the sensitivity exercises which are listed together.

Format of Sessions ......................... p. 84
Warm-up Exercises .......................... p. 84
Sensitivity Exercises ........................ p. 85
Exercises during the Training Period ........ p. 87
Exercises during the Searching Period ...... p. 97
Outline and Exercises Refined for Performance .... p. 103
Polishing Period ............................... p. 109

Quotes from the actors (Actors' Reactions) are taken from exercise critiques which they wrote at my request at the end of our rehearsals.

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Format

Opening Prayer

Ten minutes of warm-up exercises

A sensitivity exercise to expand the actor's awareness of his own expressive possibilities (first twelve sessions only)

A new exercise from the Open Theatre or elsewhere as needed

Relaxation and comments from the actors

Discussion of a scripture related to the theme: "Ye must . . . become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God." (III Nephi 11:37) (first five sessions only)

Another exercise

Comments on the second exercise

Closing Prayer

Warm-up exercises

The actors swing arms back and forth until the impulse lifts them off the floor into jumps; they hum and yawn as they roll their neck around; they shout "hey!" to the walls; they stretch arms to the ceiling and tense every muscle as tight as they can, then slowly relax through the fingertips, then the hands, the arms, the shoulders, the head, the torso, the legs, until they fall to the floor. On the floor, they take five minutes to relax each muscle from toe to head.¹

Actors' Reactions: Lucy: These exercises "helped me to make the transition from the world outside . . . to the world inside."

¹Selected exercises from a course in mime (Yvonne Cartier: Paris, France, Fall, 1966) and from classes in voice for the stage (Mrs. Corrigan; University of Minnesota, 1966-67).
Sensitivity Exercises

CHILDHOOD RECALL

With the actors lying on the floor, the workshop leader guides them with his voice. "Imagine you are a tiny baby." (He allows plenty of time for each instruction.) "Explore your bodies as if using them for the first time. Your hands. Your feet. Now roll over. Your face is new to you. What can you do with it? What about your voice? Take your time. Now you notice people around you." . . . and so forth, until many areas of movement and relationships have been explored.¹

The lights were turned off at the beginning of this exercise to aid inner concentration.

SPACE SUBSTANCE

The leader asks the actors "to move around the stage, giving substance to space as they go. They are not to feel or present space as though it were a known material (water, mud, molasses etc.) but are to explore it as a totally new and unknown substance. SIDE COACHING: 'Move through the substance and make contact with it. Don't give it a name--it is what it is! Use your whole body to make contact! Feel it against your cheeks! Your nose! Your knees! . . . Let the space substance support you. Lean on it. Rest on it. Let it hold your head. Your chin. Your arms. Your eyeballs."²

Katey brought some music which set a sensitive mood. "The simplicity with which this exercise can be described belies its usefulness in developing the actor's sensitivity."³

Actors' Reactions: Deenaz: "This exercise made me aware of how we take for granted the ease we possess in moving." Doug: "Adding a color would have helped."

¹adapted from a class in dance improvisation (Joyce Jensen: Brigham Young University, Fall, 1970).
²Spolin, Improvisation, p. 81.
³Pasolli, Open Theatre, p. 16.
WALK AND PAUSE

The actors walk freely around the room. When the workshop leader claps his hands, they pause as quickly as possible; when he claps again, they walk. The leader tries to vary his claps so as to catch them off guard; the actors try to be so alert that they can stop and start on the instant. Later, the actors walk and pause at will, relating their movement to each other and responding to the pauses around them.¹

Variations: (1) The actor remembers his exact body alignment on a certain pause and tries to repeat that pose.

(2) The actor adds eye-contact as he relates to another actor.

To me, WALK AND PAUSE suggested an alienated crowd on a city street. The addition of eye-contact was electric, but their stares seemed hostile.

BREATHING BODIES

"After some limbering exercises [warm-ups], the actors lie on the floor, relaxing and breathing deeply. Imagining that their entire bodies are lungs, they find movements to express the regular filling and emptying of that organ--tensing and relaxing, rising and falling, sitting up and lying back, rolling over and then back. . . . This exercise makes the actor cognizant of breathing, which Chaikin calls 'the awareness of being.'"²

Actors' Reactions: Doug: "I felt my body was all of a piece, not separate with arms and legs."

WORD TRIP

In a quiet voice, the leader supplies the listeners with imagery; the listeners close their eyes and imagine. "You are in a dark room," says the leader. "You can see nothing on either side of you. You do not know where you are. . . . Suddenly you are in the sun, and it blinds you. You are in a field, you start to run. . . ." The leader may use images from a poem. He sticks to the present tense and describes everything as if it were actually happening: not "as if you were in a green

¹from the class in dance improvisation.

²Pasolli, Open Theatre, p. 113.
field," but "you are in a green field." The listeners respond physically to the stimuli; their breathing rate and muscle tension change.1

Actors' Reactions: Deenaz: "Envision a theatre of the future, where the audience can flip a switch and get their chairs to lower and relax them, and then we, the actors, through word imagery, carry them on a wonderful journey."

SECURE PARTNER

The actor is to imagine that everything he does is in "the presense of a person with whom he feels maximally secure, someone in whose eyes he can do no wrong."2 The actor does not act for himself, which is narcissism, or for the audience, which is exhibitionism; he acts for this secure partner.

This is not an exercise in itself, but a technique to be applied to everything the actor does. It is a way in which the actor can "give himself totally . . . it is like authentic love, deep love."3 Like RADIATING ENERGY, this technique would seem to be easily translatable into Mormon terminology; the actor performs for Christ, who, in Mormon belief, is a real and living being.

Training Period

This section includes the exercises which we explored and the reasons--if other than curiosity--why we explored them.

Basic to our show was:

SOUND AND MOVEMENT

"Anyone begins the exercise by doing a sound-and-movement of any sort

1from a class in Beginning Voice, Diction and Interpretation (Brigham Young University, Spring, 1970).

2Pasolli, Open Theatre, p. 114. 3Grotowski, Poor Theatre, p. 246.
and he repeats it over and over again as he moves toward someone in the opposite line. That actor begins to do the same sound-and-motion. . . . The two share the action for a moment. Then the first actor moves into the second actor's place in line and drops the action. The second actor is now the principal. He transforms the sound-and-motion which he has received into something of his own, altering it radically or minimally according to his impulse. He moves across the open space, directing his sound-and-motion toward someone in the opposite line. They share it briefly, and then the third actor moves off on his own to repeat the process."

Actors' Reactions: Bill: "The sounds grew into inner feelings that had to be uninhibited." Lucy: "Often gave an insight into how each one was feeling at that time."

Variation

The arbitrary movements denote a specific emotion, such as sorrow.

To make these movements less arbitrary, we used:

SOUND AND MOVEMENT: Angle #2

"Each actor choose a 'line' based on a clear feeling ('Mother loves me'; 'tomorrow I get paid'). Then he seeks the expression of the line in sound and movement. The key word is 'seeks.' Rather than choosing and then executing an appropriate action, he looks for one while moving and sounding. When he has found one, he moves toward any other actor and shows his statement. The partner responds by showing his own. The two then try to find a meeting point in their 'dialogue,' altering their individual statements to create one which they can share. If they cannot do it, they separate and take their statements to other actors."2

Variation

"If the students are urgent, rushed, over-active, throwing themselves into scenes without thought, have them sit quietly on stage before they begin to play. They are to concentrate on exhalation, to blank out imagery, and are to sit quietly as long as necessary. . . . SIDE COACHING: 'Release your shoulders; concentrate on exhalation! . . . Trust yourself! Stop thinking what to do!'"3

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1Pasolli, Open Theatre, p. 5.
2Ibid., p. 7. Pasolli calls this exercise SOUND AND MOVEMENT IN PARTNERS.
3Spolin, Improvisation, pp. 192-93.
After some silence, the actors express their emotional statement during exhalation. On inhalation they relax and reflect, gathering impetus for the next expressive exhalation.

**Actor's Reactions: Doug:** "Trying to live again the mood of the event was difficult to do. Thus I appreciate you having us just go off by ourselves and think about one event, put a sound to it, then a motion; the emotion thus followed."

**TRUST IN A CIRCLE**

"This is widely known as a party game. From five to eight actors make a circle around another actor, who stands relaxed but not limp and with his eyes shut. Keeping his feet firmly planted and the plumb line of his body straight, he leans forward, backward or sideways until he loses his balance and falls into the arms of the actors in the circle who catch him and set him back up. The catchers must find just the right moment to take hold of the falling actor--too soon and he won't experience the fall; too late, and he'll hit the floor."\(^1\)

This trust exercise could have led to an exploration of deeper feelings such as childhood fears; the atmosphere was right.

**Actors' Reactions: Doug:** "I liked it until they let me fall, and then I quit trusting."

**CHILDHOOD RECALL: Variation: THE HERE AND NOW**

The actors lie on the floor. In a quiet voice, they describe verbally how they are feeling, any muscle aches or pains, any thoughts that filter in, the temperature of the room, the condition of the ceiling: anything which describes the here and now. They are to become intensely aware of the present.\(^2\)

Next, the actors remember some incident from their childhood and describe it in similar detail: the clothes they were wearing then, the

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\(^1\)Pasolli, *Open Theatre*, p. 25.

weather, the environment. They remember a game they used to play. PLAYING GAMES comes naturally to the actors and releases their child-like nature.

Actors' Reactions: Deenaz never remembered anything earlier than eight or nine years old, yet was convincing as a child. Lucy: "I, at first, acted as I had seen other little children act... but feel that it gradually became me as a child."

ORGANISM

"Five or so actors link arms in a line. Moving around the space, they try to become a unit; that is, each member of the line tries to accommodate himself to the movement impulses coming to him from the others. The actors avoid leading the others or feeding them impulses, but rather they follow each other. In an elaboration of this exercise, two organisms go to encounter each. The actors should let whatever happens happen... Sounds may be used at the same time."  

When two organisms were told to become aware of each other, the effect was fascinating. They responded like two life-forms--hedging, pursuing, or mindlessly merging. Because the two organisms were of differing sizes (one had three people, one had four) a power conflict emerged.

Actors' Reactions: Doug: "What surprised me is it seemed to work, we just had to be tuned in to each other--these two exercises brought us closer together, I felt." Lucy: "Gave me sense of security."

IT'S MINE

Actors take a place on the stage area. They find actions to suit the phrase, "It's mine." They interact with each other.  

Brad's concept was territorial. He wanted the space around him and the

1Pasolli, Open Theatre, p. 24.

2Katey had seen this exercise used in a performance and suggested we try it.
result was WAR! Debbie was possessive of a secret object. To have everyone curious gave her a sense of power. Katey wanted her own body and others. The result was SEX! Del didn't want to share himself--his thought or his feelings--with anyone. Doug and Deenaz turned "it's mine" into "it's yours."

Actors' Reactions: Doug: "This exercise gave me an insight into the other's characters more than the other improvises."

ORCHESTRA

The group makes sounds which are "conducted" by another's movement. "The conductor does not imitate the baton-waving of the symphony conductor, but employs his entire body to feed rhythmic impulses to the others, who face him in a semicircle. They are the orchestra, but their instruments are their voices. . . . Though they do not need to avoid imitating the sounds of musical instruments, they should not limit themselves."¹

CONDUCTOR

"The actors group around the conductor. He does an action of any sort in sound and movement, and the others respond spontaneously with sound and movements of their own, appropriating the rhythm and dynamics of the conductor's action, but avoiding imitating its form. Sensitivity, not virtuosity, is the aim. Each actor in the circle takes a turn as conductor."²

Variations

1. At one time the mood of the leader is the dominating force; others try to capture his mood in their movements.

2. Next actors and leader concentrate on creating a pleasing stage-picture for the audience.

3. Or actors make the leader the focal point by keeping their heads below his.

¹Pasolli, Open Theatre, p. 27.

²Ibid., pp. 27-28.

5. Each leader finds a new style of sound and movement.

I noted that when the group supported and enhanced the leader the effect was artistically satisfying; when the group ignored or rejected him, the picture was less satisfactory.

BLIND RUNNING

The actors pair off. One of the pair closes his eyes, thereby becoming "blind." The sighted actor grasps his partner firmly by the hand and leads him around the room, taking care that he doesn't bump into anything. He tries to build his partner's confidence, increasing his pace as he does so, until they both are running. After a time, they switch roles.¹

At one point I turned off the lights, making even the sighted actor "blind."

Actors' Reactions: Brad noted that turning off the lights built a new level of trust, as you really trust someone when you hear them bash into something to protect you.

Since Lucy still didn't feel like a child, we returned to PLAYING GAMES, which in turn led to:

GROUP IMPROVISATION

"One person goes on stage, picks a simple activity, and begins doing it. Other players come on stage one at a time and join him in this activity . . . the simple activity might consist of painting a fence, beating a rug, scrubbing a floor, raking leaves. Players are not to know ahead of time what the first player is doing." Dialogue may be used.²

From raking leaves (which Lucy started) the group proceeded to


²Spolin, Improvisation, p. 62. In her book this exercise is called ORIENTATION GAME #1.
Halloween-type things: Burning a dead mouse, making fun of another child's religion. It was exciting to watch, but the children seemed evil.

Therefore, to work on our ideal self we turned to:

IDEAL PARENT-CHILD IMPROVISATIONS

IMPROVISATION

Two or more actors form a group and decide among themselves Who they are, Where they are, and What they are doing. They then put themselves imaginatively into the situation and improvise appropriate words and actions. They are not to plan ahead of time what the results might be; the purpose of the improvisation is to put themselves into an unknown situation and to discover by playing it out what the natural results might be.\(^1\)

The IDEAL-PARENT scenes and their opposites, NONIDEAL-PARENT IMPROVISATIONS, took a whole session and a half to perform.

Actors' Reactions: Doug: "I did not care for the non-ideal, I wanted to be an ideal parent and it is hard to even imagine myself being non-ideal."

To make an improvisation nonnaturalistic, we attempted:

INSIDE-OUTSIDE

A character is portrayed two ways: first, through words and actions, from the "outside"; secondly, through sound and movement, from the "inside." Two actors do a straight improvisation, while two other actors at the same time portray their inner life; or the same two actors later repeat their improvisation from the "inside." "Up to a point, it is helpful for the actor to think of the inside as the subtext of the outside acted out... When the inside is contradictory to the outside, its function is to reveal that which the outside left unexpressed. When the inside is parallel to the outside, usually its function is to state the values of the outside in larger terms."\(^2\)

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\(^1\)Definition implied in many exercises from Spolin, *Improvisation*.

INSIDE-OUTSIDE had performance possibilities.

Actors' Reactions: Katey: "Needed more sensitivity to each other in order to do it well."

Several of these IMPROVISATIONS could have been traumatic to a child. Since a child undergoes many traumatic experiences, we tried SOUN ALL AND MOVEMENT: Variation

The actors recall a mildly traumatic childhood experience, express it in sound and movement, then share it with another.¹

A failure. Trauma was pretty heavy to jump into, especially at the beginning of the session. The exercise also made too many demands: to recall, to express and to share. You don't share trauma. The actors withdrew into themselves and didn't participate with each other, even when the exercise was over.

In another attempt at this problem:

WORLDS

A single actor, using sound and movement, "improvises a particular inner state--paranoia, narcissism, dread, euphoria. This is his world, and other actors enter it by participating in his improvisation. They can parallel his action, set it in relief, flesh out a detail, and so on, but they must enter into his world, not transform it."²

Actors' Reactions: Del said he was usually enthusiastic about the sessions; today he was just indifferent. Lucy said everyone was down in the dumps today. Certainly they were at the end of this session.

¹exercise created by me.

²Pasolli, Open Theatre, p. 47.
To change the mood of trauma, we attempted:

**TASKS**

One person calls out tasks. ("Polish your shoes, Bill," "Do ten push-ups," "Katy, decorate the tree."") The actor is to perform his task until called upon to change. As his path crosses another, he is either to assist or frustrate that person.¹

**ORGANISM: Variation #1**

In groups of two or three, the actors make physical contact, and as one unit find TASKS to perform. As in ORGANISM, they communicate non-verbally. No one leads, all follow.²

Choreographic possibilities. The actors developed a dancer's sensitivity to each other in their readiness to respond to the least impulse.

**ORGANISM: Variation #2**

All the actors form one organism. They leave and rejoin the organism at least once.³

Actors' Reactions: Will said this exercise made him uncomfortable and he didn't know if he would continue coming to the sessions. Deenaz and others found the feeling therapeutic.

**RADIATING ENERGY**

"Moving freely in the work area, the actor imagines that he has an energy source in the middle of his chest sending energy out in all directions—to his head, his hair, his eyes, his limbs, his buttocks. He imagines that the center of energy controls every part of him and is responsible for his movement and life. He tells himself that the energy gives him great power and will never fail him."⁴

¹Benedetti, *The Actor at Work*, p. 35.

²Variation created by me to discover if ORGANISMS could do anything.

³Variation created by me to discover how it felt to gain and lose your identity.

It seemed to me that this energy from an inward reliable source could be like the energy imparted by the Spirit of the Lord.

**TASKS: Variation**

The leader directs the actors to pour that radiating energy into doing something important, into building the kingdom of heaven.\(^1\)

Actors' Reactions: The actors had a hard time finding things to express their vague and differing concepts. Del wrote that the kingdom of heaven was "far too inner and mental to be expressed outwardly."

**CARRYING**

In groups of two, three, four or more, the actors find ways of carrying each other across the floor. The carried person may suggest a grocery package, a funeral corpse, a baby, or a bride. The effect is ritualistic.\(^2\)

This exercise was different from any we had done up to now because it did not require an emotional commitment from the actor, only inventiveness. The group liked the idea of using bodies to represent things, such as using bodies to represent a door to the kingdom of heaven.

**ACTORS AS OBJECTS**

The actors represent furniture, props, or other inanimate objects, with facial expressions and sound effects to suit.\(^3\)

Although basically a theatre "trick," ACTORS AS OBJECTS is still novel enough to please an audience.

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\(^1\)Exercise created by me.

\(^2\)This exercise was used in Ann Halprin's dance production, *Myths*, and is described in her article, "Mutual Creation," *Drama Review*, 13 (Fall, 1968).

\(^3\)Suggested by Spolin, *Improvisation*, p. 73.
Note on what has not worked so far: Negative themes have produced less pleasing results ("Rejecting the leader," "Trauma," "Non-Ideal Parents"). When the cast works on negative feelings, they become insensitive to each other, and the results are simply less artistic.

Searching Period

During this period, new exercises were created or old ones restructured to fit definite goals which I had outlined. Those goals least structured in my own mind were tackled first.

I. A child's NEED AND TRUST of his parent was difficult to show abstractly. First, actors had to be able to play both ADULTS AND CHILDREN. For this we used:

1. AGE CHANGE

The actors start on one side of the room as children. As they cross to the other side, they grow into adults. As they walk back, they reverse the procedure.¹

Actors' Reactions: Lucy: "This did not come easily or naturally for me. I needed some time to think about each age level and the characteristics common to each." Deenaz: "What would it be like, to swallow a pill and watch oneself developing physically and mentally?"

A better exercise for this same goal would have been:

2. HOW OLD AM I?

The director whispers an age to each player. Several players are to come on stage and wait for a bus. The director coaches: "The bus is half a block down! It's coming closer! It's held up in traffic! It's here!" As half the players perform, the other half guesses the age they are trying to portray.²

¹A new exercise created by me for our purpose.

²Spolin, Improvisation, p. 68.
3. NEED AND TRUST

Building on the TRUST exercises, the actor-children say, "I'm going to fall," "I can't see." Actor-parents come to their rescue.\footnote{1}

II. Most of these exercises looked totally unstructured at first. To create ORDER OUT OF CHAOS became another goal. For this purpose:

GIVE AND TAKE

The actors space themselves in the playing area. They are to "take" the scene, or command everyone's attention, with any kind of sound and movement. However, the moment that someone else "takes" the scene, the first actor must "give" up the central spot by refraining from any sound and movement whatsoever. Thus only one actor is allowed to perform at one time.\footnote{2}

III. The next goal was to show a child's LOVE of the world.

1. SOUND AND MOVEMENT: Variation

The workshop leader claps slowly. During one interval the actor expresses in sound and movement a loving feeling about some object—a field of daisies, ice cream, new shoes. In the next interval, he reflects on this object. On one of the expressive beats he says what it is he loves, three times in succession ("I love the sun, I love the sun, I love the sun").\footnote{3}

To improve upon (1), we added:

2. CONDUCTOR: Variation

The leader starts a sound and movement expressing a feeling about an objects he loves. He shares this feeling with four actors surrounding him in a circle. When they are all moving, the others change and expand this love into something of their own. Leader: "I love the sun." Others: "I love cats," "I love life," etc.\footnote{4}

\footnote{1}created by me for our purpose.

\footnote{2}from a class in Viola Spolin's techniques (McCarter Theatre: Princeton, N.J., Spring, 1969). We did not have time to explore this exercise but I had explored it in my previous show, Twelve Mistakes in Rapid Succession. It would have been useful here. Similarly HOW OLD AM I? was not used in our sessions but is included in the appendix for the sake of its usefulness.

\footnote{3}variation created by me for our purpose.

\footnote{4}Ibid.
3. FOLLOW THE LEADER

This exercise is like the children's game, only two leaders instead of one are chosen. Two groups follow exactly the sound and movement of either leader; the two leaders related to each other, thus leading the two groups together or apart, according to the leaders' inclinations.\(^1\)

Although intended to express LOVE, this exercise suggested a child's bad dream, or his FEARS. Choreographic possibilities.

IV. We found the actors needed more work on expressing THEMSELVES as in:

1. FEEDING THE FACE

"Each actor thinks of a line which conveys a sharp attitude or has a strong emotional meaning to him such as 'the world is awful' or 'the sunshine is marvelous.' To a slow count of five, provided by the workshop leader, the actor 'feeds' the line to his face— that is, he searches for the proper facial expression of the attitude or emotion behind the line. At five, he shows his life mask to those near him."\(^2\) While half the group is "feeding the face," the other half guess what they are expressing.

This exercise was useful later. Whenever an actor looked as if he had nothing to do, I instructed him to FEED THE FACE, and that actor came alive.

2. HAIKUS

The actors are given pencil and paper. They are to concentrate on a current mood or thought and to find words for it in the manner of the Japanese Haiku. They are not, however, restricted to a certain number of syllables. After they have written their Haiku, they find a sound and movement for that same feeling. Then they perform for the other actors in this manner: one actor goes to the center of the playing area, while the rest of the group maintains silence. He FEEDS THE FACE, reads his Haiku, performs his sound and movement, returns to his seat. This continues, with no comment from the leader or the group, until everyone has performed. The written Haikus are given to the workshop leader for his record.\(^3\)

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\(^1\)from class in dance improvisation.

\(^2\)Pasolli, Open Theatre, p. 102. The Open Theatre calls this exercise LIFE MASKS.

\(^3\)adapted from class in dance improvisation.
Performance possibilities. As in FEEDING THE FACE, I found this exercise useful to refer back to. When the actor was delivering someone else's poem, in a false tone, I could tell him, "Deliver it as if it were your own Haiku."

    Deenaz: Sunshine air
    Apple-crisp day
    Running, laughing,
    My love is on his way.

    Del: Follow far your dreams
    As children in a maze.
    Chains can't hold clouds.1

V: For a child's EAGERNESS TO LEARN, a new technique:

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The actors are divided into two groups: children and parents, or other such differentiated roles. One group asks questions typical of their role; the others give a short answer reply. After a time, they switch roles.2

I noted that this exercise created comical exchanges like those on the television program "Laugh-In."

    Actors' Reactions: Katey: "Role-playing was really great--made me think." Doug: "I liked it even more when you sped up the reaction time."

Child: "Why doesn't my frog move?"
Parent: "You must have sat on it."

Child: "Can I have a baby brother?"
Parent: "Talk to your mother."
Child: "She just told me to talk to you."

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1 As the record of these Haikus has been lost, these transcriptions are only approximate.

2 Exercise created by me for our purpose.
VI: For CHASTISEMENT:

IMPROVISATION: Variation

Two actors become a parent and child. The child is to chastise the parent. Before improvising, the actor playing the child finds out something about the other actor which is in need of chastisement. This becomes their subject matter. In playing the scene, they find their own ending.¹

VII. For the ADULT WORLD:

1. WALK AND PAUSE: Variation

The actors write down on a sheet of paper some of their own desires and fears. Next, they mime jobs which adults perform that children don't: sitting at the office, starting a car, shaving, putting on makeup. On a pause, they state one of their desires or fears, such as type, type, type, pause: "Will I be liked for myself?" Lastly, they find ways to coordinate their movements and statements with one another.²

Somehow personal self-expression of true desires and fears seemed irrelevant to this exercise, and the cute and witty saying more satisfying.

The cast was not adept at movement relationships so we tried:

2. DANCE IMPROVISATION

A group of three or four actors enter the stage area and move in any way they desire. They relate their movements to each other, metamorphosizing them into a unified dance. As in ORGANISM, no one leads, all follow. Each person adjusts himself to the impulses which he senses around him. This exercise "makes great demands on the actor's sensitivity,"³ and cannot be done except by people who have mastered simpler exercises.

Del suggested:

3. CONVERSATIONS IN MOVEMENT

The actors pair off. One actor begins the "dialogue" with a percussive or sustained movement of any type; he pauses. His partner "replies" with a movement of his own and pauses in turn. They continue in this

¹Ibid. ²Ibid. ³Pasolli, Open Theatre, p. 28. DANCE IMPROVISATION resembles their CONDUCTORLESS CONDUCTOR, but was taken essentially from the class on dance improvisation.
manner. Like GIVE AND TAKE, no two actors "speak" at the same time. The actors related better when conversing than when dancing.

4. Lastly I gave each of the actors a statement having to do either with politics, Brigham Young University, or personal feelings: three dimensions in our ADULT WORLD. The combination of movement and statements became recodified as

SPLINTERED STATEMENTS

Four actors are given statements. ("What's so fantastic about you?" "The statue of Brigham Young needs cleaning.") Actor #1 enters the stage area performing a specific movement. He delivers his line and exits. Actor #2 enters with his own movement, delivers his line, repeats the same movement and statement as Actor #1 and exits. Actor #3 performs his own, the movement and statement of Actor #1, the movement and statement of Actor #2 and exits. The #4 performs his own and the three others. Actor #1 now returns with all four sequences. The other three actors return. All four sequences are now at everyone's disposal. No longer kept in order, the statements and movements are borrowed and splintered, as the actors relate, to each other. The same words are kept but rearranged. (What's so fantastic about cleaning?" "Brigham is Young." "Fantastic!")

The actors tended to concentrate on the words at the expense of the movement, but the words were successfully amusing.

Actors' Reactions: Doug: "Was harder to do well when the statements were assigned."

VIII. KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

1. Eight in the cast formed one symbolic door for the ninth to walk through.

---

1from a class in stage movement (Dee Winterton: Brigham Young University, Fall, 1970).

2This exercise was inspired by a modern dance, "The Games People Play."
2. Scenic effects were suggested to carry us to a climax.

Flashlights or candles in our hands.
A fog machine making clouds.
Harp music.\(^1\)

3. DESCRIBING

The actor concentrates on seeing, feeling, sensing an imaginary object. He describes it as he experiences it. He is not to make beautiful sentences, but he is to find the right adjective to each sensation. The result actually will be poetic.\(^2\)

4. Variation #1

The actor DESCRIBES the rehearsal room exactly as he sees it, then describes it as if it were the kingdom of heaven. Doug referred to the beams on the ceiling (forming the bottom of a stage revolve) as "eight mouldy arms." He looked again and said, "a star--with eight points--why didn't I see it that way before?"

5. Variation #2

The actor DESCRIBES his vision of heaven. Karen saw a long corridor leading into a room which was filled with delicate furniture, in hues of mahogany, pink and blue. There was light from long windows and a case of beautifully bound books drawing her to read them. Kathy saw a clear and sparkling sky, busy people. Katey saw tiny colored flowers and a mossy pool.

I now had a fairly good idea of what technique to use for each section.

---

Refining for Performance

During this period, the play was put together and the outline

\(^1\)This suggestion was used.

\(^2\)from a class in Viola Spolin's techniques.
intuitively reworked so that the lead character was led more surely through childhood to the kingdom of heaven.

I. INTRODUCTION: the ADULT WORLD

Technique: SPLINTERED STATEMENTS

Although not on the original outline, the ADULT WORLD, by providing a contrast, set off the world of a child.

Refinement: The movements were carefully set and a dittoed sheet of statements was memorized. It took "forever." We made changes up until the last minute. If all the scenes had required as much time to set, we would not have been ready in time.

II. INTRODUCTION: A child grows up and is unhappy. He is told "Ye must become as a little child or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God."

Technique: ACTORS AS OBJECTS. The lead character, Del, improvises with these objects as he grows up.

The work on this scene is a good example of what can happen when the purpose is clear, the means unclear, and the group experienced with this way of working.

Refinement: The group gave many suggestions with which to portray a child's frustrations at being little, most of which were not usable. However, since we knew where we wanted to go, it was easy to select the good ones.

1. The actors formed a circle around Del and became objects to tempt him: a cactus plant which was not-to-be-touched, a cookie jar, a wall-which-shouldn't-be-written-on, etc. Jerry Argetsinger\textsuperscript{1} suggested the circle was dull, so:

2. All the actors except Del became one object at a time: a car, a television, and a hot stove. For this new purpose, we used a new exercise:

\textsuperscript{1}Student playwright who attended rehearsals at this point. On the program he is listed as "special consultant," since his suggestions ranged from wording to blocking and movement.
PART OF A WHOLE

"One player goes on stage and becomes part of a large animate or inanimate . . . object. As soon as the nature of the object becomes clear to another player, he joins the player on stage and becomes another part of the whole. This continues until all . . . have participated."¹

Since sex is a forbidden object to the young, there was some discussion of a suitable yet discreet object to represent this temptation: a little girl? a Playboy magazine? finally: a nude in an art museum. We improvised each object several times before setting it.

3. Three actors--mother, father, and baby Del--improvised lines around these objects, which I recorded. I took the information home, edited it, and returned the next session (the third time we had worked on this scene) with a dittoed script. We worked from the script from then on.

III. CHILDREN ARE DIVINE--CREATIVE

Technique: Although these two categories were separate on the outline, they were combined into one scene. After singing "I Am a Child of God,"² the adults RECALLED their childhood; they began PLAYING GAMES, using SOUND AND MOVEMENT; to demonstrate creativity they recited POETRY written by children.

Refinement: The trick here was to lead the children from inarticulate sound to poetry. The children played alone at first, then with each other, adding improvised words. Brad and Del entered to comment on the scene. Their comments on the weather led the children to make (poetic) comments on the rain. Harp music helped make the transition.

IV. CHILDREN HAVE NATURAL INCLINATIONS

Technique: GROUP IMPROVISATION by the whole cast

Refinement: This technique was easy to refine. We used the improvisation previously arrived at by chance. We repeated it many

¹Spolin, Improvisation, p. 73.

²A Mormon song commonly sung by children and well-known to Mormons.
times, each time keeping some items and rejecting others until the actors knew the exact sequence of events.

V. CHILDREN ARE EASILY CHASTISED

Technique: IDEAL PARENT-CHILD IMPROVISATIONS by Doug and Bill, and Katey and Del.

Refinement: Bill and Doug created a new situation specifically for the play. Their words varied nightly, within a set sequence of conversation topics.
Katey and Del used a CHASTISEMENT scene which they had previously performed, extending the ending to refocus its meaning on Del. Since Katey was nervous about improvising in front of an audience, she and Del memorized the words, changing some of the original at their own discretion.

VI. VALE OF SORROW

Technique: SOUND AND MOVEMENT on trauma by Doug alone center stage; others recite four sad poems and a HAIKU.

Refinement: This did not need to be refined. The idea of one person doing sound and movement alone was a good one and provided a welcome change of pace. Doug could not relive "trauma" as he had done in a previous exercise; such real emotion might have been difficult to control. Sound and movement, however, can accommodate some loss of power and still be effective.
The rest of the cast enforced Doug's mood from the sidelines. The poems were interspersed with pauses during which the focus was again on Doug. Harp music strengthened the mood.

VII. CHILDREN HAVE FEARS

Technique: FOLLOW THE LEADER

Although this area of childhood experience was not a separate section on the original outline, it followed naturally from VALE OF SORROW. Dramatic tension demanded that the lead character experience some of the unpleasant side of childhood--and of life--before he appreciated happiness.

Refinement: FOLLOW THE LEADER was easy to refine. Improvising
uncovered many good choreographic ideas. My only task was to suggest further areas for improvising, and to organize the work into a unified sequence. To build the scene to a climax, two actors drummed on the walls, louder and louder, while the actors playing the "fears" started chanting words, "Don't play in your food, hang up your clothes!"

VIII. CHILDREN ARE EAGER TO LEARN

Technique: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

This could have been an interesting scene, but in the interest of the play as a whole, we cut it. After FEARs, which turned out to be terrifying, Del would be in no mood to learn anything more about children. His search had reached a negative climax; he needed to be rescued.

IX. CHILDREN ARE TRUSTING

Technique: WALK AND PAUSE: statements inspired by the TRUST EXERCISES:

"I'm going to fall," "I can't see," "I'm hurt."

In the original outline, this area of childhood experience was combined with LOVE, but we had come up with a different technique for each.

Refinement: This exercise resisted refinement. Either because we arrived at this section at the end of a six-hour rehearsal period or because the structure was not a good one, our previous exercise for TRUST now looked impotent. Because it could not carry the weight of what needed to be expressed, it was abandoned.

X. CHILDREN ARE LOVING

Technique: SOUND AND MOVEMENT: CONDUCTOR: statements like "I love the flowers," "I love trees."

Along with TRUSTING, it looked as if this exercise was also going to resist refinement. The actors were too tired; the spirit of love and trust escaped them. We couldn't scrap LOVE, however, because LOVE, if anything, could rescue Del from the depression he was in.
Refinement: After a night's rest, the problem didn't look so enormous. The idea of four in a circle had to be dropped. It was static; we needed something climactic. After returning to regular SOUND AND MOVEMENT on LOVE for a while, I organized the material myself instead of letting a CONDUCTOR regulate it.

To build the scene, we began quietly at first. Lucy began a sound and movement on "I love flowers!" She was joined by Katey, who changed the sound and movement into something of her own and picked up another follower. Gradually more and more children joined in. The scene did not achieve its intent until the children focused on Del and tried to get him to love the world too. The climax of the scene came when Del rose to his feet, "I love flying!"

Jerry Argetsinger mentioned that a lot of people running very fast in a small space (and not hitting each other) is a thrilling sight, so everyone on stage began to fly, faster and faster.

XI. THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Techniques: CARRYING: making doors out of people; DESCRIBING what you see in the kingdom; doing a TASK of great importance; POETRY about love; BUILDING the kingdom in mime.

We had explored so many possible techniques that when we reached this point, I didn't know which ones to use. In fact, I was stumped on how to refine this scene, mainly because we had never firmly decided what this kingdom of heaven was. Certainly Del hadn't died and entered the pearly gates, but he had somehow undergone a conversion. The kingdom was in his mind, and how could we theatricalize that? I did know that LOVE had to lead him there and that in this scene all the previous scene had to come to a climax.

After putting a few ideas together and wondering if we shouldn't use some flashy technical effect to carry us over, we ran through the show without stopping. The run-through was more exciting than I had anticipated. The sequence of scenes, with the transitional comments between them, flowed into each other. The thrust of the show made the ending come clear. Refinement of the final scene could now progress.
Refinement: The BIG DOOR was changed to several smaller doors: POETRY was cut to one line, "I love you world!" BUILDING was cut entirely. As the cast came through the final door, they chose one aspect of their new vision to DESCRIBE and did a TASK of great importance as the lights dimmed.

Polishing Period

During this period we went back and worked on each scene, in detail, spending a week on making minor changes and on giving the actors the security of knowing exactly where to go and what to do. The actors commented that it was fun and easy to run through the show. Katey remarked she didn't experience the build-up of tension and the subsequent unwinding that accompanied her conventional roles. She could just walk on stage and be.

During the last week and a half, several other details were attended to:

1. The first transition scene was rewritten and all the transition scenes were memorized.

2. I met with the harpist, Kerry Lyn Cameron, and we decided on the musical selections. (See Appendix C, SCRIPT, for names of each selection.) She rehearsed with us five times prior to performance.

3. My idea of complicated costumes representing adults and children was abandoned at the suggestion of R. Mark Read, technical director. Rehearsal clothes were chosen carefully, however, so that the overall effect would be unified and pleasing to the eye. Work pants and plainly colored tops in nonclashing hues of yellow, red, lime-green, blue and orange were selected from the actors' own wardrobes. Actors dressed casually but neatly. No shoes were worn, mainly to ensure the actors' natural movement and to prevent any worry about being
stepped on. No makeup was used, to achieve a natural look.

4. Lights were hung and the floor and stool painted. All four walls were draped with the available black velveteen. The grid was lowered to create a more intimate environment.

5. A title was selected, through brainstorming with the cast (I wrote down all their ideas, good or bad) and through private conferences between myself, Jerry Argetsinger and Mark Read. Although the group had had a name with which to advertise from the beginning (The Eucalyptus Oil Company), the title of the show was not formulated until the week before performance. Finally deciding that few would come to see a play whose title suggested children, Mark Read advocated the title be chosen to suggest spontaneity and naturalness: An Afternoon's Work.

6. We decided to handle the audience in a way which would involve them from the beginning. The audience waited in the hall until we had warmed up. Then we greeted them personally, handing them programs, asking them where they would like to sit, and chatting with them until the play began.

Audience members sat on chairs, platforms, benches, or the floor, as they desired. The close physical proximity achieved from sitting on a crowded bench or leaning up against the next person's knees aided the feeling of group involvement. The audience sat on three sides of the playing area. Megan Terry, in an introduction to Vietrock (performed by the Open Theatre), writes, "Audience involvement . . . must be there to make the play work. To aid this, it's a good idea to arrange the
audience so that they can see one another through the play."¹

So important was this physical arrangement that some audience members doubted the play would have been as successful on a proscenium stage or with a larger audience.

In conclusion, An Afternoon's Work explored many exercises and techniques, but there are many interesting techniques as yet untried. An experiment is "any action or process undertaken to discover something not yet known";² I hope the frontier of this unknown will inspire me and others to further exploration.

¹Terry, "Vietrock," p. 197.

APPENDIX B

Program and Questionnaire
HARPIST: Kerry Lyn Cameron
SPECIAL CONSULTANT: Jerry Argetsinger
TECHNICAL DIRECTOR: R. Mark Read
ASSISTANT: Cynthia Oakes

PHOTOGRAPHY: James Pappas
POSTERS: Cathy Gubler

ENTIRE PRODUCTION CONCEIVED AND STAGED BY:
Dionis G. Spitzer

We gratefully acknowledge the use of *Miracles*, an anthology of poems written by children.

Since this is an experimental graduate production, we would appreciate it if you would fill out the enclosed questionnaire and drop it in the box by the exit.
**Questionnaire**

1. Your name ____________________________
   would be appreciated.

2. Have you ever seen this type of production before? If so, compare.

3. What about the show was most successful in your opinion?

4. What was least successful?

5. Did anything in the show touch you?
   If so, what?

6. Was the spirituality in the show effective?

7. Would you like to see more of this type of theatre? Why or why not?

Thank you!
APPENDIX C

Script
AN AFTERNOON'S WORK

conceived and directed by Dionis C. Spitzer

and created from the group improvisation work of

Brad G. Maurer
Douglas Payne
Deenaz P. Coachbuilder
Bill Drake
Katey Zundel
Del Mandarino
Kathy Ensign
Cornel Gaytan

and

Lucy Miner

NOTE: In an attempt to mend the flaws revealed by performance, the written part of this script has been altered slightly. The concluding scene has been reworked. Double spacing between speeches indicates those sequences which were written and which the cast memorized; single spacing between speeches indicates those lines which were created by the cast itself and which would change radically with a future performance and a different cast. In fact, to act the single-spaced sequences as they are written out here would be to deny the group creativity and feeling of spontaneity which are the core of this show. A future director should consult Appendix A to find out how each scene was created and set.
AN AFTERNOON'S WORK

(As the lights come up, the actors enter and assume a pose. The narrator begins:)

BRAD: Some say the world is divided into two types: grown-ups--

(Everyone shows off his "adult" costume: gloves, a vest, a business hat, a fancy tie, shades, a fur piece.)

and children.

(Everyone takes off his "adult addition" and plays with it as if a child.)

Tonight I want to introduce you to some adults--

(Everyone puts his "adult addition" back on. Doug starts to move--he's shooting for a basket.)

Douglas Payne--(He strikes a pose and remarks to the audience, "The world is our campus.")
Deenaz Coachbuilder--("What do the Vietnamese really want?")
Bill Drake--("I can wear slacks on campus.")
Katey Zundel--("The Valley of the Dolls is a dirty book.")
Del Mandarino--("I feel sorry for Spiro Agnew.")
Kathy Ensign--("Why is there so much hate in the world?")
Cornel Gaytan--("It's hard to eat with a moustache; it's easier to eat with a fork!")
Lucy Miner--("Living costs too much.")
And myself, Brad Maurer.

(The Harpist drums on the harp as one by one the characters repeat their statements, this time to each other. After each has repeated his statement, including BRAD ["I can't communicate"], they start SPLINTERED STATEMENTS.)

(Four walk around in a circle. The harp continues its beating.)
KATEY: The Valley of the Dolls is our Campus.
(The four look around to see no one is listening.)
DEL: I feel sorry for dirty books.
(The four shake hands.)
DOUG: Spiro Agnew is our world.
(Three clap for DEENAZ, their speaker.)
DEENAZ: What does our campus really want?
DOUG: (sliding to the floor) Dirty Books!

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(The remaining four people form a "chorus." They look at DOUG as they speak.) CORNEL: This valley . . . BILL: Is . . . LUCY: our campus.
KATHY: (turns)
KATEY: (while sitting on the floor looking at dirty books) I feel sorry for the Vietnamese People.
DEL: I feel sorry for dolls.
DOUG: I feel sorry for the campus.
DEENAZ: (moving to BRAD) The Vietnamese People are on campus.
BRAD: I can't communicate.
(The three on the floor jump up and glare at BRAD.)
(The "chorus" turns away.) CORNEL: I can't . . . KATHY: communicate.
LUCY: on campus. BILL: (turns)
(While annoying BRAD and trying to get him to fight)
DEL: Spiro Agnew communicates.
KATEY: Dirt communicates.
DOUG: Valley of the Dolls communicates.
BRAD: I can't.
KATEY: Vietnam is a dirty Valley.
DOUG: You're dirty.
DEENAZ: Are the Vietnamese really people? (She punches him. All four attack him.)
BRAD: I can't communicate.
ALL FOUR: Can't, can't, communicate can't.
DOUG: I feel sorry. (He gives him an extra kick. All freeze.)
BILL: (moving downstage) I can wear slacks to class.
DEL: (swaggering towards him) I can read the Valley of the Dolls in class.
DOUG: (likewise) I can wear slacks in Vietnam.
KATEY: (turning away) Slacks are dirty!
CORNEL: It's hard to eat a moustache.
BILL: (going past CORNEL to KATEY) It's easier to eat a fork.
DOUG: I can wear a moustache in class.
DEL: Does Spiro Agnew wear a moustache?
LUCY: Living costs too much.
(They form a rooting crowd at a sports event; LUCY jumps up like a cheerleader.)
DOUG: Spiro Agnew costs too much.
DEL: The Vietnamese People cost too much.
LUCY: Living much!
CORNEL: Hard to eat.
ALL FOUR: Costs! Much! Hard to eat! (Using these same words they give up their rooting and collapse in exhaustion on the floor.)
(BRAD, BILL and DEENAZ grab things from the air.)
BRAD: What do the Vietnamese People really want?
DEENAZ: Spiro Agnew.
BILL: What does Spiro Agnew really want?
DEENAZ: Dolls.
BRAD: (grabbing DEENAZ) Vietnam is a Valley of Dolls.
DEENAZ: Vietnam is our campus.
BILL: (grabbing DEENAZ) Our campus lacks Dolls.
BRAD: Our campus can't communicate.
(They toss DEENAZ back and forth.)
DEENAZ: Really want.
BILL: Can't communicate.
ALL THREE: Really want, can't communicate.
KATHY: WHY IS THERE SO MUCH HATE IN THE WORLD? (All freeze) Why is there so much hate in the world? WHY is there so much HATE in the world? (BRAD and DEL wheel out)
BRAD: Why is there so much hate in Vietnam?
DEL: Hate costs too much.
KATEY: VALLEY OF THE DOLLS, REVOLT!!!
(BRAD and DEL whisper: Revolt! Revolt!)
CORNEL: It's hard to revolt with a moustache.
DEENAZ: The Vietnamese are revolting.
BILL: Our campus lacks revolt.
KATHY: WHY IS THERE SO MUCH HATE IN THE WORLD?
BRAD: Because you can't communicate.
KATEY: WHY IS THERE SO MUCH REVOLT?
DEL: Because of Spiro Agnew.
DEENAZ: Because of Vietnam.
CORNEL: Because of moustaches!
DOUG: Campuses!
LUCY: Costs too much!
BILL: Too many slacks.
BRAD: Communicate!
KATHY: Too much hate.
KATEY: Revolt!
(They build in volume as they push to the back of the stage. All say REVOLT! except for BRAD, who says COMMUNICATE! The group lifts BRAD up in a somersault and throws him up in the air three times; then all freeze.)

BRAD: Into this world of adults, a child is born.

(DEL, having taken off his adult jacket, rolls out from among the legs of the adults, bawling like a new-born baby. The adults turn in wonder, put BRAD down, and start cooing over this helpless infant. LUCY and BILL as the mother and father kneel down by it and gaze in amazement.)

MOTHER: Sweetheart, it's a baby boy!

FATHER: He's quite a fella.

MOTHER: Don't cry, Mama's here.

(AD LIBS from the admiring crowd.)

BABY: (stops crying and looks around) Gee, the world is better than I thought it would be. Look at all the colors.

FATHER: He's got your eyes, dear.

BABY: I've got arms and legs!
FATHER: He's crawling!

MOTHER: Write it down in the baby book.

(They crawl after him.)

BABY: (panting) Isn't the world wonderful, Mom? Listen to me breathe.

MOTHER: Oosy goosy coochy coo.

FATHER: Look at this! (He makes a face while hopping around.)

BABY: Hee hee you're funny, I like you.

MOTHER: He's bright, isn't he?

BABY: (beeline for KATEY) Wow! a foot! The world is bigger than I thought.

KATEY: Aw, can I hold him?

KATHY: He's an awfully big baby.

DEENAZ: He's darling.

BRAD: Ooops, he burped.

KATEY: Little burpy wurpum, you little burpy wurpum!

BABY: (laughing) Oooh, that tickles! You love me, don't you.

FATHER: I think he likes you, Katey.

BRAD: (sniffing) I think you better change him.

FATHER: Why don't you change him this time, dear. I don't like surprises.

BABY: Everyone is so happy it makes me smile.

CORNEL: He's going to have beautiful teeth.

DOUG: There are three things you never tire of watching. Fire, an ocean, and a tiny baby. (pats him and leaves)

BABY: Bye.

(Harp plays "Rock-a-bye, Baby," as all the adults except LUCY form a gas stove.)

MOTHER: Now you play quietly, Del, and don't touch anything. (Exit)
BABY: What's touch?

(BABY goes over to the stove and pulls oven doors down; steam come out. He starts to touch the flickering burner.)

KATHY: (stage whisper) Don't touch me.

BABY: Why not?

KATHY: I'll burn you.

BABY: What's burn you?

KATHY: Touch me and find out.

BABY: (does so) Mommy!

MOTHER: (rushing over) What's wrong?

FATHER: He burned his hand on the stove.

(The STOVE dissolves into adults, who ad-lib "Poor thing" "He got hurt")

FATHER: Well, he has to learn sometime.

MOTHER: That's what happens when you're little.

KATEY: When he grows up he'll burn himself on bigger burners than that one.

MOTHER: No he won't; he's learned now and he won't do that when he is grown up.

BABY: Dad, I want to grow up.

(The adults form a television. Harp plays "Twinkle, twinkle, little star.")

FATHER: Come on, son, let's watch T.V. Are you too old for Romper Room?

BABY: Yes.

FATHER: Well, there doesn't seem to be anything else on.

BABY: Dad, will you watch T.V. with me?

FATHER: No, that's not a whole lot of fun for grown-ups, son. And listen, your Mom and I are going to the movies tonight--there's a babysitter coming--

BABY: A babysitter! I'm not a baby.
FATHER: Yeah. (He turns T.V. on.) Well, you keep out of mischief, O.K.? (Exit)

KATHY: (appears on T.V.) Romper, Romper, Stomper, Doo. Tell me, tell me, tell me do. Tell me today, did all my friends have fun at play? I see Billy and Tommy. Little Ann's been sick. Now you be good doobies--be sure to watch--

BABY: How come she never says my name? (He changes the channel.)

MAN: We've got to stop meeting like this, Pearl. Goodbye.

WOMAN: You can't leave me, now that the baby's coming.

MAN: A baby? Don't blame this on me. I've known you from way back; you're a good-for-nothing . . . (He shakes her; she screams.)

BRAD: (stage whisper) Change the channel; your father's coming.

FATHER: What are you watching? You shouldn't watch that. (He turns it off.)

BABY: Why did you do that?

FATHER: It's not for your tender eyes, son. You're too young.

BABY: I'm six and a half.

MOTHER: (entering from T.V. and adjusting earrings) Do what your father says, Del. Some things have to wait until you're older.

BABY: Oh, gee, I'll never get older.

FATHER: You be a good boy, we'll bring you back a treat from the movies.

(The Adults dissolve and form two PICTURES; Harp plays a tune from the movies.)

MOTHER: Today, we have a special treat; I'm going to take you to the museum.

BABY: Oh. That's for old people.

MOTHER: I think you'll like it. (They enter museum.) This is a man who lived long ago. Isn't that interesting?

BABY: Un huh. Hey, Mom, look at this neat lady.

MOTHER: Uh, let's move on to the next picture.

BABY: She doesn't have any clothes on.
MOTHER: Come on, there's some more pictures down here.

BABY: It looks like the guy forgot to paint clothes on her. Look at her muscles!

MOTHER: Come away, Del. You're too young to understand.

BABY: I understand.

(The Adults laugh.)

KATEY: (as the painting) See you in a few years, sonny.

(The Adults dissolve and form a CAR. Harp plays something sexy.)

BABY: Goodby, Dad, have fun! They're finally gone. I wish I was old enough to drive. (He polishes KATEY who is the front of the car.) Oh! They left the keys in the ignition! (He turns it on; sound effects of a car; it rolls forward a few feet and crashes.)

FATHER: (entering) What are you doing! Get out of that car.

BABY: I thought you were gone . . .

FATHER: How old are you? Answer me.

BABY: Thirteen.

FATHER: You know you're not allowed to drive until you're sixteen.

BABY: Do you think I'm just going to learn automatically when I'm older? I have to learn sometime.

FATHER: Son, I have just one thing to say. Grow up.

(CAR dissolves.)

KATEY: And act your age.

DOUG: (one of the wheels) Yes, act your age; you nearly killed me.

(Adults move to random places on the stage. Harp plays Kabalevsky, "24 Pieces for Children" for the Piano, #2, 'Polka')

BABY: Mom, am I old enough now?

FATHER: Well, it has to come sometime.

MOTHER: My own baby.

(They put his grown-up suit on him.)
FATHER: Here's the keys to the car.

DEL (BABY): Wow, I'm grown up!!! (more sedately) I'm grown up. I can do anything I want to do now, and go anywhere I want; (to MOTHER) I don't have to ask your permission. Katey, do you want to go for a drive? I'm so happy, and most of all I have all you friendly people who love me. (The Adults suddenly grow cool.) Deenaz--

DEENAZ: Tell me what to do?
DEL: (shrugging) I don't know--(he goes to CORNEL)
CORNEL: What's so fantastic about you?
FATHER: I just can't help you, son.
LUCY: Mothers are only people.
KATEY: I've got a wrinkle.
DOUG: I don't trust you, boy.
BRAD: I've got problems of my own.
KATHY: I'm sorry, I just don't feel like talking.

DEL: What do you mean? What do you mean? (The adults start to circle slowly around him saying their statements under their breath.) I spent all this time trying to get into your world. You're worse off than I was when I was little. Is that what growing up's all about? (pause) I should be happy. After all, I've got everything I want, the world's still the same as it always was, the flowers and the trees, and the colors, I should be happy. (The voices around him rise in volume and articulation.) Yes, I've got you people, and where does that get me? I'm going to be happy in spite of you. I worked hard to get where I am; I won't let you spoil it. (Finally he can't take it any longer) SHUT UP!!!

(There is a pause. Then BRAD takes control.)

BRAD: All right, break it up. Beat it. The door is that way. Go on. (He looks at DEL quizzically a second then starts off too.)

DEL: Hey wait. Maybe you can help me. Why aren't I happy? What's wrong with them?

BRAD: They're all frustrated.

DEL: I thought growing up got rid of a person's problems.

BRAD: You don't have any real problems until you have grown up.

DEL: Then why were they all telling me to grow up so fast?

BRAD: You were just an extra problem as a kid.

DEL: That's nice to find out. What do I do now?

BRAD: I don't know. You're on your own. Do what you want.
DEL: That's just it. I don't know what I want!

BRAD: (turning to him with amusement) Now you know why they're all all frustrated.

DEL: Why they're all frustrated? Aren't you frustrated?

BRAD: No.

DEL: Why do you happen to be the only adult who isn't frustrated?

BRAD: I've been through all that: I'm on the other side.

DEL: How did you get there?

BRAD: What can I say? It's like walking through a door.

DEL: Where is this door? How can I find it?

BRAD: It's a door you have to find within yourself.

DEL: Don't you hand out any clues?

BRAD: Have you ever thought of consulting the Book?

DEL: Is this what the other adults use?

BRAD: No-o, they think it's too much bother.

DEL: How come you know what they don't know?

BRAD: They know too much to listen.

DEL: You're telling me all you have to do is read a book, yet these other people--

BRAD: That's not what I said.

DEL: You said this book would tell me how to get to the other side.

BRAD: That's true, but you make it sound easy. Do you think the world is going to change around you? You better get something straight--all the changing is going to happen inside. These adults could walk through a thousand doors and never find anything different--unless . . . well, do you want to hear what the Book says?

DEL: I'm willing to try anything once.

BRAD: All right, Book!

(DOUG comes forward and kneels as "the Book." BRAD finds his place and reads:)
"Verily I say unto you, ye must repent and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God." (III Nephi 11:37).

DEL: I what?

BRAD: You must repent and become as a little child.

ALL: (to audience) Repent and become as a little child, as a little child, as a little child. (Everyone goes to the audience and, taking off his "adult addition," gives it to someone in the audience to hold. Then, becoming more and more as a child, the actors walk around the room joining in the song which CORNEL and the Harp have begun.)

SONG: "I Am a Child of God"

I am a child of God
And he has sent me here,
Has given me an earthly home
And parents kind and dear.

Lead me, guide me, walk beside me,
Help me find the way.
Teach me all that I must do
To live with Him some day.

(Meanwhile this dialogue takes place:)

DEL: Wait a minute, wait a minute, I just was a little child! I want to grow up! You were all telling me just a minute ago to grow up, don't you remember? I want to get rid of my frustrations, to know what to do all the time, not to be like a child. Don't you remember how I struggled to grow up? (BRAD nods) You do remember? Oh. I don't understand.

(After the song)

DEL: O.K. I can understand that. We're all children because we're all children of God. I knew that.

BRAD: Very good, you get an A. Tell me, do you remember being a child of God?

DEL: No. Is this some kind of a test?

BRAD: Well, I don't remember either. But I do remember another childhood. Here, I'll show you.

(They stand to one side and watch children play, using sound and movement. The children form groups and make up games together. Later they use dialogue. Here are three improvisations:)
DEENAZ: I'm a spider.
LUCY: I'm a bigger spider.
DEENAZ: I'm a black spider. Black spiders are bigger.
LUCY: Not bigger than orange ones.
DEENAZ: They're stronger; they can eat up orange spiders.
LUCY: Un uh. Mine can go higher. (LUCY falls over backward with laughter.)

CORNEL: You're cute.
KATHY: Go away, I'm playing.
CORNEL: You stepped on a line.
KATHY: I did not. It's your turn anyway.

DOUG: Hey, Katey, you be a mountain, and we'll ride right up.
KATEY: O.K.
BILL: I'm a motorcycle! (He makes motorcycle sounds.)

(DEL and BRAD enter.)

DEL: Hi. (The children quiet down and stare at him. A few respond: "Hi.") What are you doing? (a pause. "Playing.") Are you having fun? ("Uh huh.") How come you're not playing outside" (pause)

DEENAZ: It's raining.
BILL: It's wet.
CORNEL: Too much thunder.

DEL: Oh. Too bad the weather had to spoil your fun. ("We're having fun.") Good. (to BRAD) What's so great about this? Kids are kids.

BRAD: (leaving him) You figure it out.

LUCY: You want to play with us? (General ad-libs from the children)
DEL: That's a nice motorcycle.
DEENAZ: You can play with my spider.
KATEY: I was a mountain.
DEL: Oh, were you a good mountain? Good.
LUCY: You going to play with us?
DEL: No, I gotta go see some people, I've got things to do. I'd like to play, I really would, but--some other time, O.K.? Have fun. Bye.

BRAD: Look out, it's raining out there. (The two of them open imaginary umbrellas; they stand watching the rain. As the children mime watching at windows, harp plays Alexander Tcherepin, "Bagatelles for the Piano," #9.)

KATHY: Look at the pretty rain
That waters the pretty flowers
And washes away my hopscotch.

CORNEL: I can hear the drummers in the sky!
DOUG: The window pane has measles.

DEENAZ: There's an umbrella in the sky
   It must be raining in Heaven
   I have one prayer to say to God;
   Don't let it rain tomorrow.

BILL: The rain screws up its face and falls to bits.
Then it makes itself again.
Only the rain can make itself again.

LUCY: I wonder how God lives in Heaven
   When the clouds seem to be collapsing
   Like broken birds.

KATEY: It's watering time in the gardens of Heaven.
   And the flowers let their smells out!

(Harp music ends.)

DEL: What does the book say about this?

BRAD: Book! "Little children do have words given unto them many times
   which confound the wise and learned." (Alma 32:23)

DEL: That's really true. It would be nice to get back to that innocence they have, but they're innocent because they haven't learned certain things. We have and we can't just forget; we're grown up!

KATHY: Grown-ups are silly.
   They never eat food when it's served to them.
   They just talk and never eat it until it's cold.
   Isn't that silly?
   I haven't grown since I was five.
   I haven't grown at all--
   Grown-ups are just getting shorter.  

DEL: That's cute, I suppose, but children aren't all sweetness and light. I can remember some of the stuff we used to do . . . Wow . . . Look, it says here, right in your own book: "The natural man is an enemy to God and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be forever and ever." (Mosiah 3:19) Destructive, selfish, that's children all over. (BRAD gets an idea and leaves.) Where are you going?

BRAD: I'll show you.

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1The above are excerpts from Richard Lewis, ed., Miracles: Poems by Children of the English-Speaking World (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966). A few changes have been made in the wording.

2Ibid.
(LUCY begins this improvised scene. The words vary, but the actors have set the sequence of events. Harp plays Kabalevsky, "24 Pieces for Children" #18, 'Galop')

CORNEL: Hi, what are you doing?
LUCY: I'm making a big pile of leaves, to jump in. Help me, Cornel.
CORNEL: O.K. Make it big.
LUCY: That's good. Now you go jump in it, O.K.? I'll count. One, two, three!
BRAD: (jumps too) Hey!
CORNEL: Where did you come from? You ruined the pile.
BRAD: Let's build it bigger.
LUCY: Here comes Del. Get him.
CORNEL: Let's start a leaf fight.
DEL: Wait, wait!
LUCY: Here's Deenaz.
DEL: Wait, I'm trying to tell you something. Let's make a great big pile and put the rake in it and have Billy's mom come out and jump in it. (laughter)
CORNEL: Look who's here, Billy the Brain.
BRAD: Hi, frog-eyes.
DEL: How many leaves fell off the tree today, Billy.
CORNEL: Oh, he brought his sister.
DEL: Kathy go home.
KATEY: Hey, you guys.
DEL: Hi Katey.
KATEY: What are those guys doing here?
DEL: Oh, she hasn't done anything yet.
KATEY: You know what Kathy did? (excited whispering and giggling)
DEENAZ: Hey what is that?
CORNEL: It's a black bug.
KATEY: Oooh, it's a spider.
BRAD: (picks it up with a knowing look and starts whistling, while walking toward KATHY. Suddenly he shoves it in her face, and she runs and screams satisfactorily.)
KATHY: Eeeeee!
BRAD: Wait, wait! (He stands before his appreciative audience, lowers the spider into his mouth, and swallows it.)
KATEY: Do it again!
CORNEL: Now kiss her.
LUCY (entering as a parent) Children, Children! (They quiet down.) Please keep things quiet out here. You can play out here with Lucy if you want, but I have a baby asleep, so please keep it down, and don't mess up the yard.
KATEY (and all): We won't.
KATHY: (hanging on to LUCY's shoulder) They tried to scare me.
LUCY: They won't hurt you. (exit)
DEL: (to KATHY) You little brat.
LUCY: (coming back in as a child) Hi, I'm back.
KATEY: Your mom was just out here. She told us to be quiet.
DOUG: (entering) Guess what I got!
LUCY: It's Doug.
DOUG: Guess what I got.
BRAD: A worm?
CORNEL: He doesn't have anything.
DOUG: Yes I do.
BRAD: He has a worm.
CORNEL: You'll eat it if he does.
DOUG: It's a dead mouse! (great excitement) I caught it in a trap.
DEL: (running to look) You guys, it is, it's a real dead mouse!
DOUG: Hey, let's burn him.
KATEY: (and others) Yes yes!
DOUG: I've got a match.
KATEY: You've got matches; I'm going to tell.
KATEY: Bring her back here.
(BILL goes after her)
KATEY: She always tells.
DEL: Make a really neat big pile.
LUCY: Make a giant pile.
KATEY: You guys, you guys, let's cut out its guts!
DEENA2: What's guts?
KATEY: The insides, you know, all the gooey stuff.
CORNEL: (from off stage as a parent. Whistles loudly and calls:) Doug!
(There's a sudden hush, then the children whisper:)
BRAD: It's your father.
ALL: Hide him, hide him.
CORNEL: (Whistles) Doug! (He enters.) Hey, have any of you kids seen Doug?
KATEY: Nope.
KATHY: He's under the . . . (BILL and KATEY smother her.)
BRAD: He's--he's down riding bikes with Joey.
CORNEL: Where does Joey live?
BRAD: About six and a half houses down--that way.
KATHY: He's in the . . . (same business)
KATEY: Yea, he's down there, he's down there.
CORNEL: (exiting) O.K.
(suppressed laughter)
DEL: (to KATHY) Tattletale!
OTHERS: Yeah, tattletale.
KATEY: Hey, it's getting darker outside. Let's have a big fire.
BRAD: Yeah, and we can make a sacrifice to the devil!
KATHY: You shouldn't do that.
DEL: You guys, I know what; let's wait till tomorrow when it's lighter.
ALL: Nooo!
BRAD: I know, be a witch, Katey.
ALL: Yeah!
EVERYONE: Eetchee poooo
KATHY: (whining) Don't--
BILL: Shhh.
EVERYONE: Eetchee poo.
LUCY: Let's dance around the leaf pile.
BRAD: Yeah a dance.
EVERYONE: (circling around the mouse) Eetchee poo
KATHY: Don't
(They get faster.)
CORNEL: Hey get her. (They push KATHY into the circle and begin to call her a witch.)
EVERYONE: Tattle tale, little brat, witch, witch, witch, witch!
DEL: (suddenly screams and falls) You guys, I touched her!
LUCY: She's got cooties.
BRAD: We've got to burn them off.
(They touch her and shriek.)
KATEY: She's got fleas!
DOUG: We've got to burn our clothes.
KATEY: Come on, burn 'em off.
(KATHY is crying.)
(DOUG and BRAD start to light the leaf pile.)
DOUG: It's burning, it's smoking.
BILL: You shouldn't do that.
BRAD: Look at that.
CORNEL: Oh oh. I thought you were kidding.
BRAD: Don't be a spoil sport.
DOUG: Look at it now.
BILL: Getting too big.
KATEY: We better get some water.
DEL: I'm going to go home.
BRAD: I didn't do it.
BILL: Yes you did, Brad.
(They have all run off and the deserted stage glows red.)
DEL: That's what I mean! You see what children are really like! You want us to be like that?
BRAD: You'll find we adults naturally are like that--only a little more refined.
DEL: And this is the way to enter heaven?
BRAD: That's a good question.
BILL: What does the book say about this.
DEENAZ: Yes, where's the book.
BRAD: Book! (to DEL) Be my guest.
DEL: I really think it will say the same thing it did before. What do you know; it does. "For the natural man is an enemy to God and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever." Sounds familiar, huh.
BILL: "Unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit and putteth off the natural man and becometh as a child." Becometh as a child??
KATEY: "Submissive, meek, humble, patient."
DEENAZ: "Full of love."
CORNEL: "Willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him"

DEL: "Even as a child doth submit to his father." (Mosiah 3:19)

BRAD: There you go.

BILL: Yeah! (He goes over to where he left his adult suit.) Can I have that back, please. (He gets a stool from the corner.) Doug!

(Doug collapses from the book into a scared little child.)

BILL: I want to talk to you a minute. Sit down. Doug, I understand one of Johnny's trucks got broke. You know anything about it?

DOUG: No.

BILL: He says you do, Doug. You want to tell me about it?

DOUG: I was just pushing it along the sidewalk and the wheels come off.

BILL: That's not what Johnny said, Doug. What happened?

DOUG: I was just pushing it--pushing it along--

BILL: Doug, tell me the truth.

DOUG: The wheels just came off.

BILL: Doug, be careful. We've always told the truth, you and I. Now look me in the eye. Did you do it on purpose?

DOUG: (pause) I did it on purpose. But he called me a dirty name--

BILL: I don't care what he did. (Sigh. Pause.) What are we going to do, Doug?

DOUG: He said I was . . .

BILL: I don't care, Doug. He's not my son. You are. What he does is his parents' business. What is worse, Doug, we've been through this time and again. Just about every day there's some little friend coming over here, saying Doug did this, Doug did that. When are you going to learn? If they call you a dirty name, you've got to be bigger than they are. What good does it do you to try and get back at them? You've got to be bigger than they are. Doug, I keep telling you this, but it doesn't seem to do any good. Each time you say you're sorry, and then you go right ahead and do it again. I thought you'd finally learned, Doug. You've really disappointed me.

DOUG: Do you still love me?

BILL: (softening) Of course I still love you. You're my son. It's just that you kind of let me down. We're supposed to be friends, Doug. We go places together, we go on hikes, huh? We go fishing too? Friends don't disappoint each other, Doug.

DOUG: I'm sorry.

BILL: Well, that's a start, but I'm afraid this time it's not enough. We talked this over before and you made a promise to me. Do you remember that promise? Now you've broken it. I don't want to have to go through this again, Doug. I want you to remember this incident. I want you to decide what the punishment should be. What do you think it should be?

(Doug shrugs his shoulders miserably.)

BILL: Don't you have any trucks?

DOUG: (running to get something) He can have this one.
BILL: Doug, does that old truck look like the one you broke?
DOUG: It's got four wheels.
BILL: It's not shiny; it's not new. Half of the paint's gone. You don't want this.
DOUG: I can't give him my new one.
BILL: Doug.
DOUG: I like my new one.
BILL: Is it fair to give him an old one when you broke a new one?
DOUG: I got the new one for my birthday. Can't he have this one?
BILL: No, you don't care about this one. You like your new one, and next time you'll remember.
DOUG: I can't give him my new one.
BILL: I'll tell you what. What I want you to do is go upstairs to your room and stay there until you can decide that to give Johnny your new truck would be the right thing to do. Understand?
DOUG: All right. (DOUG goes up-center and cries.)

(Harp plays Kabalevsky, "24 Pieces for Children," #1 'Melody."

BRAD: Book! (Seeing DOUG) What is wrong with the book?

DEENAZ: He doesn't feel like being the book.

BRAD: Never mind, I'll handle it myself. So you see, the natural man must submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.

DEL: O.K. Leave the poor kid alone. Anyway, who says parents shouldn't submit to their children? I mean, adults have to be chastised too. Watch this.

(KATEY is working in the kitchen.)
DEL: Hi Mom, what are you making?
KATEY: Cookies.
DEL: How come you eat so much?
KATEY: I eat because I'm nervous, Del.
DEL: Why are you nervous?
KATEY: Because I have a lot of things to do.
DEL: Oh, I know why you're nervous; it's because of Dad, huh, because he never takes you any place. But I know if you went on a diet and got real skinny he'd take you places, and then you wouldn't be nervous anymore and wouldn't have to wear a girdle.
KATEY: Delbert! I would appreciate it if you would go clean up your room.
DEL: It's clean.
KATEY: Then go watch T.V., please.
DEL: Can't I stay and help?
KATEY: I think it would be better if I fixed it all by myself.
DEL: Please.
KATEY: Delbert!
DEL: Are you mad?
KATEY: No, I'm not mad; I just want you to leave me alone.
DEL: (going off) I'm never going to be fat.
KATEY (walks over and slaps him. There is a moment of tenseness. Then KATEY relaxes; her anger is gone.)
KATEY: I'm sorry I hit you. You have to learn when you can say those things to your mother. You know I'm very busy and very tired. I need your help, not your criticism.
DEL: (beginning to cry) I'm sorry.
KATEY: Forgive me?
(They hug.)
KATEY: Come help me?
DEL: Mom, you're not fat.

BRAD: Hey, how do you feel now?

DEL: Awful. (He goes to pick up his adult suit.)

BRAD: You got chastised as a child.

DEL: There's got to be an easier way to enter the kingdom of heaven. I can't hack this. (He rubs his sore cheek.)

DOUG: (from the back of the stage with sound and movement) I like my new truck.

DEL: What's wrong with him?

BRAD: He feels awful too.

(Everyone looks at DOUG; then sitting around the stage they retire to a sad spot of their own. The Harp plays Kabalevsky, "24 Pieces for Children," #13, 'Waltz,' and all is still for a few moments except for DOUG's crying.)

KATEY: (pause) I don't hurt no place when I'm sad, I just know I'm sad.

LUCY: (pause) Smiles warm you, tears mellow you, frowns hurt.

CORNEL: (pause) The doors in my house are used every day for closing rooms and locking children away.

DEENAZ: (who has come forward towards DOUG) Have you ever felt like nobody, just a tiny speck of air, when everyone's around but you're just not there?

DEL: (who has come forward) The birds have all flown and I am alone, in the big sky's mouth.1

1The above poems are from Miracles, except for Lucy's, which is her own.
(The lights change and the nightmare begins. KATHY and BILL beat on the walls to one side, four ADULTS creep in along the floor; DEENAZ, DOUG and DEL rub their eyes and see nothing.)

DEL: What's there? Who is it? Go away!
(The FOUR make the sound of wind and waves as they leap over the huddled forms.)
DOUG: It's dark, it's dark.
(The CHILDREN cling to each other, but the FOUR drag them apart across the floor. They are DOGS. The drumming sounds like HEARTBEATS. The THREE get back together again, but are pulled apart into a line until they rise to a standing position. The FOUR become a marching team of authoritarian parents. The THREE roll on the floor, while the FOUR march over them. The drum beats get faster.)
DEENAZ: Mommy!
PARENTS: Snap to it! Blow your nose! Don't cry, men don't cry! Hang up your clothes! Don't play in your food! Pick up your toys! Wash your face! Do your homework!
CHILDREN: I don't want to! I can't help it!
(The CHILDREN get up and start a slow-motion run which leads nowhere. The FOUR march right through them. The FOUR turn and confront the CHILDREN. A terrified freeze. Abruptly, all start running. They hit the wall at the back of the stage, and the CHILDREN turn and slide down between four pairs of legs to the floor, screaming MOMMY! DADDY!)
(KATHY and BILL enter as parents to comfort DOUG and DEENAZ.)
DEENAZ: I had a terrible nightmare--I kept running but I couldn't get away.
DOUG: I had a bad dream--these dogs were getting me, big, big, big dog.
(DEL is left alone on stage. It is awhile before he can speak.)

DEL: Now I remember what it's like. It's terrible. Give me my adult suit. I'm not going back into that nightmare for anything.

KATEY: Who says adults don't have nightmares too?

DEL: You don't even give me an out, do you.

BRAD: Come on, you can't always have things the way you want 'em.

DEL: Those other adults were right; it's too much bother.

BRAD: Look, fear isn't always bad. Why, "The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom." (Psalm 111:10)

DEL: Fear is the beginning of wisdom? Well, it's not wisdom in my book, not fear of God or anything else.

BRAD: You don't have to get angry.

DEL: I still don't see why I have to become as a little child. You haven't given me one good reason.
BRAD: You don't have to. You don't have to do anything.

DEL: Good, then let's leave it at that.

BRAD: There's still one subject we haven't touched upon.

DEL: I don't want to hear it.

BRAD: Love! "Love casteth out all fear." Book! (I John 4:18)

DEL: If you go quoting one more scripture at me, I'm going to ram the book down your throat!

BRAD: O.K., O.K. I'm leaving.

DEL: Good, so am I. (to audience and to cast) Goodbye. You can all go home now. Who knows what the kingdom of heaven is anyway? Can any of you tell me? Anybody? No, you can't, can you. I didn't think you could. It really doesn't matter. Who cares? Nobody cares.

(He sits dejectedly upstage, his back to the audience. The Harp starts playing the opening bars of Claude Debussy's "Maid with the Flaxen Hair." Nobody says anything at first. Then DEENAZ comes forward.)

DEENAZ: That's not true, Del, I care.

(Pause)

DOUG: (coming forward slowly) I gave my new truck away, but you can play with my old one. It still works.

DEL: No, Doug, I don't want to play.

(Pause)

KATEY: (approaching hesitantly) You want to play in some leaves?

DEL: I don't feel like playing.

LUCY: (also coming forward) Don't be sad. Lucy loves you. Lucy loves everybody.

(Pause)

DEL: Deenaz, what is love?

DEENAZ: (after a moment of thought) When flowers open their petals?

DEL: What is the kingdom of heaven, then?

DEENAZ: (Pause) Where flowers grow?

(Harp plays "Gavotte" by Carlos Salzedo.)
LUCY: I love flowers! (She uses sound and movement to express her feeling. KATEY joins her.) I love to dance! (The two of them join hands in a dance.)

KATEY: Come on, Del, dance!
DEL: Go dance then. (LUCY sadly sits.)
KATEY: (using a new sound and movement) I love the stars! (DEENAZ joins her; KATEY stops moving and gazes at the stars.)
DEENAZ: I love rolling in the grass. (KATHY, who has been watching eagerly, joins in the rolling. So do LUCY AND KATEY.)

(DEL notices DOUG.)

DEL: Don't you love anything?

DOUG: My new truck.

KATHY: I love dandelions!
BILL: I love swinging in swings; getting dizzy.
(Harp begins playing a harp exercise consisting of arpeggios.)
CORNEL: Swinging up and down. I love the birds!

DEL: Don't you love the birds?

DOUG: Sometimes.

DEL: How about airplanes.

DOUG: (shrugs)

DEL: Would you like me to be an airplane?

DOUG: Yeah!

DEL: (rising) Come on then.

DOUG: (flying with DEL) I love to fly!

(Everyone starts flying, slowly at first, then faster and faster.)

(BRAD is still on the sidelines.)

DEL: Come on, Brad.

BRAD: You don't believe in that kid stuff, do you?

DEL: Come on.

DOUG: I'm going to fall!

DEL: I've got you.

(As the other children sink to the floor in exhaustion, BRAD and DEL pick DOUG up by his hands and feet and whirl him around like an airplane.)
They flip him up so he is standing on their knees. Hurray! DOUG slips to the floor, as the other children crowd around.)

DOUG: Do it again.

DEL: I don't know if I can.

OTHERS: (ad-libbing) Do me! Do it! to me!

DEL: Wait a minute! I can't do it to all of you! I was just leaving--hey! You don't all need cheering up like Doug. Besides, I'm too weak, after what Brad put me through--O.K., O.K.

(Everyone says, "One, two, three!" as BRAD and DEL swing LUCY up; everyone runs through the archway formed by her legs; once on the other side they spin into a door.)

(Harp begins "The Lord's Prayer" by Albert Hay Malotte.)

DOUG: "I give unto men weakness that they may be humble." (Ether 12:27)

CORNEL: "Then will I make weak things become strong." (Ibid.)

KATEY: "Ye must become as a little child."

DEENAZ: To be a bigger man.

(Everyone rises, taller than before. They are no longer children, but adults with children's eyes. LUCY slips down.)

BRAD: (to DEL) Decide now before you change your mind. Are you going to continue growing or are you already grown?

DEL: I have to suffer all things?

BRAD: Bear all things.

DEL: Love all things?

BRAD: You've got it.

(DOUG, CORNEL, KATHY, DEENAZ and LUCY form two "doors.")

KATEY: What's on the other side?

BILL: (walking through a door) Hello, world!

KATEY: (walking through the other door) Look at all the colors!

BILL: The world is more beautiful than I thought.

DEL: I've chosen.
BRAD: There's nothing different on the other side, is there?

DEL: (walking through the other door) Nothing's different, but nothing's the same. Why didn't I see the world this way before?

BRAD: Come on, that's only a start.

(He extends his hand; DEL takes it; BRAD extends his other hand to KATHY, who extends hers to KATEY, who extends hers to CORNEL. The Harp is reaching the climax of "The Lord's Prayer." They start to run--through the door which is formed in the back by LUCY, DEENAZ, DOUG and BILL. Astonishment at the vision they behold on the other side brings them up short.)

BRAD: People!
DEL: It's like I can hear what they're thinking.
KATHY: Flowers! (She smells them.)
(Everyone comes into the shaft of light that is glowing stage center.)
LUCY: Smiling faces. (She smiles back.)
DEENAZ: The sky has clear lines. (She starts painting.)
BILL: Music! (He starts to conduct.)
CORNEL: I can see eternity. (He counts stars.)
KATEY: I feel peace. (She dances.)
DOUG: I see another door. (He writes.)

DEL: I can't believe it.

BRAD: Nothing's impossible.

(All "feed the face"; the music dies away as the lights dim.)
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