

TARRAGON THEATRE

35th SEASON 2005-2006

“The real creative energy emanates from those theatres that develop their own plays. Of these, the most successful, on a popular and critical level, is Tarragon Theatre.”

Time Magazine, 1974

“Tarragon is a powerhouse of new Canadian writing. It is also an actors’ powerhouse.”

The Times of London, 1986

“What a miracle the Tarragon is, really.”

The Globe and Mail, 2000

About Tarragon Theatre

Tarragon is primarily a playwright’s theatre. Its mandate is to develop, encourage and produce new work; to attract or train new artists and technicians to interpret new work; and to inform and develop an audience for new work. The goal of the OutReach programs is to develop quality theatre education initiatives for students, educators, community members, and theatre patrons. The mandate of OutReach is “to use all its resources, programs, and facilities to promote, wherever possible, inclusion. Particularly through our OutReach initiatives we aim to support and foster relationships with community members, educators and students as together we develop the theatre practitioners and audiences of today and tomorrow”.

Tarragon Achievements

- Over 175 Canadian premieres by such celebrated and award-winning playwrights as David French, James Reaney, George F. Walker, Judith Thompson, John Murrell, Joan MacLeod, Maja Ardal, Morris Panych, Jason Sherman, Guillermo Verdecchia, Ann-Marie MacDonald, Daniel Brooks, Diane Flacks, Richard Greenblatt, Ted Dykstra, Ken Garnhum, Michael Healey, Morwyn Brebner, Mavis Gallant, Kristen Thomson and a host of others.
- Tarragon is the foremost producer, in English Canada, of translated plays from Québec, most notably the work of Carole Fréchette and Michel Tremblay.
- Plays developed and produced at Tarragon have, on many occasions, toured nationally and internationally; they have also been widely published, broadcast and filmed.
- Tarragon has received more than 200 Dora Award nominations, many nominations (and winners) for the Chalmers Canadian Play Award and many nominations for the Governor General’s Award for Drama (winners include John Mighton, Judith Thompson, Joan MacLeod, Guillermo Verdecchia, John Krizanc, Jason Sherman and Morris Panych, all for Tarragon plays). Tarragon has received the Lieutenant Governor’s Award 5 times in the past 7 years.

- Tarragon has 3,800 subscribers in the 2005-2006 season. Tarragon is deficit-free.
- The Urjo Kareda Playwrights Endowment Fund, named to honour Urjo's commitment to Canadian theatre, stands at just under \$1.2 million. Income from the fund is used to assist playwrights while they are writing their plays.

Tarragon Programs

- 7 or 8 major productions in two theatres each season. In the 2004-2005 season, there were eight productions (over 300 performances).
- Playwrights Unit (since 1982). As many as 7 playwrights, with works-in-progress, work individually and collectively with the artistic director and the associate artistic director over the course of a year. These plays are given a public reading during Play Reading Week.
- 5 playwrights-in-residence.
- Tarragon Theatre/George Brown College New Play Development Project – Each year, the Tarragon works with George Brown College's Theatre Department to select an appropriate playwright to work with George Brown's second year class. The playwright's script is workshopped by the class, under the direction of Tarragon's dramaturg Andy McKim. In the students' third year, a second workshop culminates in a staged reading. George Brown Theatre School then has the option of performing the play in full production later that year.
- Spring Arts Fair (since 1985): an extraordinary free celebration of the performing arts, presented in spaces throughout the interior and exterior of Tarragon Theatre.
- OutReach programs aimed at youth including Spring Training Project, Young Playwrights Unit, Under 20 for Under 20's playwriting competition, high school and post-secondary co-op placements; OutReach programs aimed at educators including Teacher Nights.
- Apprentice programs in arts administration and stage management.

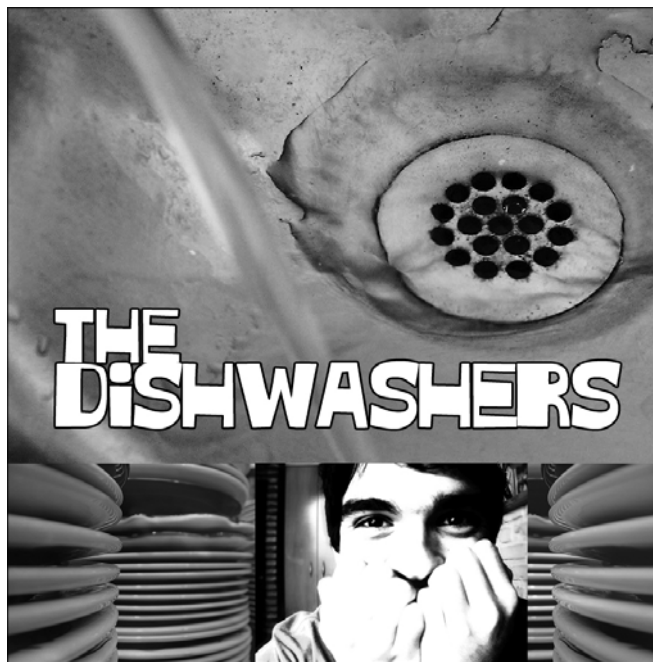
Tarragon Special Services

- Over 500 scripts professionally read and assessed annually without charge.
- Student and senior matinees; wheelchair accessibility throughout the facility.
- Teachers provided with a complimentary study guide.
- Costume and prop rentals for professional and community companies.
- Pay-What-You-Can performances every Sunday afternoon.
- Tickets donated to community and social service groups for fundraising events.

TARRAGON THEATRE

Study Guide

The Dishwashers
by Morris Panych



Directed by Morris Panych
**Starring: Jonathan Crombie, Randy Hughson,
Daniel Karasik, Eric Peterson**
Set and Costume Design by Ken MacDonald
Lighting Design by Paul Mathiesen
Sound Design by Todd Charlton
Stage Manager: Arwen MacDonell

November 8 – December 18, 2005

About *The Dishwashers* study guide:

This study guide has been created so that your theatre experience at Tarragon is a fulfilling and engaging one. We hope that it will help create discussions, generate ideas and prompt many questions.

The Dishwashers study guide was coordinated and compiled by:

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The Dishwashers study guide is divided into several sections.

1. **About Tarragon Theatre**
2. **About the Playwright**
3. **About the Play**
4. **Elements of the Play**
5. **Elements of Design**
6. **Additional Resources**
7. **Lesson Plans**

Point of Interest

We encourage you to make use of this study guide as effectively as possible and as such we want to highlight the fact that some elements of the guide are most useful prior to viewing the production and some are most useful post viewing. For example, while the structure, character breakdown and themes set up a context for viewing, the design elements are best understood after viewing. There are also lesson plans included for pre and post show activities.

**Feel free to contact us should you have any questions or comments at
416.536.5018 x243.**

The Dishwashers

"If everybody was at the top of the heap, there wouldn't be a heap."

A young gun, a curmudgeon, and a nearly expired dish jockey come together in the basement of an upscale restaurant. In this place of endless dishes, suds and despair, Morris Panych brings wit and humour to the quest for existential meaning. A delicious comedy about the Zen of dishwashing.

About the Playwright – Morris Panych

Playwright, actor, and director Morris Panych has directed over thirty productions, and written a dozen plays that have been produced across Canada, Britain, and the United States.

Panych was born in 1952 in Calgary and grew up in Edmonton, Alberta. He received a diploma in radio and television arts from the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, and then studied creative writing at the University of British Columbia (BFA, 1977), and theatre at East 15 acting school in London, England. He works primarily in Toronto and Vancouver.

His first play, *Last Call - A Postnuclear Cabaret*, premiered at the Tamahnous Theatre in Vancouver in 1982, and it was also adapted as a television show by the CBC as *Last Call - The Television Show*. This apocalyptic musical co-starred Panych and Ken MacDonald, and MacDonald also wrote and played the music. MacDonald's set designs have been an important element in many of Panych's plays, and he is the designer for this production of *The Dishwashers*.

Panych then became the artistic director of Tahmanous. There, Panych co-wrote two more musicals with MacDonald: *Contagious* (1984), and *Cheap Sentiment* (1985); and both Panych and MacDonald performed in *Simple Folk, Songs of a Generation* (1987), which toured to the Soviet Union. In 1989 the Arts Club Theatre in Vancouver produced *7 Stories*, followed by *The Necessary Steps* in 1991, and *The Ends of the Earth* in 1992.

Panych's relationship with Tarragon began with a starring role in *Pal Joey*, a musical by Rogers and Hart, in the 1985/86 season. As a playwright, Tarragon first produced *7 Stories* in the 1990/91 season and we have since produced *Girl in the Goldfish Bowl* (winner of 2004 Governor General's Award for Drama and recipient of numerous Doras including Best New Play and Best Direction); *Vigil* (retitled *Auntie and Me* for the run in London's West End at Wyndham's); *Ends of the Earth* (Governor General's Award, 1994); *Lawrence and Holloman*; *Earshot* (to be remounted in March '06 at the Extra Space). At Tarragon, Panych has also directed *2000* by Joan MacLeod and *White Biting Dog* by Judith Thompson.

In 1998 Panych co-created and directed *The Overcoat*, a physical theatre piece in which choreographed movement and music function in place of dialogue. This production toured across Canada. Panych also directed the television version of *The Overcoat*. Panych's plays for young people - *Cost of Living* (1990), *2B WUT UR* (1992), and *Life Science* (1993) were produced by Green Thumb Theatre, and have toured extensively. They are published under the title, *Other Schools of Thought*.

About the Play

In *The Dishwashers*, Morris Panych takes you into a world few have ever seen – deep, deep down into the bowels of your favourite restaurant where the dishes are washed. There we meet three dishwashers: Dressler (played by Randy Hughson), Emmett (played by Jonathan Crombie) and Moss (played by Eric Peterson). Each have their own strange and elaborate relationship with their job, one which they share with each other as they wash the seemingly endless supply of dirty dishes that descend from above.

Morris Panych has said that the play is a tribute to his father: “He was a machinist and I used to work for him every summer, and I had the most horrible, mind-numbing jobs you could ever imagine...it was pretty demeaning work. Yet he was always very happy in his work and I really admired that about him, and I really admire that about people who found a path.” In the dedication of the published version of the play, Panych writes: “*The Dishwashers* is dedicated to my father, Peter Panych; a hard working and decent man – one of the millions quietly, unobtrusively, keeping the wheels turning.”

The play focuses on people’s identity and the value of work – what kind of work do we value and, in turn, what kind of people do we value? Dressler, Emmett and Moss each have their own feelings about working as a dishwasher and what it means to be one of the anonymous many that keep all of our lives working.

Elements of the Play

All of the components that make up a play are called the dramaturgical elements. These include the **structure** (how the story is 'built') the **genre** (comedy or tragedy), the **language**, the **characters** and **themes** (the larger issues the play is examining).

Structure

The structure refers to how the playwright has arranged the events in his/her story. A story can be told in many different ways, for example the playwright can begin at the beginning of the story and move forward until the story reaches a logical ending. Or a play can begin long after the events have happened and unfold in random order, for example, in one character's memory.

In general, most plays consist of **exposition**, where the background of the story is told and the characters are introduced; the **crisis point** – the point in the story where the events around which the play will be centred begin; from here there is **rising action** which leads to the **climax** – the point at which the conflict introduced by the crisis point is resolved and the **denouement**, where the elements of the story are summarized and the play is concluded.

Examples of kinds of structures or plots:

- Shakespeare's plays always have five acts with the rising action in the first two acts, the climax in the third act and the falling action or denouement in the final two acts.
- The Well-Made Play – a term created in the 19th century for plays which are characterized by the perfectly logical arrangement of its action – suspense is a major element of these plays and each act reveals more of the plot which is then neatly resolved in the climax. Soap operas often follow this structure.
- Many modern playwrights reject logical, linear (meaning forward moving in a straight, logical line) structures and they arrange the events in the play in a less logical way. Memory plays, for example, don't often unfold in a chronological structure ie. Tennessee Williams' play *The Glass Menagerie*.

How a playwright chooses to arrange the events in the play can tell us how he/she wants the audience to experience the story.

The Dishwashers is divided into two Acts and Panych has indicated in the script that each scene ends with a "Blackout", an indication that one scene does not flow into the next one but that each scene stands on its own. Often there is a passage of time between scenes and over time we see a progression in Emmett's attitude towards his job and a decline in Moss' health. In Act One, for example, in Scene Three it is Christmas and in Scene Four it is New Year's Eve. In each scene, we learn information about what has gone on in the time lapses in between – often Dressler tells of his trips "upstairs" (a place we never see).

This structure of individual scenes within a two Act play highlights the fact that not much actually changes in this dishpit. The characters' lives do not change much, and their job is exactly the same day after day – even holidays like Christmas or New Year's do not alter their routine. The play does not focus much on action in order to push the play forward – the changes are more internal, within the characters, rather than external.

Genre

Genre is a French word meaning type, species or class of composition, and most works of literature's genre can be divided into **tragedy** or **comedy**. Determining a play's genre helps the reader/spectator understand how to 'view' the play – what is the worldview of the playwright? How is s/he asking us to look at the world? Knowing a play's genre helps us understand better the 'rules' of the play – how the play is operating in terms of its portrayal of the world.

- **Comedy**, in general, is defined as a play written “chiefly to amuse its audience...It will normally be closer to the representation of everyday life than a tragedy and will explore common human failings rather than tragedy's disastrous crimes” (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*). Shakespearean comedies are also defined as ending in marriage. The pursuit of love is a strong element of comedy.
- **Tragedy**, in general, is defined as “a serious play representing the disastrous downfall of a central character”. The central character is led to this disaster through “an error” and “the tragic effect usually depends on our awareness of admirable qualities in the protagonist which are wasted terribly in the fated disaster” (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*).
- Modern plays are difficult to categorize because they often contain elements of both the tragic and the comic, called **tragicomedy**. As the name suggests, tragicomedies combine elements of tragedy and comedy by “either providing a happy ending to a potentially tragic story or by some more complex blending of serious and light moods...In modern dramatic criticism, the term has come to be attached to the theatre of the absurd” (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*).

Typical of Panych's work *The Dishwashers* moves quickly between hilarious moments of great comedy and deep, philosophical questions. His plays have often been referred to as 'absurdist', taken from the phrase “Theatre of the Absurd”.

Theatre of the Absurd:

- A term coined by critic Martin Esslin, it first referred to a group of plays and playwrights from the 1950s and '60s
- Some playwrights often included in this group include Samuel Beckett (*Waiting for Godot*), Eugene Ionesco (*The Bald Soprano*), Jean Genet (*The Maids*) and Harold Pinter (*The Dumb Waiter*)
- Often they share a similar view of the world: they see the human condition as essentially meaningless and 'absurd'
- Often innovative in form, aiming to startle the reader to shake him/her out of his/her comfortable, conventional life of every day concerns
- Plots are often surreal, illogical or dream-like
- Distrust of language is another key element – by ridiculing conventional speech, the plays try to make people aware of the possibility of more authentic communication

Elements of “Theatre of the Absurd” in *The Dishwashers* include:

- The repetitive, never ending cycle of cleaning and washing the dishes, highlighting the sometimes meaningless nature of life
- The focus on death, particularly in the character of Moss, who seems, throughout the play, to be on the verge of death
- The ‘hell like’ atmosphere of the dishpit, where we never see life outside these dirty walls and can only hear other people upstairs in the restaurant, enjoying life
- The dream-sequence Emmett dreams at the top of ActTwo

Panych himself writes in the “Author’s Note” for the published version of the play about how he sees the ‘aburdist’ quality of this play:

“In my mind, the absurdities of the situations I have created are real, the people involved in them are real, and the outcome has high stakes for the characters involved in the world the drama creates. In *The Dishwashers*, I have created a situation that cannot play without the complete believability and integrity of all of the elements of the production. Sometimes, with the set for example...I will try to convey a dreamlike sense of reality that should not be confused with non-reality. A dream, when you are in it, is real; sometimes frightening, sometimes alarming, sometimes funny, but the stakes for you in its ‘reality’ are always high, and the existential outcome of its events is always vital. If you have ever woken from a nightmare, screaming, or ever found yourself laughing out loud in your sleep, you will know how deeply real and truthful a dream can appear to be. So it should be with any production of this play.”

Dialogue

In general, the language used in the play and the way the characters speak to each other is realistic. There are no monologues and the characters never address the audience so the dialogue has a very realistic feel to it – the characters speak to each other much like people might in ‘real life’.

One unique feature of the dialogue in the play are the misunderstandings and repetitions in the script. In Scene One, Dressler and Emmett often misunderstand one another and interrupt each other. There are several exchanges between them like this:

Emmett: And yet –

Dressler: Eh?

Emmett: Huh?

Dressler: What?

Emmett: Sorry?

The use of words in this first scene highlights the difficulty of communication between Dressler and Emmett. Although Emmett has a university degree in English, Dressler becomes convinced he is an immigrant who does not speak English very well. Emmett, obviously understands and speaks English very well and this misunderstanding of language is another absurdist element of the play.

Characters

Dressler: described as the “older, heftier” dishwasher, Dressler is the ‘king philosopher’ in this dishpit. Dressler is the senior man on the job. He’s been a dishwasher for thirty years and the play begins as he shows Emmett, the new guy, the ropes. He’s got strict ideas about who should be a dishwasher and the very important place that dishwashers hold in the scheme of the entire restaurant. As he shows Emmett the ropes, he tells him about the ‘big picture’ of dishwashing; what he sees when he looks at the endless piles of dishes around them:

***Dressler:** I’ll tell you what I see. Responsibility. Got that? You know what happens if one dirty dish gets through, new guy? We all go down. You think Mr. and Mrs. Fancy Pants, in all their best finery, sitting up there – you think that when they tuck into that rocket salad, with the lemon-sage dressing and those little herbed croutons, and they look down to encounter an encrusted speck of basil on the rim of the plate – you think they care if it’s you or me who let that happen? We’re the people they don’t ever want to know about. Ever. We’re like the foundations of this very building. Unseen reliability. Got that?*

Moss is the oldest dishwasher in this pit (and maybe the oldest dishwasher in existence). He is described in the stage directions as, “a hundred year-old, chain-smoking crab-ass”. This is Dressler’s introduction of Moss to Emmett:

***Dressler:** That’s Moss.*

***Emmett:** Right.*

***Dressler:** The guy is riddled with cancer.*

***Emmett:** That’s –*

***Dressler:** It’s one of his better qualities; but hey, he’s a human being.*

While Emmett dreams of ways he can escape this job, Moss is holding on to it for dear life. It’s all he’s got left and with a new guy coming in, he’s nervous.

Emmett is the new guy. He was once a man on the top of the heap. He once sat upstairs at this restaurant, never taking notice of the dishes he was eating off of. But he’s fallen on hard times. Really hard times. He’s now a dishwasher in the very restaurant he used to eat in and he’s finding the adjustment difficult.

***Emmett:** What did I have? I had money, money; I had a big beautiful apartment, overlooking the water, Dressler. Not just a little water, a lot of water. What am I overlooking now? Nothing; because the room I’m living in – did I say room? – doesn’t have a window. It’s one thing, Dressler, to never have had anything. But it’s quite another to have had it all, and watch it slip through your fingers. Paradise Lost; that’s what it is. Who do you think is happier in life? The blind man who used to see, or the blind man who never saw at all?*

Emmett is not a typical dishwasher and it is this element – his education, his fall from the top of the heap - that creates the drama in this play. The play’s action focuses on, in part, his changing attitude towards dishwashing. At first, he seems to be in denial that he is a dishwasher; he then rejects the job, and then embraces it, rejecting his former life and trying to unionize his fellow dishwashers. He then rejects it again and quits but by

the end of the play, when he seems to be back on top again, he longs to return to his job, saying it's the best job he's ever had.

In the final scene of the play, a new character, **Burroughs** is introduced. He's the new, new guy – there to replace Emmett. He has very few lines but we learn that he is a drummer. His arrival indicates the never-ending cycle of dishes and dishwashers that come through this place. Dressler's final conversation with him also points to this:

Dressler: *You see this pile of dishes here? It's bigger than both of us.*

Burroughs: *Yeah.*

Dressler: *Yeah. You know what else? Always will be.*

Themes

The plays of Morris Panych are characterized by existential themes and "theatre of the absurd" style and sensibility. They typically set their interrogations of the meaning of life in culturally and nationally neutral locales, and they pose broad philosophical questions on human interaction and isolation, on the nature of good and evil, and on the relationship between fantasy and reality.

From an interview with Morris Panych about the play:

"In a way, the dishpit is a perfect kind of metaphor; you could be lost there or you could be found. This horrible entrapment exists, and within that you have to find the meaning of what you are."

For each of the characters, being a dishwasher holds a different meaning. How they see themselves in their jobs illustrates the themes of the struggle to find meaning in one's job and, in a larger way, one's life. Dressler expresses it this way:

Dressler: *Why do people carry on at all? Do you ever wonder? People, every day, just going about their lives? Do you ever wonder? [Dressler draws Emmett's attention to a spider web] Do you know that every night for a month now, when we lock up and leave, a spider makes a web from here to here; a beautiful, perfect web? And every morning, when I come in to work, I walk right through it. But every night, she comes back again, and weaves another one. She must sit there all day, planning that web. She must spend all night making the damn thing. Is she stupid, or is she smart?*

Dressler and Emmett constantly argue about the meaning of their work (and of their lives) and their philosophies often come into conflict. Here are two monologues, which highlight the differences in how each character views the world:

Dressler: *Have you ever watched a man die? I guess not. You know what happens, new guy? He exhales. That's it. The breath goes out, and it doesn't come back in again; and everything he ever was, he isn't anymore. Every hope, every dream, every longing he ever had with every breath, is breathed out of him. My father looked up at me and he said, "Dressler" – he never used my first name; I think he might have forgotten it. "Dressler," he said, "my life has come to nothing." Those were his very last words. And I sat there and I thought, well, it's true, but only because he thought it might come to something. He wanted to be a dressmaker, and – well, that's a long story. The point is: ambition is a dream that you wake up from at the very last moment of your life. I don't want to lie on my deathbed, wishing, wondering. I want to die with the satisfaction of knowing I accomplished exactly what I set out to – very little; but with the greatest of skill.*

Emmett: *What makes it honest [work], Dressler? The fact that we make no money at it? What is it, exactly, this honesty? Is it the filth? The sweat? You think real estate isn't dirty? You think trading in securities doesn't make you sweat? How is a man any more honest because he doesn't take chances? Because he advances not one iota? You know what I think? I think you're a communist at heart; that's what I think. No, wait; not even a communist. At least a communist believes in workers' rights. What are you, Dressler? A guy without dreams; that's all. A guy without dreams. Every man has a right, every woman, every person in this world, every single one of us, has a right to fulfill their dreams. Even you.*

The absurdist quality of the play highlights the larger, existential questions that the play is addressing, especially questions about the meaning of life. Dressler, Moss and Emmett each express both a hatred and a love for their job and in their struggles with their jobs and each other, we learn how all of us can find meaning in our work and in our lives.

Elements of Design

The following section combines general information about areas of design (including information from Tarragon production staff, design websites, and the textbook: *Theatrical Design and Production* by J. Michael Gillette) with specific examples of how design elements have been employed in the production you are attending. A brief glossary is also included to assist with technical terms used in this section of the guide.

Design Overview

A script can be performed numerous times without ever being interpreted the same way. Although text stays the same from production to production, the way the piece is conceptualized changes.

The designers (set, costumes, lighting, sound, etc.) and director thoroughly discuss the play to ensure all parties share a similar vision of the play, and explore how this vision will be represented through design. Design elements should create an environment for the play that supports the production concept: the creative interpretation of the script.

There are some artistic and practical considerations that apply to all areas of design. These include:

- mood and spirit of the production
- historical period of the production
- locale of each scene
- season of the year and time of day for each scene
- needs of other designers
- health and safety

For *The Dishwashers*, the script calls for a realistic set. It should make the audience feel that they are getting a glimpse of a world that most of us don't even consider. We find our characters in a windowless basement, doing a job we wouldn't consider doing and we tend only to think of those who do these jobs when they aren't done to our exacting standards. They are the invisible workforce, who work at night or in basements and keep the world comfortable for those who can afford to pay for it.

Dressler: *We're the people they don't ever want to know about... Unseen reliability.*

To heighten the reality of the set, the designers have integrated real, working elements and sounds that put the audience right inside the world of *The Dishwashers*.

Set Design

The set designer's job is to create a physical world that helps the audience understand and enjoy a play by providing a visual representation of the production concept. Before rehearsals begin, the set designer meets multiple times with the director. From these meetings design drawings and a maquette (a scale model of what will be onstage) are developed. The model and drawings are used by the actors, stage managers and production staff to better understand the design goals; to imagine and replicate the space the production will be set in; and to build and decorate the set pieces.

Specific practical elements considered by the set designer are:

- number and position of entrances and exits needed
- number and position of entrances and exits already in the space
- the seating formation of the theatre – can it be changed?
- the type of stage that comes with the theatre (i.e. proscenium, thrust, arena, catwalk etc.)
- is this a flyhouse?
- the duration of the run
- will the set tour after the first production

In addition to the scenery, the set designer is frequently responsible for designing the stage properties.

It will be interesting to take notice of the following:

- How the mood and spirit of the production is relayed through the design
- What information the set gives about the characters

Director Morris Panych and Set and Costume Designer Ken MacDonald have produced this play previously in Vancouver and they have worked at the Tarragon before. They knew in advance what they wanted and needed for this production and knew how to implement their ideas in the space.

The working elements on the set are the dishwasher and the sink and sprayer. The dumb-waiter has working front doors but it has a false back where the Assistant Stage Manager loads and unloads trays of either clean or dirty dishes. The control panel has a series of lights that correspond to the “action” of the dumb-waiter as well as associated sound. And the power in the restaurant appears to dip when the dumbwaiter is engaged.

The walls have a decayed effect. It looks as though they are in need of a fresh coat of paint. It appears as though there have been leaks and dripping pipes that are caked with grime and filth. The colour is dull, not at all vibrant, and monotonous which adds to the feeling of the monotony of the job being done in this space.

The set makes it feel as though the owners or management don't really care what goes on “downstairs”.

Take note of the set-dressing elements that add to the feeling of being discarded (eg: cigarette butts and packages on the floor, dead plants, old signs, a dead cash register, a discarded walker and broken coffee makers).

Sound Design

Sound design consists of music, effects and reinforcement (such as microphones).

The sound designer obtains a lot of information directly from the script i.e. “a phone rings”, “it begins to rain”, or “a sad song is heard through the window”. He/she must think about the transitions between scenes and what sound elements will shift the audience from the mood of one scene to the next. Sound design also extends to the elements the audience hears when they first enter the theatre, during the intermission, and even the curtain call and post-show music.

Some practical elements the sound designer considers are:

- speaker and microphone placement
- live or recorded sound, or both
- volume of each piece
- length of scene changes
- equipment available
- existing ambient noise in the theatre

As well as establishing and reinforcing mood and atmosphere, sound elements also provide information to the audience:

- When you enter a theatre take a minute to listen to the pre-show music or soundscape – does it offer any clues about the nature of the show?
- What sound cues did you hear that helped establish time and place?
- Were any special effects used? Were they useful in moving the story forward? Why or why not?

The sound for *The Dishwashers* was based on the sound used in the original production in Vancouver. Sound designer Todd Charlton started with the original sound design and, along with Director Morris Panych, tweaked it to fit the feel of this new production.

Along with preshow music that sets the mood of the restaurant, there are musical “stings” that punctuate the top and tail of each scene, ambient sound of the restaurant patron chatter, New Year’s count down and the whirr of the dumb waiter which works in conjunction with the actors’ actions and with lighting cues.

The music is by the Gotan Project. For more information visit www.gotanproject.com.

Lighting Design

Effective stage lighting not only lets the spectators see the action of the play but also ties together all the visual elements of the production and helps create an appropriate mood and atmosphere to heighten the audience's understanding and enjoyment of the play.

The lighting designer wants to give information such as time and place, mood, and where the focus of a scene is. Lighting design is often not noticeable because it has been created in such a way as to enhance the mood of the play as unobtrusively as possible. However, many directors will employ unnatural lighting or hyper-realized lighting to add another layer to the production.

Lighting includes the use of coloured gels to create different effects; intensity to determine how dark or bright a scene is; direction to establish the angle at which the light hits the stage; and movement to decide the duration and components of cues.

Lighting and sound often work together to create an effect (i.e. a fade to black that is timed to a piece of music).

Lighting also works closely with set pieces when 'practicals' are used. These are light sources that are manipulated by the actors (i.e. a desk lamp). In this case the set designer will determine the look of the lamp and the lighting designer will decide how it functions.

Some practical considerations for a lighting designer are:

- the number of locations in a set
- the number of lighting instruments available
- the type of performance (i.e. drama, dance, opera, etc.)
- whether the lighting board is manual or computerized
- alternate light sources (i.e. video or slide projection)
- set materials requiring special lighting (i.e. a scrim or cyclorama)

Some lighting elements to notice are:

- when and how lighting indicates a change in time or location
- lighting changing the focus from one character to another
- how lighting interacts with sound elements
- how lighting is employed to reinforce a mood
- how colour is used in the lighting instruments

There are many different types of lighting instruments used in *The Dishwashers*. Lighting Designer Paul Mathiesen, along with Set Designer Ken MacDonald, have integrated these lights into the set. Wall sconces and overhead lighting fixtures add to the realistic feel of the set as well as the lights of the dumb-waiter control panel. Little touches, like adding Christmas lights in the bathroom during the Christmas-time scene, help to indicate the passage of time. Lights in the off stage areas (upstairs in the restaurant, in the bathroom, in the cold storage) create the illusion that the restaurant is much larger – that there are lives beyond the walls we see. The overhead fixtures also give a sense of a ceiling; we are aware that the characters are confined to the space.

Timing the lights and sound together heightens the reality of the space. The dumb-waiter control panel lights are timed with elevator sounds to make it seem as though it actually works. When the main door to the restaurant upstairs is opened, a light comes on and the ambient noise of the diners above gets louder.

Costume Design

Costume design includes all clothing, underclothing, hairdressing, makeup, and accessories such as hats, scarves, fans, umbrellas, and jewellery, worn or carried by each character in a production. A costume design suggests specific personal information about each character.

Through discussion with the director, the costume designer will decide whether or not to make the costumes 'period accurate'. The designer researches clothes of a period in many ways including: looking through store catalogues of the era (i.e. Sears or Eaton's); going to a reference library, art gallery and/or museum; perusing picture archives; or even looking at old family photographs. Similarly, if the costumes are contemporary, designers look to current fashion magazines, tv and film, and stores for research.

The designer also works from indications within the play's script and looks for hints into the characters' personality. They then make artistic choices for the colour of the costumes, their shape, and the fabrics to be used.

Finally, the designer works with the costume team and the actors in fittings to make certain that the costumes are comfortable and as easy as possible to manipulate.

Some practical considerations in costume design include:

- the background and personality of the characters
- the limitations created by the set or staging (i.e. a raked stage makes spiked shoes impractical)
- the actors can move about on the stage as required (i.e. run up a set of stairs or engage in stage combat)
- the costumes remain effective under stage lighting
- costumes that need to be changed quickly are built accordingly
- costumes can last for an entire run and be laundered

Ken MacDonald also designed the costumes, in addition to the sets. The uniforms of the dishwashers echo the colours of the set so they almost disappear in their environment. The pieces of clothing have been dyed to add a layer of grime to them. The colours of the costumes are monotone. It is important to the story that Emmett's (and later Burroughs') uniform does not fit. He has been given the uniform of a previous employee. We see that the management of this restaurant sees their employees as interchangeable, "discard-able" and not worth spending money on.

There are several quick changes in *The Dishwashers* and to accommodate this, velcro closures are used to replace buttons, which take too long to undo or do up. Specific quick change rehearsals are held to make sure these transitions run smoothly and quickly.

Emmett is seen in his street clothes and in his wedding tuxedo. They show that there is a slightly more colourful world outside the confines of the basement.

Additional Resources

Glossary of Useful Technical Terms

Acoustics	The sound transmission characteristics of a room, space or material
Cue	A directive for action (i.e. a change in the lighting, sound, or an actor's entrance)
Cyclorama	A large piece of scenic material used to surround the stage on to which colour can be projected
Gel	Generic name for the film used in lighting instruments to change colour. It can also be used as a verb (i.e. to 'gel' the lights)
Gobo	A thin metal template inserted into a lighting instrument in order to cut a pattern into the light that is projected onstage
Flyhouse	A theatre space with the ability to "fly" set pieces and/or backdrops from a fly gallery located high above the stage using ropes and cables
Maquette	A scale model 3-D representation of the set design
Plot	A scale drawing showing the placement of various elements (i.e. lighting instruments) relative to the stage configuration and theatre
Prompt book	A copy of the script with each actor's blocking, all the technical cues, and details/lists of all technical elements involved in the production
Raked stage	A stage that is higher at the back than at the front
Scrim	A scenic panel made from translucent gauze-like material

Stage Configurations

Arena Stage	A stage configuration where the audience completely surrounds the playing space
Catwalk Stage	A stage configuration where the audience surrounds the playing space on 2 sides – also known as an Alley stage
Proscenium	A stage configuration where the audience watches the action through a rectangular opening that resembles a picture frame (proscenium arch)
Thrust Stage	A stage configuration where the audience surrounds the playing space on 3 sides

Pre Show Lesson Plan 1 Exploring Stereotypes

Critical Question:

How do we stereotype both in life and in performance?

Expectations:

TH1.01: describe the process of creating a character (e.g., script analysis, character analysis, experimentation with movement and voice);

TH2.02: describe how movement and non-verbal communication can be used to portray character, to define relationships among characters, and to communicate dramatic tension;

CRV.01: interpret a variety of roles/characters, using the techniques of character development;

CR1.04 – reinterpret characters, using suggestions or notes provided by the director and peers, and demonstrating further insight into the characters in subsequent rehearsals and performances

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Warm up:

Physical warm up.

Main Activity

We often define people through stereotypes (their work, where they live) and in some cases this limits our ability to see them for who they are. However, stereotypes can be a part of the theatre, such as stock characters in *commedia dell'arte*. The following activity asks students to fully explore stereotypes. The purpose of this exercise is to push students beyond stereotypes in their own performance work.

- Divide students into four groups.
- Give the western stereotypical script (written by Scott Baker) to two groups (see page 20)
- Give the stereotypical soap opera script (written by Scott Baker) to two other groups (see page 21)
- Individual groups prepare their scene and decide who says what line, how they want to stage the show etc.
- Students take turns performing and watch the performances (scripts can be in hand, though with enough rehearsing memorization is possible)

Reflection:

Discuss how a similar script was interpreted so differently

Discuss the response to the stereotypical scripts

Journal reflection:

What was a positive aspect of group work? Why? Give examples.

What was a challenge to working in a group? Why? Give examples.

What have you learned about stereotyping as a result of this activity?

The Western:

I want you boys to pay a little visit to this here sheep rancher, Rough him up a little. Get it?

You Jefferson Stone? I got a message for you.

Jefferson, I know how hard you've worked. But think of me. Think of the children. You can't stop a way of life. To bring sheep into cattle country is madness.

Hank Bartlett has got this town sewed up tight. I'm pulling out and if youse got any brains you'll be pullin' out too.

Try to understand, Emily-Sue. There's times when a man's gotta fight for what he believes in, and this is one of those times.

Whiskey, Gimme a bottle.
It's him. It's the stranger. I'd recognize him anywhere.

You lookin fer me?

Awright Bartlett, stand up like a man, cause I'm gonna drill yer like a dawg.

This was once a decent town with decent people in it. Now that Bartlett's dead it can be a decent town again. Thanks to the stranger.

The Soap Opera:

Remember me, Laura? Or is it Laura? It was back in Chicago wasn't it, Carol?

How did you find me? No one knows that I'm not really Laura Braithwaite! Oh, why wouldn't you have left me alone?

It was terrifying! As soon as I saw the car go off the cliff, I realized....Oh it was just awful!....It's all my fault!...If I hadn't argued with her...And now she'll never walk again...or worse! Tiffany... Tiffany....Tiffany...

It's going to be touch and go Dr. Braden. But I think she'll make it. Her pulse is holding.

Thank you, Nurse Braithwaite. You're new to Hope Hospital aren't you?

Dr. Braden, I....

Call me, Peter.

Peter, there's something I have to tell you...I haven't always been....Nurse Laura Braithwaite.

Nurse Jones, I know this is going to be painful but I have to be honest. Our engagement is over. I'm in love with Laura Braithwaite.

Dr. Klein. Calling Dr. Klein. Wanted immediately in obstetrics.

But, Alex, you don't understand. Darling, it's not your child I'm carrying...It's...it's Peter Braden's.

Next episode:

- Will Laura Braithwaite walk up the aisle with Peter Braden?
- Will Peter comfort Nurse Jones?
- Will Tiffany survive a heart bypass?
- Will Alex understand?
- Will Dr. Klein make it to obstetrics in time?

Pre Show Lesson Plan 2

Learning about different Roles

Critical Question:

How do our assigned 'roles' define our perspective?

Expectations:

CRV.02: create and present an original or adapted dramatic work; Ontario Dramatic Arts Curriculum

CR1.03: reinterpret roles in rehearsal and performance, demonstrating insight into the characters;

CR1.02 – convey character through the effective use of voice and movement techniques;

Ontario Dramatic Arts Curriculum

Warm-up:

Expert Game (builds on improvisational skills)

- Divide the students into pairs
- Ask the students to decide if they are "A" or "B"
- A speaks while B listens
- Ask 'A's to speak non-stop about the following jobs until you say stop (about 2 minutes), switch periodically with 'B's so they get to speak
 - o a school janitor
 - o a restaurant dishwasher
 - o a parking attendant
 - o a fast food cook
 - o a teacher
 - o a principal
 - o a waitress/waiter
 - o a host/hostess in a restaurant

Main Activity:

This activity fine tunes tableau skills and further develops characterization while connecting with the environment of *The Dishwashers*.

Part A:

Divide the students into groups of 5.

Tell students to assign themselves the following roles: dishwasher, cook, waiter, host and client.

Ask them to brainstorm possible conflicts that might occur in a restaurant with the character roles they have been assigned.

Collect all the conflicts in a 'hat' and then distribute different conflicts to the other groups.

Part B:

With their conflict scenario, students create a tableau and each group take turns presenting their tableau.

The teacher walks up to the tableau and taps each character on the shoulder.

The character comes alive and shares their perspective about the conflict (which is grounded in their role).

They talk as in the expert game for as long as the teacher requires (about 1 minute) and then return to the frozen tableau image.

Discussion Possibilities:

What surprised you about your perspective in the conflict?

Did similar characters (i.e. the waiters or the cooks) share similarities in perspective?

Why or why not was this manifest in the actor's characterization?

Pre Show Lesson Plan 3 Character, Subtext and Scene Analysis

Critical Question:

How do we develop character through scene analysis?

Expectations:

CRV.02: create and present an original or adapted dramatic work; Ontario Dramatic Arts Curriculum

CR1.03: reinterpret roles in rehearsal and performance, demonstrating insight into the characters;

CR1.02 – convey character through the effective use of voice and movement techniques;

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Warm-up:

Physical warm up.

Main Activity:

1. Put students into pairs
Ask them to decide who is “A” and who is “B”.

Explain that this lesson is about the exploration of subtext. *Not what you say but how you say it; what is the world beneath the words?*

Distribute minimal scene 1 from *The Dishwashers* (see next page)

Students are to think about their scenario:

Who are these people?

How old are they?

How well do they know each other?

What assumptions can we make about them?

What happened just before they spoke?

What might happen next?

What happens in the spaces?

What might be the scene about (theme)?

What gestures can be added to help convey the ideas?

Rehearse the script, then experiment with the text.

Do it once with “A” angry.

Do it with “B” sad.

Do it with 2 pauses in the scene, pick two places where this will happen.

After rehearsing (5-10 minutes), students present in front of each other and the audience tries to guess the situation.

Invariably one text will be interpreted by the performers in many ways. It will be interesting to see which ones had an idea of their scenario and how that idea was communicated to the audience.

Possible questions:

- How did the physicalization of the script help convey it’s meaning?
- Did you observe any small details in the performances that conveyed the “world under the words”? (ie - small movements, expressions, gestures)

From *The Dishwashers*

Character A:

Would you excuse me?

Character B:

I'm not standing in your way.

Character A:

You are standing in my way.

Character B:

Step around me.

Character A:

Why should I?....Alright.

Character B:

See that? Compromises himself. Doesn't stand his ground. Is it any wonder you never made it in the corporate world?

Character A:

On the contrary, I did make it, Dressler. I made quite a lot of it, in fact.

Pre or Post Show Lesson Plan Analysis of Pre Show Press

Critical Question:

How does the press shape our opinion of the arts?

Expectations:

THV.02: demonstrate an understanding of various aspects of the elements, principles, and techniques of dramatic arts;

AN2.02 – explain how their experiences in dramatic arts have helped develop or enhance their beliefs, philosophies, or world views;

AN2.01 – explain how participation in the theatre fosters self-awareness and awareness of others for performers, authors, and audiences;

AN1.05 – identify universal concepts and themes from a study of theatre works, and analyse their personal, social, and cultural significance;

ANV.03 · analyse the personal, social, and cultural impact of dramatic arts;

Ontario Dramatic Arts Curriculum

Materials:

“A Real Dish” by Gord McLauchlin, Eye Weekly, on the next page.

Warm-up:

Lead the students through a physical relaxation warm up.

Main Activity:

Interpreting the article “A Real Dish”

- Distribute a copy of “A Real Dish” to each student.
- Students read the article individually and highlight points that they “connect” with.
- Place students in groups of 4.
- In groups, students try to answer the following questions and then discuss them with the greater class:

From reading the article, has the journalist drawn similarities between the character Emmett, played by Jonathan Crombie, and the playwright Morris Panych? What are they? Please explain thoroughly.

In the aforementioned article the author says that “...*Jonathan Crombie [Emmett], a failed financial whiz kid. As befits his generation, he has greater expectations than dishwashing*”.

What do you think McLauchlin means by this statement? How do you feel about this judgement statement about the younger generation? Is there a basis for such assumption? Please explain.

Journal:

1. What did you learn about the creative process from reading this article? Please explain.

A REAL DISH by Gord McLauchlin, Eye Weekly (11.10.05)

This week's theatrical openings explore more commonplace activities: surviving holiday loneliness and the drudgery of work.

Playwright **Morris Panych** tackles the latter in *The Dishwashers*, which gets its world premiere at the Tarragon. Set in the basement dish room of a schmancy restaurant, the play is a tribute to men like Panych's father, who gave up dreams of being a musician to raise a family on a machinist's wage.

"Grinding metal rings for oil pumps is about as drudgery- making as you can imagine," says Panych, recalling his father's work. "Standing at a turning plate with cold milky oil running down your hands for hours."

In *The Dishwashers*, sink veterans played by **Randy Hughson** and **Eric Peterson** teach a lesson to newcomer **Jonathan Crombie**, a failed financial whiz kid. As befits his generation, he has greater expectations than dishwashing.

Panych figures his father's generation was less obsessed with the need for big success to validate existence. He sees *American Idol* as a symptom of that expectation. "I'm probably more guilty about it than anybody," says Panych. "I'm ashamed of my own desperation [for success], so I write about it." Last year it won him the Governor General's Award for Drama for *The Girl in the Goldfish Bowl*.

Panych says his father admires his theatrical achievements, especially in light of his own foregone music career. "That said, he has no clue what I do. When he sees my work, I don't even think he particularly cares for it."

Post Show Lesson Plan 1

Play Analysis through Role Play

Critical Question:

How does role-play act as a tool for greater understanding?

Expectations:

THV.01: demonstrate an understanding of the conventions of role playing and structuring dramatic works etc.

TH1.01: demonstrate an understanding of the theory of “willing suspension of disbelief” both as performer and as audience;

ANV.02: evaluate dramatic performances presented in the school and the community;

ANV.03: explain how dramatic arts represent, influence, and contribute to culture and society;

AN1.06: identify the artistic choices made by the actors, director, designer, and technicians in a dramatic production, and assess the effectiveness of these choices;

Ontario Dramatic Arts Curriculum

Warm-up:

Review with students the important elements of creating a whole group role-play:

- a. Maintaining focus throughout the role-play.
- b. Maintaining the physicality of your character throughout the role-play.
- c. Sustaining the vocal quality of your character throughout the role-play.
- d. Ability to take on, and commit to, your characters' attitudes and beliefs.

Main Activity:

Interpreting the play through Role-Play

- Distribute two pieces of paper to each student.
- Ask students to write down two questions they have for any member of the *The Dishwashers* production (writer, director, actor, designer).
- Collect the questions.
- Divide the class into two groups. Group “A” and “B”.
- Take group “A” and distribute one of the following roles on separate pieces of paper to students: actor(s), set designer, costume designer, director, lighting designer, sound designer, playwright etc.
- Ask group “A” students to discuss quietly and prepare for their role as a member of the *The Dishwashers* production team in one part of the Drama room.
- Distribute the already collected questions for members of production (hence group “A”) to the Group “B” students.
- Group “B” are told that they are each a journalist at a press conference.
- The “journalists” (Group B) must ask the “artists” (Group A) the already written questions (*additional spontaneous questions are encouraged and everyone on the artist panel must answer as least one question*).
- After each question has been asked, reverse Group “A” and “B” roles and distribute remaining questions.

In this activity students develop role-playing, reflective thinking, focusing and application of knowledge skills. Through the students' own creative work (layered with their experience in Drama class and viewing the production), they may contribute their own knowledge about artistic choices to answer some of the questions asked during the role-play.

Journal:

What surprised you about your character? Please give two examples. How did discussing the play in role affect your analysis of the Tarragon production? Be specific and give examples.

Notes