

NUNC DIMITTIS
An Opera in One Act

by

LANCE A. MASSEY

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A REPORT

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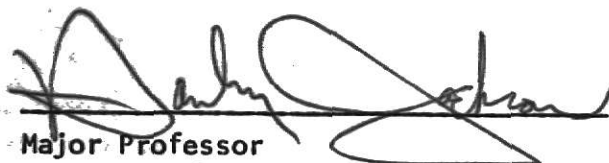
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"Nunc Dimittis"
An Opera in One Act

I. Statement of Purpose

The majority of Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century operatic literature exceeds the capabilities of most college age singers for reasons of tessiture, length, and necessary vocal maturity. Moreover, full-length operas of the Twentieth Century are often beyond the grasp of young singers both technically and aesthetically. The aim of this project, therefore, was to create a small-scale composition for the stage in a Twentieth Century musical idiom which would be accessible for collegiate musicians. It is hoped that the resulting one-act opera may prove to be a vocal, musical, and dramatic challenge to collegiate as well as professional musicians.

II. The Libretto

Characters. Six men and one woman constitute the cast of "Nunc Dimittis". They are as follows:

Robert Welles - an active novelist and poet; impetuous but compassionate; handsome and of average build; age 35; Tenor.

Suzanne - Robert's wife; attractive and shapely; dresses stylishly and suggestively; egocentric, high brow and used to the "good life"; age 28-30; Mezzo-Soprano.

Old Prisoner - convicted murderer and thief; a hardened criminal who fears nothing; age 50-55; Bass-Baritone.

Young Prisoner - protege of the old prisoner; a superficially tough juvenile delinquent who is afraid and confused despite his tough exterior; age 18-20; Tenor.

Prison Guard - gruff and insolent; takes sadistic pleasure by harassing the prisoners in his charge; age 50; Baritone.

The Sailor - Suzanne's current lover; muscular and athletic; age 30-35; Speaking Role.

The Priest- compassionate, but detached from reality; has difficulty finding the right words to say; middle to advanced age; Baritone.

Scenario. The libretto of the opera is based upon an idea of the composer. Working in collaboration with James McCallum, the story evolved into a prologue, six scenes, and an epilogue. The action takes place alternately in two cells on Death Row and in the bedroom of the Welles' home. The time is 1962. The full text of the libretto is found at the end of this paper. (See Appendix A.)

"Nunc Dimittis" is concerned with the miscarriage of justice. Robert Welles is condemned to death on the gallows for the murder of his

wife's lover. In a flashback sequence it is learned that Suzanne, his wife, committed the murder. Even so, he professes his undying love for her and confesses to her crime thinking that he will receive a light sentence.

With the knowledge of innocence playing heavily on his disturbed mind, Robert is further tortured mentally by the prisoners in an adjacent cell as well as the prison guard. The action centering around the execution of the other prisoners causes Robert's mind to finally snap. In a scene of disjunct oratory and emotionally disturbed action he is driven to suicide.

In the epilogue Suzanne is found being consoled by the Priest who has come to administer the last rites to her husband. When Robert is found hanging in his cell, Suzanne is flippantly insensitive and unconcerned.

Title. The title of the opera, "Nunc Dimittis," was chosen to represent two levels of thought. In traditional liturgical usage, Nunc Dimittis is one of the canticles of the Roman Catholic Church. This canticle is from the "Office of Compline," which is the final office of the day in the religious community. Also known as the "Song of Simeon," its text is taken from the second chapter of the Gospel According to Saint Luke. The opening verse, Nunc dimittis servum tuum Domine, secundum verbum tuum in pace, is translated in the King James Version as, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word." The text of the canticle with translation is found at the end of this paper. (See Appendix B.)

In modern usage, Nunc dimittis servum may be translated as, "Now departs the servant". In this sense the title suggests Robert's role as a servant to his unfaithful wife. When Robert confesses to Suzanne's crime he, in effect, becomes her servant and takes upon himself the physical and mental agonies that she, the master, would have had to bear.

Futhermore, because of his eventual suicide, Robert makes the ultimate sacrifice of any servant, that of giving up his own life for his master.

III. Vocal and Instrumental Considerations

Vocal Considerations. Any opera conceived with college-age singers in mind should be so composed as to lie within comfortable vocal ranges. An additional consideration to aid the singers should be that of tessitura. Vocal ranges and tessiture in "Nunc Dimittis" are such that college singers should encounter a modicum of difficulty in maintaining vocal intensity and relaxation. As a further aid to the singers the tessiture are varied from scene to scene, and no character is required to sing continually through an entire scene.

In addition to singing, the score of "Nunc Dimittis" calls for the use of speech and Sprechstimme. While Sprechstimme is not necessarily a criterion of college vocal study it is a viable Twentieth Century vocal technique.¹ The use of Sprechstimme in "Nunc Dimittis" has two purposes; 1.) it serves as a stimulus for dramatic interpretation and character development, and, 2.) it may serve to introduce the technique to students.

Instrumental Considerations. In order to achieve concord between singers and instrumentalists the decision was made to use an orchestra of chamber proportions. The perennial battle of dynamic balance which is often fought between voices and instruments is unnecessary. With careful attention to and sympathy for both singers and instrumentalists a cease-fire has been achieved through appropriate orchestration in "Nunc Dimittis".

The use of a chamber orchestra is an extension of a Twentieth Century aesthetic aimed for in the opera. Clarity and timbral delineations are of utmost importance in contrapuntal textures,² and the artistic purpose herein

¹Donald Jay Grout, A History of Western Music (New York: Norton, 1960), p. 650.

²Joseph Machlis, Introduction to Contemporary Music (New York: Norton, 1961), p. 50.

is expressionistic. The chamber orchestra for "Nunc Dimittis" is used not merely for accompanimental purposes, but, rather, as an integral part of the total drama of the opera. Orchestral colorations are employed to accentuate the actions on stage, to create specific changes in mood, and to effect transitions of dramatic differences. Because of these requirements it was necessary to include representative instruments from each instrumental choir, but in smaller than normal proportions. A complete list of the instrumentation appears on page two of the full score, as well as at the end of this paper. (See Appendix C.)

IV. Musical Idiom

The musical idiom of "Nunc Dimittis" is primarily contrapuntal and is dramatically conceived. As with all lyric music the form is dictated by the text.³

Motivic Development. Extensive employment of Leitmotifs, or "leading motives," came to full fruition in the music dramas of Richard Wagner. The Leitmotif took the form of a short thematic element enmeshed in the operatic texture to call the listener's attention to a specific person, place, or idea. More importantly it serves as a germ idea for compositional development.⁴

In "Nunc Dimittis" there are three Leitmotifs. 1.) The augmented triad, when used either melodically or harmonically, suggests Suzanne's infidelity. When the characters in the opera refer to Suzanne's promiscuity and unfaithfulness the augmented triad will be found:



Example 1. Infidelity motive.

2.) Overlapping tritones comprise the motive of death:



Example 2. Death motive.

³Willi Apel, Harvard Dictionary of Music (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 278.

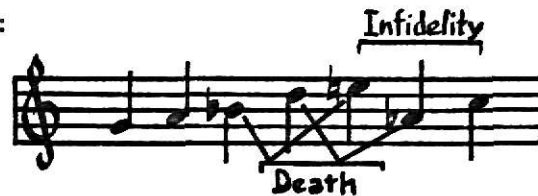
⁴Apel, pp. 396-397.

Since Suzanne's infidelity led to the death of both her lover and her husband the two motives are often combined, again either harmonically or melodically:



Example 3. Motives used in combination.

3.) A seven-note melodic figure is used to designate the element of impending doom. It, too, combines the preceding motives, but in a more subtle way:



Example 4. Impending doom motive.

This figure is used as an ostinato during the fight between Robert and the sailor (87-105).^{*} It is used later in the opera, during orchestral interludes, to point up impending tragic situations (113), (140), (230-239), (382).

Melodic Development. Four themes are used extensively in the opera. The first of these is shown above in Example 3a. This combination of two motives is used at the beginning of the first scene (5) and also constitutes the melodic material upon which one of the interludes is based (52-58).

The second is the aforementioned canticle, Nunc Dimittis, which is also used thematically. Taken directly from The St. Gregory Hymnal and Catholic Choir Book⁵ the canticle is based on the seventh psalm tone and

^{*}Numbers in parentheses refer to measure numbers in the score.

⁵Nicolai Montani, ed., The St. Gregory Hymnal and Catholic Choir Book (Philadelphia: The St. Gregory Guild, 1920), pp. 466-467.

is in the Aeolian mode. This theme is fragmented several times before it is finally heard in its entirety (260-280).



Example 5. Seventh psalm tone.

Thirdly, a Dorian mode theme is used for melodic development in the opera. This theme first appears in the form of a canon at the ninth during the fight between Robert and the sailor (87-105). It appears in the solo trumpet part in Scene III (119-134), in the solo violin part in Scene V (254-279), and in the interlude following Scene V (283-289).



Example 6. Dorian melody.

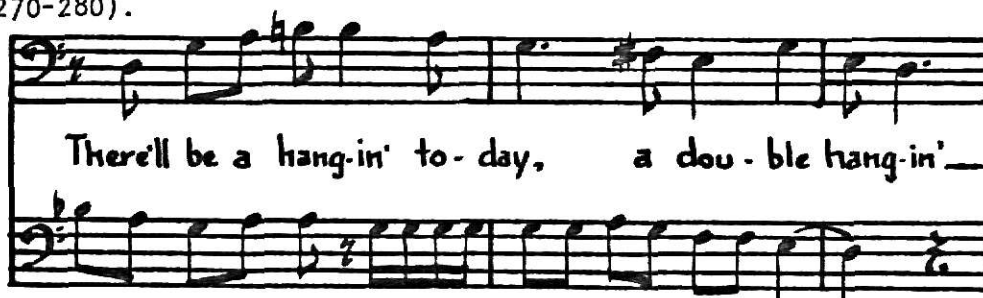
Lastly, a folk-like tune in Ionian mode is sung by the Old Prisoner in Scene V (254-258).



There'll be a hang-in' to-day, a dou-ble hang-in'—

Example 7. Folk tune.

A dualism is presented in Scene V when the Nunc Dimittis theme, sung by the Priest, is sung against the Old Prisoner's hanging song (270-280).



-o-nem gen-ti-um, et glo-ri-am ple-bis tu-ae Is-ra-el.—

Example 8. Dualism of themes.

These two themes are also combined in the orchestral interlude after Scene V to point up that scene's dramatic impact (280-291).

Harmonic Structures. The principal harmonic idiom employed in "Nunc Dimittis" is highly chromatic and freely atonal. Even though primarily atonal, several sections of the opera center around the note "A" (110-124), (135-154), (199-213).

There are two instances where diatonic melodies are employed. In the duet which ends Scene IV, Robert sings in the key of D major while Suzanne sings in the key of B-flat major. Though both vocalists are singing diatonic melodic lines the resulting polytonality gives an aural impression of free atonality (189-198). The other instance of a tonal melody occurs in Scene V with the folk tune cited in Example 7. Here, however, the accompanying strings are sustaining pitches unrelated to the tonality of the folk tune, again attaining an aura of free atonality (254-258), (271-279).

V. Formal Considerations

As has been previously stated, in lyric music the text will most often define the form of the composition.⁶ "Nunc Dimittis" is divided into a prologue, six scenes, and an epilogue. The prologue is not set to music and there is no overture; a brief orchestral introduction leads directly to the first scene. Each of the six scenes is separated by an orchestral interlude which serves to bind together the drama of the two scenes surrounding it. The interludes following Scenes II (110-119) and III (137-146) are similar in that the second is an exact retrograde of the first.

The interludes following Scenes V (280-291) and VI (367-379) are similar in that they both quote the "Nunc Dimittis" theme. In addition, the thematic material in the opening measures of the opera (1-3) appears again at the end of Scene VI (360-362).

⁶Apel, p. 278.

VI. Theatrical Considerations

Sets. Since all of the action in "Nunc Dimittis" takes place either in two prison cells or in the bedroom of the Welles' home, the design and construction of sets may be simple and abstract or, alternately, elaborate and realistic.

The basic design should include two cells side by side with a row of bars separating them; each cell should have a barred window. Bunk beds of the institutional type and a table with chairs should also be included in each cell. Doors to the cells (if used) should be at down stage right and down stage left.

If the cells are built on a moveable platform the bedroom may be built on a similar platform for convenience of scene changes. Another alternative is the use of a raised platform behind the cells which could be lighted separately for the bedroom scenes. The bedroom should be furnished with a bed and night table. Other props, such as a chest of drawers, are optional.

In the construction of the set, flats or stage drapes may be used for the walls of the cells and bedroom. The set design for the original production will be found at the end of this paper. (See Appendix D.)

Lighting. Stage lighting is very important for "Nunc Dimittis". The cells should be well-lighted but with muted gels to give an appearance of gloom. The windows of the cells should be back-lighted to provide a sunrise effect in Scenes V and VI. Other special effects may also be used to accentuate certain characters and/or actions. In the original production, spotlighting was used to focus attention to the Priest in Scene V and to Robert's hanging corpse in the Epilogue.

Lighting for the bedroom scenes may be brighter, but should retain a feeling of intimacy and sexuality. Scrim lighting is strongly urged. Here

again, special effects may be used, especially in the fight between Robert and the Sailor.

Costuming. Straightforward and perhaps even stark costumes should be used in a production of "Nunc Dimittis". Robert and the other two prisoners could conceivably wear street clothes, although gray or khakki work shirts and trousers are suggested. The Guard should wear a uniform (or a suggestion of one) and a gun belt. The Priest should be dressed in a black suit with a clerical collar and should carry a missal or rosary.

The Sailor may be outfitted with a uniform or may wear a knit crew-necked shirt and white jeans. Suzanne should appear at the opening of Scene II in a slip, then add a robe as the scene progresses. For the Epilogue Suzanne should be dressed in stylish street clothes. Robert may put on a sport coat and tie for Scenes II and IV. A complete costume change, however, is not feasible due to the time element.

Stage Directions. The full score of the opera contains only the basic stage directions and lighting cues. Since every production will differ, the full score does not attempt to include every stage movement and gesture. Indications that are given are those which are deemed necessary for any production, and they are provided for the benefit of the conductor.

VII. Summary

The amalgamation of music and drama into a viable art form is, at best, a difficult task. The composition of such a work for collegiate musicians is even more arduous. If, however, a composer is true to his craft and is sensitive to the capabilities of his performers he may produce an opera which conforms to the requirements and restrictions placed upon him. "Nunc Dimittis" was thus conceived and brought to completion.

Appendix A.

"Nunc Dimittis"

Libretto

 PROLOGUE

(On tape, over house speakers)

Judge: Have you reached a verdict?

Jury Foreman: We have, your honor.

Judge: Will the defendant rise and face the jury. What is your verdict?

Jury Foreman: We find the defendant . . guilty.

Judge: Robert Welles, in accordance with the verdict of this jury, and adhering to the laws of this state, I hereby sentence you to be bound over by the authorities to the state penitentiary where, at an appointed day and hour, you shall be taken to the gallows and hanged by the neck until dead. May God have mercy on your soul.

(Raps gavel.)

SCENE I

(Lights up on stage. Scene is two cells on death row. Robert's cell, on stage left, is clearly visible - bed, table and chair, and one high, barred window over table. The cell across the hall, stage right, is much the same; this cell is inhabited by the two other prisoners. The guard's office is off stage right.)

Old Prisoner: (calling over to Robert) Hey! Hey you! . . . Hey
you across the way . . . Hey stupid!

Robert: (seated on bed) What? Are you talking to me?

O.P.: Yeah, who else? You been here a week an' we ain't heard a peep
outa you. Who'd you have to knock off to get in here?

R.: Nobody.

O.P.: What?

R.: (trying to ignore him) A man.

O.P.: (persisting) Who was he?

R.: A friend of my wife's.

O.P.: Oh Yeah? Her lover? Don't blame ya none for that. Damned two-
timin' bitches!

Younger Prisoner: (acting more interested now) How'd ya kill the bastard?
With a gun?

R.: Yes . . . with a gun.

Y.P.: Well how'd ya find out he was makin' time with her?

R.: I . . . I found them . . . at home.

Y.P.: Geez!!

O.P.: Cripes!! Together in your own house? I'd have killed him, too!

R.: Yes, together in my own house.

Trio

Y.P.: That's just like a woman.

R.: I found them at home!

O.P.: Damned two timin' bitches!

Y.P.: They make ya believe they love you . . .

O.P.: That's women for ya!

R.: Suzanne and that sailor!

Y.P. . . . and everything's fine.

O.P.: Women!

R.: Together in my own house!

O.P.: Then all of a sudden you find out they been cheatin'.

O.P.: Can't trust a woman no farther than you can throw her!

R.: Together in my own house!

O.P.: I'd have killed him, too!

O.P.: Lousy female bitches!

R.: I found them at home!

O.P.: I'd have killed her, too!

Y.P. and O.P.: Together in your own house!

R.: Together in my own house! (Lights fade to black out.)

SCENE II

(Robert and Suzanne's bedroom. A back-lighted scrim hangs over the front of the room. Suzanne and the sailor are on the bed; Suzanne is in a slip; the man, in trousers only. Robert enters as lights come up.)

R.: (Loudly, agitated) Suzanne! What is this? What the hell is going on?

Sailor: What's it look like, mac?

R.: (angrily) Shut up, you!! (starts toward the man; Suzanne intervenes)

Suzanne: Oh, Robert . . . I'm sorry. It's just . . .

R.: Just what?

S.: It's just that I need someone. Someone to . . . to love me.

R.: Damn it! I love you!!

S.: Do you? You never say so, or even act like you do.

R.: Hell, you know how busy I am, how much trouble I'm having with this new book. And now you do this to Me!

(moving downstage)

S.: That's just the point, Robert. You spend all your time writing and none with me--none with me. I just need somebody, anybody.

Sailor: (who has started dressing) Yeah, mac. If you don't take

care of 'em, somebody else will.

S.: Oh, shut up!! (crosses to Robert) Oh Robert, I'm sorry.

R.: (a bit more plaintive) What does he mean to you?

S.: Nothing . . .

R.: Nothing?

S.: No, nothing . . . nothing at all. He's nobody.

Sailor: Nobody, huh? (angered) Why I've had better sluts than
you for a quarter!

R.: (enraged, to sailor) You lousy bastard!!

(Robert and the sailor begin to fight. The sailor begins
to overtake Robert, and Suzanne runs to table, opens
drawer, removes revolver and shoots the sailor who falls
to floor on his back. Robert comes up to kneeling
position as lights fade.)

SCENE III

(Scene is back to Robert's cell. He is in the same kneeling position
as at end of flashback.)

R.: (to himself) He's dead.

O.P.: Hey! What's the matter with you?

R.: (louder, but still to himself) . . . He's dead . . .

O.P.: (yelling down the hall) Hey Guard! Hey, this guy's dyin'
or something. (Guard runs in) You better be quick
or you won't get to hang him, you blood-thirsty son of
a bitch.

R.: . . . He's dead . . .

Guard: (unlocking cell door) Wake up, (slaps Robert to bring him
around) you crazy bastard!

R.: . . . Dead . . .

G.: (menacingly) That's right -- you killed him. And we're gonna stretch your pansy neck for it, too. Have ya got that figured out yet?

R.: (still kneeling) Leave me alone.

G.: Yeah, I'll leave you alone -- for awhile. (pushes Robert to the floor with his foot. Goes out and locks cell door) And by the way, Mr. Author, your faithful wife is coming to see you tomorrow. Just one last time . . . before we make you taller!

Other Prisoners: Son of a Bitch! Dirty bastard!

G.: (to other prisoners) You bums keep it quiet or I'll see that it takes an hour for the rope to finish you off!
(exits laughing)

O.P.: (to Guard, half voice) Go to hell! (Younger Prisoner clams up, a bit frightened, as lights fade.)

SCENE IV

(Continuation of flashback. Scene is as it was in Scene II.

Robert, Suzanne, and the sailor are in their exact positions as before.)

R.: (shaken) My God! What have you done?

S.: Oh Robert. I'm so afraid. What will we do?

R.: We'll think of something.

S.: (bordering on hysteria) But -- the police! There will be questions -- an investigation! I can't take that! -- I can't!! Oh Robert, hold me.

R.: (holding Suzanne by upper arms, shaking her) Control yourself!! We must think clearly. (moving away, one hand to head; sits on edge of bed) I cannot believe what has

happened here tonight.

S.: (Kneeling beside him) Oh, dear, dear Robert.

R.: But, even, after this, I still love you. You are my wife,
the woman I yet long for; you are my love, the one my
heart beats strong for. Suzanne, my own, though your love
has been untrue, you are mine, only mine, and I never will
forsake you. I will save you all the torment and anguish
by confessing to your crime. I will tell the police that
I killed him!

S.: No, I couldn't ask that!

R.: (formulating his plan) But don't you see? An enraged husband
would have a more substantial motive for murdering his
wife's lover.

S.: (beginning to catch on) Yes-s-s.

R.: And the jury would feel compassion toward any man in the same
situation. (embracing Suzanne)

S.: And in no time you will be paroled.

Duet

S.: Robert, my savior, how truly wonderful you love me.

R.: You are my wife, the woman I yet long for.

S.: Robert, my hero, loves me and will save me.

R.: You are my love, the one my heart beats strong for. Suzanne
my own, though your love has been untrue, you are mine,
only mine . . .

S.: You are mine . . .

Both: And I never will forsake you.

R.: My love!

S.: My own!

R.: My darling!

S.: Robert!

R.: Suzanne!

Both: My love! (Lights fade to blackout.)

SCENE V

(The cells.)

R.: (As if in a daze) Suzanne . . . Suzanne! Suzanne!!

O.P.: Hey! What's wrong with you? You want more of what that
damned guard gave you the last time?

Y.P.: Yeah! Wake up: (to O.P.) He's goin' off the deep end.

O.P.: All writers must be nuts.

Y.P.: (to Robert) What was all that? What happened?

R.: (acting more detached from reality) Nothing -- just remembering . .

O.P.: Oh, you think too much!

Y.P.: Remembering? Remembering what?

R.: Oh nothing, really, (even more detached) I never expected
death row. (glibly cheerful) What jury could hang a
man for justifiable homicide? (laughs weakly to himself)
I had prepared myself for prison, but not death. (crosses
to bed and begins to tear bedsheets into strips, tying
them together)

Y.P.: What are you doing?

R.: (somewhat child-like) Making a rope.

O.P.: What the hell for?

R.: I'm going to escape!

O.P.: Ha! Ha! Ha! You really are crazy! Nobody escapes from this
place!

R.: (in a "So there" voice) I will! (moves towards bars)

I'll show you- I'll show everybody! I'm going to
tie this rope through those bars and let myself down. And you
or nobody else is going to stop me. I'm gonna escape!

Y.P.: You'll never make it!

R.: Oh, yes I will!

O.P.: (to Y.P.) This guy is crazy!

Y.P.: (to O.P.) He's a fool!

R.: I will escape!

Y.P. and O.P.: No one escapes from this place!

R.: (more intensely) I will escape!

O.P.: Poor bastard!

Y.P.: You'll never make it!

R.: I will! I will! I will!

Y.P.: Never! Never! Never!

O.P.: He's crazy! Crazy! Crazy!

(Enter guard and priest, the guard laughing loudly.

Robert retreats to his bed and hides the rope.)

G.: (to O.P. and Y.P.) Well, boys, you'd better pray hard . . .

(unlocks cell door) 'cause you're gonna need it where
you're goin'. Ha, Ha.

O.P.: (to guard) Go to hell.

Y.P.: (frightened) Oh, my God. (falls to knees and grasps
bars)

Priest: (to Y.P.) Do you wish to make a final confession?

Y.P.: Yes, I . . . (priest kneels to hear confession)

O.P.: (interrupting) Hell, no! I don't need that! I ain't
afraid of dyin'. (taunting Y.P.) There'll be a

hangin' today, a double hangin'. There'll be a hangin' today. Ha, ha, ha! (crosses to table and lights up a cigarette)

Priest: (rising, makes the sign of the cross to Y.P.) Nunc dimittis servum tuum Domine, secundum verbum tuum in pace. Quia viderunt oculi mei; salutare tuum. (continues on with entire Nunc Dimittis)

O.P.: (slapping Y.P.) Come on you yellow punk! (grabs Y.P. by collar) Die like a man!

G.: (taking O.P.'s arm) O.K. It's nearly sun up. Let's go.

O.P.: (shaking loose) Get your filthy hands off me, you bastard!

(to Y.P.) Come on! Come on!

(begins to push Y.P. out into hall way) There'll be a hangin' today, a double hangin'. (to R.) So long, Shakespeare! (pushing Y.P.) There'll be a hangin' today. They will kill Ole Joe and charmin' Billy. There'll be a hangin' today. (guard, O.P., Y.P. and Priest exit. Robert moves to cell bars, watching them with hollow eyes.)

SCENE VI

(Robert faces audience with a dazed look.)

R.: Alone -- alone, with just my memories -- memories that pick and tear at my brain -- a brain that ceases to reason. There is no honor in death on the gallows -- I am not a murderer -- I cannot die as a common criminal.

(turns to the other cell, as if in response to a question)

What? No! I am a civilized man of learning -- an author and poet. (quoting)

"Orison"

"Gesticulating pinion, red with flame;
simpiternal vision, glowing, radiant.

Alabaster. Amen."

"Again toward other cell) Why do you laugh? That
poem was one of my best! (looks at rope in his hand)
Oh yes -- I am going to escape! I will show them!
(quoting, in Shakespearean manner)

"O world! O life! O time!

On whose last steps I climb,

Trembling at that where I had stood before;

When will return the glory of your prime?

No more -- oh, nevermore!

Out of the day and night

A joy has taken flight;

Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar,

Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight

No more -- oh, nevermore!"

(stands up on table, looking at his rope) The lifeline.

(in normal speaking voice) I stand on the precipice
of freedom! Onward! Let this umbilical cord carry
me out of this cold, damp womb, and into the light of
the blood red sun!!

I must escape this degradation, humiliation, escape this
debasement of my soul. Existence must hold more meaning
than an ignominious death. I shall escape! I shall
escape! These walls may enslave the body, but no power
on earth can enslave the soul! Freedom of the mind!

Freedom of the soul. Free of this sordid world! (ties rope to window bars) Freedom!!

(ties rope around his neck) Escape!! (immediate black-out as Robert kicks over table.)

EPILOGUE

(Lights up on hallway and dimly on Robert's body hanging motionless. Enter guard, Suzanne, and the priest.)

P.: (to S.) You have kept such a faithful vigil. Too bad this will be your last visit.

S.: (unconcerned) Ah, yes. It is tue.

P.: (to S.) Have the lawyers not succeeded in obtaining a reprieve?

S.: No, not yet. They made an appeal to . . .

G.: (seeing the corpse) God Damn!! (exits, running)

P.: (genuflects and makes sign of the cross, then stands to console S.) I am sure that this is very difficult for you, my dear. However, we . . .

S.: (interrupting) Yes, (smiling slyly) it is. (saunters off, adjusting her hair as priest watches, stunned; lights fade)

CURTAIN

Appendix B.

Nunc Dimittis
(Canticum Simeonis)

1. Nunc dimittis servum tuum Domine, secundum verbum tuum in pace.
2. Quia viderunt oculi mei, salutare tuum.
3. Quod parasti, ante faciem omnium populorum.
4. Lumen ad revelationem gentium, et gloriam plebis tuae Israel.
5. Gloria Patri et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.
6. Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

Nunc Dimittis
(Song of Simeon)

1. Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:
2. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
3. Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;
4. A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.*
5. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;
6. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

*This translation is from the Holy Bible, the King James Version of 1611, St. Luke 2:29-32.

Appendix C.
Instrumentation

2 Flutes (both double Piccolos)

Oboe

2 Clarinets in B-flat (2. doubles Bass Clarinet)

Bassoon

2 Horns in F

2 Trumpets in B-flat

2 Trombones

2 Tympani

2 Percussion: Snare Drum

Temple Blocks (5)

Suspended Cymbals (2)

Gong

Triangle

Xylophone

Chimes

Piano (doubles Celesta)

Strings

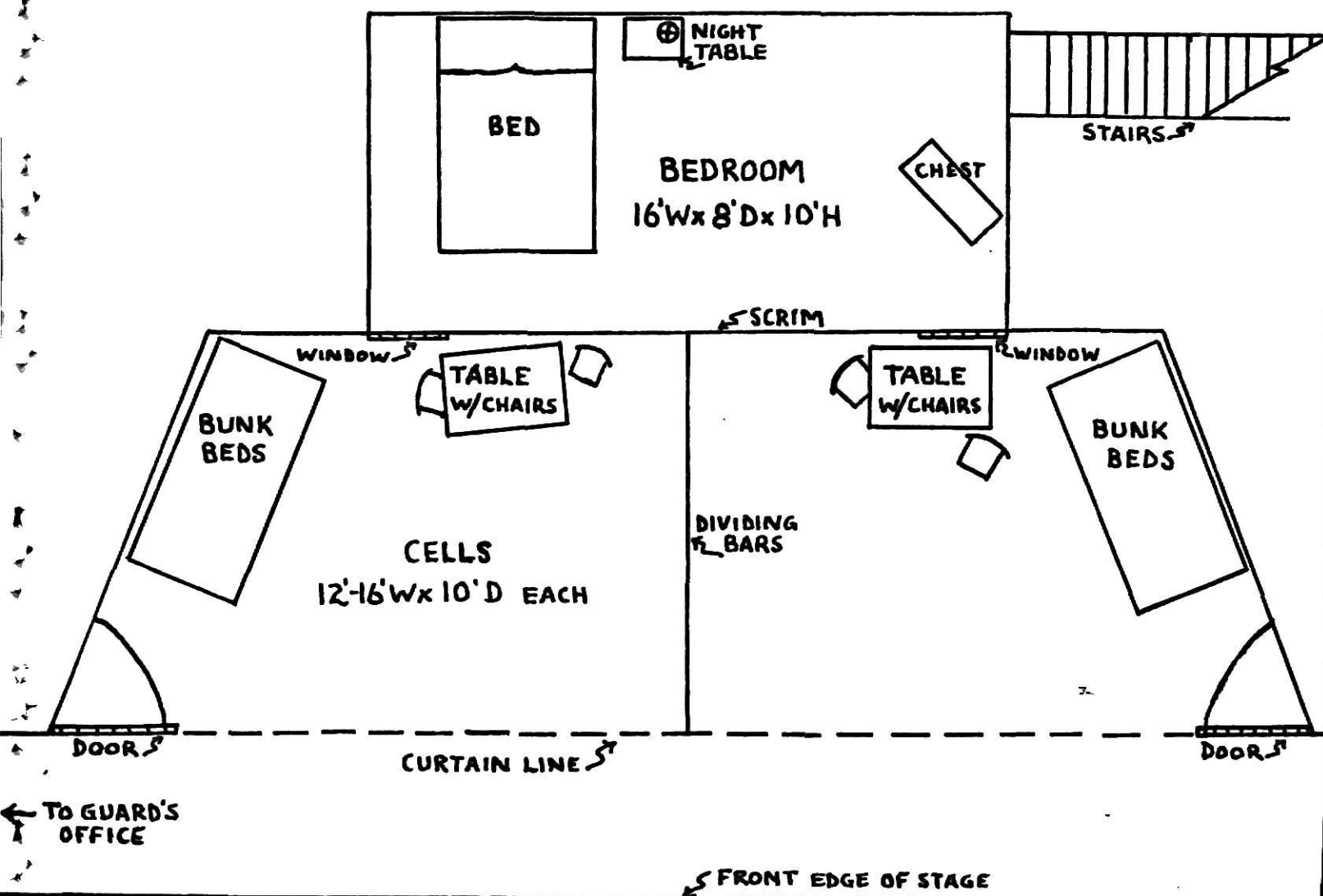
ILLEGIBLE

**THE FOLLOWING
DOCUMENT (S) IS
ILLEGIBLE DUE
TO THE
PRINTING ON
THE ORIGINAL
BEING CUT OFF**

ILLEGIBLE

Appendix D.

Set Design for the Original Production
by Allan M. Bailey

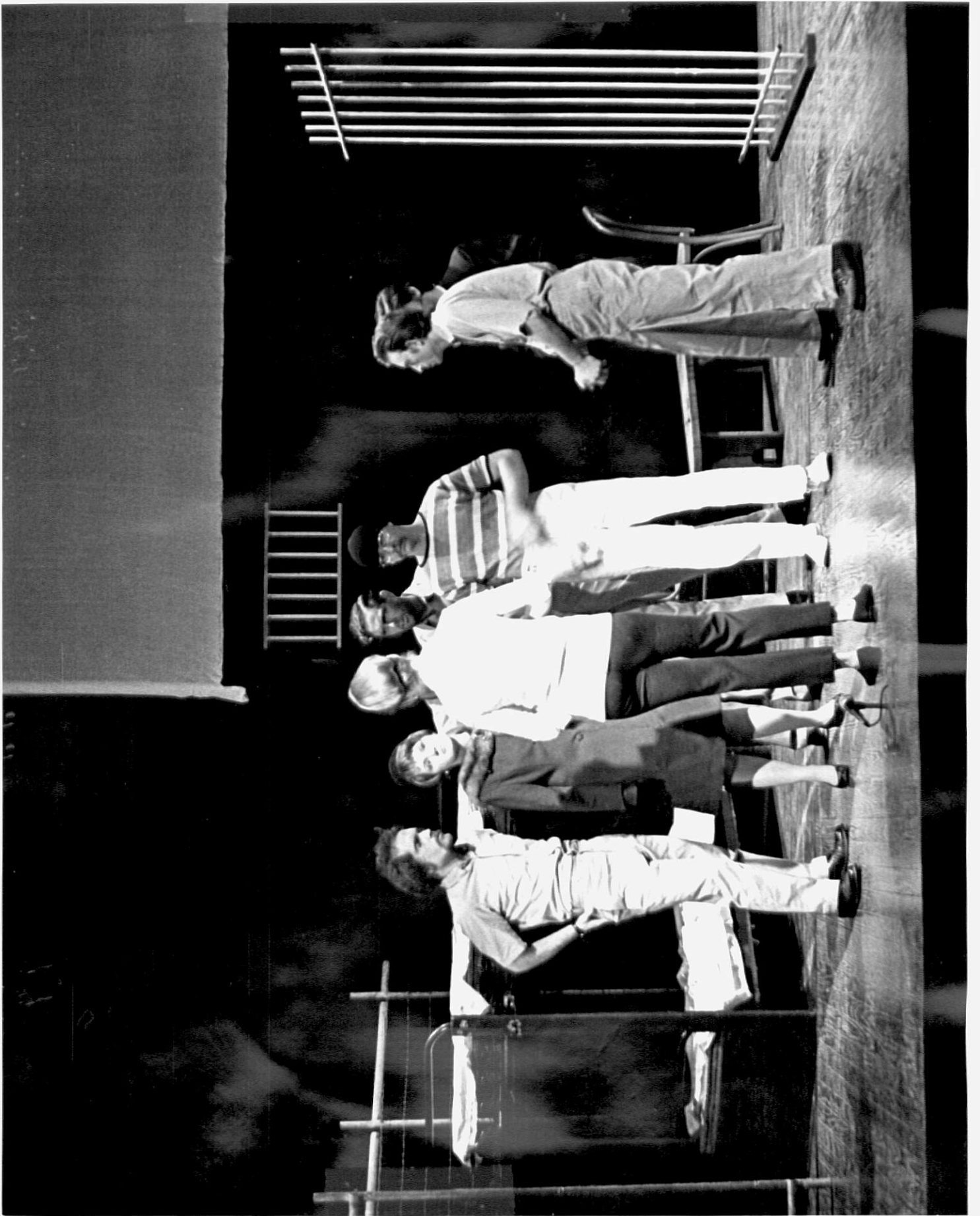


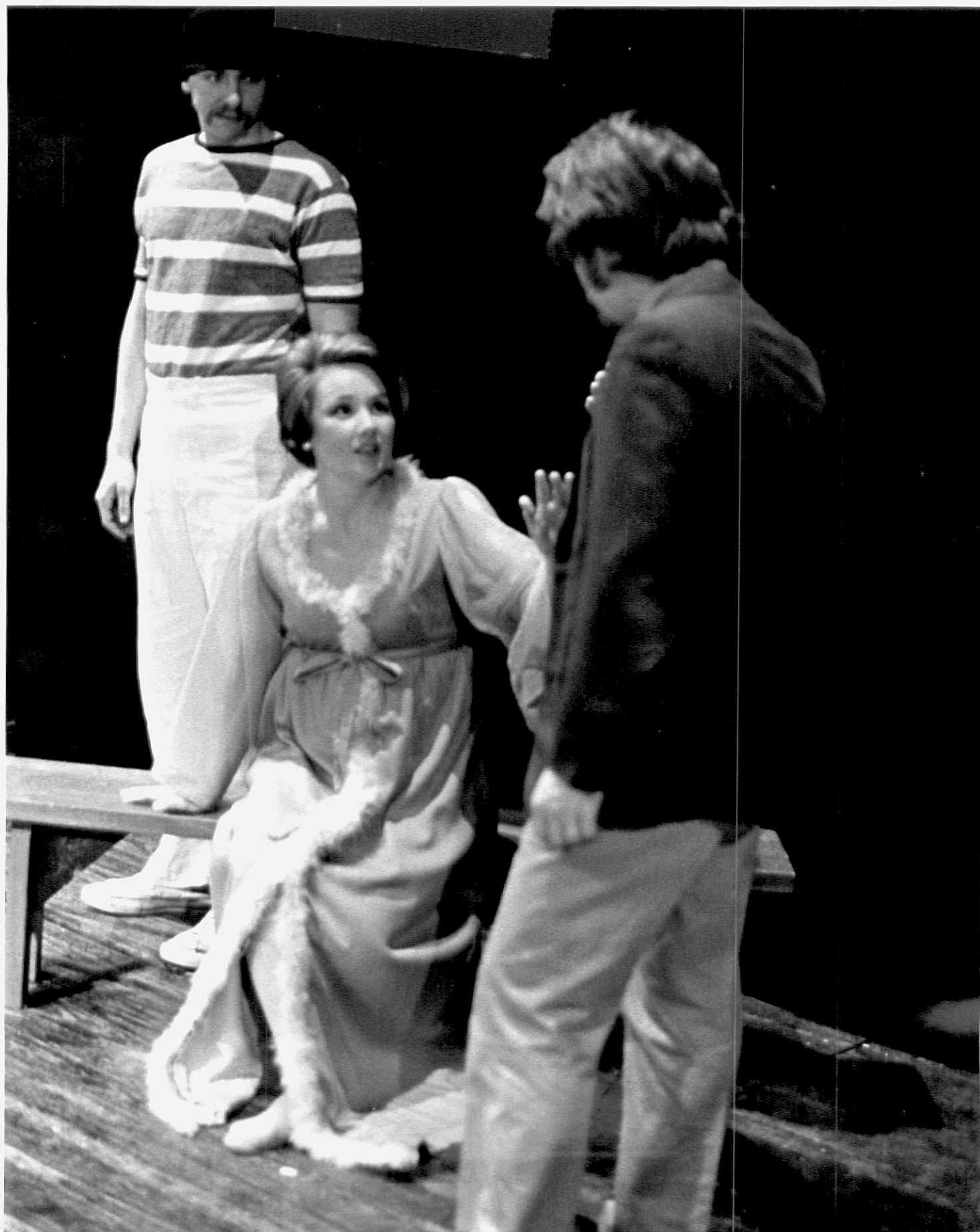
(Scale: $\frac{1}{4}$ " = One Foot)

Appendix E.

Photographs from the Original Production

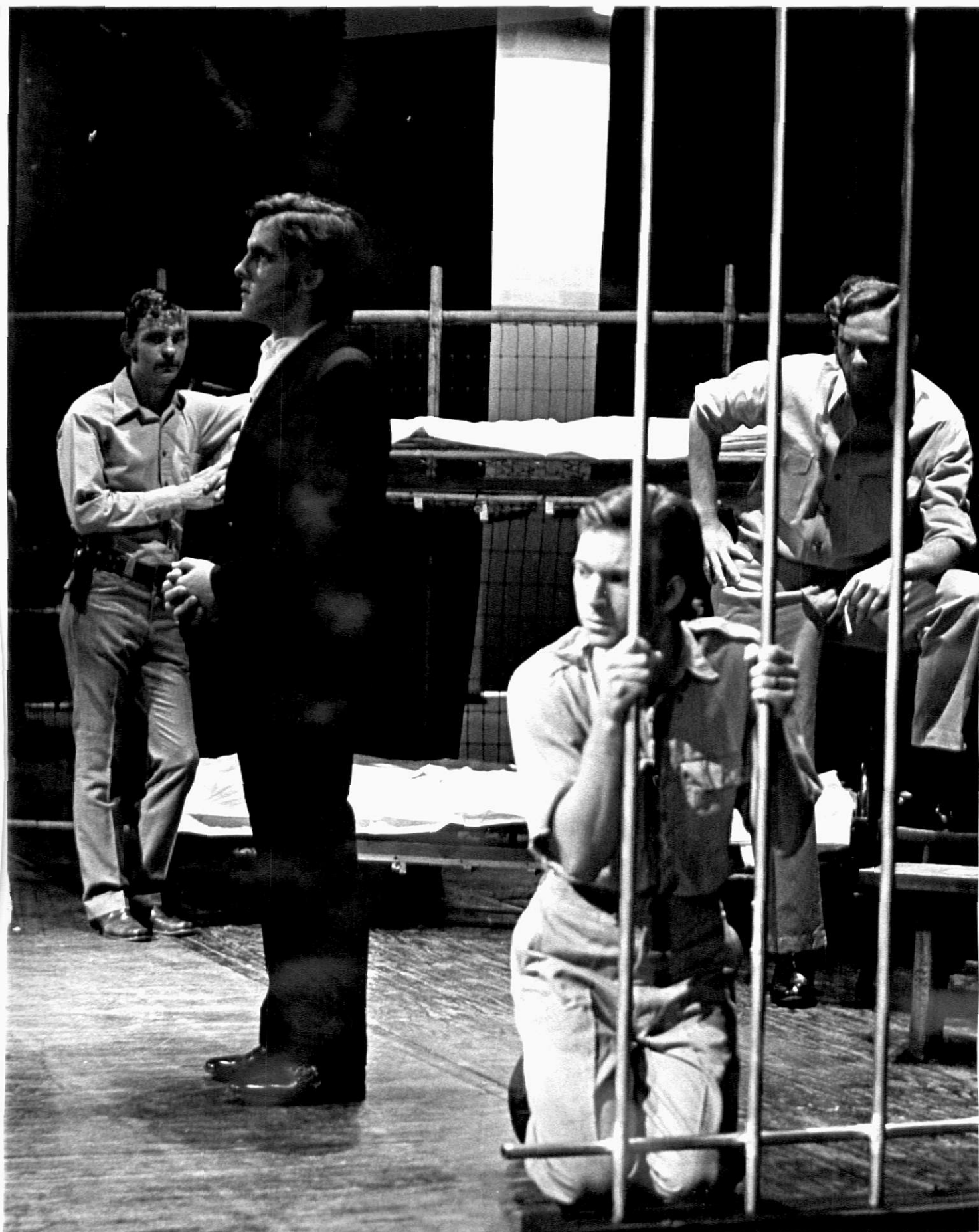
1. Stage right portion of the set showing part of the scrim covering the front of the platform used for the bedroom scenes.
2. Robert confronts Suzanne and The Sailor in Scene II.
3. The opening of Scene III finds the Old and Young Prisoners playing cards.
4. Robert professes his love for the unfaithful Suzanne in Scene IV.
5. The Priest intones the Nunc Dimittis for the Young Prisoner in Scene V as the Old Prisoner and the Guard look on.
6. Robert's imbalanced mental state is reflected in his facial expression in Scene VI.
7. Suzanne is at first stunned when she sees Robert's hanging corpse in the Epilogue.

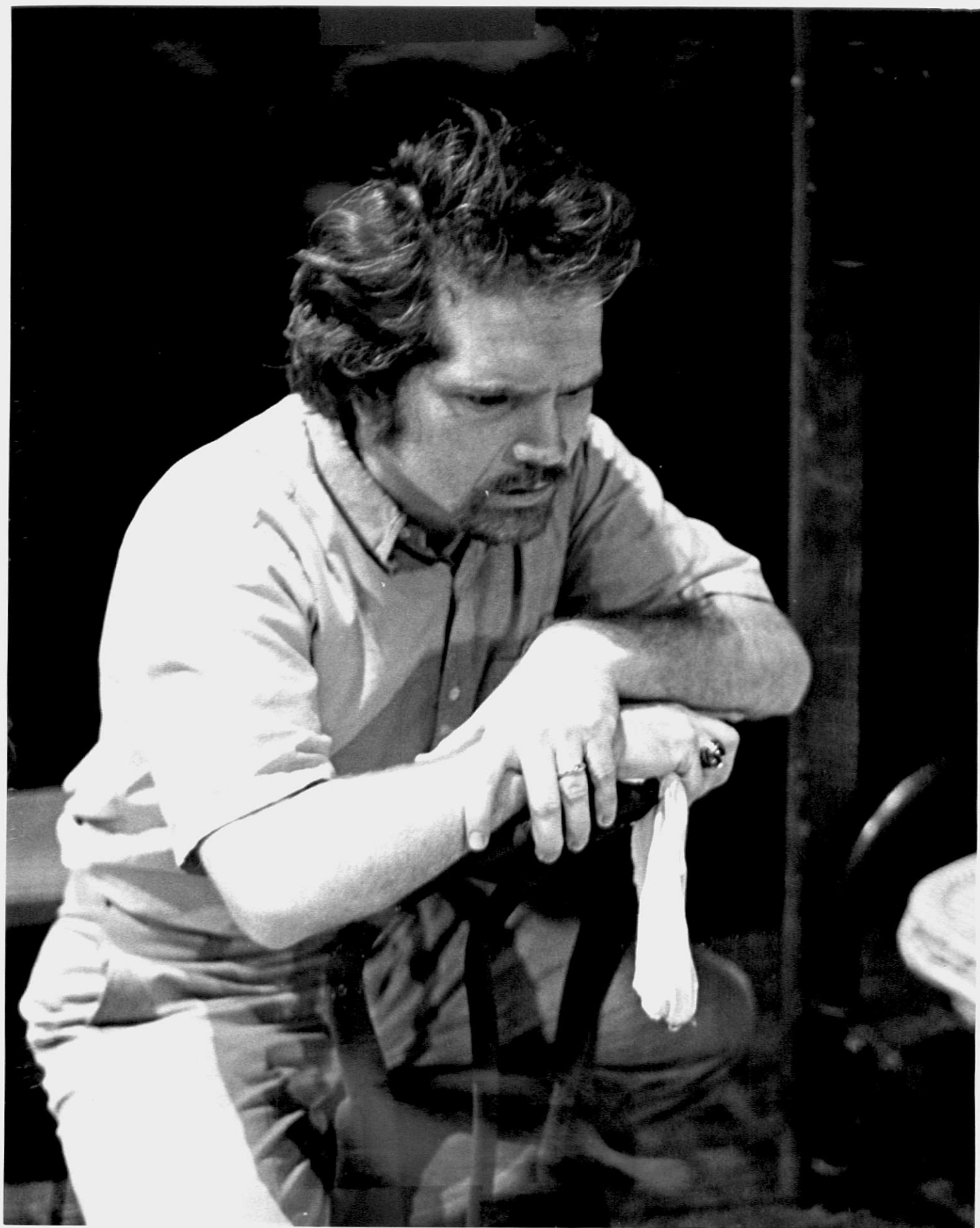














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NUNC DIMITTIS
An Opera in One Act

by

LANCE A. MASSEY

B. M., Kansas State University, 1972

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF MUSIC

Department of Music

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1974

NUNC DIMITTIS

An Opera in One Act

The purpose of this project was to create a small-scale composition for the stage in a Twentieth Century musical idiom which would be accessible for college age singers. After careful consideration for collegiate singers and instrumentalists the resulting one act opera should lie within the grasp of most college musicians.

The opera, based on an original libretto, employs the device of Leitmotif development which is enmeshed in a contrapuntal and dramatic musical texture. The harmonic language is highly chromatic and freely atonal, although diatonicism and polytonality are used for dramatic underscoring.

This report, then, is a defense of the composition and includes discussions of the motivic and melodic development, vocal, instrumental, and formal considerations, and a section on the theatrical aspects of production. While musical examples are used in the report, a complete full score of the opera accompanies the paper. In addition, there are appendices giving the text of the libretto, the Nunc Dimittis Gregorian chant, and set design and photographs of the original production.