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Simulating *Newhouse*: Necessary Angel's Hyperrealistic Environments

by

Wesley John William Eccleston 

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Department of Drama

Edmonton, Alberta
Spring 2002

University of Alberta

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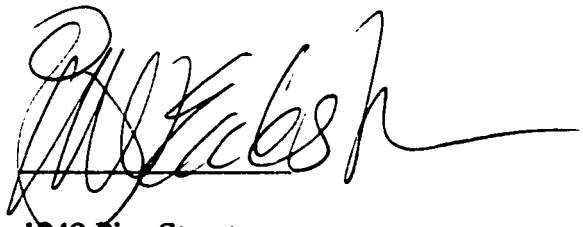

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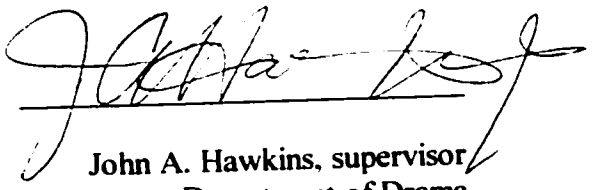

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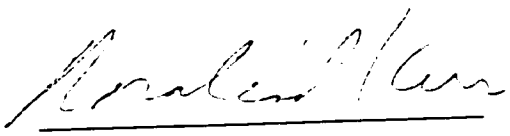

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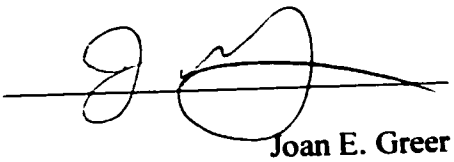

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Abstract

The sensibilities of audiences toward the act of theatre have been changed as a result of the saturation by media into our lives. One cannot explore the postmodern predicament in reference to theatre without giving attention to the use of technology to promote the engagement between the consumer and the act of theatre. I contend that audiences can no longer be constructed as passive spectators; theatres must employ scenographic techniques that address the audiences' conditioning to the saturation of media in their lives. Environmental staging provides an example of an effective approach.

In this thesis, I discuss some major proponents of environmental scenography, filtering their achievements through the insights of cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard, who constructs a human condition based on media simulation of that which we call reality. He suggests that we re-assess what live theatre can do, especially in view of pervasive, technologically mediated entertainments. I survey historical examples of alternative scenography that have attempted to displace traditional theatre forms. I describe two types of non-realistic staging: surrounding-space theatres; and transformed-space theatres.

In order to focus my discussion of these non-realistic approaches, I use Toronto's Necessary Angel Theatre as a contemporary example of a theatre company keenly attuned to the usefulness and pitfalls of scenographic experimentation. I discuss in detail the company's 1989 production of *Newhouse*, describing the use of non-traditional media in its creation and production. I contend that Richard Rose's work is well-founded in the contemporary age of hyperrealism as described by Baudrillard. I discuss this production of Newhouse as an example of hyperrealistic theatre. I then go on to discuss in depth my own experimentation with Baudrillard's theory in my own production of Newhouse. I discuss my production in context, describing our production and our design plans, and I include information on the public reaction to our performances. I draw attention to the need to apply theory to illuminate how the use of alternative approaches to performance can create a postmodern aesthetic consistent with the theatre audience's new sensibilities.

Preface

The increasing saturation of daily life by communication media characterizes a human experience unlike any the Western world has witnessed. The new technologies that penetrate and pervade everyday life stagger the imagination when compared to years past. There is general agreement that the lives of consumers equipped with the latest communications technologies have been augmented, and continue to be defined, by these technologies. Information age, cyber-society, digital revolution — these terms have different connotations to different people. Such references are usually to the technological advances of the last quarter of the twentieth century, drawing attention to the defining characteristic of informational data: the conversion and transformation of every kind of information into digital form. Media experts attempt to map this trend as a form of convergence, using the universal language of bits and bytes that may be manipulated, compressed, and combined with other digital data. Recently, the focus has shifted from hardware to a concentration on software. This is currently embodied in the creation of the latest and most complicated of information networks, the set of communication protocols labeled the "Internet." As a source of knowledge data, communication, and entertainment, the phantom community born of the "World Wide Web" is permitted seemingly limitless opportunities for informative exchange, provided each participant has access to a personal computer. One could conceive of an individual now able to acquire all of the elements basic to human existence – food, clothing, shelter – merely from the act of "pointing and clicking" her or his cybernetic fingertip on a mouse-pad.

Not surprisingly, consumer marketing has taken, and is taking, full advantage of this medium, even as it pertains to obtaining goods and services beyond the confines of the home or office. It is now possible, for example, to contact a theatre and check performance times and available seats, peruse prices, select the date and seats, have a credit card verified, and print the theatre tickets — all within moments of viewing a video

clip of the play. Yet, despite this newfound ability to send and receive information, even if we can do it more quickly and easily than before, it does not necessarily mean that there is more understanding or communicated meaning. The speed of connections to sources of information has increased, but what of the thoroughness and richness of experience bypassed in the act, in the name of digital convenience? Just what effects do these new-fashioned technologies have on a personal consciousness as it constructs identity within the broader Western network of multiple points of view? What toll has been taken, and what repercussions should be addressed, when approaching a discussion of the fields of entertainment and culture in an age of aggressive mediation by means of technologies designed to simplify consumer communication? How have media augmented the perception of a live entertainment/cultural event, especially as it relates to the instances in which the experience has been enhanced by the imposition of a communications medium?

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank those involved in bringing this thesis to fruition. I would like to extend my gratitude to Dr. Alex Hawkins for his supervision, guidance and ceaseless patience.

I wish to give much thanks to Dr. Rosalind Kerr for her support, resourcefulness and encouragement.

Playwrights/Directors Richard Rose and Don Kugler deserve tremendous accolades for their invaluable, personal recollections of their productions of *Newhouse* and history of Necessary Angel Theatre.

Thanks to the Western Canada Theatre for permitting my company to monopolize their second playing space for two weeks, and simultaneously making it easier on our pocketbook.

Special thanks to David Edwards and James Hoffman at the University College of the Cariboo for continued encouragement and tutelage.

Insurmountable thanks to members of 3 Men of Sin Theatre Productions who quite blindly trusted my approach to *Newhouse*, and banded together to make it a (hyper)reality. Indebtedness to my co-artistic directors Trent Scherer and Stephen Sawka; as much as to my cast of *Newhouse* 1999: Ben Ayers, Steve Baumber, Sara Brown, Katie Comrie, Tom Dorran, Cayman Duncan, Kira Haug, Craig Johnson, Kate Lovering, Derek Rein, Matt Rollo, Giovanna Rondinelli, Terri Runnalls, Kris Wiebe, and Amanda Worthington-Wallin. Best regards to my crew for accepting all technical challenges: Andrea Fraser, Dustin Miklos, Tim Tillyer, Joel Eccleston, Cheryl Mayhood, Chris & Theresia Reid, Tammy Hooch-Antink, Charmaine Norman, Ryan Holowaychuk and Rob Chisholm.

Thanks to Holly Miller for production photography, as well as Alex Walton for his poster design.

To my family, I cannot overstate your positive influence upon my continued artistic education and production.

Final thanks to my close friends who have been more than passive spectators in my life.

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Introduction

There currently exists an extensive tradition geared toward debunking and explaining modes of media perception. With varying degrees of success and acceptance, several interpretations and analyses have surfaced from the global community, each offering its own theory on how an increasingly machine-using society apprehends any work of art. Likewise, those in the field of cultural theory have postulated many hypotheses concerning the impact of technological advancements upon the cognitive faculties of human consciousness. The pace of today's industry creates an increasing preference for edited and summarized news, rather than for unedited accounts. It is clear that previously recorded entertainments are much more popular than live performances. Although grand, live performance spectacles with staggering numbers of spectators continue to occur globally, many of them also depend on technologies which mediate between the spectacle and the viewer. Such dependence on technology, even in live productions, is increasingly pervasive. Historically, media critics have demonstrated an impulse to explain and place works of art within specific artistic genres. As I discuss in the chapters to follow, theatre theorists and practitioners alike have posed critical questions about their art in an age that is becoming more and more familiar with using technologies both in everyday life and in various forms of entertainment.

Most contemporary critics and scholars agree that the current cultural predicament is postmodern. The postmodern fundamentally stands in opposition to all things modern, often for the sake of parting with the past, and stressing the urge to go beyond that which has preceded it. It must be clarified that the postmodern era is defined as being connected to the times in which people exist and interact with stimuli specific to that which is no longer modern. This is to say, it refers first and foremost to daily life conditioning by experience, and secondarily to the artistic artifacts created by individuals operating within those environments. I contend that this postmodern condition is the result of the

progressive saturation of media into the routines of Western experience. One cannot explore the postmodern predicament in reference to theatre without giving significant attention to the use of technology, and how it manifests itself, to promote the engagement of the consumer with the act of theatre.

The works and practices of the dominant theatre are well documented. One need not list the dominating persons of the mainstream theatre; one need only refer to a variety of works still found today in many theatre companies' seasons. Undoubtedly, the normative model for theatre is that of the mainstream theatre, the performance experience in which audience members are shuffled into an auditorium and seated facing in one direction. The pictorial image is illuminated to display the actors speaking their lines of text to accomplish the ultimate plot of the story, as the seated audience members are constructed as passive viewers of the action before them. More often than not, the "fourth wall" between the performance and audience separates them, each by convention respecting this division which separates actual reality from the fictive reality of the play. This model of theatre has been tried and proven true, surviving on the supposition that what takes place onstage is a reflection of life offstage. Based on mimesis, this method of performance is the most widely accepted among its practitioners as their primary way of working, and has come to define the majority of theatre productions today.

But this performance model has not been without its share of opposition. Many who have rejected the conventional theatre as a way of working have created or adapted their own models in order to achieve what they consider a more direct route to truth and verisimilitude onstage. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, practitioners have carried out alternative approaches, hoping to someday achieve popular acceptance. Such theatre artists have thrown almost every aspect and convention of the live theatre performance into question: the most important is the relationship between the audience, and the performance and its scenography. Those with a flair for shaking the foundations of the modern theatre have explored and discovered the untapped possibilities of

alternative theatre practice that has eventually taken on conventions of its own. The focus of this thesis is upon some of the Western theatre traditions underlying the non-traditional theatre. I limit my scope to that which could be labeled alternative theatre practice as a reaction against the proscenium, and a rejection of the modernist mode of mimesis.

In this thesis, I intend to study some of the major proponents of environmental scenography, while filtering their achievements through the cultural insights of theorist Jean Baudrillard, whose analysis presents comprehensive conclusions about societies emerging from the Industrial Revolution until the mid-1970s. Delving into post-structural logic, Baudrillard constructs a human condition based on media simulation of that which we commonly call reality. His evidence of simulation suggests that we re-assess what theatre ought to be doing, especially in view of the dominance of television and film.

In the first chapter, I survey primary theories and productions of theatre practitioners who have been involved in opposing Western theatre performance that limits itself to a purely "frontal" presentational style. I undertake a historical and theoretical survey of unconventional and environmental scenography in order to demonstrate theatrical approaches that attempt to displace mainstream theatre practice. I describe two major approaches to non-realistic staging: surrounding-space and transformed-space theatres.

In the second and third chapters, I use Toronto's Necessary Angel Theatre company as a contemporary example of a theatre company keenly attuned to the pitfalls and usefulness of scenographic experimentation. I consider the production history of the company, as well as its mandate, which focuses on adapting both established texts as well as performance venues. Considering in detail its 1989 production of *Newhouse*, I intend to study the use of non-traditional media as manifested in play creation and production. I also weigh public response and theatre criticism, since this demonstrates attributes of Baudrillard's theatre of simulation. Considering the work of Richard Rose at Necessary Angel Theatre as an extension of his predecessors, I suggest that his approach is, in

comparative terms, well-founded in the contemporary age of hyperrealism. Although I use specific Necessary Angel productions as examples of hyperrealistic theatre, I reserve my deepest theoretical analysis for my own experimentation.

In the fourth chapter, I describe the results of my practical application of Baudrillard's theory as these results became clear following my own production of *Newhouse* in 1999. I directed this provocative play with my theatre company, 3 Men of Sin Theatre Productions, in Kamloops, BC, a city located in a region that, compared to Toronto, would be considered rural. I discuss the resources that were available, and improvements we would have made had additional financing been available. I discuss this production in context; I describe our production and design plans; and I include information on the public reaction to the performances. While I do not intend to compare my production of *Newhouse* with the expertise demonstrated by forerunners of non-realist performance, I do intend to draw attention to the need to apply theory (here, the methodology of Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulation) to illuminate how the use of alternative approaches to performance design creates a postmodern aesthetic that attracts Canadian theatre audiences.

Chapter One:

Alternative Approaches for New Sensibilities

At this point, I should clarify some concepts and terms that I use in the following chapter. The traditional theatre of the West operates on a set of established codes and conventions. There are rules of conduct and expectation for audience members who enter a production venue. For example, amplified music is sometimes used before the performance, during, and even afterwards to create mood; complex lighting instruments are hung, gelled, and focused for illumination and artistic flair; set-pieces and props are constructed and mounted to provide backdrops for the performances by the trained actors who vocalize rehearsed lines and perform physical interactions with each other. Combined, these elements communicate their messages in the hope of purveying an entertaining piece of theatre. We also recognize these technical elements as information media that contribute to the finished product because they function as signs communicating meaning to the audience. The meaning communicated depends on the interplay of these signs. But what if these communicated signs of meaning no longer produce their intended effect? Does the conventional use of these signs in the traditional theatre reflect a reality that is increasingly mechanized? How can outdated techniques challenge audiences who are frequently "multi-tasking", and are quite capable of, and indeed accustomed to, handling massive amounts of information at one sitting? I make clear that new technology can alter culturally induced expectations of theatre. My discussion allows for an analysis that defines technology as the new mirror that reflects life.

To arrive at a theory of perception within a particular region, the research must include examples of productions from that place. Unfortunately, Canada did not produce many examples of experimental scenographic approaches until the early 1970s. Granted, early Canadian theatre practitioners such as Roy Mitchell and Herman Voaden proposed

and attempted to establish experimental and alternative approaches to conventional theatre production, but their efforts are less scenographically effective and historically significant than those in Europe. Similarly, in the United States, there was little interest in exploring alternative performance environments until the late 1960s. In Canada, live theatre performance was at its most popular during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Since Canadian companies were few, and Canadian plays even fewer, touring productions from America and England dominated the national stage with formulaic presentations. Production quality improved by mid-century, sparked by a progressive movement toward amateur theatre, as manifested by the Little Theatre Movement and the establishment of the Dominion Drama Festival, both of which expanded after 1945. Having experienced prior to 1960 few alternative approaches to theatre, Canada nurtured homemade performances which used the fourth-wall production model as a production ideal. Performances took place primarily within a standard proscenium theatre model, while other approaches remained largely underdeveloped.

Across the Atlantic, the turn of the twentieth century brought with it a re-evaluation of the place of art in a society becoming increasingly mechanized. For years, Russia's Kostantin Stanislavsky staged dramas determined to mirror reality and replicate life onstage devoid of excesses of theatricality. Emphasizing a realistic approach, he maintained a separation between the audience and the fictional reality of the play by reinforcing the fourth wall. This method of representing realism created a pictorial, realistic performance for his audience who were merely obliged to sit and view the action directly in front of them. He did use a range of technologies available to create this picture-framed drama and to complement the performances as illusionistic devices. It was this genre of realism with which proponents of early environmental production took issue; they challenged not only the arrangement of dividing the audience and performance, but also the failure to recognize the pervasive effects of technology in the lives of the audience outside the theatre.

The modernist performance style that dominates Western stages had established a point of departure from which, and in reference to which, many independent theatre practitioners such as Piscator, Ronconi, and Schechner defined alternative approaches. Essentially, their work was a reaction against the realist model, though their purposes and methods differed. But the focus of their arguments were shared: to reject the realist model because of its divisive separation between audience and performance, and to create a new sensibility toward scenographic representation, based on the conscious manipulation of space. These practitioners experimented with media to amplify and maximize the total illusion of the performative event, making full use of the technologies available. They introduced non-traditional, unconventional media into productions, aiming to magnify the role of emerging technology, and to recognize the power of media to alter user-consciousness not only in art, but more importantly in life. They aimed to intensify their audience's experience through a conception of theatre that placed the spectator not as separate from the performance, but inherently linked to it, and even contained within it.

To alter the spectator's relationship to the performance, non-realistic approaches were manufactured with goals of a greater intimacy, a greater theatricality, and a different realism previously prevented because of the dominance of the paradigm of realistic scenography. This impulse was not merely to give the audience a greater physical involvement in the production, but to alter their perceptions of space, to shatter the pictorial flatness, and to draw the audience into a new understanding of space. Two major approaches evolved from these aesthetic developments: focusing on surrounding the spectator architecturally; and transforming temporarily an existing space to the needs and demands of a production. I must recognize that these dual groupings have been more exhaustively explored by Arnold Aronson in his authoritative book on the subject, *The History and Theory of Environmental Scenography*. For my purposes here, I suggest that there was a historical shift from the costly approach of constructing new theatre venues to

try to address new objectives, to altering found spaces, which was more economically feasible.

Architecturally surrounding space theatres were proposed, designed, and in some cases built or rebuilt in order to unify the total performance environment. Contending that the realistic theatre was not really a performance environment due to its fourth wall arrangement, alternative theatre theorists concerned themselves with malleable scenographic choices which stressed the union of audience and performance. Laying the foundation for later practitioners who used transformed spaces, these first experimenters desired to create theatres that eliminated the proscenium and allow for an emancipation of the spectator. They proposed to create performance venues that joined audience and performance architecturally within a surrounding environment in which human faculties were assaulted from all sides. No longer could there be one point of view in a darkened auditorium; spectators could no longer perceive the performance from a single vantage point.

In theory, the most effective surrounding space would be a spherical theatre, with the audience suspended at the centre. In practice, architectural experiments proved largely unworkable. Reasons for failure were many, despite the variety of theatre designs, of which there was no shortage. At the beginning of the twentieth century, practitioners of Futurism, Italians Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and Enrico Prampolini rejected mainstream art and clearly emphasized the necessity to incorporate and highlight the new mechanical mentality of the audience into the performance. By 1933, Marinetti proposed a Total Theatre based on his and Prampolini's ideas as an example of unifying spectators and performance. Farkas Molnar, a member of Bauhaus, also took an architectural approach to create a surrounding-space theatre. In 1924, he designed his U Theatre with the "U" referring to the configuration of the seating area. He intended that, because of this configuration, the sensation of the performers and audience would be an impression of shared space, thus bridging the gap that existed in the Realistic approach. He even went

so far as to design a machine to disseminate various odours into the atmosphere. Adding another sensory experience beyond the traditional modes of sight and sound would increase the feeling of a total environment. In 1937, American Blanding Sloan developed plans for his Infinidome. His architecturally integrated space resembled a hemispheric dome two hundred feet in diameter, complete with a mechanized thrust stage circled by a seating area accommodating as many as 1,200 audience members. Upon the ceiling of the dome that would span the audience and performance areas, Sloan proposed to project images of sky and star-spangled night to replicate the outdoors. Meanwhile, Austrian Fredrick Kiesler had been designing his Endless Theatre in 1923. Kiesler did not merely envision the sensation of being suspended in space, but contemplated the actual suspension of the audience enclosed in the environment. He eliminated a backstage area, as well as a permanent auditorium space, allowing for the option of expanding the performance in all possible directions and configurations. Unfortunately, despite their ambitions, these designers proposed venues that were too expensive to build. None of these surrounding space theatres was constructed as planned, although some aspects came to fruition at world expositions years later.

The most widely recognized and comprehensive proposal for a total, environmental theatre was set out by Frenchman Antonin Artaud in his *Theatre and its Double*, in which Artaud called for a genre of performance that he called Theatre of Cruelty. Published in 1932, although Artaud had written it more than a decade earlier while he was in an asylum, the book articulated Artaud's strong ambition to rejuvenate theatre by means of engulfing the audience. Although Artaud failed to propose a single new idea that had not already been proposed by his counterpart practitioners like Marinetti and Kiesler, he did organize major environmental concepts into a definitive declaration about environmental scenography. He rejected the Realist focus on text, replacing it with an excess of images to affect physically the audience. Artaud configured the space to situate the audience in the middle, seated on the ground or in mobile chairs, to perceive the presentation taking

place all around them. With the distinction between stage and auditorium thus erased, the actions of the play would be more than mere spectacle, given that his use of simultaneity and a barrage of overlapping projections would induce a trance-like state in the audience. Artaud adamantly insisted upon the necessity of abandoning the architecture of the dominant theatre, but apart from general comments on configuration, he made no specific designs for an alternative. Nonetheless, his emphasis was on converting found environments into a unified production space with moveable seating, complete with central and peripheral stages.

Since he was a proponent of alternative scenography, Artaud's emphasis on using found spaces for production is part of a more widespread shift from the approach of constructing new surrounding theatres to the more economically feasible approach of converting found environments. Very few theatre theorists implemented the forms they suggested, with variations of several re-emerging and being incorporated into theatres after the Second World War. Most "total theatres" were too expensive or too specialized to construct from scratch.[1] Rather than building theatres that were too costly, another group of practitioners saw fit to adapt existing venues. These performance spaces are usually referred to as "found spaces," in which the transformed environment shapes and defines space through the arrangement of stage areas, seating units (if any), and attention to decorative elements in order to conceal the previous purpose of the space. Diverse spaces have been used, including lofts, garages, storefronts, churches, schools, and even traditional theatres. Transformed spaces have often maximized the use of technological

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[1] Although theatre practitioners lacked the financial resources to construct such spaces, large-scales commercial organizations could bring these ideas to fruition. For example, this kind of total-environment aesthetic was most successfully exploited by Walt Disney in his amusement parks. Transforming surrounding landscapes into a festival space, the significance of these parks relies on the way in which they build, transform, and utilize space as a total environment. The efforts to construct such surrounding spaces demonstrated an artistic need to maximize the theatricality of performance by redefining the conventional use of technical elements. The intention was to create an overwhelming and total event, so that by means of the audience's new spatial relationship to the performance, the reality of the play did not stop at a fourth wall, but encompassed the audience from every angle.

elements to intensify the experience, and forced sensory overload to make the audience feel even more part of the production.

The German director Erwin Piscator was one of the most successful pioneers of shared-space staging within a transformed environment. Realizing many of his notions with actual productions, he demonstrated his desire to unify a large audience. He also spearheaded the "mixed media" or "multi-media" approach, allowing for the greatest use of technology. Piscator's Epic Theatre experimented with simultaneity, lighting effects, film projections, as well as surrounding the spectator by using scattered platform stages that allowed for flexible scenography. His productions were performed in transformed spaces such as factories and halls. He aimed to destroy the psychological separation between performer and spectator, and subjected the audience instead to a sensory assault to overwhelm them. Spectators were not confined to a specific seating arrangement, which allowed them a more active role, one in which the possibility for their overt physical participation became feasible. I turn now to the subject of media studies to further explain what effect technology has on our perceptual faculties, especially concerning their significance during live performance.

The 1960s witnessed the emergence of cultural theorists who postulated the effects of electronics media on the human condition. The recognized guru of this genre was Canadian Marshall McLuhan. In his early publications, McLuhan recognized that emerging technologies and their accelerated incorporation into everyday life actually conditioned the manner by which people perceive the world, including the way they perceive works of art. Thus in *The Medium is the Massage*, McLuhan proposed that:

> Societies have always been shaped more by the nature of the media by which men communicate than by the content of the communication.... Electrical technology fosters and encourages unification and involvement. It is impossible to understand social and cultural changes without a knowledge of the workings of media. (8)

McLuhan suggests that new technologies become extensions of our own nervous system.

Since the beginning of literacy, through the twentieth century, art had been concerned with representation. McLuhan proposed that new technologies actually subvert this notion. "This new electric technology, like any other innovation, affords a mirror in which we see the old technologies with ever increasing clarity" (*War and Peace in the Global Village*, 80). Sensing also a loss of connectivity, McLuhan gave considerable credence to the power of an environment to mold perceptions and to enable the invisible processing of information. Because of the media's ability to massage the senses, art became shaped by the way in which space within a given environment is perceived. With information steadily pouring upon the average Westerner, McLuhan believed that a change in environment would effect pain in consumers as they attempt to make sense of it all. This rationale thereby gave artists the opportunity to create environments, and depending upon their ambitions, to either hide the construction of an illusion, or create an anti-environment to reveal how the illusion is created. McLuhan asserted that:

> any technological innovation in any culture whatever at once changes all these sensory ratios... in all cases, sensory change is levered by the new technical innovations, since new technology inevitably creates new environments that act incessantly on the sensorium. (136)

His much-quoted "the medium is the message" summed up McLuhan's notion that it was now impossible to separate the content of a message from the form in which it was transmitted. Applying this principle to theatre, we can say that the subject matter is intrinsically caught up in the objective means — and the distinction between the two is blurred. The alternative productions that concurrently emerged with McLuhan's ideas suggest an expanding awareness of the media's power to mold perceptions. In the end, it became the artist's duty to agitate the audience by making them aware of their conditioned responses to works of art.

My search for artists interested in conditioning audiences brought me to Luca Ronconi, an Italian theatre director, who in the late 1960s took a structural approach to staging performances . In a conscious break from realistic representation, he employed the

philosophy that an audience's sensibilities enabled them to take a more active role to create the illusion around them. Ronconi suggested that the single viewpoint offered in the traditional theatre is inadequate to provide a multiplicity of experiences for spectators. As a result, Ronconi made preliminary steps toward creating a participatory role for the audience within a theatre environment. His non-realist production of *Orlando Furioso* used multiple stages with proscenium-like platforms at both ends of the floor space. Scenes would take place simultaneously to add to the disorientation of the spectator by allowing different focal points. Ronconi believed there was no one way of seeing a theatre event, or absorbing the totality of the illusion; a given individual spectator is only able to witness certain episodes from the entire event. Receiving only a fragment at a time of the whole play, audience members followed actors around the transformed space. The audience thus became a new society of seekers, rushing to observe action wherever it next arrived. The shared space allowed the option of audience participation.

For his production of *XX*, staged in 1971, Ronconi continued his ambitions by transforming an auditorium into a two-storey "house" with twenty rooms. The audience was divided into small groups and ushered to and from the rooms by guides. Each group started at a different point, with the production culminating in a main chamber, in which all groups united for the finale. Employing elements of what Aronson would call moving audience-stationary performance, Ronconi physically ushered his audience from room to room. His rationale for transformation of space and imposed audience involvement stemmed from his belief that real life had become more controlled and complicated, and theatre should reflect this shift. Directed to follow the action, spectators were made aware of how the entire production was manipulated. Ronconi desired to teach his audience that they were products of a complicated environment outside the theatre and so required new conditioning, thus a new audience/spectator contract inside the theatre. Ronconi's audience became a cog in the wheel of his theatre-machine that could not operate without their participation.

No study of alternative scenographic productions would be complete without brief mention of the person who is best known for practicing the concept of environmental theatre: Richard Schechner. Like Artaud, Schechner's American approach to scenography was not particularly innovative amalgamating Western approaches established earlier in the twentieth century. Yet, the significance of Schechner's accomplishment was his outright attempt to turn this approach into a movement; results have been evident in the work of other groups which subsequently adopted an environmental mandate. Following his founding of the Performance Group in 1967, Schechner formulated and codified his ambitions in his publication of the "Six Axioms for Environmental Theatre" in *The Drama Review*:

1) The theatrical event is a set of related transactions.
2) All the space is used for performance, all the space is used for audience.
3) The theatrical event can take place either in a totally transformed space or in "found space."
4) Focus is flexible and variable.
5) All production elements speak their own language.
6) The text need be neither the starting point nor the goal of a production. There may be no text at all. (12, 41-64)

Stressing process, use of whole spaces, and audience participation, he described the transformation of production spaces with scatter stages and the use of closed-circuit television. Schechner made a conscious effort to discard any framing devices, eliminating the symbolic seal of the fourth wall. Audiences were allowed the options of sitting or standing during a performance. Proposing an audience now capable of mobility, Schechner's model constructed the relationship of spectator/audience as another example of stationary audience-moving performance, and moving audience-moving performance, as Aronson has described. In addition to his desire to use transformed spaces, Schechner became actively anti-illusionist in his work, even confrontational. Determined to establish a new aesthetic which would someday occupy the mainstream, Schechner's productions were often political, consistent with the times of the late 1960s in America. His

performances at times bordered on forced participation, rather than merely offering the option of involvement. Like McLuhan, Schechner considered the theatre itself an extension of the environment outside the theatre. Recognizing that environments condition behaviour, Schechner insisted that performance environments condition the audience. But this movement away from the illusion of the play was not practical, in that it bordered on sensationalizing the non-realist approach for purposes having nothing to do with the function of theatre or entertainment. Schechner's intention to forcibly compel physical interaction between audience and performance places his efforts as merely using an environmental approach as a means to his political message. Until he left the Group in 1980, Schechner's publications and productions certainly maintained the presence of the environmental method within the practice of theatre. However, as with Ronconi, the aesthetics of enforced audience participation and the biased themes were neither attuned to the times, nor did they provide enjoyable entertainment.

In the foregoing discussion of technology and obvious manipulation of performance spaces, a trend has appeared: artists could not help but use the mechanical aids of their times in their attempts to mirror life in the theatre, and they did so by manipulating all media involved in production. Given the new dynamics of the present age which proliferate meaning as it refers to signs, life in the West is rarely unmediated by technology. I now suggest that this desire and preference for representation, rather than the observable real, demands media saturation in theatrical productions in order to serve this appetite.

The aftermath of the Second World War also led to numerous cultural and social theories. Most philosophies sought to emancipate art from the universal implications of the school of New Criticism.[2] These sign-based theories stressed new perceptions of art

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[2] Structuralist Ferdinand de Saussure attempted to explain the construction of art as a series of codified signs that fixed meaning. Theorists of Cultural Materialism defined signs as fixed and ordered by dominant ideologies, to the point where meaning became social, collective and finally determined by those who held economic power. Jacques Derrida professed his theory of Difference and Deconstructionism

while at the same time attempting to universalize their signification models. Jean Baudrillard addresses these technological repercussions in his theory of cultural analysis, that hinges on his notion of the simulation.[3] His background as a structuralist and semiotician has led to his postulations in light of the most recent information media that are available to the everyday Western user. Baudrillard's approach goes beyond all previous cultural theory, becoming post-everything: post-modernist, post-structuralist, post-industrialist, post-materialist, even post-realist. Baudrillard's notions surpass theorists such as Michel Foucault and Jean-François Lyotard by way of a complete annihilation of the established sign systems of society. In fact, Baudrillard's world of hyperrealism posits credible opportunities for performance. Given his assessment of the simulation itself, the image, the illusion, and the sign, Baudrillard argues for a new perception of Western, mechanized life in which the media we use are now a pervasive and integrated part of our everyday lives.

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based on a binary system of meaning constructed by what it was *not*. The study of Semiotics reaped plausibility grounded in the opinion of art as a sign system, like Stucturalism. Tadeusz Kowzan made significant inroads towards a semiotically based theatre by classifying the sign-systems at work in a dramatic production. Defining theatre as a sign-system, Kowzan determined that the variable signs at work in a production imply a signifier, which, processed by the audience, leads to a signified meaning. The totality of these signs included all meaning signified by the actor, and those outside of the actor, such as the technical elements. More importantly, Kowzan articulated the connection of the sign to reality by way of a sign's ability to carry meaning, and thus communicate information when put into practice. With the inclusion of elements outside of the actor playing as significant a role as those of the actor, his semiotic approach stressed all signs as media or tools of communication geared toward expressing meaning in production.

[3] Simulations, as the layperson perceives them, are usually only perceived by society in the form of training models or gaming realities. Airplane pilots are subjected in their training to rigorous simulations for take off, maintenance of altitude, landing, as well as emergency procedures — all for the purposes of conditioning the pilot to respond to real situations that may occur at some later time. Video games now employ equally sophisticated simulation modes to achieve a more life-like experience for the user, regardless of any potential practical use, and simply for the purposes of creating an experience for entertainment's sake. Surely a low percentage of "gamers" will create and manipulate actual civilizations, play quarterback in the Superbowl, or race Formula One on the streets of San Francisco. Yet upon actual observation of these activities, however probable or improbable, it may be considered that the apprehension of the experience will always be shaped by the simulation model. The reproduction of experience, due to more and more simulations, grounds itself in a reality that was never conditioned by the users' actual physical environment. Simulation penetrates not only entertainment and training, but also everyday experience.

The current phase of this aptly-named information age characterizes a period in which ways of gaining access to information is accelerating. Aware of his times, Baudrillard acknowledges this trend, and deems that, while there is quantitatively more and more information available, there is qualitatively less and less meaning. Baudrillard therefore sees consumers, in their rush to gather information, becoming indifferent to the origin of meaning, which in turn confuses them further. The theatre practitioner is in the business of constructing meanings into a performance for a consumer. Theatre performances produce substitutes for reality. These substitutes replicate the real world, so already involve an act of simulation. The challenge of representation has been long debated and is based on affirming the validity of representation which defines the real world as *a priori*. Baudrillard goes a large step further, proposing that reality and the simulation are not, as one might assume, mutually exclusive. He throws the definition of reality into question with his rationale that the real is no longer possible. Westerners now know only simulations, because the time-tested adages and strategies of history, power, and even knowledge itself are starting to erase themselves.[4]

Today's postmodern culture perceives reality, then, not even as a copy of an original, but as a representation of representations. For Plato, the real existed, but could not be realized through representation; for Baudrillard, the real cannot be accessed because it no longer exists. Baudrillard therefore eliminates the possibility of representing the real, which makes it difficult to control previous value systems, and to control meaning of the real. Baudrillard's observation of simulation appears to subvert the truth of the

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[4] Concerns over the simulation model as a replication of reality dates back to Aristotelian notions of the simulacra. Plato's *Republic* outlines artists as falsifiers of reality because of mimetic aims that tarnish the true object. Plato's conception of reality was to be rid of representation due to its not accurately representing the original. Ergo, reality was tied to the essence or aura of objects and any attempt to displace or reproduce that connection was damnable. Plato believed that God could guarantee a genuine relationship between the thing itself and its aloof spirit. His version conceives of the simulation as the copy of the ideal copy, which differentiates between the good copy and the false copy that repeats external appearance without grounding in reality. Plato rejected the simulations of his time because of their failure to resemble or return to the founding model. Simulations became merely fictitious or empty representations, since he defined mimesis in terms of distance from a founding identity in reality.

legitimate order through a dismissal of a higher power (God) who, in postmodern culture, no longer occupies central authority. Breaking the fixed hierarchy of signs, Baudrillard deems that signs are now themselves constructed as real, which eradicates the notion that signs can be exchanged for a higher meaning. This is the current phase of hyperrealism, where representations are actually preferred over reality. Simulation is so widespread that it ushers in new cultural, economic, and political orders. Baudrillard's theatricalized world of hyperrealism encourages interplay among signs that no longer only express meaning. *(See Appendix)*

Baudrillard regards our society as no longer capable of distinguishing the real from its simulation because everyday life is so rarely unmediated by technology. As an inescapable part of culture, information networks distribute empty signs that serve to inform us on some level, thus to shape consciousness. Scott Durham in *Phantom Communities*, his book about the postmodern simulacra, confirms concisely this state of affairs:

> In Baudrillard's post-apocalyptic vision of postmodernism, the serial images and virtual realities generated by the media and information technologies of all sorts have become the sole arbiters of the "truth' or "reality" of everyday experience, to the point that the spectator or consumer appears only as the vestigial support for the "simulation model' that he or she seems destined to repeat. (21)

One then begs the question of how truth and reality may be staged in such a media-saturated society? If signs no longer express their intended meaning, how can any sense be made of a play, let alone how can it be enjoyed as entertainment? Baudrillard suggests that, despite the loss of a sign-system, objects still do exist, and have the ability to communicate and exchange value. I have found Baudrillard's theories useful in my own environmental theatre production, which I discuss in Chapter Four.

Chapter Two:
Foundations of Necessary Angel Theatre

As we enter the twenty-first century, the term Environmental Theatre has been vernacular for more than three decades. Despite having its roots in the avant-garde, it appears today less politically charged and confrontational than it once was. The need to reform the audience has become less of a concern for theatre practitioners; audiences are now more accustomed to a blending of techniques, an eclectic range of approaches, and other emerging postmodern techniques. The non-realist productions in contemporary culture imply not only an alternative physical relationship between audience and performance, but also more importantly, a different understanding of that contract. Perhaps because of mainstream theatre's continued emphasis on traditional forms and detachment, audience dissatisfaction with realist productions continues .

I return to the Canadian theatre scene to give examples of efforts by individuals and companies who have adopted experimental methods of creating theatre. Specifically, I focus on the Necessary Angel Theatre, a company created in the late 1970s. I demonstrate that the company's founding and current artistic director, Richard Rose, frequently utilizes environmental performance, though the company is not always bound to that choice. Time and time again, Necessary Angel's productions demonstrate an acute awareness of space and how to maximize its effects. Their lack of a permanent performance venue may actually be to their advantage, because it obliges the company to seek out an appropriate space for each individual production.

During the 1970s, the theatre scene in Canada expanded, as new professional companies formed and began to offer productions differing from those in the large regional theatres. Most of this activity took place in Toronto, the English-speaking cultural hub of central Canada, where the population and funding were such that emerging companies could actually make a living. New federal grants for the arts, in the form of Local

Initiative Programs, resulted in four new Toronto-based companies: Factory Lab Theatre, Tarragon Theatre, Theatre Passe Muraille, and Toronto Free Theatre. Invariably, these companies came to define themselves by creating plays by means of a method called collective creation which was implemented to create new Canadian work. As a performance genre, collective creation seemed to be liberated way of working. As early as 1959, Toronto Workshop Productions, under the artistic direction of founder George Luscombe, proved that group collaboration could result in entertaining performances, such as their successful original runs of *Chicago '70* and *Ten Lost Years*. Toronto Workshop Productions, like Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop troupe in England where Luscombe trained, relied less on text than on creating a spectacle which included mime, large ensemble work, and specialized lighting effects. Luscombe's *oeuvre* remained concerned with his own personal politics, as he focused on adapting non-literary works for the stage, as well as modernizing classical dramatic works. However, the next generation of collective creation at Factory Lab Theatre, Tarragon Theatre, Theatre Passe Muraille and Toronto Factory Theatre were less political with more attention upon telling Canadian stories. These emerging companies, previously under-funded and without venues, received monetary acclaim, artistic successes, and joined the ranks of the established, legitimate theatre companies.

Meanwhile, Canadian educational institutions continued to teach aspects of theatre, including acting, design, and directing. In 1973, Richard Rose, born in Venezuela and raised in Sudbury, Ontario, became a student at York University. Bilingual in Spanish and English, Rose first trained as a theatre lighting designer. Rose acquired design positions in 1975 while in his third year, and there were early indications of his determination to take his craft to a professional level. Following his studies in design and directing, Rose faced a crossroads that would later determine the primary focus of his artistic aspirations. Rose turned down a professional opportunity to design for the Canadian Dance Festival, preferring to seek directorial avenues. After some time off from the York program to

travel in Europe, Rose returned to York in 1976 to finish his fourth-year courses. Canadian theatre practitioners Malcolm Black and Mavor Moore mentored his new passion for directing. While at York, from which he graduated in 1977, Rose had attended the productions by Toronto's Theatre Passe Muraille and Factory Lab Theatre. Perhaps because of seeing these productions, Rose desired that writing for new Canadian plays be of a higher quality.

> We were reacting and rejecting the Passe Murailles, the Factories, a lot of kitchen-sink realism. Probably a quality of writing in the collective creation process of Passe Muraille that wasn't good enough; the nationalism of those theatres, themes of nationalism, not entirely consciously, but partially. Actors Lab was interested in the work of Grotowski, and I was more interested in language. I was primarily interested in language plays and did not see this in Canadian work. The writing never seemed to be good enough to interest me.
>
> (Rose, Personal interview 22 March 2000)

Rather than seek professional opportunities with existing theatres, Rose decided to explore new theatrical territories that included better use of dramatic language.

In 1978, Rose formed a collective with other graduates of York: Lawrence Laphin as a director, Bruce Spect as a designer, and Brian Conrad as a general/stage manager. The name of the company would be the Necessary Angel Theatre, derived from the poetic work "Auroras of Autumn" by Wallace Stevens: "For I am the necessary angel of the earth. For in my eyes you see the world anew." (*The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*) According to Rose, Stevens compares the role of the artist to the role of the necessary angel. At the time, Rose says he read Peter Brook's *The Empty Space* once a year. In this book of published lectures, Brook articulates the need for a "necessary" theatre to emancipate theatre-goers from bland productions. Rose's inclusion of the term "necessary" in his company title indicates the artistic responsibility which he hoped to fulfill. His eventual directorial successes would challenge his audiences and satisfy the expectations of a necessary theatre company.

Like many young theatre troupes with ambitious aspirations, Necessary Angel had little means to produce productions. Despite a limited budget, and their lack of a permanent venue, Necessary Angel's first production in 1978 was *Agamemnon* from the *Oresteia*. This traditional production was staged at the Dream Factory in downtown Toronto, and toured to local high schools. With the company performing in gymnasiums, Rose learned early in his career to value the rewards of manipulating space. Time and time again, the production of *Agamemnon* had to be reconfigured to fit the available performance venue. Public reaction to the première production was not favorable: it received a pummeling from critics and reviewers. Rose remained undaunted and refused to give up so early in the game. His company was in dire economic trouble, no one could make a living, and within six months it disbanded, leaving Rose to pick up the pieces and start over.

Necessary Angel received its second founding in 1979 when playwright John Krizanc and designer Dorian Clark joined Rose. Reinventing the company, Rose hoped it would appear more reputable and legitimate now that it had a writer like Krizanc, whom Rose had met while attending York. This time, the company adopted a mandate to produce new Canadian works, and explore new interpretations of classical pieces, with new approaches, new styles, and new stagings. By 1979, Necessary Angel joined five new troupes to share co-operative resource space at the new Toronto Theatre Centre.

> We were the next generation: Nightwood, AKA [Performance Interfaces], Necessary Angel, Theatre [of the] Autumn Leaf, Buddies in Bad Times, [and Actor's Lab,] we all started the Theatre Centre together, a bonding of companies who needed space. We had an international context; we looked outside the country for inspiration, so I would go to the works of Peter Brook, Luca Ronconi, Robert Wilson, Cynthia Grant, who ran Nightwood Theatre, or Mabou Mines. There was the Toronto theatre scene and, in a way, we ended up in Canadian development, Canadian creation, sometimes collective, sometimes written material. We were looking beyond Canada. We didn't necessarily want to tell Canadian stories. *Tamara* or *Prague* are not Canadian stories, per se. I was interested in classical work and, ironically, not interested in Shakespeare, but in the Greeks.
>
> (Personal interview)

The new co-operative venue of the Toronto Theatre Centre provided a forum for companies with diverse approaches to and agendas for theatre. On some projects, groups shared ideas and worked collectively. Necessary Angel used the Toronto Theatre Centre, and also continued to seek out other spaces. For their adaptation of *Boom* in 1981, Necessary Angel performed in gymnasiums and community halls, in which they constantly had to augment resources for staging.

With Krizanc on board, Necessary Angel also began to work collectively. Ideally, collective creation uses research techniques for script development to create an original play for which the decision-making is co-operative, rather than hierarchical. But this process proved to be complicated; the blurred lines of responsibility often led not to group consensus, but to one person having to make the final decisions. This occurred with Necessary Angel. The company would start with collective playwriting and then through rewrites and rehearsals, the traditional hierarchical patterns of artistic decision-making would re-emerge. As it turned out, Rose would finalize the performance script based on his own research. This pattern became the basis on which he began playwriting.

Less than two years after its second founding, Necessary Angel mounted the first of many international productions of the play for which it is most famous: Krizanc's *Tamara*. Created by this fledgling company, hailed as an epic of environmental theatre, and receiving many national and international awards, the success of *Tamara* surprised many critics. The play is set in fascist Italy in 1927, and revolves around the character Gabriele d'Annunzio, a nationalist poet whose works are exploited, but who fails to object politically to Mussolini's fascism. Directed by Rose and designed by Dorian Clark, the production obliged the audience to assume a physical role within the surrounding transformed spaces. Rose admits that *Tamara* was partially inspired by Ronconi's direction of *XX*, to which I referred in Chapter One, which also concerned itself with themes of fascism and art. Krizanc and Rose had read and studied an article on *XX*, which had been staged in a multi-storey house with the audience moving through it in order to

follow the action. But unlike the directed movement of Ronconi's production, Rose and Krizanc sought to free the audience from a pre-established route to allow them to follow any route they chose.

Tamara was first mounted as part of the 1981 Toronto Theatre Festival at the historical Strachan House in Trinity-Bellwoods Park on May 8. The budget was a mere $25,000. Through an arrangement with the City, Rose agreed to renovate the abandoned girls' school in order to use it for the production. Necessary Angel then began the process of transforming the existing space to simulate an Italian mansion. They repainted, cleaned, refurbished as much as they could afford to, and brought it up to code. The performance took place on two floors, each of which had small rooms off the building's white hallways. As they arrived, audience members were issued "passports" outlining the "Ten Commandments" of conduct necessary for the production. Steve Nelson, a critic for *The Drama Review*, included these "demands" in his article on today's environmental theatre:

The Ten Commandments

1) Read your Passport. Know its contents. Get caught without it and you will be deported.
2) For greater comprehension, previous guests have observed that following only one or two characters yields greater order. But, if variety is the spice of your life, it's OK to follow your impulses.
3) Ten people live in this house. Always follow one of them. If you wander about on your own you break the law. Worse, you will lose the thread of the story you are creating.
4) Be brave. Act on your choices with conviction.
5) Be bold. Go directly to an opposite side of the room. Chances are you will see more.
6) If you are here with friends, split up. Several sources of information are better than one. Interrogate those around you. Compare notes during "Intermezzo" or later over coffee and dessert.
7) Watch the stories or watch the watchers. One way or another, get involved.
8) If you become tired, you will be comforted to know there is always a story on the main floor.
9) For your own safety, do not stand in a doorway. Do not open a closed door. Do not follow someone who deliberately closes a door in your face.
10) Move quickly. Move quietly. Speak only when spoken to.

("Redecorating the Fourth Wall" 33 3, 75)

Freed from any seating arrangement, spectators *chose* the action they wanted to follow around the house. The commandments encouraged physical involvement and allowed the audience to determine the degree of that involvement. As a result, during the performance, scenes played simultaneously in separate rooms, making a viewing of all the scenes by any individual audience member impossible. The production concluded with the serving of a decadent dessert which returned spectators to the festive atmosphere that had begun the production. During this post-production party, cast and audience members could discuss their personalized experience, further obscuring the lines of the reality and fiction. The intention was to create an intimate and voyeuristic relationship between audience and spectator, and have a good time doing it, since they both eagerly navigated the space as in a complex amusement park environment. Creating a space somewhat like a Disney theme park (the ultimate surrounding space), Rose demonstrated a scrupulous concern for the environmental illusion he created. The audience, in close proximity to the actors, were drawn toward a world of simulated violence and sex. Although the fourth wall seemed breakable, the audience remained safe. They were able, by their closeness to the performance, to feel threatened, but not actually endangered; to be involved, but never actually implicated.

Following a successful première run, Necessary Angel's contract with the City of Toronto ran out in the summer, and commercial producer Moses Znaimer, who was interested in interactive theatre, ended up paying the City to extend the production's run. After *Tamara* closed in Toronto, Necessary Angel mounted a second production in Hamilton, Ontario, which ran for a month at the historic Dundurn Castle. Then in 1984, *Tamara* broke into the American market, receiving its first American production at Il Vittoriale degli Italiani in Hollywood, California. Produced by Znaimer, the Los Angeles remount necessitated another renovation of a space for performance. The company overhauled the building, which had been left in a decrepit state, and transformed the architecture to create a setting resembling a villa. The production utilized three floors,

comprising repainted rooms with carpeting and new furnishings, as well as a vast central auditorium with temporary seating on three sides. The play began and ended in the grand foyer at the front of the mansion. A large chandelier was installed above the foyer, mounted into a ceiling painted to suggest clouds and sky, and inhabited by cherubs. The production used incense to an additional sensory experience. Critical reaction from the American press was mainly positive; the production resulted in Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Awards, and a nine-year run. The production eventually closed in 1993, having achieved the status of the longest-running play in Los Angeles.

Half way through the California run, a second American production opened in New York City. In November 1987, the play opened at Il Vittoriale, the Park Avenue Armory in Manhattan, again with Znaimer as executive director and Rose as artistic director. Dinner at intermission was added to complement the production; dessert was again served at the finale. Critic Nelson, mentioned earlier, describes his experience of *Tamara* as enjoyable and something beyond the confines of realism:

> Taken purely as voyeurism, *Tamara* is indeed a great deal of fun. The action, though by necessity somewhat complex, is nicely suited to the follow-it-from-room-to-room approach. The Armory's stuffy Victorian atmosphere and marvelous period fixtures have been used to great effect. One gets the feeling of actually being in a functional villa down to the working kitchen in which d'Annunzio cooks and eats an omelet. One spectator remarked to her companion that *Tamara* was obviously the guest since her bedroom was the only one with air conditioning. In many respects the show is a logical extension of the hyperrealism. (77)

Nelson identifies the voyeurism and hyperrealism of the production to describe Rose's inclusion of media to enable the full immersion of the audience into the reality of the play. Analysis also surfaced in Richard Plant's 1996 essay "Deconstruction of Pleasure", published in *On-stage and Off-stage* from Breakwater Books. Plant correctly hypothesized that Necessary Angel crafted *Tamara* as an experience that forces the audience to deconstruct simultaneously the ways in which the audience was enabled to use all five senses to experience the play. Because of the audience's awareness of how they

themselves were being stimulated, the play maintained its momentum with popular audiences. *Tamara* became so popular that it ran for three years in New York, Mexico City, and Buenos Aires.

Richard Rose and Necessary Angel had hit it big early in the game. During and after the initial productions of *Tamara*, Rose began to gain respect as an environmental theatre director. At the time, this was welcome, but also limiting. In spite of rave reviews, both nationally and internationally, Rose still struggled to get work in Canada. Yet his success clarified to him that he needed to keep taking risks, and to promote himself in other areas of theatre. More and more, when he was considering a play for production, Rose began to view the story as more important than the stagecraft. Also, he was careful to consider a play's stylistic form in reference to design; he would use an environmentally scenographic approach only if it seemed appropriate to the play. During this time, Rose gravitated toward working with certain actors; this tendency became clear in his subsequent productions.

Meanwhile, Rose continued to experiment further with transformed spaces, as well as with permanent theatre venues usually used by more established, mainstream theatre companies. In 1982, while *Tamara* was still running in Toronto, Necessary Angel collaborated with Thom Sokoloski's Theatre of the Autumn Leaf to create the Autumn Angel Repertory Company. The companies planned a three-year relationship of combined efforts, but disbanded in 1984 after only two years. While they collaborated, the companies staged some environmental work in addition to script development workshops. In 1983, the combined companies produced *Censored* under Rose's direction. Adapted from the novel *A Cabal of Hypocrites* by Mikhail Bulgakov, the play was performed in the transformed environment of St. Paul's Church in Toronto. Rose recalls that he:

> originally wanted to do it in a theatre, take the audience backstage of the theatre, open the curtain, and that would be the French court, the church was in the audience. I wanted to put the audience in the artist's perspective, and then see the

> world [with that] outlook on the world. And then in the second half, inverse that, so that they sat in the audience and watched the rest performed.
>
> (Personal interview)

Clearly interested in the audience/spectator relationship, Rose transformed a place of religious ritual into an environment in which the audience's relationship to the performed event depended on a spectator's physical viewpoint. Another notable production of the collaboration with Sokoloski was *Prague*, another award-winning play written by Krizanc. By means of rehearsals using both written script as well as improvised scenes, the script was created, and received a workshop production in 1983. Directed by Rose and designed by Clark, *Prague* received a full production at Bill Glassco's Tarragon Theatre in 1984. Finally, the play was remounted two years later at the Centaur Theatre in Montreal.

By 1985, Necessary Angel's collaborative partnership with Theatre of the Autumn Leaf had been dissolved. However, Necessary Angel continued to seek out venues and collaborations, which resulted in a production of a play titled *Desire* at Toronto Free Theatre. The play was the product of collective creation techniques, and as it turned out, was one of the last collective projects on which Rose would work. Having had enough of this non-traditional method of play development, Rose had developed a desire to deal more exclusively with written work. It was at this point that Rose began working with Don Kugler on adaptations of established works.

Like Rose, Kugler was born outside of Canada, but has spent most of his professional life working in Canadian theatre. Hailing from Nebraska, where he received his Bachelor of Arts degree, Kugler studied English for his Master of Arts degree at the University of Saskatchewan, which he received in 1972. He started his doctoral studies in English, and finished his course work, but not his dissertation. Receiving a Canada Council grant, Kugler headed to the Maritimes where he sought some solitude in Nova Scotia to write. Eventually, receiving no follow-up grant, he took work at a fish plant, as an assistant editor of a local weekly newspaper, and as managing editor of a small fishing magazine. The nearby town of Liverpool had a community musical theatre group with

whom he began directing. Determined to develop further his directing abilities, Kugler applied for and was accepted into the Master of Fine Arts program at York University in 1982, and he moved to Toronto. There he met Rose, now an advisor to the York program, and upon graduating in 1984, Kugler founded a company called ACT IV with Eugene Stickland and Larry Lewis. Kugler says that he had always admired Necessary Angel's plays, which had established the reputation of tackling complex ideas. In 1986, Kugler was invited to be a script reader for Necessary Angel, which initiated a partnership that would last some eight years.

With Kugler on board, Necessary Angel began to focus on previously written plays, as well as adaptations of literary works. At the same time that Kugler was exercising his dramaturgical skills with Necessary Angel, he was also working as production manager at Toronto Free Theatre. Kugler's responsibilities at Necessary Angel were broadening to include collaboration and dramaturgical input. Meanwhile, Rose began proposing projects. Their first production was Howard Barker's *Castle*, staged in 1987, which would serve as Rose's break into mainstream theatre. The production was directed by Rose, and dramaturged by Kugler. As Rose tells it, 1987 was the

> year I finally got recognized as a director. I had the longest running hit in L.A. but I could not get hired in Canada, because I had done this big hit *Tamara*. So I did *Castle* in a proscenium theatre. Clark Rogers said it was amazing because in the audience we saw people from Passe Muraille, from Stratford, the "net" was invited, [and] the "net" was there. And it turned the audience's eyes on language plays, so it was a big breakthrough, and that's when I started getting hired by the theatres. So I had high status, but I also had a high degree of resentment. I mean I did *Mein*, and it was a very successful play in '84, but I still couldn't get hired a lot at other theatres, and when you're doing two plays a year, you can't make a living doing dramaturgical work. There was a lot of professional jealousy. And when I did *Castle*, I think they went, 'Boy, he can do a play in a theatre,' and that's when I got other work. (Personal interview)

Having established that he possessed the skills to direct more traditional theatre, Rose's opportunities with other companies, including the Stratford Festival, proliferated. Rose's

directorial expertise in *Castle* would lay the foundation for audience expectations of later Necessary Angel productions.

By 1988, it had been ten years since the founding of Necessary Angel. Their production record makes clear that they were making a conscious effort to seek out new ways of advancing their professional artistic growth. Richard Rose's artistic expertise sharpened during this decade as the result of his ability to push beyond the traditional approaches taken by established companies. From his first projects, touring from found space to found space, to his blockbuster *Tamara*, Rose demonstrated and confirmed his ability to manipulate space for the purposes of creating a total experience for the audience. His versatile scenographic approach to production demonstrated his disposition to view any space as having its own inherent environmental qualities ripe for transformation. His eagerness to attempt new processes such as collective creation, and to learn from those explorations, confirmed his openness to a variety of approaches. Rose's credits show an impulse to liberate his audience. His search for intimacy and truth in production point to his desire to construct spectators as voyeurs who are allowed the option of interacting, rather than merely being confronted, or taken for granted as passive recipients of the performance. Having been positively reinforced by his successful experiences of producing plays in different appropriate spaces, Rose next undertook another major production, *Newhouse*, and in so doing, provided another overabundance of stimuli for his audience.

Chapter Three:
Conception and Production of *Newhouse*

With no permanent venue, Necessary Angel had become accustomed to staging productions on a limited budget. Having no fixed space meant using found spaces, whether in an actual theatre or abandoned buildings. It also meant no subscription base, and thus no assurance of filling enough seats to balance costs. Therefore, Rose's company survived much like a commercial theatre company that uses spaces as it finds them, relying solely on the current production to subsidize the next one. For Necessary Angel, this system resulted in having no permanent audience base. As it happened, this permitted the company certain artistic freedom to create new identities for each production. This ability attracted both new and previous audience members. However, with these freedoms also came financial challenges. The economic realities of guaranteeing subsequent productions became the biggest obstacle. Rose has asserted that his shows may not be big money makers; he is more interested in extending artistic boundaries than in balancing a budget. This philosophy was put to the test in the late 1980s, as Necessary Angel embarked on a plan to produce increasingly complex shows against the background of a constant and real threat of an economic bust. Grim financial realities almost suspended production of *Newhouse*, but because of Rose's determination, the play would eventually help to ensure the continued existence and reputation of the company.

In 1984, *Tamara* received its American première in Los Angeles. As director, Rose spent time traveling back and forth from California to Toronto to oversee the production and visit family. A year later, Rose had the opportunity to work at the California Institute for the Arts where *Newhouse* would be conceived. 1986 was characterized by increased publicity of a global plague which shortly became identified as AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). By 1986, American statistics claimed that twenty-five thousand Americans had been affected, occasioning media efforts to

publicize the enormity of the epidemic. Rose recalls the paranoia that emerged in the media, noticing that the

> *Village Voice* had huge articles on AIDS [stating] how many people were dying. It was as though sexuality had been impounded. Sensuality and any kind of outward expression of sexuality were put on reserve. People by that point were closed, held in. (Personal interview)

These events, and the media response to them, led Rose to seize the timely opportunity to create a play about this hysteria. The tale of Don Juan would serve as the basis of the play, which would depict a Casanova ("Newhouse") figure caught in the midst of a sexual plague within a sexually repressive society.

Rose began to work with students at Cal Arts on this pilot project. Rose had his young actors improvise using two *Don Juan* scripts playwritten by Molière and Odon von Horvath. Establishing a contemporary context, they eventually assembled the production script based on their selected, improvised variations of both scripts. This somewhat collaborative, adapted piece was set in Los Angeles and first performed at the California Institute. Rose, who was familiar with limited budgets, used electronic media to manufacture a reality that was inexpensive to build physically. To simulate a society assaulted by a media circus, Rose used screens as backdrops for the production, on which he projected the setting for action, text, and replications of events as they were performed live. His combination of live and taped video contributed to media-dependent performance: for example, the crew videotaped Newhouse riding his motorcycle down the Los Angeles freeway; this footage was then played during the performance to shift space and time.

Following his workshop production in Los Angeles, Rose returned to Toronto, and brought with him an enthusiasm about the show, and a desire to develop it further. Kugler was now contributing to the company dramaturgically and saw Rose's excitement about the possibilities of workshopping the play with Necessary Angel. In 1987 they did just that. For this first version of the play as performed by his own company, Rose proposed

experimenting further with the use of space by using different locales in Toronto as the performance environment. Rose proposed placing his audience members on a chartered bus and equipping each of them with radio receivers. Like the performance itself, the audience would be in motion. The actors would wear microphones and broadcast on an FM frequency to each audience member's headset. The audience would listen to the broadcast as the bus drove through parts of Toronto, such as Queen Street West downtown, to eventually arrive at Cherry Beach, which would have been transformed into an internment camp for plague victims. Unfortunately, this sort of production became too expensive to implement.[5] The costs of various elements, such as the radio system, made Rose's desire to use the city as a surrounding environment impossible.

Determined to give his play a workshop in Toronto, Rose entertained the idea of adding a politically identifiable figure as a character to the play. Rose observed that no one holding actual high office in the real world had been publicly implicated or compromised by the AIDS epidemic. While in Los Angeles, Rose had noted a wide range of political reactions to the disease, ranging from those who advocated preventive measures, to those who desired to quarantine victims. These political implications prompted Rose to create another primary character: with the play now set in Canada, Rose created the Prime Minister as a character, and based him on the mythical King Oedipus. In this working version of the play, the Oedipus/PM character would serve as political backdrop to those events centring on the personal life of Don Juan/Newhouse. The Oedipus/PM character would appear on taped video shown on television monitors that Rose would place among the live Newhouse scenes. This workshop received production in 1987, the same year that *Castle* established Rose as a legitimate director. *Newhouse* was performed in a warehouse in East-end Toronto "as a minor simulation of what the

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[5] Interestingly, this ambition was realized ten years later in 1999 by Andrew Houston in his production of *Nights in This City: A Coach Trip to Another World* by Tim Etchells. This production is documented in *CTR* 103. His production placed his audience, equipped with headphones, riding in a bus around Toronto, Ontario. Houston desired to decentralize the landscape and emphasize the limits of representation.

play could be in performance" (Personal Interview). Following this workshop, Kugler and Rose still felt some dissatisfaction with the script. In their revisions, the public presence of the PM became increasingly more interesting when placed in stark contrast to the private demeanour of Newhouse. Kugler and Rose planned more rewrites and arranged to give the play a full production the following season, in 1988-89.

Up to this point, Necessary Angel had been staging approximately two shows per year, not including Rose's outside-the-company projects. Their 1988-89 season was budgeted to include a full production of *Newhouse*, and debut a play by budding playwright Michael Springate called *Dog and Crow*. That season, Springate's show was produced first. Rose recalls that the production:

> almost closed the company. *Dog and Crow*'s a very fascinating play, about Mussolini, communist peasants, and Ezra Pound, like a tryptic. A very rich play and I think we had a very good production. But the play was not well received; it was considered too analytical, or too intellectual. So the reviews weren't great for it, it was a very dispassionate piece in a way, and nobody came until the last week and started to appreciate it. But at that point we didn't have enough money at the box office, so we hit such a shortfall that the general manager was let go [and I went] off salary. We still had money in the bank, but we were supposed to do a second production, so I deferred *Newhouse*. We took about 40,000 bucks and deferred it into the following year. And it wouldn't have been enough to do the show, but we went through a fundraising campaign, trying to rebuild the company, pay the box debt on *Dog and Crow*, and rebuilt it back up. Took everyone off salary so there was no money going out, none being spent. We hired, in the new fiscal year, a new general manager, and then Kugler came on that year, the next round of grants, built ourselves back up and then did three shows. It busted us but good, *Dog and Crow*. I mean, that's what happens, the projected box office was projected higher than we could achieve. We just closed everything up, and said, 'okay, new fiscal year we'll start again.' I kept the company going, on a volunteer basis. And it was a great change. That's when Kugler came [back] on, a new general manager, and we rebuilt the company. (Personal interview)

As an artistic director used to dealing with logistical, spatial, and monetary problems, Rose persevered through this troubling time and took appropriate measures to ensure the continued existence of the company. Although this was supposed to be time off, Rose nonetheless undertook necessary rewrites of *Newhouse*.

The next season, Rose's prior experience and familiarity with collective approaches would serve his purposes of adapting more existing texts. He improvised further with an additional *Don Juan* script, Tirso de Molina's *The Playboy of Seville*. Rose observed that this version complemented the versions by Molière and von Horvath. Rose also rehearsed with Seneca's *Oedipus Rex* to further explore themes present in Sophocles' script. Kugler recalls that he and Rose went through the different versions of *Don Juan* and *Oedipus Rex*, scene by scene, with rough drafts. Bringing to bear his education in language studies, Kugler began to notice how well the plays echoed each other. Rose passed rehearsal drafts to Kugler who then retyped them into the computer, giving the script shape and texture. The new draft was then used in subsequent rehearsals, passed back to Kugler with a discussion of the text, retyped by Kugler — while Rose was also doing rewrites and he and Kugler were having ongoing dialogues about structure.

From a retrospective and theoretical viewpoint, Rose and Kugler's decision to implement a second, well-known classical dramatic text now appears to have been a wise choice. Baudrillard recognizes that nostalgia plays a powerful role in the communication of ideas. Baudrillard contends that after the loss of reality and referents, all that remains is nostalgia: a memory of what used to be real. "When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning" (12). For Baudrillard, nostalgia evokes a "hyper-semblence" of historical events. This trend is apparent in the recent popularity of history-television programs that dramatize historical events. These shows are popular because we naturally gravitate to the television set, which also happens to be, statistically, our leading source of information. The content of these nostalgic documentaries renders history lucidly in the entertainment realm where supposedly factual events are routinely embellished or otherwise adjusted for the sake of ratings. Necessary Angel aptly acknowledged their use of these plays by terming *Newhouse* an adaptation. In a performance context, the recollection of these works by the audience would shape and influence their experience of *Newhouse* by means of the literary parallels and

intertextuality. The resulting adaptation juxtaposes a well-known, tragically-driven man who enthusiastically pursues and digs out the truth with another well-known, brutally honest man who rejects and buries the truth. The melding of these works blurs the memory of the originals sufficiently to make the resulting adaptation a credible work on its own. Paradoxically, the play relies on the audience's memory of each source to highlight the contradiction between their traditional genres, tragedy and comedy respectively. The Prime Minister's heavy public scenes alternate with Newhouse's light private encounters; the contrasting moods synthesize opposites in a performance where meaning shifts as frequently as the focus. The strength of nostalgia in *Newhouse*, then, results from the outright manipulation of dominant narratives and the contradictions they present as they collide in performance.

Nostalgia also exists as a powerful force when considering the efficiency of a plague in decimating a society. Plagues perhaps have the most power when combined with ignorance. History offers many examples of epidemic diseases that annihilated entire communities and countries. The best-known epidemic, the Bubonic plague, destroyed entire populations throughout the early Renaissance. Plague still occurs in Africa, South America, Asia, and even Australia, but rarely in North America. Until AIDS, that is. *Newhouse* takes place during a sexual plague that makes no distinctions based on age, gender, political or religious bias, or international borders. Here, nostalgia is required to make the play work to its full potential because contemporary audiences are aware that where plagues are concerned, infection equals death.

As the *Oedipus Rex* portion of *Newhouse* took on more prominence, Kugler and Rose continued to note the ongoing paranoia about AIDS in the real-life media. With headlines and columns dedicated to debunking the truth behind AIDS — how it was transmitted, who was at risk — Rose and Kugler attempted to keep up with all the breaking news so that the fictional world of the play would be an accurate representation of current events. In the end, Rose and Kugler decided that they were not as interested in

the accuracy of particular facts, as much they wished to engage the social repercussions of a plague-induced hysteria. Alan Filewod's article in *CTR*, "The Words are Too Important', refers to their final decision not to identify the plague as AIDS:

> CTR: Why is AIDS never mentioned as such? It seems to work as a metaphor, an intensified version of the disease we know?
> Rose: We didn't want to get bogged down with the realistic details of the disease. This could happen/ this couldn't happen. We're not really interested in the specific details or the transmission of that disease or the nature of the disease as it's known now or next week.
> Kugler: The details are changing all the time. All we know about it is that we don't know about it, and because we don't know about it, that's ignorance, and because we have ignorance we have fear, and that's essentially what we wanted to deal with. (38)

When I asked him ten years later, Kugler fleshed out further details about the issue of social commentary, and the rewrites:

> For a while, we tried to keep up with it. In early drafts we tried to stay ahead, but we couldn't. We'd write something fantastical one day, and then two days later we would read it in the newspaper. And ultimately that became not what we were interested in. What we were interested in was the particular kind of turmoil in society, and how it calls into question our ethics and ethical questions raised by a society confronted by an epidemic, a plague. What does that do to us? How do you deal with this? And also, with two different scripts, and two different levels: one, how do you deal with it on a political, social level, and [two,] how do you deal with it on a personal level? How do you let it affect your sense of social responsibility? (Kugler, Personal interview 20 March 2000)

In their rewrites, Rose and Kugler even went so far as to begin to adapt the entire *Oedipus* trilogy. With *Newhouse* as part one, a renamed character, Newman, would emerge in an adaptation of *Oedipus at Colonus* and continue to wreak sexual havoc as society sank deeper into disease. These sequels were never developed, yet they serve to illustrate the depths to which Necessary Angel was willing to probe into the dramatic possibilities of this important social issue.

Kugler and Rose had adapted two cornerstone dramatic texts of Western culture, and set them against the landscape of paranoia spawned by the proliferation of a sexual plague. With the scenes arranged in an alternating fashion between those relating to Don

Juan/Newhouse and those relating to Oedipus/Prime Minister, the play proceeds from the views about sexuality, to how sexuality affects their lives on the private level, and on the public stage. This social drama expresses four debates on the federal/international responsibility of government to deal with a plague: first, the Liberal Prime Minister promoting volunteer testing and personal responsibility; second, his rival, Conservative Opposition leader Mr. Crane advocating the American remedy of imposing quarantine; third, the far-right religious Evangelist preaching morality, mortality, and repentance; and fourth, the forthright seducer Newhouse exploiting his diplomatic immunity while promoting sexual liberation. The play dramatizes a federal election that is necessitated to help remedy the divisions within the nation. The Prime Minister's unrelenting desire to know the truth about his own health is counter-weighted by Newhouse's outright denial of his condition. Eventually, it is confirmed that both Newhouse and the Prime Minister are carriers of the plague, and consequently, both lose their positions of power, and suffer exile and obscurity in the wake of their electoral defeat by the right-wing opposition. Like Oedipus, the Prime Minister has by the end of the play mutilated himself and destroyed his chances for office; like Don Juan, Newhouse has alienated himself in search of mere sexual gratification. The play consciously avoids a single moral message, allowing the audience to consider the various points of view.

By the time the 1988-89 season arrived, the latest version of Necessary Angel, despite having canceled half of the previous season, were primed to tackle three major projects: Barker's *The Possibilities*; an adaptation of Michael Ondaatje's novel, *Coming Through Slaughter*; and at long last, a full production of *Newhouse*. As had become his custom, Rose searched for a venue appropriate to the play, and one in which he could maximize his scenographic style of presentation. After some weeks of looking for a large enough arena that was available, Rose found a likely venue, the William H. Bolton Arena in Toronto. Rose secured the venue for a three-week period – one week for tech, and two weeks for performance – in the gap between the ice hockey and ball hockey seasons. The

production opened on April 19, 1989, and was performed only thirteen times, because this was all the company could afford. With no co-producer on board, and only a slim surplus remaining from the previous year, as well as a large Equity cast and crew, *Newhouse* had little chance of turning a profit. The fact that maximum audience capacity was one hundred sixty per night did not help. The $150,000 required to mount the production required financial contributions from other agencies: the Laidlaw Foundation, the George Cedric Metcalf Foundation, and Labatt's Ontario Breweries. Rose also had volunteer help. Earlier that year, Rose had directed *Spring Awakening* at York University, and had become acquainted with the theatre students there. He required more actors to bulk up the chorus, so the York students joined the run on a volunteer basis to fill the roles of the paparazzi and protesters, and to provide technical assistance.

Necessary Angel staged *Newhouse* environmentally, with the centre line of the single audience and performance space located at centre ice. The audience was placed within the area, with scattered stages distributed around and among them. Scaffolding was brought into the arena, and was erected behind and alongside the platforms; the scaffolding served to support curtains and backdrops, to provide elevation for technicians manipulating lighting instruments, and to house stacks of television monitors that would broadcast in closed circuit the live events as they unfolded in performance. (To visually illustrate the environmental design, please refer to *CTR* 61, Winter 1989.) Toronto's *Now* magazine published a *Newhouse* article that articulated Kugler's intentions:

> You really want to pull out of a proscenium context because it gives you a framed, two-dimensional reality in a way. If you open the form out and get the audience inside the story structurally, they can see that that story spills into their lives – that it affects them and they have an effect on it. (Kaplan)

Rose, with environmental designer Graeme S. Thomson, based the design on the idea of the body politic in the political arena. In Filewod's *Newhouse* article, Rose stated his

desire:

> to get a sense of the audience in the middle; the set was originally to be modeled on the human body, the government being the head. Money intervened. One of my desires was to have the floor sloping, sculpted in such a way as to have rises and curves like a body. The middle dais was meant to be the heart, where the critical action takes place. But unfortunately we couldn't do that. We meant to use the body as a kind of cage, all those actions taking place inside the body.
>
> (Filewod "The Words are Too Important" 39)

Originally, then, the side platform stages were to be the lungs, and the spectators the veins and arteries that run throughout the entire body. Rose regrets that this design was never fully realized due to financial limitations.

By this point, it was clear that Rose had been fine-tuning his total approach to production. His past productions suggest that he enjoys the challenge of working environmentally and bringing a voyeuristic intimacy to his productions. He adamantly believes that space and time are the foundations of action, while the relationship between them is metaphorical. When questioned about why he uses non-frontal scenography in performance, and the effects he is trying to achieve, Rose responded:

> I think what [a total approach] gave to me was synthesis. Trying to make everything work, all the elements of the theatre, character, time, space, set, environment, every possible variable, to try to take everything and move it towards synthesis. You're synthesizing all these elements all together to create this one experience. I think the one thing about environmental theatre is that it tends to surround the audience. [Yet] in environmental theatre, they are actually more alienated because they are in the middle of it, so they withdraw to save themselves from becoming involved. But at the same time, their body is physically involved. Your body might be involved, but your brain is working on another level. And that to me is a total human experience. So you might be doing one thing, but might be thinking another thing – subjecting your brain, subjecting your body. You might be watching a car accident, being revolted by your stomach, but being fascinated by your brain. We have the ability to have contradictory multiple level experiences on anything.
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> So I'm not just sitting in a chair and watching in the normal proscenium arch, passively. So it becomes, I think, for the actor onstage, they have to create the multiplicity. That's why Shakespeare is so delightful onstage because you go, 'I'm watching a scene, I'm feeling for these people,' and suddenly this person turns to

> me and talks to me. It goes: thought and emotion, at the same time. They are storytelling at the same time they are representing the scene. In environmental theatre, there's a kind of parallel thing of being in the middle of it, your body's going, 'I'm turning, I'm twisting, I'm surprised, I'm experiencing right? My body's in an experience.' And my brain's going, 'I don't want to get involved, I don't want to think about this, I withdraw. I withdraw from the experience, because I'm trying to make sense of it.' And yet my body's experience is chaos. And the brain goes into overdrive to make sense of it. As they would in an accident. It's like [how] people will save themselves in an accident. They have their bodies bashed around and they save themselves. Their brain goes 'No, you're going to get out of this situation,' despite [the fact that] they don't know their arm is chopped off at the elbow.
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> And that's what I find most interesting about environmental theatre. The actor's got to know, when they get that close to an audience member, that they are making the audience member go from the emotion of watching, not involved – and then involved. *If I'm only watching, I'm feeling; but as soon as I'm involved, I'm thinking.* So that's the complexity of thinking and feeling experience of the theatre, only it happens spatially. The actor can make the audience think anytime they want by walking up into their face. They'll stop feeling and they'll think as a defense against their feelings that have been assaulted. And then can withdraw and go create a certain kind of spatial distance. (Personal interview, ***emphasis mine***)

In this quotation, Rose articulates his anticipation and construction of the audience/performer relationship as it occurs in an environmental staging. He desires to make the experience so intimately disorienting that spectators reassess their relationship to the performance altogether. This complexity is necessarily spatial, because the intimacy of this scenographic style constructs the audience as necessarily present and conscious. Rose makes mention of the audience being "assaulted" when placed in close proximity to performers. In an environmental production like this, spectators do not only passively *feel* the implications of the performance; they must actively *think* about their vulnerability. This forcing of thought activates a defense mechanism to handle the situation. The technical media used may also assault the audience, and force them to reassess their role within the performance. The environmental medium creates a shared space; the intimacy created promotes a shared experience. Together with video designer Chris Clifford, Rose made use of media he could afford, including live broadcast on several dozen television monitors distributed throughout the playing area. Surrounded by these electronic

instruments, the audience was assaulted on all sides by the intentional overload of information. The play was staged at a swift pace, and deftly orchestrated to allow for rapid changes of focus, as scenes transpired at one platform, then on another on the other side of the rink. In retrospect, it is not surprising that Rose's multi-focus intentions embody the early influence upon him of Peter Brook's concept of illusion:

> In all communication, illusions materialize and disappear. It is sufficient for an actor to speak a powerful text for the spectator to be caught up in the illusion, of course, he will still know that he is at every instant in a theatre. The aim is not how to avoid illusion: everything is illusion, only some things seem more illusory than others. It is the heavy handed illusion that does not begin to convince us. On the other hand, the illusion that is composed by the flash of quick and changing impressions keeps the dart of the imagination at play. This illusion is like the single dot in the moving television picture: it only lasts for the instant its function demands. (*The Empty Space* 88)

Rose's flashes of illusion put into practice Brook's knowledge of contemporary thought processes. Prolonged audience contemplation of the repercussions of any one scene was avoided by requiring the audience to move physically to the next centre of attention. In addition, his bombarding the audience with an overabundance of media was intended to recreate the plethora of contradictory information in modern, everyday life. So saturated, the production edged toward a hyperreality in which the performance illusion is quickly created and then imploded to make way for the process to repeat itself. Understanding that theatre audiences may have a short attention span, Rose constructed a stimulating production environment that did not allow for withdrawal or passivity.

Rose's and Brook's position concerning illusion becomes even more astute when examining Baudrillard's commentary on the subject. In addition to problematizing the concept of illusion, Baudrillard goes so far as to claim an impossibility of illusion, because the real referents are no longer possible to determine – signs no longer stand for that which they are intended. Instead, illusion is everywhere, and no longer needs to be constructed.

The same goes for art.

> And so art is everywhere, since artifice is at the very heart of reality. And so art is dead, not only because its critical transcendence is gone, but because reality itself, entirely impregnated by an aesthetic which is inseparable from its own structure, has been confused with its own image. Reality no longer has the time to take on the appearance of reality. (*Simulations* 152)

Clearly, Baudrillard is challenging the notion that life is separate from art, and determines that they are not mutually exclusive. Simulated, mediated culture is losing the ability to distinguish the real from the unreal. Just consider digitally enhanced movies of spectacle such as Hollywood's *Titanic* and *Independence Day*. Even under careful scrutiny, it is difficult to determine where the movie camera has left off, and where the computer animations have taken over – trick photography techniques challenge the limits of human capabilities, and confuse perceptions of time and space. In any entertainment medium, the current chaotic, free play of signs disallows an illusionist performance because direct meaning between signifier and reality is now impossible to establish. To assume that any given audience has had the same degree of exposure to the effects of media would be an error, just as an expectation of suspending disbelief in the illusion would be patronizing.

Audience and critical response to the final version of *Newhouse* is perhaps one of the most complex areas of discussion, because the sources are often very subjective, and sometimes rely on accounts from individuals not familiar with the aims of the creators. Needless to say, some descriptions of the audience reactions must be offered to discuss their experience and responses. Unlike *Dog and Crow*, *Newhouse* can be considered a success. Rose, Canada's environmental practitioner who directed the hit *Tamara*, was once again staging an unconventional performance that piqued the interest of theatre-goers and the public alike. There was a certain hype about the production. This led to good crowds, and Rose recalls that audiences were at full capacity. People talked about the show, spreading the news via word of mouth. Rose remembers the sensation of coming to

the venue and perceiving the performance experience as a kind of festival. As event-oriented theatre,

> it had a party feel. People became part of a society instantly and BANG! It started to happen. I didn't know it would feel like that. I knew you'd feel in the midst of things, but I didn't know you'd feel like that. I was very surprised at that feeling. And the swirling part was interesting. I had done *Censored*, which was like *It's All True*, [because] things swirled around you. And you didn't know where it was coming from next, which was part of the excitement. I never thought it would feel like that. And you know what though? It's probably not different than going to a rock and roll concert in an arena that I used to go to in Sudbury. Just go to the arena, it's just a common thing in Canada. (Personal interview)

Rose relished watching his bombarded audience heaving and moving to where the action popped up next. The spectators appeared eager to follow and piece together the story as it enveloped them, and developed about them. There existed no demand for audience participation, other than offering the possibility to move physically in order to better observe the scattered scenes. Kugler recalls his observations and opinions of the audience involvement:

> People who said, I'm not going to run around and follow the action and just came in and plunked themselves down on one platform and didn't move the entire show, they hated the show. They chose their response. And I mean if [that's] how they enter the show, then you have to be okay with them choosing not to enter in a particular way. But on the other hand, it's hard to imagine enjoying the show if you don't move with it. You kind of predispose not to enter the show. It's asking something of you, and either you want to give that, and you are excited about giving that, or you're not excited. I'm not very interested in forcing the audience to do anything [but] allow them the option of involvement. You always tread this line, inviting them to participate. So every time you ask for audience involvement, rarely are you asking for unfettered involvement. Usually, even though you say you are erasing the line, the line exists. You don't want someone to walk onstage and punch out an actor. (Personal interview)

Besides offering the option of limited involvement to their audiences, Kugler and Rose also observed the effects that the presence of television monitors had on them. It appeared that audience members were drawn to involve themselves with the representation of the real events by way of their fixation upon the screens. This is testimony to the degree to

which Western peoples have become accustomed to obtaining supposedly objective facts through the television press:

> Rose: I was surprised by the concentration when we flipped on the video monitors.
> Kugler: You found yourself believing the image more than the event that happens in front of you. You'd look at the event and end up watching the video because it was way more real than the event that you could reach out and touch. That was totally fortuitous. We never anticipated anything like that.
> (Filewod "The Words are Too Important" 39)

These observations confirm the Baudrillardian notion of the copy – the simultaneous broadcast – being more real and true than the actual live event. I believe this behaviour further supports the thesis that the public actually prefers mediated, rather than direct, experience.

Necessary Angel was operating on a commercial basis, and therefore was desperate for good reviews. Kugler recalls that the media had a certain kind of fascination for the show, as well as a whole range of critical responses. The play captured the attention of newspapers such as the *Toronto Star*, and those outside the daily press – for example, an arts feature about Rose and *Newhouse* in *Maclean's* magazine. The theatre scholars and critics at *CTR* also responded, offering their critical accounts and opinions in the same issue in which the play was first published. These reactions were mixed with the negative responses to Rose's and Kugler's use of language and sources. John Bemrose of *Maclean's* suggested that "it seemed like *Dallas* while trying to sound like *Oedipus Rex*", and that "the climactic scenes flounder in rhetorical pomposity. Rose and Kugler do not create the poetic, elevated language that might have made *Newhouse* soar." (Bemrose *Maclean's* "The Plague Years" 63) Michael Sidnell concurs in challenging the use of language, suggesting the play is an "eternal textdom where nothing has ever happened, nothing happens and nothing ever will except the fabrication of new texts out of old tropes." ("Ambivalences of Representation" 44) However, it is clear that Rose and Kugler used language as a means to their ends. They were not trying to produce a piece

poetically comparable to *Oedipus Rex*, but to make the total experience in performance (language/text and environment/image) as provocative and as rich as possible. Kugler responds to these criticisms of his stage language in the play with his own rationale:

> I have never been particularly proud of that text, because I think the text is trapped. We were trying to locate certain parts of the play in the media world and we cribbed that kind of language. But that language is really boring; then, because we wanted to situate part of the play in the world of politics, we cribbed that language and that language is boring. So at the level of language I have never been very happy with the play. I am very happy with the play in terms of its production, because by pinning that one language, which is not very sophisticated, against another language, which is not very sophisticated, and yet a third level of language which was much more poetic, it allowed for an interaction.
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> I remember seeing a production of it at UofA [directed by Carl Hare for their Studio Theatre in 1991]. I just happened to be in town. I went to see it [and was] very surprised he was doing it [as] a proscenium production, and I wrote to him afterwards and said, 'Well Carl, I'm really happy that I got to see it because it confirmed to me that the play will not work in the prosc.' And you know, it was a good production, but what it confirmed for me was that the writing wasn't very good, it exposes that the writing isn't very good. Richard and I aren't writers. You don't listen to the language so much. You hear the idea and you kind of know where you are, but you have to focus on something else because you have to watch over there. You don't have time to just sit there with one particular language, right? I think one of the strengths of [*Newhouse*] was [that] you are grappling with the level of ideas, not the level of language. I think all [a proscenium production] does is expose how bad the writing is. I mean just at the level of language: it's not Shakespeare, it's not rich and evocative writing. It's functional writing, so it does the duty it's asked to do. We were only trying to use the particular writing to locate it, but it depended on a kind of simultaneity. [The audience] not being able to give their full attention to this, because they had to watch something else, or, here's something else right at the same time.
>
> (Personal interview)

The final version of *Newhouse* became significant for several reasons. For Necessary Angel, it meant an opportunity to workshop and nurture a play conceived from infancy to full production. Its postponement from one season to the next in order to escape company bankruptcy demonstrated Rose's foresight to alter radically performance plans when operating on an unstable commercial basis. The period of development of *Newhouse* marked Rose's collaborative period working on adaptations with Kugler:

Newhouse was followed by adaptations of *Coming Through Slaughter* with Michael Ondaatje; *Not Wanted on the Voyage* with Timothy Findley; and *Property* with Marc Diamond. *Newhouse* heralded Rose's return to transforming existing spaces, and while not on the scale of *Tamara*, the scenographic effects staggered the spectators and even the creators themselves. The play also supports one of Rose's artistic maxims that all good art always questions all ideologies. By representing the human experience with all its contradictions, Rose demonstrated a keen understanding of the realities of theatre and life. Indeed, the environmental approach was integral to the development of the script. The appropriate use of technical media created the "illusion of reality," though of a different kind than the total theatres of the past. For the duration of each performance, the total barrage of assaulting signs of information were sufficiently overwhelming to create a hyperreal society of bystanders and eyewitness in the midst of great and troubling events.

Chapter Four:
A Simulation of *Newhouse*

Since the founding of Necessary Angel in 1978, through their production of *Newhouse* in 1989, their productions have been staged first in Toronto, with some being remounted elsewhere provincially, nationally, and internationally. Given the means, ambition and desire to do so, other companies can promote the efforts of progressive companies like Necessary Angel by re-staging their challenging plays in the manner in which they were first produced. This brings me to a discussion of my own attempts to recapture the essence of Necessary Angel's original 1989 production of *Newhouse*.

I should first situate my theatre company within the much larger realm of Canadian cultural scene. Kamloops, British Columbia, operates today as a transportation and commercial hub whose principal industries include crop farming, ranching, petroleum refining, mining, tourism, lumbering, and pulp production. Despite its relatively small population of just under one hundred thousand, Kamloops has a strong record of support for culture. This is demonstrated by popular exhibitions both in theatre venues (plays) and in sports facilities (hockey). Local citizens overwhelmingly support their minor hockey league team, the Kamloops Blazers, as well as their professional theatre company, the Western Canada Theatre. The city is no stranger to the performing arts, with a long history of support throughout the 20th century of musical and dramatic clubs, its Little Theatre association, and later, youth theatre in the early 1970s. In 1975, under the leadership of Tom Kerr, the Western Canada Youtheatre became an Equity company. Subsequent artistic directors Frank Glassen and D. Michael Dobbin passed the theatrical torch to the current director David Ross in 1984. Since 1978, they had staged their productions in the newly-constructed, proscenium-equipped Sagebrush Theatre, and in 1987, they built onto their offices a second space for rehearsal, the Pavilion Theatre.

Growing up in Kamloops, my initial perception of theatre was based upon my experience of this theatre company.

Let me be candid. Kamloops, British Columbia is not Toronto, Ontario. I am no Richard Rose and my theatre company is no Necessary Angel. My budget today is significantly less than theirs was ten years ago. They began to make a living from their productions, while I am still obliged to balance my artistic endeavours with other occupations that help me pay the bills. They are working with a professional payroll; I am coping with my own inexperience and a network of volunteers. In 1993, I studied and performed at the University College of the Cariboo with focuses on Theatre and English. By the time I graduated, I perceived that there was a lack of opportunity locally with theatre that was not the realist-based type of production offered by WCT and other drama groups in town. More importantly, I began to sense that performance could be pushed beyond the types of productions that we observed locally. In 1996, two fellow graduates and I staged our first production: David French's *Of the Fields, Lately*. Although this choice was not a far cry from the artistic style of WCT, our production proved that we had the capacity at least to produce a show independently. We called our company 3 Men of Sin Theatre Productions in reference to a quote borrowed from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

Over the next three years, we sharpened our talents, established a local reputation for producing riskier, more adventurous productions, and broadened our performer base of actors and technicians. We had no space to call our own, and in the tradition of fledgling theatre companies, we performed in many venues throughout the city. We relished the opportunity to host coffeehouse performances, during which spectators were crammed as close to the stage as possible, enabling a certain level of intimacy. We learned to value this close contact, and made use of the small space at the Cottonwood Community Centre for productions of Daniel MacIvor's *See Bob Run*, *Wild Abandon* and David Mamet's *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*. In 1997, I began attending the University of Alberta in the Master

of Arts program in Drama and continued to work with the company in the summer between school years. As usual, venues were a problem, due to limited funds. Undaunted, we began looking for other performance environments. This search was what stimulated my interest in the manipulation of performance space.

My first environmental experiment was in 1998 when I directed Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story* in a park on the grounds of the University College of the Cariboo; a year later, we staged George F. Walker's *Tough!* at the same location. We also began using the unlikely venue of Kamloops' Old Courthouse heritage building for productions of Norm Foster's *Office Hours* and James McLure's *Laundry and Bourbon*. This turn-of-the-century former courtroom had no proscenium arch, and had a high domed ceiling that rose above and surrounded the chamber. We also produced realistic shows at the UCC's Alumni Theatre, such as MacIvor's *The Soldier Dreams* and Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* The company incorporated as a provincial society in May of 1999. At that time, we stated our purpose: "to demonstrate the talents of local artists and technicians through theatrical productions and to expose audiences to a wider range of traditional and alternative forms of theatre." Although this sweeping mandate may seem overly ambitious and naïve, we were attempting to challenge ourselves both in the content of our scripts, and in the flexibility of our theatre styles.

My interest in diverse, media-saturated scenographic approaches began at the University of Alberta. My contact with peers, instructors, and supervisors stimulated my interest in dramatic theory, as well as a search for plays that I thought exemplified the potential for multi-focus and multi-media. When I was made aware of *Newhouse* by Alex Hawkins (who had attended Necessary Angel's production in 1989), I decided to put contemporary theory into practice with a production of this play. Rose admits that he never expected that anyone in Canadian theatre would remount it. The University of Alberta had staged a proscenium production two years after Necessary Angel's initial production, making mine the third production. Rose suggests that the small number of

remounts of the play are perhaps due to it being too outlandish and offensive, but believes the main reason to be financial. In today's economic climate, it is uncommon to employ more than thirty Equity professionals for a single production. Since I had a wealth of volunteer performers available, I had to allow myself to take the opportunity. When I commenced my preliminary background research, and sought out other plays emerging from Necessary Angel, I was somewhat stymied. Aside from *Newhouse* and *Not Wanted on the Voyage,* their original scripts were not available. In explaining why, Rose pointed to Equity rules of production, which disallow videos to be distributed, as well as the performative nature of his productions. For example, for an unpublished Necessary Angel collective like *Mein*, Rose believes the challenge for publication would be to develop some sort of gestural language to accompany the "photo-script." For me, the publication of *Newhouse* in *CTR,* and pertinent feature articles, aided my understanding of this play in reference to the original approach to both interpretation and design.

My interpretation of Baudrillardian theory also influenced my analysis and approach to my production of *Newhouse*. I aimed to determine how signification now functioned during performance. Following my extensive exploration into the texts authored by Baudrillard, I attempted to find strategic applications made possible within a hyperreal culture. This task was not easy, in light of Baudrillard's opinion that it was impossible to isolate and describe the process of simulation. He does not offer concrete methodologies because he believes they do not exist. However, Baudrillard does assert that a "hyper-semblance" to reality is possible through substitution of real signs for the lost real itself. A hyperreal, theatrical environment is possible if it is sufficiently saturated with meaning.

I referred earlier to Artaud, who proposed his amalgamated manifesto to re-inject "realness" into the theatre. His radical point of view was not limited to a fixed language or form. His Theatre of Cruelty sought to bring the public into contact with the truest nature of experience, which Artaud saw as cruel. Artaud claimed that everyday life had become

so unpredictable and intolerable that the only possible theatrical mirror for such a society was one in which the audience continued to feel the painful agitation of life by way of the complicated interplay of signifiers. Baudrillard recognizes the ambitious notions of Artaud, adding the hyperreal condition to the equation:

> It is our Theatre of Cruelty, the only one that remains to us, perhaps equal in every respect to that of Artaud or to that of the Renaissance, and extraordinary in that it brings together the spectacular and the challenge at their highest points. It is at the same time a model of simulation, a micro-model flashing with a minimally real event and a maximal echo chamber — not a real event, but a condensed narrative, a flash, a scenario. (*In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*, 114)

A theatre of cruelty as a model of simulation certainly intrigues me. Baudrillard also emphasizes that theatre need not be so much representational as presentational – theatre's reproduction and synthesis of media amaze by their combined spectacular effects. Baudrillard suggests a performance space in which all media echo each other to produce a fleeting glimpse of meaning. I determined that this sort of production is not totally illusionistic, but instead implies a stimulus-rich space of simulated reality. For Baudrillard, a theatre of simulation contains "no more scene [or] cut-off point, ... end of spectacle as well as of the spectacular, towards the total environment, fused together, tactile, esthesia and no longer aesthetics" (*Simulations* 141). In a quest for a production that does not divide shifts in space and time, and is not merely a spectacle for the senses, Baudrillard encourages a total approach that is not limited to sight and sound, but physically engulfs its audience.

Baudrillard further qualifies the power of simulation: "the profound tactic of simulation...is to provoke an excess of reality, and to make the system collapse under an excess of reality" (*In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities* 120). A hyperreal performance attempts to fill a space with realness to the point that the stimuli are overwhelming. All elements — mechanical, scenic, and even human — that contribute to a production must over-replicate the mediated world outside of the performance space. This is to make the

environment overwhelming as a constructed and concentrated space. In his essay "The Hyperreal Nebula," published in *Canadian Theatre Review*, Robert Nunn furthers this investigation by highlighting the performative nature of media-saturated theatre:

> I would say that postmodern theatre is an act of resistance even when most thoroughly saturated by the mass media. It seems postmodern theatre, by virtue of performance, subverts the implosion of meaning and restores it in the midst of media overload. The polysemic character of theatre permits a deluge of information to be rendered lucid in that it is dispersed among distinctly differentiated codes, and precise spatial and temporal locations. Equally important, by virtue of addressing a group of people, it restores, at least for the duration of the performance, an element of sociality that contradicts the fragmentation towards which we are driven by mass culture. (48)

Nunn believes in the possibility and power of such a performance -- one which unites rather than divides. In an environment so mediated, the audience connects with one another, completing a network that allows information data to circulate so furiously as to require the audience in order to complete the circuitry. Finally, wrestling with ideas and construction of meaning leads the audience to a hyperreal encounter that Baudrillard anticipates as the new era of performative, partially interactive, and amplified sensory theatre:

> Here comes the time of the great Culture of tactile communication, under the sign of the techno-luminous cinematic space of *total spatio-dynamic theatre*. This is a completely imaginary contact-world of sensorial mimetic and tactile mysticism; it is essentially an entire ecology that is grafted on this universe of operational simulation, multi-stimulation and multi-response.
>
> (*Simulations* 139-40, *emphasis mine)*

The media, as extensions and satellites of the audience's consciousness, allow spectators to share the effects of their simulated reality. These effects force spectators to become collectively aware of the presence of these media, and observe how they construct the reality that exists outside of the production.

I was primed with this conceptual disposition and began to focus my energies on the complicated intricacies faced by artistic directors. I soon realized that our production of *Newhouse* would be our most ambitious and costly venture to date, 3 Men of Sin

undertook a fundraising campaign. Our successful municipal arts grant proposal, approved in June 1999, became our main source of financial aid, which we supplemented by selling sponsorships for the production program. I involved the Kamloops commercial and arts press early, in the hope of promoting the public perception of my production as a special event that could only be experienced first-hand. During July, promotional articles in two local arts magazines and two local newspapers raised awareness of the production with such noticeable headlines as "Director forges new direction with paranoid play", "Tearing down the walls", and "*Newhouse* promises to be provocative multi-media show." Through the articles and promotions, I attempted to create a buzz about the production, emphasizing that, although my theatrical approach may not have been new, it was new to Kamloops audiences. We even appeared on the local television mid-day program to promote the production and stimulate viewers to attend by way of building up *Newhouse* as an experience that would make the audience part of the show through a non-realist approach to staging. I hoped that the same information system — i.e. the press — that are challenged by the theme in the play, would, ironically, encourage attendance for the production. Involving the media in this way benefited our eventual box office receipts, and more importantly, was in the spirit of a play that is concerned with the media itself as a proponent of information, and as a partial producer of public hysteria.

I knew in advance that the space I used would be as important as the story told in the play. The richness of the audience's experience depended on my scenographic decisions. Knowing the local spaces from years of using or attending productions in them, I began to look for an affordable empty space. I never considered staging *Newhouse* in a traditional theatre because I desired to use the environmental approach for which the play was originally written. My first idea was to use a recently gutted, former electronics wing of UCC's trade division. The Visual and Performing Arts Department had acquired it for future development of a multi-purpose theatre, and in its current state, it was a large industrial room complete with visible framing-beams and shabby ventilation ducts. I

thought that this truly post-industrial space would suit the nature of the play with its rough-hewn, ragged appeal. My aspirations were dashed when I was informed that the space was not up to safety codes and could not be used for production. At that point, it made sense to book the WCT's second space, the Pavilion Theatre, since it was available and came with the necessary lighting and sound equipment that we would have had to rent anyway.

I was faced with having to create a set design within this black box theatre. Knowing there was nothing inherently environmental about using a flexible space aside from sharing similar architecture, I aimed to implement a non-realist approach akin to the multiple focuses of the 1989 Necessary Angel production. For assistance, I referred to Graeme S. Thomson's design for the original production that was published in *CTR*. Working with his concept of stages scattered around the boundaries of the space, I referenced Natalie Rewa's article, "All News *Newhouse*," to learn where certain scenes had taken place in the Toronto production. As with that production, there would also be no seats for our audience, thus obliging them to pivot and possibly walk within our venue. Fire codes technically restricted the set design; the middle "dais" used in Toronto had to be discarded for our version (Figure 1). We booked the space for a total of two weeks – one for technical construction; and one for production week – providing enough time to construct carefully the appropriate environment. The lighting design proved a challenge in that, while the instruments available would adequately light a traditional approach, they would be inadequate for the six stage areas. We adopted, then, an approach similar to Necessary Angel's overhead spotlights-on-scaffolding by way of fixing them high on the lighting pipes angled high over the heads of the actors. Because light is one of the most efficient techniques for the transformation of space, we chose to use the focus of light to highlight the action as it moved from one specific area to another within the darkness. The video equipment, including cameras and television monitors, were donated by members of the cast and by the corporate retailer, The Brick, in exchange for a later performance of

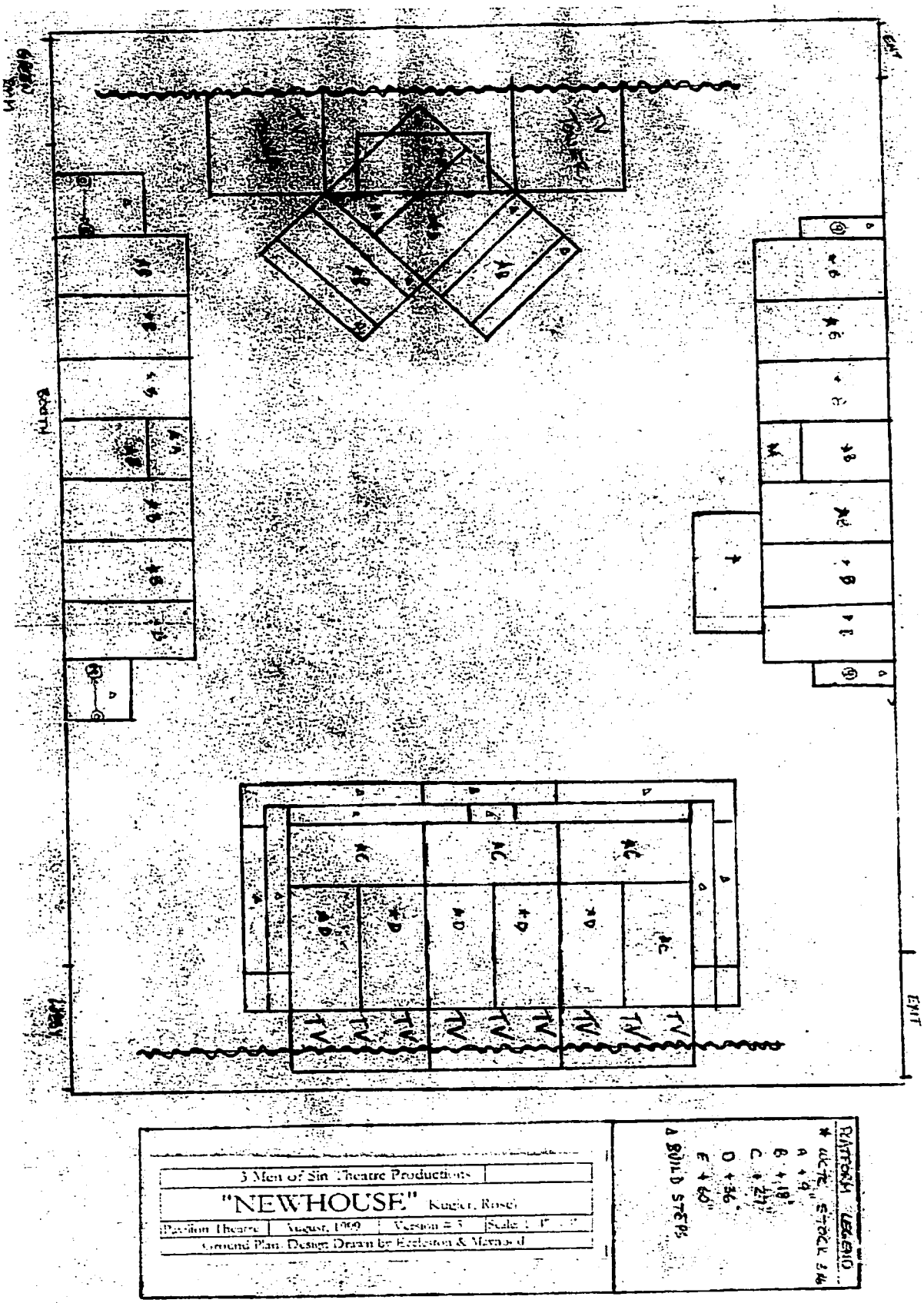

Figure 1: ***Newhouse*** **environmental design for 3 Men of Sin Theatre Productions.**

short comic scenes at a private function. I had originally hoped to rent all of the necessary video production equipment to enable backdrops to be superimposed behind the video action, a technique similar to that used in television weather broadcasts. Because of the high cost of such equipment, my aspiration quickly faded, and I was grateful just to have sufficient video instrumentation for a closed-circuit broadcast on the monitors within the environment.

I continued to seek additional ways by which I could further immerse my audience in a world of information overload. As the house lights dimmed to begin the performance, I broadcast a pre-recorded, 30-second montage of selected footage. Without getting specific as to what exactly was depicted (because of copyright), I desired to contextualize the play within a land of conflict, plague, and turmoil. I chose to implement my prologue not only to familiarize my audience with the troubled circumstances, but more importantly, to acquaint them with the method of presentation that was to follow in the play. Just as the live action would serve to entertain the audience, the television monitors would likewise continue to inform them of events that extended beyond the confines of what was being staged around them.

In order to complement the visual electronic broadcast, I elected to implement print media within the production. Every available elevated platform upon which the actors performed became a canvas for newspaper clippings. Drawing from printed publications, we selectively mounted assorted images, headlines, and commentary onto every possible platform dressing. The plastered mosaic of images and text served to suggest the ceaseless business of news reporting. Furthermore, scene fourteen of *Newhouse* specifies the implementation of tabloid headlines to compound further the plethora of stimuli of separate and simultaneous news conferences. While the politicians spoke separately to paparazzi, I projected eleven separate headlines using slide photography and an oversized projection screen that was suspended from the venue ceiling. In an effort to locate the magnitude of the plague, I drew from a local publication

(*The Kamloops Daily News*); a provincial paper (*The Vancouver Sun*); out-of-province publications (*The Calgary Herald, The Edmonton Journal, The Ottawa Citizen, The Montreal Gazette*); national papers (*National Post, The Globe and Mail*); and an international publication (*The New York Times*). My use of print media added to the play's whirligig of up-to-the-minute news reporting. I chose to use publications from diverse cities because, like Baudrillard, I believe that traditional notions of regionalism and nationalism are erasing themselves. As Western civilization concentrates more on the commodification of products and signs, original meanings become unclear; with the loss of referentials, we lose any chance of genuine patriotism because the illusion of a national identity no longer fools anyone. Perhaps Rose and Kugler avoided giving the Prime Minister a real name because a fictional surname conveys less meaning to an audience than the title-name of Canada's leader, which carries far more signification because of its richer connotations. Likewise, I needed to use diverse newspapers to enable my substitution of signs to replace the illusion that this play could take place only in the country that all of us call Canada.

Rose and Kugler divided the script into two acts to allow for an intermission within the production. At the end of the first act, the audience had already experienced a tremendous amount of stimuli by way of the television monitors. For my intermission, in an effort to draw attention to the fact that the broadcast action was only temporarily suspended, I chose to broadcast the test-pattern, colour bars used by television networks during times of suspended transmission. This static image continued until the end of the intermission, at which point it disappeared, and the second act began with the march of masked evangelists (scene 19).

We commissioned a poster design from local visual artist Alex Walton. I worked with him through concepts, adaptations, and drafts of an application of Leonardo da Vinci's *vitruvian,* or Human Figure in a Circle sketch. To my delight, we arrived at an eye-catching Everyman in a red spotlight (Figure 2). Over the genitalia present in the

original, Walton placed a black bar to represent the de-sexualized society present in the play. This Everyman's anatomy appeared as a symbiosis between man and machine. I intended that this image suggest that the characters in the play have become integrated into the electronic informational world that swirls around them. I also hoped that the image paralleled my theoretical approach regarding commodification of the sign. Nostalgia, again, conjures up memories of da Vinci's original; this once functional map of the body can commonly be found in poster form as popular art. The original, now some four hundred years old, is no longer sufficient to depict the human form, and therefore has become available for sale as a sign of the past. I targeted my version of this Everyman toward potential audience members who are predisposed to attend entertainments whose appeal is as popular art.

I felt myself moving toward a reproduction of Necessary Angel's *Newhouse*, but on a much smaller scale. Like Rose and Kugler's version, the play would establish the speaking of text simultaneously with the displays of images by means of newspaper headlines and live television broadcast. I hoped to pique the audience's interest as soon as they entered the performance environment (despite those who still harboured reservations about the arrangement), and that during the performance the entire audience would become conditioned to their surroundings. By placing the audience at the centre of the space, my spectators would ideally be made to experience the kind of mind/body contradiction that Rose described earlier, where the audience would be obliged actually to think as they tried to process their physical and mental intimacy with the environment. The hyperreality of the performance would provide a voyeuristic experience for the audience. While in such close proximity to the actors and each other, audiences could easily observe the action as they themselves simultaneously became part of the action observed by other spectators. From whatever vantage point they chose, the spectators would get multiple focuses in which they could not help but be caught up. Besides, I wanted my audience to

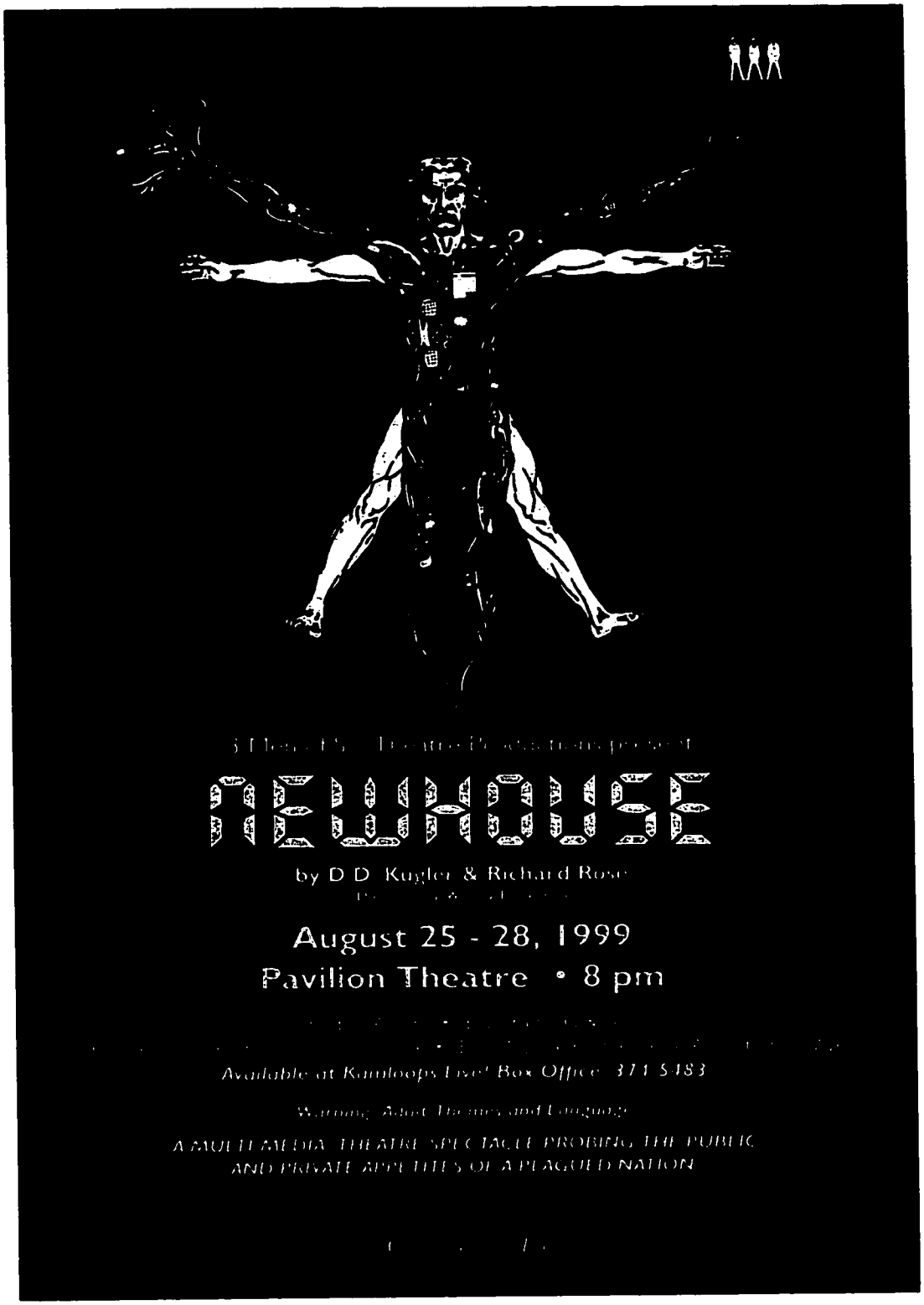

Figure 2: *Newhouse* poster commissioned for 3 Men of Sin Theatre Productions.

enjoy themselves in the environment that encouraged not only a shared physical presence within the performance, but also a collective emotional release.

I recognized the magnitude of hysteria that an epidemic sexual-plague could believably create in fiction by researching and reflecting on my own experience of public reaction to the real-life emergence of the AIDS virus in the late 1980s. Current health reports confirm that this plague is still far from beaten, and that it continues to be detrimental not only to developing nations, but also here in Canada. Certain strains of the virus have actually mutated and no longer respond to the medical "cocktails" that have been prescribed to victims in an effort to slow the infection. Health authorities claim that AIDS is now the most widespread global virus in all history. This subject matter of the play is therefore still topical. By directing this play environmentally, I intended to make the epidemic seem all-encompassing and ever-present. The mediating video that updated the political developments and progression of the plague during the performance would serve to blur the objectivity of the press. I anticipated that this Baudrillardian blurring would not allow the audience to determine easily the effects of the disease in the play. As the spectators were left to speculate as to which characters were plague carriers and which were not, I hoped their suspicions would be complicated by the mixed messages they received at first- and second-hand. I expected that the performance event would appear filtered by the media so that an implosion of reality (a hyperreality) would occur between the live action and the representation of reality in the news being broadcast. Neither source of reality could serve as a reliable origin of fact. Through this interplay of live and recorded action in performance, both the original truth and the representation would be called into question without identifying either as reliable. Both assumedly reliable sources of information would cause the audiences to actually reflect intellectually upon the play's implications, rather than merely feeling them. The audience's physical placement during the performance would necessitate their mental involvement to complete collectively the whirlwind of superficial hyperreality.

My theoretical approach to the play could not avoid dealing with the function of the chorus from *Oedipus*. Extant Greek tragedies from the fifth century BCE utilize the chorus as guides to interpretation and emotion in expressing a human connection between the performance and the audience. With the responsibility that this observation implies, I became concerned primarily with clarifying their function and role in *Newhouse*. The sexual plague reverberates throughout the play through the chorus of paparazzi who announce news that is continually changing. The chorus functioned according to my interpretation of Baudrillard's political sphere.

I have asserted that Western society prefers mediated images rather than first-hand experiences. We favour having real-life groundbreaking events digested by those who make their business at it, then broadcast edited versions via satellites to reach global audiences. This enables everyone to experience monumental events from the comforts of a home equipped with one or more television receivers. Decades ago, McLuhan recognized the power of television to revolutionize every political system in the West. Today, we can easily see that this assertion has come true. It is common knowledge that political demonstrators often do not begin their protests until the press arrives to capture portions of the proceedings for live or taped broadcast.[6] The same goes for political photo opportunities: when our statesmen make major political statements, the press focuses great attention upon them. As early as the 1950s, a change in gathering newsworthy information took place as politicians ceased to speak slowly for scribbling journalists and desired to appear less stilted for the cameras. Their rhetoric spewed faster and more frequently. Canada's unique press scrums, which are formally staged, demonstrate this process of instantaneous news. Although the scrums are clumsily orchestrated, the

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[6] The most recent example of this mentality is speculated to have taken place on September 11, 2001 during the terrorist attack in New York City. Following the unexpected and intentional crash of the first Boeing 767 jet into the first tower of the World Trade Center, it is suggested that those responsible had actually planned for the second jet to crash into the second tower fifteen minutes later in order to enable maximum television coverage as reporters and cameras arrived to film the disaster.

live camera captures both the major statements and the minor foul-ups. But the politicians themselves are not entirely responsible for the results that are portrayed in broadcasts. In *Newhouse*, this is the case with the political characters: the Prime Minister, the opposition leader Mr. Crane, the Minister of External Affairs, and the Evangelist. Baudrillard has much to offer regarding this exchange of messages between paparazzi and political figures. In fact, he suggests that "the official news service only exists to maintain the illusion of actuality of the reality of the stakes, of the objectivity of the facts." (Baudrillard *Simulations* 71) The news, therefore, only reinforces the misconception that what one observes on television is actual and truly objective. I made it clear to my chorus of paparazzi and commentators that they were not there to collect new information, but to test and poll the political persons. I hoped to demonstrate Baudrillard's theory concerning the loss of the real:

> We live by the mode of referendum precisely because there is no longer any referential. Every sign, every message (objects of "functional' use as well as any item of fashion or televised news, poll or electoral consultation) is presented to us as answer/question... Every message is a verdict, just like the one that comes from polling statistics... Every image, every media message and any functional environmental object is a test, in the full rigor of the term, liberating response to mechanisms according to stereotypes and analytic models. It has nothing to do with the object of yesteryear, no more than does media news with a 'reality' of facts. Both objects and information result already from a selection, a montage, from a point-of-view. They have already tested reality and have asked only questions that 'answered back' to them. They have broken down reality into simple elements that they have reassembled into scenarios of regulated oppositions. (116-7, 120)

Armed with stock questions to which they anticipate stock answers, the chorus of paparazzi in *Newhouse* embody this notion of reconstructing responses so that politicians may be portrayed as clear adversaries to one another. Well-practiced at their game of gathering supposedly new information, the press forces its captive politician to answer decidedly slanted questions. Non-compliance with this system, or ignoring a question that

Plate 1: Prime Minister and Opposition Leader Crane respond to the press.

has been asked, is not an option. The personnel

> frame and excise their message bundles, which are in fact bundles of selected questions, samples of their audience... What the media thereby localize and control are not real and autonomous groups, but samples modeled socially and mentally by a barrage of messages. 'Public opinion' is evidently the prettiest of these samples, not an unreal political substance, but one that is hyperreal, a fantastic hyperreality that lives only off montage and test-manipulation... The political sphere loses its specificity when it enters into the game of the media and public opinion polls, the sphere of the integrated circuit of question/answer. The electoral sphere is in any case the first great institution where social exchange is reduced to obtaining an answer. (121-2, 124)

In terms of my own approach, the electoral sphere in *Newhouse* is ultimately simplified to the question of where the Prime Minister stands on the issue of quarantine of plague victims. His American neighbours have introduced this drastic measure to contain the spread of the disease; public opinion in Canada also centres on instituting this extreme measure of isolating the sick.

I made it clear to my actor playing the Prime Minister and ensemble of news reporters that when the press reports the news, the Prime Minister is the one who makes it. Aware of the press's deadly efficiency in catching a dissembling politician, the Prime Minister is forced to become a master of the press. His public position requires him to adopt a corporate image of leading the country as a business. As the play progresses, the Prime Minister inevitably fails at mastering the press; this failure is demonstrated most in regard to his own medical condition which is speculated upon, and eventually made public by the press during the talk show (scene 25). To make matters worse, the Prime Minister's Wife also fails to appease the media, which is decidedly set against her husband (scene 27). She makes the mistake of asking for mercy from the press – which leads to tragic confrontation, suicide, and self-mutilation. The Prime Minister ultimately blunders in his unpopular decision to implement volunteer testing at the same time as corpses continue to pile up, and characters like Newhouse roam free. Baudrillard recognizes the

Plate 2: Prime Minister reacts bitterly to the press following his self-mutilation.

dangerous and continuously weaving path that politicians follow under the probing eye of the camera:

> It is no longer necessary that anyone *produce* an opinion, all that is needed is that all *reproduce* public opinion, in the sense that all opinions get caught up in this kind of general equivalent... Public opinion is *par excellence* at the same time medium and message. And the polls that inform it are the incessant imposition of the medium as message. In this sense they are of the same nature as TV and the electronic media, which we have seen are also only a perpetual game of question/answer, an instrument of perpetual polling. (126)

The political mud-slinging evident in the fictional political world of *Newhouse* leads to the conclusion that the entire political sphere is merely a systematic game of distinctive oppositions. Politicians' regurgitated public opinion renders their struggle for power as a futile attempt to sway the press. The federal election has been reduced to a mere diversion from the real issue of the plague. The only ones who believe in the polls – the scorecard – are members of the political class. There is no possible winner in the electoral game because their efforts are absorbed into an electoral simulation in which the difference among candidates no longer exists. While the Prime Minister and Opposition leader Mr. Crane debate, they founder in a system that creates a press spectacle. These electoral perplexities present the audience with a political race that nullifies him who harbours the most reasonable position. The best man does not even have a chance to win the race. The politicians are ultimately defeated in advance not by each other, but by the press and the polls that render their parties as lifeless as those who die a slow death from the disease. My production, which opened on August 25, 1999 ran for a total of six performances, five evenings and one matinee. I had a total of fifteen actors who doubled in some roles, and, when available, also comprised the chorus. Eight technicians, ranging from technical operators, to dressers, to stagehands, were required to keep the performance functioning. Two hundred eighty-six members of the public attended during our performances, an average of approximately fifty per performance. Before each performance, my stage manager announced that scenes would take place largely on the platforms, and advised the

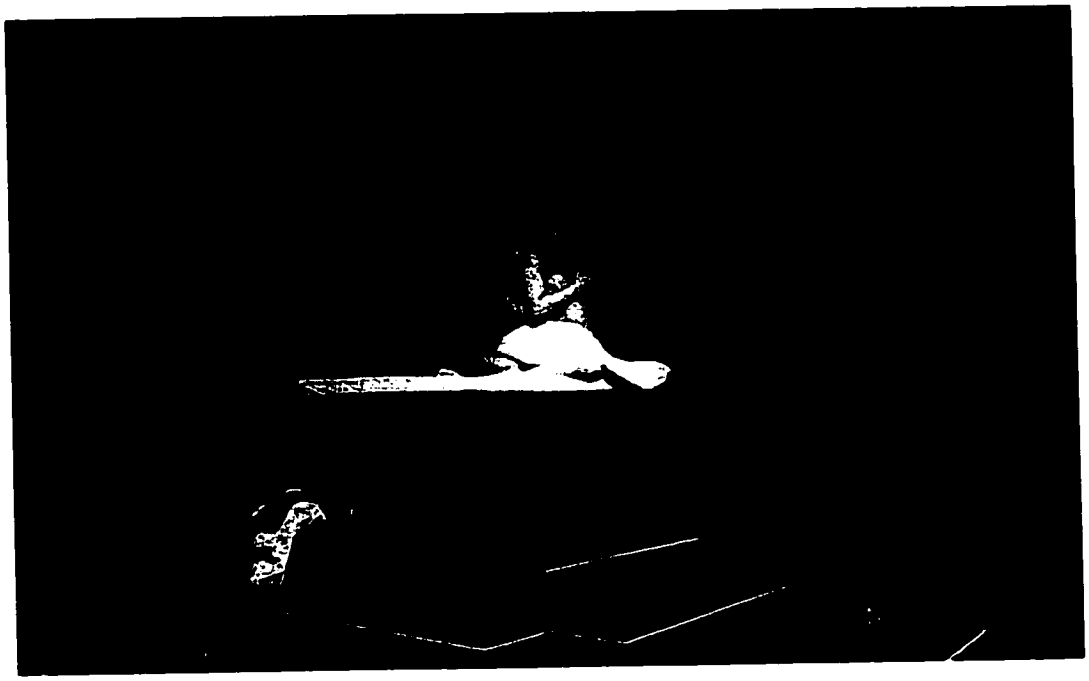

Plate 3: Newhouse and Isabel make love at the Canadian Embassy Ball.

audience to place themselves wherever they chose to view the action, obviously from within the vacant middle area of the space. My decision to include the announcement became necessary because of my concern that the entire audience would sit on the platforms and expect the performance to occur in the centre of the space, like theatre-in-the-round. From what I gathered from audience members who attended Necessary Angel's production, coupled with the photographs that appear in *CTR*, I determined that their audiences entered the arena, and most seated themselves on platforms. Then, as actors advanced upon them, spectators quickly scurried to new vantage points. I believe that Necessary Angel had established this audience expectation of physical involvement through their previous productions such as *Tamara* (complete with commandments), which had conditioned the audience to the idea that the entire venue may be used for performance. Therefore, no audience conduct announcement was necessary. Because I had never manipulated a performance environment like this before, my audiences had no notions of this kind of audience conduct, and therefore had to receive guidance as to which areas were available for them. I did not want my actors to have to improvise or re-block their scenes because of stubborn spectators, so an announcement of this sort became theoretically and practically necessary.

As a spectator for all performances, I was extremely interested to watch the audiences adapt themselves to the environment. Attendance was not as high during the mid-week performances as on the weekend. These early performances allowed the audience to place themselves fully in the middle area. Necessary Angel's production had taken place in a hockey arena; mine was in a venue a fraction that size. Because of the extra space at the mid-week performances, most patrons decided to sit on the floor and swivel their bodies to see wherever the action erupted next. There was little physical travel required of them because they had the ability to view all stages from the single vantage point they had chosen. On the Friday and Saturday evenings, the attendance was higher, which meant no spectator could sit in the middle of the space and still expect to see

Plate 4: Newhouse seduces Amy on her wedding night.

everything. As some audience members arrived early, some tried to sit, but when larger numbers entered, they began to stand to make room. These performances therefore began with all audience members standing, then turning and shuffling to get better sightlines for viewing the action. A few of the audience members chose to lean against the walls of the space, and by doing so, had a minimal level of involvement. Those choosing to maximize their involvement demonstrated characteristics of a moving audience-moving performance; the multi-focus scenography attracted them to stages within the environment as they created their own intimate, personalized performance, which was dictated by their proximity to the scenes.

The chorus' staged movement through and beside the audience while enacting their ensemble scenes gave the audience an intimate, voyeuristic experience. For example, my mingled audience/performer staging of the mob riot (scene two), the evangelist march (scene nineteen), and the candlelight vigil (scene thirty), gave the appearance to some audience members that other spectators were in fact performers at these gatherings. My staging of scenes such as the parliamentary debate (scene twelve) and the talk show exposé (scene twenty-five) did not intersperse the spectators and performers, but implicated them as both live and home audiences to the televised events. During the performance, I observed spectators looking every which way to view the televised scenes as I, too, was struck by their concentration on the television screens while the live action transpired in front of them. Some even chose not to move or look to see the action if it was being shown on the monitors. Heads turned in every direction as these stimuli simultaneously saturated the environment.

Overall, it was encouraging to see the level of engagement within the performance. Audiences seemed to become childlike when they both sat on the floor and moved to view the action. The audience appeared to have fun being at the centre of things. Audience response was very positive. Different people I surveyed for their critical responses after the performances seemed to have experienced something different. We received two

Plate 5: Doctor draws blood from Prime Minister for plague testing.

formal newspaper reviews from the local arts columnists. Sandy Wiseman, the *Kamloops Daily News* reviewer, described her experience as "not an easy production to watch [with] continuously moving action [and] lots to absorb." (Wiseman) She went on to say that the "audience didn't seem to have any trouble pulling up a chunk of floor and cranking their necks from one side of the room to the other following the quick-moving action." Elsbeth Duuertsema, the *Kamloops This Week* reviewer, highlighted the environmental nature of the performance, suggesting that my "fast-paced treatment of this grim subject is innovative: four stages and a dozen screens bombard the audience." (Duurtsema). She too observed that there "was so much happening I found myself swiveling from the actions on one stage to the words or images projected on a screen." It appeared that my scenographic approach had achieved its intended results. The spectators felt engulfed and caught up in the onslaught of stimuli.

In retrospect, I believe that the production realized my hyperrealistic intentions. Our most ambitious project had drawn the highest attendance to any production in our company's short history. It demonstrated our capability to stage a competent production, given that we have no venue of our own and a very limited budget. The overwhelming volunteer support by cast and crew, in addition to WCT's assistance, made this production more successful than I expected. The hyperrealism in the performance was, I believe, achieved with ceaseless bombardment of information that showed the medium to be the message: a fusion of scenography and subject-matter. My production succeeded in telling a topical, tragic tale that communicated with an audience for whom it was deadly important.

Conclusion

In my thesis, I have attempted to unify the cultural theory of Baudrillard with the dramatic approaches of theatre practitioners who focused their energies on developing new scenographic techniques. From my initial reading of *Newhouse* to the present, my pursuits have led me both to parallels that I anticipated, and to discoveries that I did not expected. I recognized that cultural and theatrical theories often postulate an ideal with little chance of a practical application. I determined that certain twentieth-century theatre practitioners rejected traditional approaches because they believed that mainstream techniques were no longer sufficiently effective to express new sensibilities. These pioneers implemented scenographic approaches that allowed for the manipulation of the most foundational medium of theatre: the performance environment. By transforming space, theatre "environmentalists" bravely experimented by subverting the dominant theatre arrangement. Yet, despite the shortcomings of various models, practitioners in a subsequent generation were stimulated to probe further. By building upon their predecessors' work, and predisposed to experiment with new forms, subsequent theatre practitioners built upon previous theories, and moved closer to what their predecessors originally set out to do.

Necessary Angel is a bold and daring company which has challenged established conventions of the dominant theatre. Rose's progressive approach treads the tenuous balance of commercial experimentation: complex enough to stimulate curiosity and interest, and at the same time artistically sound. Clearly, he too has suffered the misfortune of sacrificing artistic innovation because of insufficient financial budgets that do not allow any room for failure. Yet Rose has managed to preserve the continuation of Necessary Angel; otherwise, *Newhouse* would have never happened at all. It is unfortunate that this engaging play has only received three productions to date, but it is encouraging that, since 1989, Rose has continued to practice this type of aesthetic. He has

since become a mainstay director at the Stratford Festival. This comes as no surprise, because the town itself is like an extended theme park. Canada's best-known summer theatre event qualifies as an industry assembled nostalgically around the plays of Shakespeare. This fantastical, carnival of theatre can now be seen to be a massive simulation that draws on antiquity to attract droves of spectators. Rose's active association with this festival comes as no surprise if we accurately acknowledge his approach to art as involving the perpetual transformation of information.

One of my most important observations from writing this study is that although Rose's approach to theatre scenography parallels Baudrillard's theory, Rose has never specifically studied Baudrillard. In my opinion, this expresses that Rose is very much attuned to his times, which demand that entertainment be not merely captivating, but arresting. Asked to elaborate on how he intends to continue to challenge audiences, Rose responds with optimism:

> I think now there are more people who want better plays. They are smarter and more sophisticated. The commercialism of the 80s, the big musicals, all that did was create more people looking for more sophisticated plays. Or, the people who rejected those pieces just go, 'This is stupid, why am I paying 80 bucks? I want something more.' I believe those experiences created an opposition audience. And ironically, I think the baby-boomers who have run the economy and the culture for so long are at an age when they are dealing with their mortality. As they deal with this reality, they are looking for plays or life experiences that give greater meaning. They want a greater depth of feeling. (Personal interview)

When I heard Rose say this, I felt that he was articulating my own sense of dissatisfaction with the well-packaged production, and my personal identification with "an opposition audience." Growing up in the 1980s, I attended those grandiose musicals, but I somehow wanted plays to express more. Now, I have realized what was missing – exposure to productions that have remained absent from national theatre seasons – all for the sake of repetitious realism that can no longer fully stimulate an audience. I believe that the habits of mainstream theatre have resulted from a lack of understanding concerning the power of media technologies to form new sensibilities. Leading by example, practitioners like Rose

may influence larger companies to take risks, especially financial risks. I believe that audiences will embrace a kind of theatre performance that is actually theatrical. Given Necessary Angel's demonstrated habit of incorporating hyperreal aspects into performance – intentionally or not – their environmental plays such as *Tamara* and *Newhouse* have offered especially meaningful experiences in the theatre. As performed by a company that has remained steadfast through artistic failures and successes, Rose's body of work demonstrates a rare commitment to a unique mandate that considers how and in what ways audience sensibilities have changed in the last century.

I have also determined that my approach to theatre as a complex, simulating machine fully recognizes all the elements of the performance environment. Despite the work of Schechner and Ronconi, it is nonetheless futile to expect or force spectators to do anything physically. However, if you allow an audience the opportunity to intermingle with the performance, their curiosity will likely do the rest. Rather than forcing spectators to participate, it is essential that they only be induced by means of simultaneity, involving a scenography that ceaselessly stimulates an audience's focus to change. We cannot control an audience's willingness to participate, but we can arrange a performance environment that allows them to personalize their level of involvement. It is possible and necessary, as I found with my production of *Newhouse*, to fill a performative environment with continuous stimuli that simulate the fast-paced speed of Western life. While it is not my intention to suggest that any approach but an environmental one is ill-advised and predisposed to fail, my experience suggests that if one implements a creative scenographic design to complement the play's content, the audience response may be more satisfying. A hyperreal production must at the very least maintain the mediation experienced in everyday life, and ideally attempt to heighten that mediation by transforming the performance space into a stimulus-rich environment.

For these reasons, I believe that my decision to apply Baudrillardian theory into a pre-existing script was well-founded. While I was not required to assemble my

performance text from various sources, nor to transform a found space, I was obliged to formulate my directorial choices to draw attention to the manner in which we perceive and understand our environments outside the theatre. *Newhouse*'s paparazzi chorus physicalized the outright construction of meaning that is too often kept hidden from the public; like the plague itself, which necessitates the taking of responsibility, their news reporting also demands accountability and discretion in the dissemination of information. Along with entertaining my audiences, I believe I successfully challenged and disoriented them so that they actively thought about, and not merely felt, the repercussions of the play into the hyperreal world.

Finally, like Rose and Kugler, I have determined that there is something special about going beyond the expected realist arrangement. Today's hyperrealism, a theatre of simulation, renders more visible the fact that the rest of daily experience is actually mediated. In the end, Western spectators become more aware of other conditioning environments because of their shared desire, and their need, to reposition themselves in a theatricalized world. I challenge theatre practitioners to recognize the irrefutable presence of mediation in life, and to implement more hyperrealism into their productions so that they are able to communicate more effectively with their audiences. Surely this approach to theatre is a financially risky practice, but I believe that the benefits outweigh the economic pitfalls. Given the fact that the environmental approach has been well practiced in various incarnations with successful results, I believe it will continue to thrive, and will undergo further development in the years to come.

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Appendix

Baudrillard begins his study by reinforcing the postmodern condition as it relates to the dominant form of economic activity in Western consumer society, which is "commodity exchange." In a consumer society, exchange-value (a symbolic form) has become more objective and more real than use-value (a material form). Commodities are created and manufactured as much for reasons of capital gain as for reasons of practical utility. Lamenting the effects of commodification on consciousness, Baudrillard ultimately portrays signs as having become divorced from their referents because of exchange-value winning over use-value. For example, some practitioners are more interested in staging Shakespeare because of its potential as a classic to generate good ticket sales, than they are in the possibility of connecting the play with audiences some 400 years after the play was written. Whereas predecessors of cultural and dramatic theory are concerned with signifiers and their referents to establish meaning, Baudrillard disposes of such connections to reality, which he regards as outdated.

Baudrillard prefaces the current mode of simulation as the third in a triad of orders. Baudrillard asserts that, prior to the Renaissance, there existed a hierarchical order of signs, in which goods and meaning were intrinsically linked to what they were. Literary technology revolutionized the written word with the invention of moveable type and Gutenburg's printing press. Information proliferated through this medium, and more quickly and efficiently disseminated knowledge on any given subject to the masses. Artists drew heavily on sources of history to present their audiences with tales in forms that signified a connection to reality that was grounded in a resuscitation of previously known signs, which produced a counterfeit of the image. Baudrillard regards this as the first phase of the image — classified as a reflection of reality — which became increasingly concerned with the exchange of goods, and concentrated on producing works of art as counterfeits of a previous age. He also considers this phase as the only true time of the "double" and "mirror." The beginning of the nineteenth century brought the Industrial Revolution and Baudrillard's second order of simulation. During this age, "the machine is man's equivalent and annexes him to itself in the unity of its operational process. This is the difference between the first order and one of the second" (Baudrillard *Simulations* 93). Technology and communications media, the tools and skills of creating products and information, began to take on an inexorable and significant role in forming the consciousness of both urban and rural communities.

Baudrillard declares that today, there no longer exists a system of objects that mirror reality, but that

> the age of simulation thus begins with a liquidation of all referentials — it is no longer a question of imitation, nor of duplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself. (*Simulations* 4)

The present third order of simulation, then, marks a shift from signs that dissimulate, to signs that convey that there is no meaning beyond themselves. No higher power can guarantee the imaginary relation of signs to meaning, leaving theatre practitioners to

founder in attempts to represent reality via signification.

> The definition of the real becomes: that of which it is possible to give an equivalent reproduction - the real is not only what can be reproduced, but that which is always already reproduced, the hyperreal. (146)

Obviously, Baudrillard accepts the notion that there exists pre-existing meaning to a lost signifier. Meaning is present even before the sign is implemented, which reverses previous signification equations where the signifier gave a signified meaning.