Scenic Design for "The Metal Children"

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Scenic Design for “The Metal Children”

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Theatre

by

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Abstract

A scenic design for the play “The Metal Children” by Adam Rapp was created and performed by the steps of the design process used in the design program at the University of Arkansas Department of Theatre. *The Metal Children* presents itself as a multi-unit set. With a script that introduces five different locations, one begins to question how we move forward with every different scene fluidly and in a quick scene shift time. When beginning the design process, I had to look at the show as if it were a musical with multiple scenic pieces that would fly in and out in a choreographed fashion to match the pacing of the actors around it. Because one of the main motifs of the show involved Young Adult Literature, I decided to handle scene shifts and overall scenic looks as if the show was progressing forward like one would turn the pages in a book. Overall the production was successful and operated very smoothly, because of the design and tech team involved could take my vision and recreate it on stage.
Acknowledgments

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Section 1: Producing the Show

*The Metal Children* by Adam Rapp, was produced at the University of Arkansas’s University Theatre on November 11, 2016. The production ran for seven performances over the span of two weeks. The University Theatre is located on the University of Arkansas campus in Fayetteville Arkansas. Construction and set up for the show was executed by the scenic shop located in the theatre. It features a scenic and lighting shop, which employs four full time employees and thrives off the work of their limited hourly students who work in the shop where they complete requirements for classes and assistantship assignments.

The University Theatre is a proscenium style venue that seats 315 audience members. The proscenium measures to 36’-0” wide by 20’-0” tall with a stage depth of 36’-3” from plaster line to the back wall. The stage extends beyond the proscenium line with a covered orchestra pit measuring another 11’-6” to the total depth. The venue is equipped with 31 line sets with five dedicated specifically for lighting electrics. The number of lighting electrics allows flexibility when positioning hanging scenery that is required for production needs.

The first of four design meeting for *The Metal Children* was held on March 3, 2016. Due to University scheduling and the winter break between spring semester and fall semester, the final design meeting was scheduled for September 8, 2016. This timeline allowed for an easy recapping process for the whole design team culminating with presentation of the final design as well as final drafting for the show. Construction for the show began on October 3, 2016 leaving a build period of five weeks and four days. Technical rehearsals began on November 4, 2016, which was exactly one week prior to opening night. The final performance date was November 20, 2016 with a strike, or disassembly of the show following the final performance.
The University of Arkansas served as the producer for the show. The other artistic and design team members included faculty director Jenny McKnight; second year M.F.A. candidate Jeremiah Albers as the assistant director; undergraduate stage manager Maggie Harris; undergraduate assistant stage manager Ian Bean; third year M.F.A. candidate Emily Clarkson as the lighting designer; second year M.F.A. candidate MJ Hall as the costume designer; faculty member Tyler Micheel as the sound designer; faculty member Weston Wilkerson as the technical director. The stage run crew was a combination of students enrolled in THTR 1323 and 1313 – Stage Technology I and Stage Technology II.
Section 2: A Look Into the Story and History

*The Metal Children* is a play about a down-on-his-luck author, Tobin Falmouth, who writes a controversial novel that is subsequently banned by the school board of a small-town school in a fictitious town called Midlothia. He travels to Midlothia to protest the banning of his novel when strange and inexplicable occurrences start happening around him. Between crazy teenagers reenacting moments from the book and people wearing porky pig masks appearing at his hotel room, he seems to find his voice and regains his ability to write well again.

The play begins in Tobin’s New York City apartment home to an apparently depressed author who is under the assumption that he has no more writing creativity. The scene opens with Tobin addressing a camera in protest to the banning of his book throughout the school’s curriculum by reading a statement that was prepared by his sassy agent. We can see that Tobin is not taking care of himself or his apartment due to the messy conditions of his apartment. He is seen buying marijuana from a drug dealer, sleeping with his neighbor who lives down the hall, and witness him selling off old gifts he had received from friends. Throughout the scene his literary agent, Bruno, convinces him to travel to the town of Midlothia and make an appearance to protest the banning of his book. With some hesitation and after he reads a well written letter from a concerned Midlothian teacher Stacey Kinsella, Tobin agrees to go to the town to help protest.

Scene two begins at a tattered, run down motel room with words “Gone For Now”, a phrase that was significantly noted in his book, spray painted all over the walls. Tobin meets the kind-hearted motel owner Edith Dundee who happens to be one of his biggest fans. Edith explains to Tobin all the weird things that have been going on in the town, and how the school kids are reacting to the announcement that his book has been banned from the curriculum.
Following the awkward conversations with Edith, comes his second visitor Stacey Kinsella. Mr. Kinsella is a teacher at the Midlothia school who is in favor of the book staying in the curriculum. With every sound and every phone call, he seems to be nervous as to what might happen to him next, because he is the target of the town’s “Pork Patrol.” The “Pork Patrol” serve as a vigilante group of individuals parading around town protesting the book. After Tobin thinks all his visitors are finally gone for the night, he has a surprise visitor by the name of Vera Dundee who happens to be Edith’s niece. Vera is the leader of the town’s protesters who are trying to keep the book in circulation and who believe greatly in Tobin’s writing. This group is passionate about the book and its message within the story. They seem to be able to find meaning within his novel that even Tobin was not able to see. He is also concerned that Vera’s group may be misinterpreting his novel further amplifying the controversial nature of the book. Vera explains to Tobin that she, along with the other young ladies, use his book as a guide for how they should live their lives and how they should stand up to the powers that are against them in the world. She starts her plan by attempting to get herself pregnant, by Tobin.

After seducing Tobin with her charm, Vera sneaks out of his hotel room during the middle of the night leaving the door unlocked allowing the town’s “Pork Patrol” to enter his room. The “Pork Patrol” enter Tobin’s room, turn on a vacuum cleaner, and proceed to beat Tobin within an inch of his life and leave him to die in the room alone.

Act two begins at the School Board meeting that made Tobin come to Midlothia where they would hear testimony for and against the ban of his novel. The audience sees Tobin walk into the meeting late with bruises and cracked ribs from his ordeal at the motel the previous night. In this scene, we are introduced to a few new characters. Community citizens who are against the book being in the curriculum speak their mind and express their concerns both
regarding their religious and moral background. Vera also speaks about her emotions after reading the book, causing Tobin to speak out about how he simply wrote that book out of anger, and there was no real meaning behind it. Following Tobin’s monologue where he is seen defending his book, we see Edith run into the meeting to tell everyone that Stacey had been in a terrible accident.

Scene two opens in a hospital room where we see Stacey lying in a hospital bed. He appears to be in good spirits after light conversation with Tobin. He requests that Tobin read a piece from his book to him. While reading, you can see a change in Tobin’s tone and thoughts while he goes through the passage. After he finishes reading, Edith joins the room and lets Tobin know that a new statue has appeared in the town square, signifying that a young woman has gone missing. Tobin immediately leaves to investigate.

Scene three takes place at the town square where a bronzed statue of one of the town’s young ladies stands over all those who draw near. She is surrounded by mementos left by those who visited. It is here where the audience sees how the book has become a negative influence on the town’s children. In this scene, we see Tobin’s conversation with one of the speakers from the town hall meeting Roberta Cupp, who is desperate to change Tobin into a spiritual person, which is not the person he wants to be. Following the heated exchange between Ms. Cupp and Tobin, two characters from the “Pork Patrol” show up and this time they stab Tobin with a large knife leaving him to die in the shadow of the bronzed statue.

Scene four takes place back in the hospital where this time we see two beds are occupied. One with a sleeping Stacey and the other with Tobin. Vera and her sperm donor Boy X are also there waiting for Tobin to wake up so she can say goodbye. She tells him that they are going to leave Midlothia and venture out to make their own place to stay and raise children just like the
book tells her to do. In this pivotal scene, we see a major change in Tobin’s character after revealing his true feelings about his recent divorce. He learns that his ex-wife is happy now and he should be too.

In the final scene of the play we are back in Tobin’s apartment in New York City where it is apparent Tobin is a changed man. His place is clean and orderly and Tobin also seems to have a new-found energy and confidence. We see his agent, Bruno reading a new manuscript of Tobin’s and it is excellent. Tobin appears to have found his writer’s voice once again. Perhaps more importantly he has found himself and a new purpose in life. At this moment in the play, the audience is left to believe the show may be concluding; however, an unexpected visitor knocks on his apartment door, and it’s Vera. Vera now has a child: Tobin’s child, and has come to ask him for financial support for their movement. Vera and her friends have set up a farm and community for pregnant teenagers. After coming to an understanding with Vera, it appears that Tobin will attempt to take part in his daughter’s life. Tobin says goodbye to Vera and the scene closes with him gazing out of his apartment window.

*The Metal Children* speaks strongly to art and censorship within the media and in our schools. We see how a simple teen novel could create controversy and corruption as well as create inquisitive minds. This play illustrates the power art and literature can and have on society.

The playwright, Adam Rapp, created this script based from his real-world experiences that stemmed from the beginning of his career. In 2005, Rapp created *The Buffalo Tree*, which was a story relating to life in a youth detention center. This piece, having violent and sexual content, was banned from the curriculum at Muhlenberg High School in Pennsylvania. The novel was taken from the students and placed inside a vault similar to what happens in his play,
The Metal Children. As a result, there was a backlash from numerous students, teachers, and parents who were either for or against the inclusion of his novel in the school’s curriculum. To help combat what he believed to be a clear case of censorship, Adam Rapp sent copies of his novel to teachers and gave them the choice of whether to continue the assignment or abandon it. After a year of continued controversy, there was a town meeting in which the legitimacy of the book was discussed. Adam attended and argued for the book and questioned why they had the right to tell the students what they could and could not read. It is clear that this autobiographical portion of his young life as an author served as a foundation for writing this play, The Metal Children.
Section 3: From Concept to Design

At the first production meeting on March 2, 2016, the Director, Jenny McKnight had very strong ideas and themes and clearly articulated them for the rest of the design team. Ms. McKnight made it clear that she wanted to set the show in 2009. She wanted to take the opportunity to reach out and connect the show to the University of Arkansas’ audience whom she believed were also connected with the popularity of Young Adult Literature. “The play has two worlds pitted against one another; but we don’t want to take sides. We’ll make no apologies for the bookend scenes in NYC; however, it feels like the scenes in Midlothia appear to get progressively odder similar to what would happen in the old serial television drama, Twin Peaks.” (McKnight March 03, 2016) As a collaborative effort, the design team decided that the two locations of New York City and the small Midwestern town of Midlothia needed to uniquely distinct properties. The New York City apartment needed to highlight the sense of being small and congested, whereas Midlothia needed to have the sense of being open and strangely fairy tale like in its appearance. The show is quite fluid with seven scenes featuring five different locations. One of my questions to the rest of the design team was, “What is the movement of the play?” we established that we wanted the show to change in front of the audience’s eyes along with a sense that each scene would appear to grow and shrink as each scene transitioned from one location to another. At the end of the first design meeting, Ms. McKnight wanted the team to consider the use of video projections in the design. She wanted us to consider the idea that when any of the characters read words from the book or other documents, those words would appear on stage as they spoke them further highlighting the idea of the novel being written.

As the scenic designer, one of the biggest challenges I faced for this show was to figure out how to make the show move smoothly and quickly between five different locations while
still creating the illusion of each location accurately for the audience. An important part of the design was to understand the movement of the play, while learning the traffic patterns of both the scenery as well as the actors. To better understand these traffic patterns I created an action chart for the entire show. (See Appendix A Figure 1) After completing the action chart, I investigated where I could find a pattern or relationship between movements that might allow me the ability to fine tune the scene changes. Many factors come into play when creating a plan for scenic shifts that can be as complex as this show. Scenery can either fly onto the stage on battens, can rise on elevators that come from the trap room up through the stage floor, slide in from the wings stage left and stage right, or simply be gripped into place by actors or technicians. Often set designers use a combination of these techniques to effectively change scenery. Another important concern is to understand the physical limitations of the theatre space as well as the limited number of crew members available for each scenic shift. When I began sketching ideas for the show, I quickly realized I was working in a way that is like a multi scene musical production. Not only was it important to move scenery on and off stage efficiently, it was also important to allow for adequate space for the director to block each of the scenes in unique and exciting ways.

The second design meeting, which was held on March 31, 2016 was where I presented my sketches as well as supplemental research and preliminary analysis. Ms. McKnight responded positively to the sketches; however, she wanted me to develop my ideas further with more detail so she could better understand actual spacing and how the transitions would function. Sketching 2-Dimensional pictures are quick and useful when starting the design process, but after further discussion with my mentor Michael Riha, we determined that it would be necessary to construct scaled models for each scene to more clearly understand spacing and transitional
movement between the locations. It would also help to understand storage backstage and management of crew members. I found it easiest to begin working with 1/8” = 1’-0” scaled white models. (See appendix B figure 1), By examining my sketches, I could understand how I wanted the walls and scenery to transition; however, I needed to understand how the overall look of the scenery would impact the show. After presenting the models to Mr. Riha, he helped me understand some possible design flaws in my initial ideas. One example of where I was struggling was the New York City apartment. I had done extensive research but was unfamiliar with just how small and utilitarian most New York City apartments were. Having spent a great deal of time in NYC, Mr. Riha was able to provide some much needed context and design details that aided in my further exploration for this particular location.

Act one, scene one, which was the location of the New York City Apartment, was something I wanted to appear to be the most realistic of all the locations. To make a more realistic look, my research came from numerous photographs of New York Studio Apartments. While researching, I fell in love with the idea of utilizing exposed brick walls. This seemed to resonate as being an iconic “New York City” look.

When I began the design process, I felt it was important to show Tobin’s character in relationship to the state of disarray of his apartment. He was recently divorced and seemingly in a downward spiral as an author and as a person, which led me to the idea of having his apartment serve as a reflection of his current life. It was important that it looked like a typical bachelor pad. One of the challenges in creating that kind of space was to give the space a feeling of claustrophobia while still allowing for an appropriate amount of scenery to be as realistic as possible.
Act one, scene two, which was the first location in the town of Midlothia, was the point at which I wanted to start transitioning into a scenic style that was increasingly unrealistic and bizarre. As I was designing this location, I struggled with how to efficiently and quietly transition from a very realistic and scenery heavy location – the NYC apartment – into the increasingly outlandish Midlothia motel room. It was critically important that the scene shifts were fluid, seamless, and quick as possible so as not to disrupt the flow of action. At this point I created the concept of trying to make the scenic transitions resemble flipping pages in a book to transition us further into the story. Eventually I ended up with what was ultimately called the “Iris Drop” (See appendix C figures 13-17) as a means of transitioning and changing the composition of the frame through which we viewed this every changing world. This drop would consist of a horizontal border and two vertical legs, which would move in tandem to create an irising effect into the next scene. It was designed to close off one scene while opening on another. With that idea now in development, I could imagine each scene shift with a more fluid movement.

In an effort to begin showing the less realistic locations in our mythical town of Midlothia, I achieved that by deconstructing the reality of the motel room down to one wall. I further enhanced the odd nature of this fictitious town by breaking the wall away and adding a 75 degree angle to the top of the wall, which would give the viewer an uneasy feeling. Further challenging this particular scenic unit was the fact that each night of the performance featured the motel wall with the words, “Gone For Now” spray painted in bright red letters over the wall. During the scene, the young heroine enters the room and begins to spray paint over the old words. Without harming the actors or audience members with chemicals I wanted to find a way to make this effect happen without using real spray paint. I also didn’t want to create this
moment implementing a theatrical solution; it was important that it look as real as possible. The solution was to use water based spray paint, which would ultimately be repainted every night after the show ended by the run crew present.

During the scene while the protagonist is sleeping in his bed, we hear footsteps approaching his room. Because of the size of the scene and the intimacy of the space, I wanted to introduce the biggest antagonists, “The Pork Patrol” to the show by revealing them behind the wall through a hidden scrim paneling that is placed in the wall. (See appendix C figure 12) I wanted the room to resemble a motel with simple things like the calming and flat color on the walls and the fire escape map on the door with room information attached.

Act two, scene one takes place in the High School Auditorium in Midlothia. This scene is where we meet the townspeople who want Tobin’s novel banned. For this scene, I wanted it to look like an actual auditorium and give the audience the feeling that they were in the town hall meeting as well. The town hall scene is meant to be inside a school auditorium, which is not the normal place to hold their meetings. To utilize this concept for the scene I simply made a podium with chairs on stage. With this simple solution, I could portray the setting. To give the scene an unrealistic look, I positioned the iris drop at a steep angle traveling from largest on stage left to smallest stage right. (See appendix C figure 15) Additionally, upstage of the actors I positioned portraits of past superintendents to include one that is referenced during the scene. These pictures were designed utilizing a forced perspective technique with the largest being placed stage left and the smallest, stage right. Above the portraits, a piece of crown molding capped the “room” and was suspended at the same angle as the iris drop. These molding pieces was also created utilizing a forced perspective technique, which meant the molding measured 1’-6” on the stage left side and 0’3” on the stage right side further adding to the bizarre, unnatural
stylings of Midlothia. In looking at the complete composition, I wanted to give more of an uneasy feeling. Typically, we view the proscenium stage from left to right; however, by positioning the iris drop with the smaller size stage right and the larger opening stage left, it reversed the composition creating tension with the larger opening on the audience’s right.

Act two, scene two the Emergency room, is the most intimate scene in the show. With that in mind, I chose to close the set by focusing the iris drop in to just slightly wider than the space occupied by the two beds and a bed side table. (See appendix C figure 16) It is in this scene when the audience learns the most about our main character as a person and who he wants to be as a person. Due to this important part of the story, I did not want to distract from that information which is why I was very selective in the amount of scenery as well as the small scale. However, I still wanted the audience to remember that we were in the strange town of Midlothia, which is why I placed the lighting fixtures for the room at the same extreme angle as the border of the iris.

Act two, scene three the town square, was the most open scene of them all. After multiple conversations with Ms. McKnight, she did not know how she wanted to stage the scene, but she did want to focus on a town statue located in the town square. After researching small town squares, I could identify an image that seemed abstract without being distracting that would work for a fictitious town such as Midlothia. After finding the image and supporting images of halogen street lights to support our location, we agreed that the scenery should not overwhelm the scene. To make a solid image we created the statue and simply placed a park bench where both characters sat during the scene. The use of the two large street lamps also allowed for separation of areas (See appendix D figure 5).
At the third design meeting, which occurred on April 14, 2016, I presented the 1/8” scale models I created that illustrated each of the five unique locations. Ms. McKnight reacted extremely well to all the models with only one objection – the town square scene. That scene was not where we wanted it to be. Aside from the technical concern surrounding the extreme angle of the iris border, there was still something that was not quite right about the composition, which led me to continue to develop that scene with new options at the final meeting.

The fourth design meeting on April 28, 2016 was the final meeting of the spring 2016 semester before summer break. It was critical to have the design solidified due to the two and a half month break that separated that meeting and the first production meeting in the Fall 2016. By this point I had redesigned the town square scene into a more cohesive area that better encased the two characters without causing separation. Following the final approval of the 1/8” White models, I was able to get to work on the final ¼” = 1’-0” scale models as well as the drafting with renderings (See appendix B figures 2-6).

Over the summer break from the University I kept in contact with Ms. McKnight via email and telephone. I could upload color choices, scenic details and paint treatments to a shared dropbox folder allowing her the ability to collaborate with me even though we were 1000 miles apart. We talked and agreed about colors in collaboration with Ms. Hall who had no hesitation over the colors that I had chosen on a scene-by-scene basis.

Upon returning to the University, I completed my renderings and drafting prior to the final deadlines imposed by the technical director, Weston Wilkerson and scenic charge artist, Susan Crabtree. Emily Clarkson the lighting designer and I would set meeting times to discuss trim heights for the individual scenic battens as well as overhead masking borders. These early discussions allowed us an opportunity to discover potential problems that could arise from the
moving border and legs that were located just behind the proscenium line. One of the big issues was to see if there were any combination of movements that would potentially block lighting fixtures from reaching the apron of the stage. With careful planning, we could discover the correct heights that would not negatively impact her lighting positions and would ultimately keep the correct look that the director and I envisioned for each scene.

With careful planning, the design was complete. After multiple meetings and many breakout sessions we found the perfect physical scenic environment that could easily accommodate the story line our director wanted to tell. It also allowed me a great deal of input and artistic freedom to create a world that was both unique as well as functional.
Section 4: Top to Bottom Production Process

The University produces many shows within a nine-month season. Due to the overlapping nature of this busy schedule, the department creates a unique build schedule for its productions. *The Metal Children* was the third overall show of the six-show season making its position of production fall in the last month of the fall semester. At the University of Arkansas as a Graduate Student Scenic Designer, I earn my assistantship by working in the scene shop while designing the show. This is very helpful because I am there to answer any questions that arise and I can watch the design come to life from my paper designs to reality. After turning in the final drafting, Mr. Wilkerson quickly produced working drawings for the shop staff from which the show was built. From the outside, the show did not appear to be a large show to build. The expectation was that the show build would not take a great deal of time to complete. This proved very beneficial because of the short build time that the show had from the beginning.

The build process quickly began with the construction of all the wall units and pilasters for the first and second scene. (See appendix C figures 11-12) The beginning stages of the build proved far more difficult than anticipated because the cast was using the stage for rehearsals during the evenings. The scene shop staff did not have the ability to hang any of the flying units unless it could safely be completed in one day allowing rehearsals to be held in the evenings. To help supplement the absence of standing scenery in rehearsals, the Props Master Susan Crabtree provided rehearsal furniture to help create the illusion of the space for each scene. The lesson was quickly learned that movement of all the furniture was also very integral to help the story progress forward. We soon discovered that the actors would be beneficial in helping shift scenery within each transition.
As the scene shop approached the first technical rehearsal, the staff began feeling the pressure of the approaching deadlines. The scenery was easy to construct; however, some of the scenic pieces that were installed on top of other large pieces were starting to be neglected. About two weeks prior to the first technical rehearsal I was approached by the Technical Director to consider making cuts to scenic units. In the auditorium scene, each portrait of the superintendents was to include a picture frame lighting fixture that needed to be custom built to complement the forced perspective built into each portrait. Because the first technical rehearsals were quickly approaching, Mr. Wilkerson did not feel that there was adequate time within the build schedule to construct, wire, and mount each lighting fixture. (see appendix D figure 3) I was unwilling to cut the lighting fixtures as the scene needed them to balance out the composition. To keep them in the design, a fellow scenic MFA candidate and I scheduled a weekend work day in which we could build the lights to keep them in the design. The lights were built by taking various sizes of PVC pipe and cutting through one side allowing an opening to bend. After applying heat, we could bend the pipe to create the size that matched the frames. By saving time with the solution, we could send the newly constructed lighting fixtures to the electrics crew to have them wired and mounted on the portraits.

The first technical rehearsal was used to train the run crew members and practice scenic shifts. This was a critical rehearsal as it allowed the crew and cast to familiarize themselves with all the intricate movements of the scenery. It allowed me the opportunity to choreograph the specific movements and timings of the transitions. The team’s goal was to make every transition fluid and attempt to keep them under 45 seconds per transition. This goal was obtainable due to the large number of cast members who could assist the crew. The beginning of the shift rehearsal started off a bit disorganized; however, with a bit of instruction and patience, we were
quickly on our way to solving the problems a set with this many moving parts poses. Due to the high learning curve involved in each scenic shift, we were unable to rehearse each shift as many times as everyone desired. We ended the night with the crew feeling confident about every shift and knowing that they would get better as we continued our technical and dress rehearsals.

The next technical rehearsal was what is called a 10 out of 12. This is a rehearsal that has 10 working hours out of a 12-hour day. We began the rehearsal at 10:00 am with a brief review of what was accomplished the previous rehearsal. The goal of the 10 out of 12 was to work through the entire show incorporating all lighting and sound cues. The actors were also present and necessary as the lighting designer needs them on stage and in their positions to set all light levels and positions. Another aspect of this rehearsal is to make sure all the scenery that is intended to be in each scene is in its onstage position. However, there were still some scenic units that needed to be added to complete the design. It was also at this rehearsal where I needed to take notes on all remaining details and scenic adjustments to make sure we could complete the set with the remaining time allotted. I spent most of that day taking completion notes while working closely with the Technical Director to try and determine how we needed to approach the work week leading to opening night. Since I was finally seeing the set under performance conditions, I could determine that the choices I made regarding specific paint treatments were working very well.

On the night of the second technical rehearsal, my mentor Michael Riha sat with me to help fine tune the details of the set. Toward the beginning of the night, we could see that the hidden scrim panel in the motel wall varied too differently from what the original plan was, which was to match the scrim paint treatment to the opaque wall treatment. After having a discussion with the director, she agreed that it did not look right and she was open to another
way to fix it. I quickly worked up a sketch on how to mask the seam between the opaque sheeting of the wall and the translucent scrim material. (See appendix C figure 12) My solution was to create a series of wall paneling partitions dividing the wall in an intentional design, which helped the wall look seamless to the different paint treatment. The second issue presented itself after hanging the portrait frames and the tapered molding. Once hung, we could see that the designed forced perspective of the molding did not line up to the established vanishing point. This error made the entire scene look disjointed. We fixed this problem by simply dropping one pick point on the perspective molding to make it converge at the vanishing point.

Entering the first dress rehearsal, the props master and I had a discussion about how we needed to provide better set dressing for the New York Apartment scene. It needed to look like a dirty, unkempt apartment as if he was not able to take care of himself since his divorce. Prior to the dress rehearsal starting, we rigged dirty clothes and various piles of trash onto different scenic pieces to help create a trashy sense. When we return to the New York City apartment at the end of the show, the crew needed to be able to replace the trashy props with ones that made his apartment seem clean again, as if he has turned his life around. From the previous technical rehearsal, the changes that were made to the scenery were appreciated by the director and she noticed a difference in the presentation of each scene.

As the final dress rehearsal started I was focused on paying close attention to any notes or problems that occurred or potential design issues that I may have missed in the previous rehearsals. Fortunately, I made it through the final dress rehearsal without any major scenic notes. The crew had done an incredible job finalizing all the previous notes making this design complete.
Section 5: A Reflection

*The Metal Children* was a script that I had not yet encountered as a scenic designer. In my previous design experiences, I had made designs for single sets. This show was quite like how many multi scene musicals are structured; a show featuring multiple locations with many scene shifts throughout the play. I knew that this show would challenge me and help me grow as a designer. It was clearly outside of my comfort level making it the perfect choice for my 3rd year design.

Working with Director Jenny McKnight was a breath of fresh air as well. I could feed off her love of the script and I myself became inspired to create a world that supported her vision. Ms. McKnight was one of the most understanding directors that I have had the pleasure of working with. She was open to any and every idea that I gave to her and if it was something that she did not prefer, she was willing to give it a chance to see if it would end up working for the production.

Sadly, I was not able to make a strong connection with the script as a designer or a person. I found the story to be very back and forth. While reading the script, there was always something you were expecting from the text; some different kind of meaning from the characters; however, the script and the story simply kept the reader wanting and finished without satisfying the story. This however, did not affect my ability to connect with the characters and the places that were presented in the story. With extensive research into regions and some places mentioned in the story, I could connect the characters with their personality and regions in which they lived.

The design team was one that had worked together on a previous design project. Fortunately for us, we had already established a working vocabulary that allowed us the ability to
communicate effectively. This helped with the collaborative effort of the entire team as we could talk to each other about any issues that came up and even help each other with solutions that benefited one another.

I would call this design very successful as I was able to grow as a designer and reach areas of my creativity that had not been reached before. The show was very well received by many students and members of the community.
References:


McKnight, Jenny, M.F.A. "First Design Meeting." Personal interview. 03 Mar. 2016.
Appendix A: Analysis, Research, and Preliminary Sketches
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**Time/Set**
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- NY Apartment
- NY Apartment

**Page #**
- 7-8
- 8
- 8-9
- 9-11
- 11
- 11-13
- 12
- 14
- 14-18
- 18
- 18-20
- 20-23

**FS Title**
- An Intro
- Little More Passion
- Take two
- Time with Mary Jane
- Priorities
- What Kind of Stir
- The Book
- # Think You Know Somebody
- The Plot
- Silent Read
- A Warm Welcome

**Action**
- Tobin Intro
- Complains to T
- T Continues Video
- K delivers drugs
- B gets on to T
- L looks for keys
- B explains book to L
- L takes her leave
- B Explains the Letter to T
- Reads Letter to Self
- T arrives to Midlothia

**Props**
- Piece of Paper (Script), Video Equipment
- Book Bag, MaryJ, $80
- Cigarettes, Keys in Fish Tank
- Toothbrush, Glass of OJ
- Letter, Wallet w/Money $100
- Video Equipment
- Fresh Bedding, Metal Children (Book), Sharpie, Travel Bag

**Sound**
- City Sounds?
- Buzzer

**Costumes**
- Boxer Shorts, Mismatched Socks, Stained White T, Bathrobe
- B: Nice Suit, Tie, Shoes
- K: Hip Hop Skater
- Nicotine Teeth, Tattoo (or 2), Sheet, Maybe tube socks
- T: Jeans, T Shirt, E: Jeans, Cotton Shirt with Hotel Name

**Notes**
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**Act 2 Scene Chart**

**Notes**

Figure 2, Page 2 of Action Chart
## Act I: Scene 3

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Figure 5, Research Imagery
Figure 6, Apartment Sketch

Figure 7, Motel Sketch
Figure 8, Auditorium Sketch

Figure 9, ER Sketch
Figure 10, Town Square Sketch
Appendix B: Preliminary White Model,
1/4” Color Model
Figure 1, White Model Scene by Scene
Figure 2, Color Model Apartment
Figure 3, Color Model Motel
Figure 5, Color Model ER
Figure 6, Color Model Town Square
Appendix C : Final Drafting and Painters Elevations
Figure 1, Apartment Ground Plan
Figure 2, Apartment Section
Figure 4, Motel Section
Figure 5, Auditorium Ground Plan
| Figure 6, Auditorium Section | 45 |
Figure 8, ER Section

47
Figure 9, Town Square Ground Plan
Figure 10, Town Square Section
Figure 11, Front Elevations

• Face all wall surfaces with 1/4" Luan
• Wall thickness can be negotiable to accommodate flying for units.
Figure 12, Front Elevations
Figure 13, Iris Drop Front View, Apartment
Figure 14, Iris Drop Front View Motel
Figure 15, Iris Drop Front View, Auditorium
Figure 16, Iris Drop Front View ER
Figure 17, Iris Drop Front View, Town Square
The Metal Children

Wall A & A.1
Scale: 1/2" = 1'-0"

Figure 18, Wall A & A.1 Painters Elevation

57
Figure 19, Wall B & B.1 Painters Elevation
The Metal Children
Wall C
Scale: $\frac{1}{2''} = 1' - 0''$

Figure 20, Wall C Painters Elevation
Figure 21, Town Statue Painters Elevation

The Metal Children

Town Statue

Scale: $\frac{1}{2}'' = 1' - 0''$
Figure 22, Floor Painters Elevation
Appendix D : Production Photos
Figure 1: Production Photo Apartment
Figure 2: Production Photo Motel
Figure 3: Production Photo Auditorium
Figure 4: Production Photo ER
Figure 5: Production Photo Town Square