

Using the metaphor of a repertory performance season as a tool towards developing sustainable theatrical design practices.

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Abstract / Concepts

The world of theatrical production is ephemeral. This has often resulted in a tendency towards less than sustainable practices within the industry and art form. It has also often placed a potential “barrier of entry” for certain demographics whose resources cannot provide for “single use” production elements.

It is, however, feasible to at least compensate for a portion of the aforementioned challenges by utilizing a design and production mindset that emulates a repertory production schedule.

Definition of Terms

Repertory Theatre:

The term repertory theatre is most usually used to describe a series of individual productions that are presented in the same venue, with each production alternating performance dates (eg: two nights of *King Lear* followed by a brief changeover period – perhaps as short as 12-24 hours – then two nights of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* followed by *The Comedy of Errors* and then returning back to *King Lear*).

Sustainability (theatrical):

Methods and techniques that allow for the needs of current situations and applications, while maintaining - at minimum – a baseline supply of resources for future projects and productions.

Technique Examples – Fort Hays State University 2022-23 Mainstage Season



1) *Promises, Promises*

Using existing stock items – platforms, furnishings and Broadway and Hollywood style flattage – an open plan flexible design was created. This design permitted rapidity of scene changes as well as preplanned utilization of the platforming in the seasons next production.



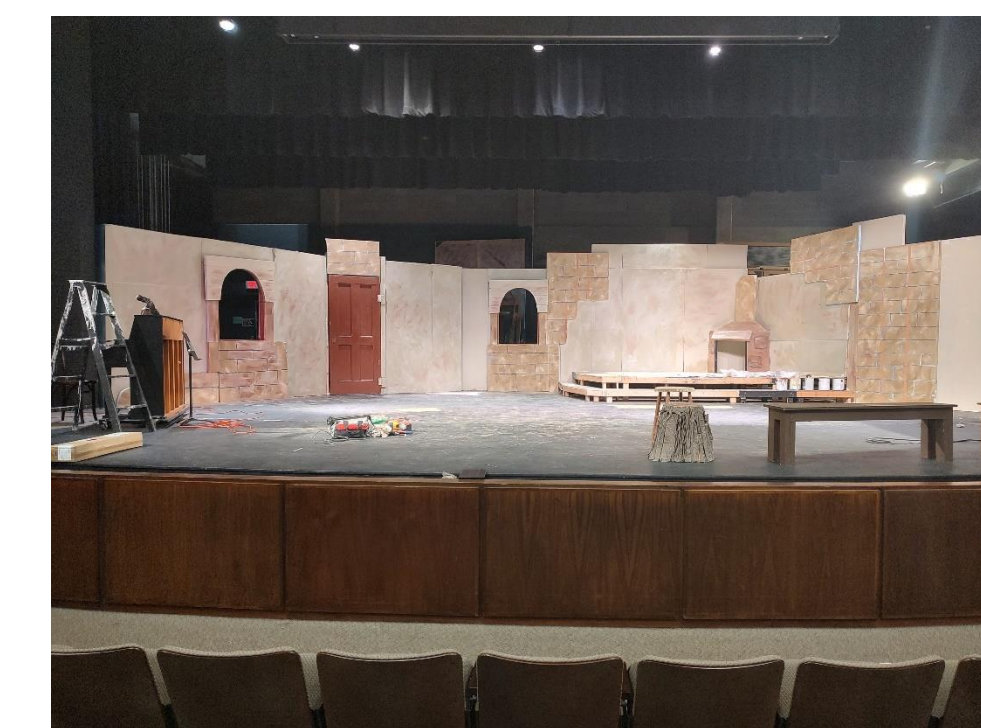
2) *Independence*

The stage right platforming was shifted intact directly downstage, forming the base for a stairway unit. The Broadway flattage was reused as upstage masking on stage right, and the upstage center platforming was relegated to new heights and repositioned center left, creating a “porch”. Various Hollywood flats were repositioned to create appropriate walls



3) *Don't Dress for Dinner*

The stage right platforming was struck, with its various Hollywood flats remaining to be used for walls. Additional door units were pulled from stock and interfaced with those units. The majority of the upstage right platforming was kept in position, with the far upstage unit being relegated to a slightly lower height.



4) *Amahl and the Night Visitors*

All three door units from stage right remained (though repositioned) with the doors being removed from two of the units and the resulting openings filled with temporary window plugs. The third unit had its door replaced from one with an etched glass panel to a solid core look. The upstage right platforming was brought to a single height, with additional full length step platforming added.

Conclusions

The 2022-23 Mainstage season at Fort Hays State University can serve as a baseline example for this process and mindset. While the Department of Music and Theatre does have a certain stock of scenic items, its collection is by no means unusual for many educational institutions of its size. Much like anything within the realm of the theatrical arts, collaborative planning is the key to success. As long as all parties within the artistic team agree on how the design aspects will serve the storytelling of the text design choices can be made on a seasonal rather than show by show level. Also, while the FHSU 2022-23 Mainstage season played largely to interior settings with tones of realism, there is nothing inherent within this technique that limits it to only such productions. More lyrical design and staging potentials are fully feasible, given prior agreement between the members of the artistic and production team.

Finally, many currently underserved communities (eg: rural high schools) find themselves limited or “shut out” of more fully realized production creation. While developing initial stock might be a protracted process, with a piece added here and there, this technique can help both “amortize” such expenses as well as including the secondary benefit of increased collaboration within the artistic teams involved.

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