

**Director's notebook  
Student B (SL and HL)**

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**Published Play: The Long Christmas Ride Home by Paula Vogel**

**ISBN #0-8222-2003-2**

**Act: One Act Play**

**Scene/Moments:** Pages 41-51 1st moment is when the father hits the mother and the children become adults

2<sup>nd</sup> moment 52-57 and The dancer that breathes life into the Ghost of Stephen who then breaths life into the childhood puppet version of him, that returns to the moment when the father hits the mother and they are back in the car hanging over a cliff until the end of the play when the father pulls the car back safely, but so much damage has been done.

**\*MY THOUGHTS ARE WRITTEN IN GREY**

**\*\* QUOTES, EXTRACTS, ETC...ARE WRITTEN IN BLUE**

**Initial reactions-**The blend of naturalistic and non-naturalistic acting styles, the use of breath and stillness to create dramatic tension. '**...East meets West. Actors meet Puppets. Past meets Present...**' said theatre critic Carolyn Clay about her experience seeing this play. The simplicity of the story told with the possibilities of the strong visuals. The contrast between stillness-being trapped in a car with your family, bursting out into the future and how movement is heightened. The family in pain at a time of year that is about celebration- 3 children, 2 parents, 1 violent act. The family caught in desire, anger, neglect, and expectations. Gender and sexuality issues, AIDS, depression, rejection, the father's affair, the wife's anger, the family financially neglected because of the 'other woman.'

The metaphors and symbols in this piece are the use of the Japanese images, the Bunraku form of puppetry, and the line from the play that is repeated over and over again **"It's amazing what people throw away."** The father willing to throw away his entire family, and literally almost does when he chooses to strike his wife across the face, losing control of the car and sliding off the road on the brink of going off into a creek bed. Time freezes in that moment, as the actor's playing the child puppets breaks forth into adulthood. Perhaps that is a metaphor for their childhood being ripped from them and having to grow up too fast. The entire journey in the car is a journey into looking at their lives. The words of the minister in the play-At the core is the Buddhist belief in " ukiyo-e, " " the floating world, " in which the ephemera of life is both celebrated-a line from the play defining this would be- *Joy in the world as opposed to " Joy to the World.* This word, Ukiyo-E, resonates with Stephen as both a small child and an adult. I want to create a 'floating world' visually for my audience.

The color in terms of lighting feels like a hot light at times, everyone under a spotlight but cold with hints of a blue wash. It feels like ice, trapped, snow, cold.

I always thought of Snow Globes as Floating worlds (Ukiyo-E)...maybe my set? This play is deals with past, present and future...I like how a Snow Globe helps to create and capture that idea. The puppets themselves have the ability to float.

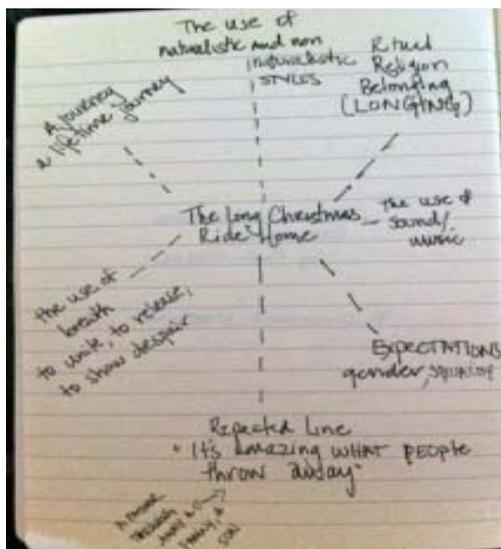
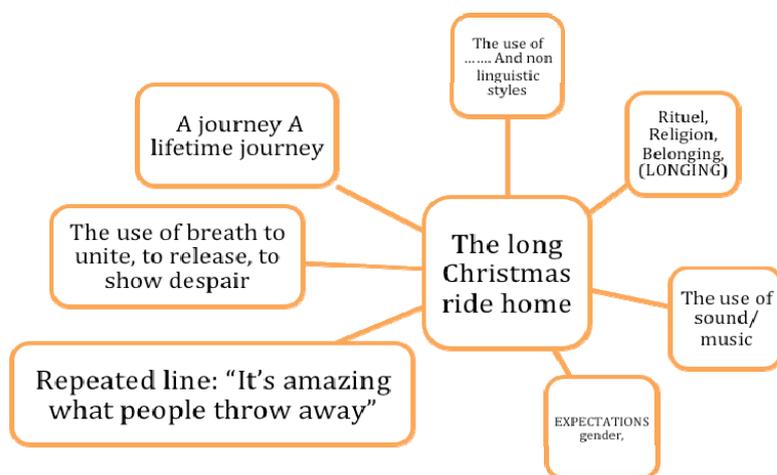


Image from my journal on my initial response to the play.



**Original Context (Research):** Cultural and Theoretical Context with my artistic responses Although no particular theme or topic dominates Vogel’s work, she often examines traditionally controversial issues such as sexual abuse and prostitution.<sup>1</sup> Asserting that she "writes the play backwards," moving from emotional circumstances and character to craft narrative structure, Vogel says, "My writing isn't actually guided by issues.... I only write about things that directly impact my life." Vogel's family, especially her late brother Carl Vogel, influences her writings. Vogel says, "In every play, there are a couple of places where I send a message to my late brother Carl. Just a little something in the atmosphere of every play to try and change the homophobia in our world."<sup>[1]</sup> Carl's likeness appears in such plays as *The Long Christmas Ride Home* [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Long\\_Christmas\\_Ride\\_Home](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Long_Christmas_Ride_Home)] (2003), *The Baltimore Waltz*, and *And Baby Makes Seven*. Her work embraces theatrical devices from across several traditions, incorporating, in various works, direct address, Bunraku puppetry, omniscient narration, and fantasy

sequences. Critic David Finkel finds this breadth in Vogel's career to be reflective of a general tendency toward stylistic reinvention from work to work. "This playwright recoils at the notion of writing plays that are alike in their composition," Finkel writes. "She wants each play to be different in texture from those that have preceded it."<sup>[2]</sup>

1. Parker, Mary-Louise. "Paula Vogel" [<http://bombsite.com/issues/61/articles/2108>], *BOMB Magazine* [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BOMB\\_Magazine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BOMB_Magazine)], Fall 1997. Retrieved on 2011-07-19.

2. David Finkle (5 November 2003). "Review: The Long Christmas Ride Home" [<http://www.theatermania.com/content/news.cfm/story/4056>]. *TheaterMania*. Retrieved 2008-12-25.

This play is a beautiful combination of a very western style of theatre in terms of language and playing realism, but using references to Japan and Japanese forms of theatre throughout: Bunraku Puppetry, as well as Noh movements. It is approached as a "one Westerner's misunderstanding of Bunraku...the misunderstanding is the key." according to Vogel.

'How distance makes trauma beautiful, a terribly beauty as Yeats once said'-Paula Vogel (Youtube interview on Women in Theatre accessed Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>. 2013). According to Vogel in the same above interview, this play is a response to *The Long Christmas Dinner* and *The Happy Journey to Trenton and Camden* by Thornton Wilder and a response to her brother (who died of Aids). Hints of her brother are captured in the character of Stephen. Vogel's piece is a Post-Modern piece, so I need to research a bit on that form.

**The following information is From Wikipedia:**

*The Long Christmas Ride Home* is a one-act full-length play by American playwright Paula Vogel that was first performed in 2003. It dramatises a road trip by two parents and their three young children to visit grandparents for the Christmas holiday, and the emotional turmoil that they undergo. A significant element of the production schema is a Western, contemporary employment of bunraku [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bunraku>], an ancient form of Japanese puppetry.

### Production history

Many of these productions have honored Vogel's assertion that the play, while partly about Christmas, is not meant as a seasonal "Christmas play" (unlike, for example, adaptations of Charles Dickens' [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles\\_Dickens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Dickens)] *A Christmas Carol* [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A\\_Christmas\\_Carol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Christmas_Carol)]). Therefore, like the world and New York City premieres, many productions are presented during what Vogel terms "the before and aftermath" of the holiday season (e.g., October, January).<sup>[1]</sup> This production will not take place during the 'Christmas Season' as per Vogel's suggestion, in order to capture the 'before and aftermath' of the traditional Christmas Season, my thoughts are about performing it during the month of October and November and then again in January. Or maybe I should play it for only one night, July 25<sup>th</sup> 6 months before and 6 months after Christmas day.

### Characterization

While the characters of the mother, father, and children (in adulthood) are portrayed by human performers, the children (in youth) are portrayed by puppeteers and initially voiced by narrators. Vogel bases the presence of puppets on what she claims is "one Westerner's misunderstanding of bunraku," the centuries-old form of Japanese puppetry. (Vogel does, however, write that other styles of puppets would be acceptable, so long as the children-puppets do not become "cute or coy.")<sup>[1]</sup> **I am going to consider using shadow puppets and larger scale bunraku puppets, as well as other puppetry styles in addition to the Bunraku style puppets. There is a serious nature to the style of puppetry that I must adhere to as a director of this piece. Vogel indicates the play's flexibility in regard to the use and number of puppeteers.<sup>[1]</sup> Some productions, including the world premiere, utilize three-person bunraku teams to manipulate the puppets: an *omozukai* controls the right hand of the puppet, a *hidarizukai* controls the left hand of the puppet, and an *ashizukai* controls the feet. Other productions, sometimes responding to the economic considerations of hiring additional performers, have used a single puppeteer for each child puppet (though this makes it impossible to use traditional bunraku puppets). Regardless of the type of puppeteering arrangement employed, the chief (or in some cases, sole) puppeteer will later assume the role of the child as an adult. **I will be using the 2 puppeteers per one puppet, but all puppeteers will be dressed in black with the traditional black hoods, except for the puppeteer that represents the older version of the child puppet. They puppeteers who later become the adults of the children (Rebecca, Stephen, and Clair) will be dressed in contemporary fashion appropriate to the character type. Rebecca the young unmarried pregnant girl, rebellious and possibly playing with an idea of blending Japanese punk fashion, she should look like a mess, someone who doesn't actually care about fashion and maybe a bit like someone who looks they have a hangover. When we find out Rebecca is pregnant, it should feel shockingly sad and the judgement of someone in this state is pregnant. Stephen seems like the nice guy...I don't want to play the camp, over the top 'gay' fashion, but rather a contrast, almost plain-maybe trying to not trigger more of his father's rejection. Clair is someone to me who almost shatters the pretty little daddy girl image. Later in the play she is a lesbian. I think playing her as a lesbian who identifies her gender as more masculine would be fitting-a rejection of her father's doting and favoritism. Almost a guilty to response-short male haircut, military style boots, wife-beater tee shirt, jeans...she may have tattoo's in remembrance of Stephen...written in Japanese. In the play, Clair's child puppet wants a cowgirl outfit and 6 shooter for Christmas, but is dismissed by the mother-indicating that Clair's desire for toys meant for boys was inappropriate. This is a very subtle moment but gender and sexuality are issues running through both Clair and Stephen's journey.****

The traditional bunraku function of the Japanese *tayū* (or chanter), who, among other narrative tasks, performs a puppet character's utterances, is fulfilled by the Man or Woman narrator at the beginning of the journey and then by a puppeteer (one per child character) in the latter part of the journey. In so doing, Vogel is able to continue the traditional *tayū*'s fluctuation between first person and second person address.

The Man and Woman, who begin the play as omniscient narrators, soon assume the roles of the mother and father during the journey. These two performers initially speak all stage dialogue, including the lines of the children and some stage directions. **It is clear to me that the Man and Woman role need strong vocal range.** Gradually, the three actors who begin the play as the chief puppeteers of the three children begin to speak the children's lines, relegating the Man and Woman to roles as the parents and occasional narrators. The human actors speaking the children's lines during the opening automobile journey abandon the puppets in the latter portion of the play to fully embody the adult characters during lengthy monologues.

### **Music and sound**

Acknowledging the continual presence of music in traditional bunraku, Vogel has indicated her preference that "music and sound effects run under the entire play."<sup>[1]</sup> Many productions make great use of traditional Japanese music by shamisen players, though Vogel states that aural effects as varied as a boom box, Western Christmas carols "tuned to the tonal scales of bunraku," wooden clappers, or Hawaiian guitars are acceptable. **My thoughts are using traditional bunraku instruments-such as the shamisen but playing traditional Christmas Carols. Such as 'Oh Holy Night' especially during the violent scene. The idea of playing with contrast. Vogel's thoughts on how 'distance makes trauma beautiful.'**

Wooden clappers will also be used to underscore some of the rhythmic build in action, like when the puppet children are fighting in the car, or when Stephen is having sex in a bar. ***"Just as the chanter, when reciting, places more importance on expressing the feelings of the tale than on musicality, it is important for the shamisen player too to fill his playing with the "heart" of the piece, and also to assist the chanter in his recitation...For that reason, the ideal is that the shamisen player must become one in spirit with the chanter."*** (Japan Arts Council website-<http://www2.ntj.jac.go.jp/unesco/bunraku/en/contents/creators/tayu.html>) There is not a chanter in this play, but the Mother and Father do play the narrators as well. The idea here is that all the actors and the Shamisen player, along with other musicians must become of one emotion.

### **Scenic design**

Vogel intends the work to be played on a "simple, elegant, bare" set: stools, benches, and simple chairs. Such minimalism will, she hopes, "allow the action [to] flow as much as possible." Real stage properties (e.g., an actual umbrella) should be used only "when absolutely necessary."<sup>[1]</sup> Most major productions have adopted Vogel's suggested scenic design [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scenic\\_design](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scenic_design)]. **While Vogel had in mind simple, bare set...she certainly made it clear in the playwright's notes at the beginning of the play that she is open to extravagant large budget productions. I am looking to blend the two ideas. This helps with the visual potential of the script as well as the commercial extravagance of the Christmas Season. The Snow Globe idea is about looking like a magical nostalgic setting, but inside is a family trapped in their own desire, fear and darkness. I want to create a "floating world."**

## References

1. Vogel, Paula (2004). *A Long Christmas Ride Home*. TCG. Pp. 5–8. ISBN 1-55936-249-9.
2. Dewitt, David. "THEATER REVIEW; There's Mom and Dad, And a Lot of Problems"  
[<http://theater2.nytimes.com/mem/theater/treview.html?res=9C0CEED61F38F932A35751C0A9629C8B63>] *The New York Times*, February 1, 2004
3. "The Long Christmas Ride Home - Reviews - Nov 5, 2003"  
[<http://www.theatermania.com/content/news.cfm/story/4056>].  
Theatermania.com. 2003-11-05. Retrieved 2012-05-16.

In trying to understand more about Paula Vogel, I began to research Feminism, as Vogel has been called a feminist playwright. I after reading about Feminism I did not feel as if this play fit into this ism. The father was such a dominating presence. But then it hit me that the son, Stephen, who was gay and effeminate, actually represented the feminist voice. I'm not sure exactly how this information will be used completely, but it does give me ideas to discuss with the cast. The following information is my research into Post Modernism and the theoretical context of the play. Reading Wilder's work it is clear where Vogel gets her inspiration for this play and it is evident that she is taking a postmodern approach to Wilder's play. This is not an easy thing to get my brain around, but my comments are in grey responding to the research I found.

### **POSTMODERNISM- New and old make..... by Robert Barton's book Style for Actors 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition**

**Manifesto:** Play with the past without embracing nostalgia. See life with quotation marks around it. Place the new up against the old. The present sells; history is dead; ideals are illusion. Forget consistency, continuity, and originality. Embrace splicing and blurring of forms, stances, moods and cultural levels. Enshrine the discontinuous. Challenge all arbiters of good taste. Undermine seriousness with kitsch. Respect all uncertainties. See erosion as art. Theatricalize the mundane; politicize the theatrical. Replace declarations of faith with declarations of skepticism. Aspire to ambiguity. Avoid all systems.

**Background:** Postmodernism first appears as a rebellion against modernism in architecture, then painting, then dance.

**Sight:** Designs are likely to evoke the past and present simultaneously, with period detail executed in new and unexpected materials, colors and shapes. A first impression will alter with extended viewing, through quirky, informed touches and sly insertions. Again, I think this idea of a Snow Globe, projections, shadows, along with costumes that evoke a familiar 1950's family- maybe mimicking the classic Christmas film *White Christmas* or *It's a Wonderful Life*, but the main puppeteers playing the adult versions of the children would be dressed in modern clothes of the mid 1980's.

**Sound:** Old sounds reverberate with new cadences. The tone is blasé, exhausted, bemused and self-conscious. It helps to be a devastating mimic of celebrities. In terms of music the mix with western and the Shamisen player seems to capture this idea.

**Skills:** Postmodern theatre calls on the actor to express enthusiasm for any phenomenon while simultaneously mocking it; to ferret out humor and irony and find political implications in every possible source; to balance the raucous and disrespectful with the bland and the meek; and to develop vocal technique to convey a feeling and its alternatives. Knowledge of television, shopping malls, garage sales and suburbs as sources of information also helps. Although postmodernism is rooted in disillusionment, it is not a hostile performance style; rather, the performers show delight in the invention of themselves and respect for their differences. Actors turn to address the camera/audience occasionally. While there are some possible elements in here that might work with this piece, I believe it is the realistic acting style that mixed with the non-naturalistic staging that makes this piece of theatre so interesting.

### Lingo

**Reflexivity – authorial confession or intrusion into a work-**the puppeteers break out and become the human actors of their childhood puppet character...the moments are almost like long monologues.

**Intertextuality – mixing traditions, genres, texts-** Vogel's mixture of western realism and classical Bunraku, as well as other forms of puppetry. The entire play is a remake of Wilder's play.

**Pastiche – ironic collage-** Something Vogel does a lot of in her plays.

**Appropriation – stealing or heavy modelling (eg Madonna's Monroe)**

**Androgyny – resistance to gender codes for normative behavior-** Clair wanting a cowgirl outfit and gun, Stephen's effeminate mannerisms and rejection of gender specific toys...the soccer ball. Stephen's desire to wear his sister Clair's charm bracelet. Clair I want to look androgynous when she is an adult.

**Deconstruction – reading against the grain for what is latent or unsaid.** The internal thoughts are played out and shared in this play.

**Personal Context (Intention and Impact):** This is an emotional memory play. It plays with the past, present and future. 3 Children, 2 parents, 1 violent act (I adapted that phrase on a YouTube trailer created to promote one theatre companies production of the play).

Part of our unit of study in theatre has been on the tradition of Bunraku, as well as some other styles of puppetry. I enjoyed it, but didn't really get it on a personal level. The unit was based on a handout by Rob Warren on Bunraku as well as watching several DVD's and then ended with us making some newspaper puppets and doing scene work. I was the 3<sup>rd</sup> puppeteer who operated the feet. We wore black, including covering our faces. Black in Japan means nothingness according to James Brandon, a professor of Japanese theatre at Hawaii University. Imagine playing the role of nothing??!!-that was my initial reaction.

At first I thought, 'why am I learning about Japanese puppetry that takes 30 years to master?' I've never even been to a Japanese restaurant, much less Japan; which is actually fine by me. Oh it's not that I don't want to go, I do-but not with my family! Let's just say that my parents would argue the entire time and expect things to be like

'America.' In fact, my guess is that we would travel thousands of miles to Japan and end up eating at a McDonalds.

Why am I telling you, a stranger, all of this? Well, it's called "Personal Context," so I'm getting personal. Now before you go and get too uncomfortable with my intimate disclosures about my home life, I need to explain why.

I've been drawn to plays that explore family dysfunction, perhaps I identify with that, as most of my friends can also relate. A family that love, but somehow is just isn't the healthiest. Maybe my deep Southern roots are too deep to cut, and why should I? The plays that speak to me are Tennessee William plays: *The Glass Menagerie*, *Cat On a Hot Tin Roof*, *Suddenly Last Summer*, etc...

As someone questioning my own sexuality, I began to read articles about Queer Theory and gender bender plays by postmodern playwright Christopher Durang. I even directed some scenes from *The Laramie Project* using queer theory. So why didn't I choose something along those lines, honestly, I found this play *The Long Christmas Ride Home* in a list of one-acts and it was a blend of realism and Bunraku puppetry. And then it all kind of came together- back to my original question-'why am I learning about Japanese puppetry?' There is a line in this play that made me see why we should explore the unfamiliar. It sort of made this entire course make sense. At one point the character playing the minister says on page 25-

***Sometimes using the distance and perspective  
Of a far-off land, of another people  
We can return and see our home more clearly.***

My **Director's Vision** for this piece is: **A Visual Floating World of Emotional Time** (Past, Present, Future); East meets West, naturalism and non-naturalism...contrasts. *Emotional Time is the feeling of the past, present and future exist in the same moment. If we were to visualize emotional time, we would not see it as a rigid string of points connected together in a two-dimensional space but as a string of points whose shape and relationship is constantly moving and changing in a holographic space. The perspective from which we view it also affects this space. Change the perspective, and the shape and the relationship of the points change too. (Strasberg, John p.4)*

This play follows that structure and allows for me to think visually with the elements- Shadows, projections, puppetry, snow globe, fog, and music to create Emotional Time. I will also explore the postmodern theory and apply aspects to certain elements.

**Audience (Intention and Impact):** Space will dictate greatly on how I hope my audience feels, actually being in a church (one that is quite liberal due to the content of this play), but I want that feeling of community and ritual. Adults who just feel empty...who cannot bare the thought of going to the theatre to see *A Christmas Carol*. Couples in crisis, anyone who has ever grown up with the damage of unhealthy parenting. People trying to make sense of their childhood. Seeing a family in a Snow Globe-floating world, but also trapped. Sitting in tense stillness until you have been triggered and violently

shaken, then settling into the aftermath and it's beauty. In my research, it has come up over and over again from DVD, books and articles, that the purpose of the puppeteers performing Bunraku is to achieve Enlightenment. I want this same impact on my audience. That seeing this piece, they are able to maybe to see their own 'home more clearly."

**Shape of the play:** The shape of the play to me feels round-like the circle of life. From children, to adults, and then the Ghost of Stephen after he dies, back to the children again. It is a memory. I think this shape is why I want to fit the family in a Snow Globe when they are driving and lost in their private thoughts, but have the ability to break out (without breaking the giant snow globe)...This play is an emotional memory play that moves from past, present to future back to past...things in Shadows are interesting to me...as well as the ability to project images...the way memories flood our minds. This was created by me on [www.wordle.net](http://www.wordle.net) they are my themes and ideas from the play.



**Space-**A church with a large playing area. This hopefully will create that sense of Christmas ritual, a time of celebration and storytelling. The audience will be drawn into the feeling of a community. Perhaps also feeling a bit reverent or a bit vulnerable. I don't want to perform it in a tradition theatre space. I like the idea of using a found space- it has a sense of the audience being quietly immersive, as if they need to be there sitting in the pews.

I am concerned about the amount of playing space and the entrance/exits through the Snow Globe...I thought a hydraulic lift from the floor into the Snow Globe, but then how will they get out, so maybe leaving an area in the back that allows for entrances and exits...this could be covered with cool images projected onto the snow globe to cover those transitions. The following image is a possible idea for how to create a snow globe effect...



Find this image in: “Playing with fire”,  
Julie Taymor , 1999. Page 174

This image is from Julie Taymor’s book PLAYING WITH FIRE and it reminded me of a snow globe

**Transitions** -The lights, projections, and sound will help create a heightened sense in moments of transitions. The scene where the family is suspended in the car about to slip into a creek bed...I want flashbacks of the every moment in the play to be projected and run at fast-forward speed...the projection will be on the Snow Globe. The fighting with the kids in the car, the fist fight with the grandfather and husband, the kites, the breaking of the charm, the lustful thoughts of Sheila, the voice of the wife, the sermon of the minister...then the puppeteers playing the children burst forth as the adult version of their childhood puppet. The use of breathe in this play is specific and needs attention. It is used to release tension, to sigh in hopelessness, to breath life into the Ghost of Stephen and then into the puppet of Stephen.

Elements	Given Circumstances	My Ideas
Space	A small church with a large open playing stage.	I originally thought a black box. The feel of the show is intimate. It is about a family spending some time at a Christmas service. The idea of the holy and sacred being contrasted with sexual desire and violence. Hoping the audience will feel that feeling of community that a church can provide, along with the sometimes dark and disturbing nature of our own thoughts. Every one tends to look good on the outside, but in our minds or behind closed doors lays our dirty secrets, our fears, and our desires.
Setting	A Giant Snow Globe, Two long benches, Shadow Screen,	Inside are the two benches. Outside the Snow Globe is where other action takes place. The visit to the grandparents, the Minister’s sermon, the seedy bar scene. I would also like a large cut out of apartment windows. This to show the other puppets that

		are minor characters, but play important roles. The adult versions are played by actors but their lovers are to be played by puppets (Shadow, Foam life size Puppets, Hand and Rod puppets)
Costumes	Realistic, Sunday Best, Christmas Reds and Greens. Then later the adult versions of the children when they burst out can current trends for young adults.	Postmodern costumes from late 1950's and then also mixed with 1980's costumes.
Lighting	Cold, blue wash, Shadows Projected Hazer lighting effects	There is a line in the play- <i>The night was blue with cold</i> . Many scenes could be played in shadows. The bar scene where Stephen has sex-the moment he knows he has Aids- I want projections of Japanese cherry blossoms in patterns to be projected while he is having sex in the shadows.
Sound	Samisen Player, Wooden Clappers, Christmas Carols, Western Techno fused with traditional Japanese Noh music	The use of traditional Christmas carols played to underscore scenes. Oh Holy Night will be played during the scene where the father slaps the mother in the car and the car spins out of control. Wooden clappers used to build on the rhythm that drives scenes.
SFX	Projections, use of shadows, use of different styles of puppetry. Snow Instead of an actor who plays the man who infected Stephen with AIDS, I want the look actor to wear a puppet costume...in the style of a Muppet Puppet that	Having projections created within the Snow Globe. The end of the play calls for snow, so having it snow inside of the snow globe as the light focus on the faces of the children puppets as the slowly look up. The minister's sermon on Japan-using the projections like a PowerPoint presentation. The scene where Stephen goes to the bar and has sex and is infected with the AIDS virus, seems like a moment that could be played by the character in the bar wearing a Biker, leather, big thick moustache but as a foam

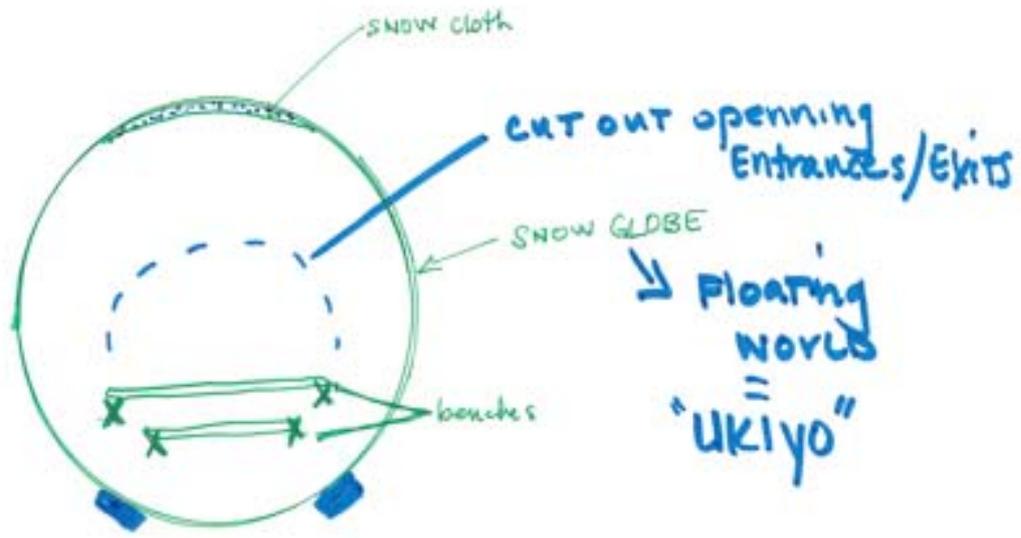
	looks like one of the cast members of the Village People. Snow Low crawling fog	puppet. It gives this moment a chance to blend both the realism and non-naturalistic acting. I want snow to fall in the Snow Globe in the last moment of the play and then snow falling all over the audience.
Props	According to Vogel, only when necessary so as to keep the action of the play moving.	The scene with the Kites. Where Claire misunderstands the word Kike for Kites. Having the stagehands fly kites, as well as having kites fly all over the house. All of the gifts received for Christmas, especially the bracelet, dairy and soccer ball.

The following 2 images below are my poor attempts at creating an idea around the set. I wanted to also create a large Shadow screen so that the scenes where the adult versions of the children have their scenes, it would be done with shadows and shadow puppetry—given the sexual nature of 2 of the scenes, I want this done in shadow.

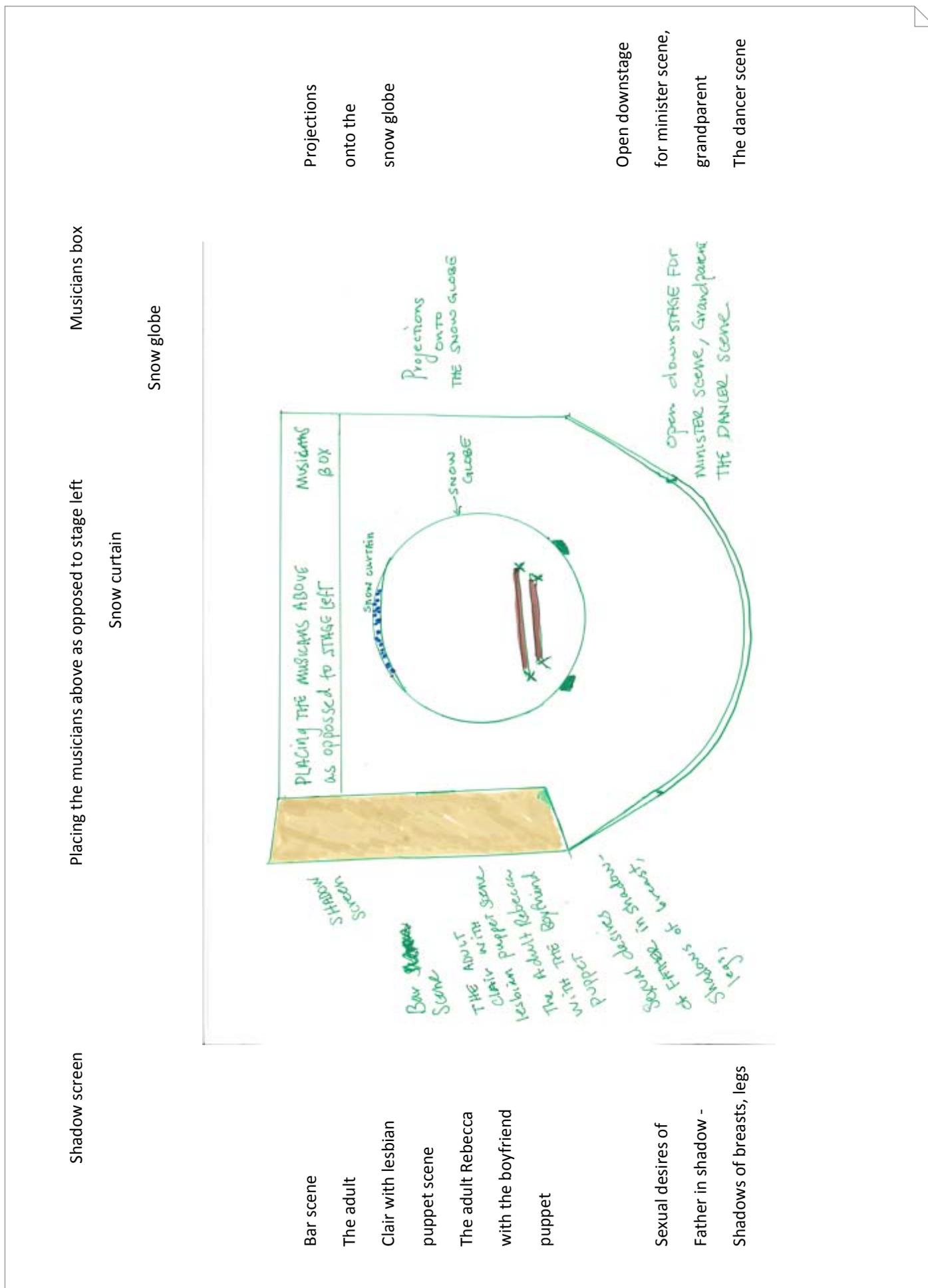
I also think putting the musicians above gives them a status as almost heavenly. In traditional Bunraku, the musicians are stage left, according to a workshop by Rob Warren that I attended in 2012.

There would be images painted on the set of Japanese cherry blossoms, Japanese patterns, as well as the ability to project images onto the snow globe almost like a hologram.

When the father has thoughts of his lover Shelia, I want those images to be in shadow...her thighs, breast, lips, etc...



Snowcloth  
Cut out opening  
Entrances/Exits  
Snow globe -->  
Floating world =  
"Ukiyo"  
Benches





Drawing by Rob Warren, IB TSM  
2007

I would use only 2 puppeteers per puppet-or possibly 1- The face of the puppets in my productions would not move like they do in Bunraku, but almost have a very neutral or even sadness in their expressions.

**Rehearsal Process-** Actors working as a complete ensemble. Lots of exercises into ensemble movements. I have a great free download from the theatre company Complicite that I will use.

Vocal work- our class did a lot of work on from the beginning of class with the theorist Patsy Rodenburg and everyone in the cast, but especially the Mother and Father, who play narrators as well...need to lots of vocal range.

Lecoq's States of Tension would be good rehearsal strategies.

It would be necessary to have my musicians available throughout the rehearsal process, as I want them to not just underscore, but also actually work off and with the actors and the actors with the musicians.

I would want puppeteers and physical theatre cast members, as well as the ability to act realistically.

There is a lot of fast action that breaks into stillness and breath.

**Live theatre productions** that inspires or influences the scene/moment I've chosen. I'm inspired by Frantic Assembly's movement in the play *THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHTTIME*. It was such an amazing piece of theatre that I saw on NT Live in March 2013 (I watched this production online through the National Theatre Live website). It redefined theatre for me. The mixture of physical theatre created by the entire ensemble blending with the vocal realistic acting style was thrilling. It filled the scene with action. It brought us into the mind of the main character. I really feel as if the scene with the dancer and the Ghost of Stephen should be approached in this style. The Dancer using the movements of Noh-slow and ritualistic, then the entire company of stagehands manipulating, lifting, throwing, catching, etc...the Ghost of Stephen as he is dancing with the Dancer, building in an angered frenzy.

The other production that has influenced my overall approach to the entire play is *War Horse* in New York. 2012. Again, my mind was blown the horses looked like large-scale puppets, almost like a frame of a puppet, but the movement and mannerism was completely naturalistic. This fusion of non-naturalism and naturalism created a surprising emotional response from me as I was watching. I am hoping the puppet children can have a similar affect on my audience. I want the style of my puppets to not look like realistic children, but maybe more the essence of childhood. The horses in *War Horse* were a frame of a horse....I like this idea. It is keeps the non-naturalistic nature of the style but hopefully the acting will be grounded in realism. This frame or unrealistic style of the children puppets I hope will give the idea of the fragility and the spirit of childhood.

The other production I saw was *THE LIGHT PRINCESS* at the National Theatre in London on Oct. 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013. The visual aspects of the production were beautiful. The princess in the production floated! This was done mostly by several actor/puppeteers dressed in black but faces not covered, as the manipulated, lifted and made it appear that the princess was actually floating. It was basically Bunraku puppetry but using an actual actor. It has inspired me to use the Bunraku puppeteer's in the moment when Stephen meets the Dancer. I want Stephen to float-again literally showing the idea of Ukiyo-E (Floating World).

I also just realized that all 3 productions that have inspired my were directed by the same person-Marianne Elliot.

**Title of Moment #1:** Hageshii the Japanese word for violence, intense according to the website <http://japanese.about.com/od/wordoftheday/p/word134.htm> I wanted the scene where the Father hits the Mother to be called Hageshii.

The major conflict in the play is around a violent act. There is a moment where the Mother and Father (and kids) are in the car arguing after a Christmas visit with the grandparents go horribly wrong and this leads to a fight in the car between the Mother and Father. The Father, in slow motion, strikes the mother across the face. This moment in the play is where the children puppets break out into adult. It was a defining moment in the memories and here we see the adults they have become...broken. Rebecca unmarried and pregnant, Clair suicidal, and Stephen in fact, has died of AIDS and is now a Ghost.

Again the musicians would underscore this moment that has been building then in a moment everything moves into slow motion as the Father hits the Mother. Then complete stillness as puppeteer playing the child Rebecca burst into young adulthood in the mid 1980's. We see her as a mess, drunk and screaming at her puppet boyfriend to let her inside the apartment. We find out here she is pregnant by another guy, cheating...following the same pattern as her father. The boyfriend puppet would be a shadow puppet. It is here we learn that Stephen has died. This breakout moment is repeated in a following scene with Clair watching through the apartment window her lesbian lover having sex with another women. Again, this scene would use shadow puppets to portray Clair's lover and the other woman. Clair would be played by the actress who was the puppeteer for the child puppet of Clair. Clair broken by the affair holds a gun to her head. We then see the Ghost of Stephen playing out a sexual reaction in a bar because the man he loved stopped loving him. In this rather graphic scene in a biker bar, Stephen describes the moment he knew the AIDS virus enters his body. I want to project Japanese cherry blossoms in patterns during this moment as Stephen is having sex with the Biker (a giant foam Muppet style puppet who looks like a member of the Village People)...the sex scene would be done in behind a shadow screen.

**Title of Moment #2: IBUKI** – it means breath in Japanese according to this website: [http://www.stockkanji.com/Breath\\_ibuki](http://www.stockkanji.com/Breath_ibuki) I wanted to title my Key moments, so this moment I thought should be called 'Ibuki.' Pages 52-53 in script.

The Dancer, who comes on towards the end and dances for and with Stephen, breathes life into the Ghost of Stephen, who in turn breathes life into the childhood puppet of himself. This transition needs to feel like beauty. The music slow and building, the other stagehands come on as the music builds and in this moment of Noh Dance and Physical Theatre. This fusion of East meets West.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lu5Vn1vQ5i4> a scene from Nō Theatre Performance "Tamura", Dance of the Ghost.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DmMQN0AMk7k> promo video from Push Theatre (a physical theatre company)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w9IEsUYITU0> Frantic Assembly's and the National Theatre's Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time

*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* was complete inspiration...blending realistic acting styles and magical design affects with physical theatre. There is a moment in the play where the actor is being lifted up imagining he is an astronaut traveling to the moon-it was visual stunning, as the actors lifted him and the lights created stars. I actually want to imitate this moment to a large degree...I want the moment in my play to have Stephen lifted, as well as the Noh Dancer, as they appear to be floating through space, the music playing a fusion of traditional Japanese Noh but mashed with a western techno mix and the lights underscoring this moment of beauty-Lights like stars. I hope this will create Ukyio-E: Floating World.

The other production I saw was *THE LIGHT PRINCESS* at the National Theatre in London on Oct. 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013. The visual aspects of the production were beautiful. It has inspired

me to use the Bunraku puppeteers to lift and manipulate Stephen when the beautiful dancer and he meet. I want it to look as if Stephen is floating with the Dancer in a moment of timelessness. I see the Dancer in a Kimono of silk that falls from his body and is used to wrap Stephen in the dance. The Wooden clappers, the shamisen players blended with the western music will hopefully build to the desperate frenzy of Stephen's emotional state. It is in the suspended moment of floating that I want the lights to be in a tight focus on the Dancer and Stephen as the Dancer breathes breath/life into Stephen. The lights will project stars all over the stage. As Stephen is given life through breath he then lifts up the child puppet of himself and tenderly breathes into the puppet as the puppet comes to life in Stephen's arms. It is a tender moment of connection.

The little child puppet Stephen is goes back into the car (joining his puppet sisters, Mother and Father inside the Snow Globe sitting on the benches). We are back at the moment again where the Father and Mother are arguing and he turns to hit her in slow motion. The shamisen player would underscore this moment by playing 'Oh Holy Night,' as the Father loses control of the car. The actors in the Snow Globe would physically swerve and sway in slow motion, as the projections of every moment of the play would be in a fast-forward. The father's lustful desires for Sheila, the sermon at church on Ukiyo-E and Japan, the fight between the grandfather and the father, the moment when Stephen tries to wear Clair's bracelet and breaks it, the mother's anger at the father for not providing for the family, getting a vacuum cleaner as a Christmas gift while the mistress received jewelry. These projections would happen during the lines on pages 54-55. Then as we realize the car is on the edge of a cliff about to slip into a creek bed, Clair panics and wants out. There is panic and silence as, according the script the- *"Father prayed to a god he did not believe in and reminded himself of the good children he has, and the Mother thought to herself she must try harder, dress younger, say softer things."* But thoughts of Sheila flooded his mind as the Father calmly pulls the car from danger and we hear the family breath as one. This breath, according the script, should be amplified and then turn into the sound of wind as the Father says, "Children: let's go home." The children with locked arms, look upward into a shaft of light as snow begins to fall gently on them in the Snow Globe, music begins to fade as snow begins to fall on the audience.

Perhaps these moments in context to my entire vision of ***a visual floating world of emotional time*** will indeed allow the audience (who are sitting in a church), to achieve 'enlightenment' and 'see their own home more clearly.