A stage manager's cosmic experience

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A STAGE MANAGER’S COSMIC EXPERIENCE

by

Marguerite Angela Sugden

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Fine Arts degree in Theatre Arts (Stage Management) in the Graduate College of The University of Iowa

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Thesis Supervisors: Associate Professor Abbie Katz and Lecturer Melissa L. F. Turner
To my mother and lifelong editor, Marinel Romano, for your unconditional love, trust, and encouragement.
Beautiful endings not only give rise to beautiful beginnings, they are themselves beautiful beginnings.

Andromeda
Seven Homeless Mammoths Wander New England
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PUBLIC ABSTRACT

The University of Iowa Department of Theatre produced *Seven Homeless Mammoths Wander New England*, by Madeline George, in the spring of 2018 as part of the Mainstage season. Stage managed by Marguerite Sugden, and brought to life by a diverse team, this production proved to be both a challenging and rewarding process.

From the unique perspective of a stage manager, with particular focus on the Director/Stage Manager relationship, this thesis will examine the challenges and successes of the project from pre-production to post-production. Looking at how the production developed from previous productions through to technical rehearsals, many discoveries are made regarding Sugden’s personal and organizational goals. This paper analyzes how leadership and communication are essential for the forward movement of a production. It also addresses the significance of collaboration in theatrical processes. Sugden concludes with some final thoughts about how this distinct production has shaped who she is as a stage manager, and how it instilled a drive in her to work on shows with which she feels a special connection. Much like the transformations that occur within the play itself, this experience transformed Sugden’s stage management style and validated the power of theatre to bring people together.
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PART I: INTRODUCTION

The University of Iowa Department of Theatre produced *Seven Homeless Mammoths Wander New England*, by Madeline George, in the spring of 2018 as part of the Mainstage season. This production proved to be both a challenging and rewarding process. Yet, it has greatly shaped who I am as a stage manager, and has instilled a drive in me to work on shows with which I feel a special connection.

In theatre, and at The University of Iowa, it is common practice to refer to others by their first names. Working as collaborators fosters a more intimate atmosphere and thus allows for less formal interactions. In consequence, for the purposes of this thesis, I will be referring to my collaborators by their first names.

As director, Meredith Alexander worked with an assistant director, Molly Winstead, and production consultant, Nina Morrison, to develop our production of *Seven Homeless Mammoths Wander New England (Mammoths)* over the course of six weeks. The rest of our team consisted of two guest designers, a graduate designer, an undergraduate designer, department production staff, student assistant designers, crew, and two stage managers. Appendix A includes a complete list of Production Personnel. As the person responsible for the forward movement of the production, and as one of the only people attached to every facet of the production, a stage manager has an incredible birds eye view. This thesis will examine the challenges and successes of the project from pre-production to post-production, through the unique lens of a stage manager.
Production History

The first production of *Mammoths* was produced by Two River Theatre Company in New Jersey. It was originally developed at The Lark Play Development Center, a “playwright-centric, artist guided development center” in New York, that focuses on “process as product”\(^1\). It has since traveled the nation, having been produced in such places as Chicago and Virginia. In a department that has a large focus on new play development, this play was an excellent choice for The University of Iowa. It was refreshing to work on something so new, and something that comments on relevant social issues. Madeline George says that *Mammoths* is a comedy about “jealousy”, “complicated relationships”, “death and rebirth”, “all the transformations that we go through in our lives”, and a comedy about “prehistoric mammoth skeletons”.\(^2\) The story follows Dean Cynthia Wreen and her ex, Greer. Greer had moved out and was in remission, but reveals that her cancer has returned. Together Dean Wreen and Greer decide to have Greer move back in to the house that they once shared. However, Dean Wreen did not consult her new and much younger girlfriend, Andromeda, who also lives there. Andromeda and Greer appear to be direct opposites of each other, although as the play develops, one can begin to see similarities between the two characters. The relationship between Dean Wreen, Greer, and Andromeda is a love triangle that highlights alternative kinship structures. It introduces the audience to a new way of thinking about the traditional family dynamic. The three leading ladies become a family, despite the awkwardness.

Paralleling their story, is the story of the natural history museum on campus that is being shut down to build a freshman dorm. We see the history and memories of the museum acted out.

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through a series of dioramas, in which the Early Man characters stand as frozen mannequins. Using the dialogue of college students that have visited the museum, these mannequins share the museum’s story about bringing people together. In our version, the Caretaker character represented the space in between the two worlds. He was to have a sense of “magic” about him as he spoke through periodicals and newspaper articles to verbalize what was happening to the museum and within the town. When first reading the play, I was eager to see how these elements would function together on the stage and if the audience would understand the connections between the two worlds. It is one of those plays that calls for being seen live, off the page, and on its feet.

As our production process went along, I became exceedingly confident that my attachment to this project was no accident. I coincidentally had just discovered my love for the T.V. show *Friends*, and I was thus overjoyed to find so many inside jokes and references to the sitcom within the play. I felt that I had an insider’s perspective because I could identify all the different *Friend-isms*, as I like to call them, within the script and themes of the play. Madeline George herself calls it a “Shakespearean comedy in the form of a *Friends* sitcom”. The play has also been described as a screwball sex comedy but we ultimately called it “A Cosmic Sitcom,” a title that Meredith came up with after seeing and submitting many drafts of the poster to marketing. I found this description to fit our production perfectly. This title refers to the episodic structure of the piece, as it moves along like episodes from a sitcom, but the message is much bigger than just a few funny moments that make us laugh. It is one of love and transformation.

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When asked what this play is about, the dramaturg and assistant director, Molly, said that this is a play about death. Although this brash response seems grim, the point is that this show makes death seem a little less scary. In a metropolitan college town, filled with students living in the world of Netflix, where they can constantly binge on *Friends*, our production would draw them in with the sitcom-like structure of the piece, but would leave them talking about the higher ideas in place; what family truly means, and what happens once our bodies leave the earth.

The Script

The first step in a stage manager’s process is to thoroughly read the script. We are fortunate in the Stage Management M.F.A. Program because we get access to the scripts the year prior to the production, and can make a case for which show we feel would provide us with the best learning opportunities. I was immediately drawn to *Mammoths*. Not only was the title intriguing, but it struck a personal cord for me. My aunt and her partner are both teachers, and her partner’s ex was recently diagnosed with a very progressive form of cancer. So, they decided to let him move in with them. The characters in *Mammoths* enter a similar arrangement for the same reason. Instantly, Madeline George created a world with characters that I could relate to, and I was eager to help bring this world to life. When I learned that Meredith would be directing the piece and that she too had similar personal connections to the script, I was even more convinced that this was a kismet experience. Meredith’s life intersects with that of Dean Wreen and Greer, and she felt that this story was one worth telling.

I was not only excited to work on this project because of a shared passion with Meredith for telling the story, but it also happened to be two of my friends’ thesis roles. Cristina Goyeneche played Dean Wreen and Elyse Fisher played Greer. I felt a kinship with both women. Cristina went to the same high school as my best friend, and she is one of the few people I can
always count on for fun. Elyse was one of the first people I met here, and we instantly bonded over our mutual love of hiking. I looked forward to the opportunity to help my friends achieve success in these two important roles. These elements; my connection to the piece, Meredith’s shared passion for the story, and it being Cristina and Elyse’s thesis role, made my participation on this production seem like a perfect fit. I was attracted to the “Cosmic” messages, but I also found myself feeling cosmically drawn to this production.

**First Meeting with the Director**

After being assigned a show, one of the first steps in a stage manager’s process is setting up a meeting with the director to discuss working styles and expectations. Although I had already heard a lot about Meredith, I knew it was important to establish our relationship as a team, to ensure a smooth collaboration, and to meet my personal goals. So, I began preparing for our first meeting.

As part of my training, in seminar of my first year, I worked with the other graduate stage managers to generate a master list of questions to ask the director in your first meeting together. This list has since proven to be quite useful. I was preparing questions for my first meeting with Meredith when she invited me to attend a meeting she had planned with the costume designer Akeem. In this initial meeting, Meredith wanted to focus on the story we were trying to tell and why it was important. At first I was worried that focusing mainly on the story would limit the productiveness of our first director meeting because we were not able to touch on any of my questions, but I left feeling very appreciative for the conversation that developed between her and Akeem. Having Akeem there gave me helpful insight into how Meredith works, which allowed me to better adapt to her communication style, and form a stronger working relationship. It also helped me to
become a helpful go-between for her and the designers. Meredith works from the center out, and she was looking at Akeem’s images to spark conversations about the story and the characters. Akeem was looking for feedback on his actual design; patterns, colors, silhouettes. Recognizing a disconnect, I helped mediate and led the conversation down a productive path.

I would consider our more traditional first director meeting to be the phone conversation that Meredith and I had over winter break. During our phone conversation, I asked all the initial questions I wanted regarding expectations and logistics. Additionally, Meredith and I outlined a plan for how to facilitate a better flow of communication with the whole team. Together we created a great game plan for how the process was going to run. This made me confident in my abilities to act as a confidante and sounding board for Meredith. I was invigorated because I was now certain that this project would be an opportunity for growth. Not only was I developing a strong relationship with the director, but I was now positioned be the main point of contact for questions about the show. I understood Meredith’s vision and working style, and could help others understand what she was looking for.

**The Design Team**

The design team is responsible for creating the world of the play. They collaborate with the director to create a vision for a specific production, and then work to bring that vision to life. The stage manager works closely with the design team to uphold the vision, meet deadlines, and physically create the world artistically. As the stage manager, I am the liaison between rehearsal and the designers. Each night I send out a report filled with notes for the designers about discoveries made in rehearsal. Once final designs are in, the stage manager is brought in to support the development process and help the designers stay on track. For the most part, our team was successful in staying on target but we had to overcome a few scheduling challenges.
Jess Fialko was our scenic designer, in charge of designing the architecture, or physical set, for our world. She is an alumnus of the graduate design program, along with our lighting designer, Courtney Schmitz. Both Jess and Courtney were working remotely for most of the production process. Our costume designer was Akeem Celestine, a current graduate student in the graduate design program. At the time, he was in his second year of the program. The sound designer was Elin Dejus (They/Them/Theirs), an undergraduate theatre major who came on board later than the rest of the team. They were a current student of Meredith’s, and this was their first traditional sound design for theatre.

Both Jess and Courtney had been in communication with Meredith before I came on board. Once on board, I set up a meeting with the entire design and directing team at which point the designers shared where they were in their process. Jess shared with us her initial designs, Courtney shared with us her initial research, and Akeem shared with us his initial thoughts and color pallet. These designs continued to change and adapt as the process went along, up until opening night.

Our team came from a vast variety of backgrounds and experiences, and *Mammoths* was everyone’s first time working together. Working with such a diverse team of designers was an exciting challenge for me as a stage manager. Communicating with the entire team is one of my main responsibilities as the stage manager, but with such different schedules, and especially with two of our designers being out of town, finding time to connect was very difficult. Navigating around this scheduling challenge helped to enhance my time management and organization skills. Since I saw Meredith daily during rehearsals, I became the go-between for her and the design team. I would report back to the team and sometimes send separate emails to loop them in to important conversations. This experience allowed me to further develop my people
management skills, and this practice has only proven to help me succeed on other projects. I would not have been as prepared to handle my fall production had I not gone through this process. Developing personal connections, and establishing strong communication among team members are skills that I was proud to showcase during this process, especially in regard to the design team.

**Personal Goals**

I set a lot of personal goals for this production because my previous production had highlighted many opportunities for growth. One of my biggest goals was to develop a strong team dynamic between me and the Assistant Stage Manager (ASM), Alexis Hinman, as well as between us and the rest of the production team. I was a little nervous about working with Alexis because she is an advanced undergraduate stage manager who has had a lot of experience as the lead SM. I was worried that she might see gaps in leadership from my lack of experience and that it would cause issues between us. I never wanted her to resent me by feeling like she could be doing a better job.

It was also extremely important to me that we stood as a united front in support of the rest of the team. I wanted to be sure that others felt that they could come to us with issues so we could help them troubleshoot. I also wanted to establish our role as the main point of contact for any and all questions pertaining to the show. Stage Managers oversee the production process from beginning to end, and as such we can streamline communication down one direct path.

Another goal I set for *Mammoths* was to establish a strong relationship with the director. I have found that in an educational setting it is useful to be a director oriented stage manager. As graduate stage managers, we can relate to our fellow students but we also operate on the same level as the director on the hierarchical chain. This puts us in the perfect position to be an ally for
our directors. They are faced with a very difficult job as they must work around student conflicts, act as educators as well as leaders, and stage an entire production from start to finish that will be viewed by their peers. These factors create a high-stakes situation that can be incredibly stressful. I want to be a confidante for my director so that they know they have someone looking out for their best interests during such a stressful time. Helping the director also helps us as stage managers because we are responsible for the forward momentum of the production process, and the director acts as the dominant force that drives a production forward.

Connecting with our guest designers was another major goal. Our production was unique in that we had two out of town designers. Both Jess, the scenic designer, and Courtney, the lighting designer, were brought in as guest artists. I saw this as a great networking opportunity. Not only are they both alumni from the University but they are both working professionals. I hoped to build strong working relationships with these designers so that if they ever needed a stage manager they would think of me, or at least recommend me for future employment.

Coming into graduate school I had done a lot of assistant stage managing work with only a few stage managing credits. As a result, I felt very strong in the role of the ASM but not as strong as the lead SM. Additionally, I was hyper aware of my weaknesses after working on the Fall Opera. I was proud of the work I had done with the Opera but I did not receive the feedback I would have liked. I was thus determined to turn it all around with this show. I wanted to feel more confident as the person in charge and prove to my committee that I have the skillset required to be a great SM. Impressing the Director of Theatre, Bryon Winn, and the Production Stage Manager, Melissa L. F. Turner, was a huge personal goal that fueled my drive for success. I wanted to prove to myself and everyone around me that I am capable of greatness.
Beyond support, communication, and leadership, a final area of goal setting revolved around organization. On every production, I try to create new and innovative paperwork. I want to have a diverse portfolio that exhibits a variety of capabilities and styles. Securing prep time was the first step towards achieving this goal. I had lost my prep week on a previous production and it was a huge set-back. Making sure that Alexis and I utilized our prep week in a productive manner was a major focus during pre-production.

After reading the script, the next step is prep week. Prep week is typically the week before rehearsals begin, when the stage management team works together to generate paperwork for the show, and get things ready for the first rehearsal. From experience, I have found that a good prep week can often influence the flow of the entire production process, so it is vital that you take the time to prepare adequately. This proved challenging as our annual graduate research trip would cause us to lose three days of prep time. However, Alexis and I met early to outline tasks and discuss availability, and by sticking to the plan we accomplished our goals. Appendix B includes our prep week checklist that we used to stay on track.

Another organizational goal I set for this production was to learn how to completely reformat a script. Melissa helped me take the book format of our script and turn it into a Word document. Once I had the Word document, I had to comb through it for typos and other formatting errors that occur naturally during the scanning process. I have always wanted to learn how to digitize a script besides just tearing it apart and photocopying it page by page. Not only did creating a master script in Word allow me to keep up to date with edits as we moved through the process, it also allowed me to have copies ready to provide to the directing team upon request. Having this Word version also made it very easy to create a digital calling script later in the process (Figure B.8), which became an excellent archive for the show.
By the end of the process I felt very accomplished in relation to my personal goals. Alexis and I established a strong relationship. I would bounce ideas off her regarding the SM duties, and I was able to use my ASM background to help mentor her. I believe that Meredith and I now share a mutual respect. I have a variety of new paperwork templates that I can continue to tweak for future projects, and I now know how to transfer a paper script to a Word document. It is because of the successes on this production that I could tackle an even larger show this fall, and why I now feel confident when applying for lead SM positions. It feels as though the stars aligned, and the universe knew that this project was exactly what I needed.

**Dramaturgy**

As the process moved along conversations kept revolving around the dramaturgical aspects of the play. In a response about why so much dramaturgical research is required in her plays, Madeline George said that it’s because she writes to essentially develop a better understanding of a question she has about the world. (George, 2019). The Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of Americas (LMDA) defines dramaturgy as an effort to “contextualize the world of the play” and to “establish connections among the text, actors, and audience”. According to LMDA, dramaturgs are field experts of the dramatic past, and advocates for the writers of today. (LMDA, 2019).

Uncovering the dramaturgy was an essential part of our rehearsal process because this play not only consists of caveman characters, it spans across multiple generations, and tackles many themes. We spent about three days doing table-work, and then incorporated further script analysis and research into our scene work as we staged the play. It was impossible not to incorporate the dramaturgical elements into our rehearsals, because much like Madeleine
George, we were seeking to understand. We were using all the tools available to us to answer questions regarding relationships, death, life, and rebirth.

DePaul University in Chicago had recently produced the play, and being so close to them geographically, it was important to the team that our production be different and stand out. Bringing her own unique experience and knowledge to the table, one way Meredith accomplished this was by working to establish relationships that reflected humanity: how we take care of, love, and support each other.

The play presents an alternative kinship structure⁵, where the characters become a unique and quirky family. Andromeda herself is a huge proponent of redefining family dynamics and mentions her fondness of such structures throughout the play. As we moved through the rehearsal process, Meredith worked with our production consultant, Nina, and the dramaturg/assistant director, Molly, to help inform everyone on what alternative kinship structures are. We learned that they are more prevalent in the LGBTQ+ community and that it is quite common for women in lesbian relationships to remain good friends with their exes. This information contributed greatly to rehearsals as it assisted in the storytelling. Cristina and Elyse worked hard to establish a relationship that people in the LGBTQ+ community could recognize and relate to, but also one that anyone could empathize with. Significantly, the word lesbian is not said within the play, and it was of great importance to Meredith that clichés and stereotypes were not represented on our stage. Although Dean Wreen and Greer’s dynamic may seem strange to those unfamiliar with this family structure, it was important for us to create characters

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⁵ A. R. Radcliffe-Brown defines a kinship system as a system of dyadic relations between person and person in a community, the behavior of any two persons in any of these relations being regulated in some way, and to a greater or lesser extent, by social usage. A kinship system also includes the existence of definite social groups (Radcliffe-Brown, 1941). Thus, an alternative kinship structure is any dynamic that goes against the traditional network of social relations.
that obviously loved and cared for one another, in a very human way. We worked to represent a universal human experience.

As mentioned previously, one specific way we hoped to stand out from past productions was with our development of the Caretaker character as the “keeper of memories”. This idea was a big focus when creating the world of the play, as we developed it in the rehearsal room. The Caretaker was the link between the two major settings in the play, so whenever logistical questions came up or the actors needed clarification on motivations or intentions, we turned to the Caretaker and reviewed his monologues for guidance. Art Borreca, the co-head of our Dramaturgy Department, played our Caretaker (Figure C.5). Together, with Art and the rest of the team, we would analyze and breakdown different theories for how each character got to where they are and how they develop alongside the museum’s closing.

Another way we dove into the play dramaturgically was by analyzing the cyclical messages depicted throughout. Molly spearheaded this research. She was also given the task of directing, or rather guiding, the Early Man scenes. Much like Madeline George herself, Molly identified that this play was about beginnings and ends (death and rebirth) and the cycle of life. On day six, Molly drew a timeline on the chalkboard in the space, and worked with Cristina Ranslem and Ashlynn Dale, who were playing the Early Man characters, to create titles for all their scenes. Appendix B includes a diagram of the Early Man cycle. Working to highlight the cyclical nature of the scenes, Molly brought in some history about how Man has evolved over time. She argued that this evolution is evident in each of the diorama scenes based on the actions that the mannequins are described as doing. Additionally, the college students that are being represented through the Early Man characters also develop cyclically as the play moves along.
Having this diagram to reference when discussing the Early Man scenes was not only essential to the storytelling, it also allowed me to establish a vocabulary to use with the rest of the team. I sent the diagram to Akeem, our costume designer, so that he could work on creating costumes that reflected what was happening in each scene. I also referenced the scene names in daily calls and reports. It was helpful to use in the space whenever I needed to indicate to the actors where we needed to pick up, or move to within the play. The dramaturgical work established in rehearsal laid the foundation for how we communicated about the play. It grounded us in the story and gave us a point to return to if we ever felt lost.

In addition to the dramaturgical content that came from each member’s contribution and knowledge, as well as further research, early conversations revolved around how important the set design would be to the overall storytelling and dramaturgy of the piece. Meredith stressed that she wanted the set to reflect a transformation. As the characters are transformed over the course of the play, so too should the set. The early set designs quite literally transformed between Acts as the design, consisting of a double decker platform on two wagons, broke apart during the “cosmic shift” when the play goes “someplace bigger” on page 87 (Figures B.2 & B.3). Although the set did not literally break apart in the final design, we still worked diligently in rehearsal to emphasize the transformation that occurs in this moment.

It was important for me to emphasize the significance of this transformation to the rest of the team. The research done in the space and for the set laid the groundwork and made it easier to communicate with the entire production staff. During production meetings, we would collaborate on how to make this cosmic shift happen, and I would help facilitate the discussion. It was easier to do my job because I understood the context surrounding the world of the play. I had a foundation with which I could communicate.
PART II: DEVELOPMENT

Reflection of the Director

Meredith Alexander is a prominent professor of directing and acting. As a well-established and distinguished faculty member at the University of Iowa, Meredith’s name is not only well known in our theatre community but within the larger University and surrounding community as well. As one of the founding members for the Gender, Women’s and Sexuality Studies Program at the University, Meredith stands out as a pioneer for women and specifically women on stage. She has directed professionally in New York, Chicago, Cincinnati, and Kansas City, and she holds a Masters of Fine Art degree from the University of California, San Diego. Meredith has an outstanding reputation, so I knew that she is a well-respected member of our department and I felt very honored to have an opportunity to work with her.

Every director brings their own working style to a production. Based on my experience on Mammoths, Meredith’s directing style relies heavily on collaboration. She comes into the process with ideas but likes those ideas to grow and develop with the help of others. A “Meredith Show” is an organic, living thing, that never stops growing. It evolves with every step of the process, and sometimes continues to evolve even after opening night.

As a way of establishing this collaboration in the rehearsal space, Meredith utilized “Viewpoints”; a training technique that was adapted for the stage by Anne Bogart and Tina Landau, and it is a technique of composition originally developed by the choreographer Mary Overlie. The technique focuses on creating staging using space, shape, time, emotion, emotion,

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6 Department of Theatre Arts. (n.d.). Retrieved March 2, 2019, from https://theatre.uiowa.edu/people/meredith-alexander. Online biography for people within the Theatre Department at the University of Iowa

movement, and story. Anne Bogart and Tina Landau focus primarily on the “Viewpoints” that relate to time: tempo, duration, kinesthetic response, and repetition.

In our rehearsal process, Meredith’s primary focus was on how people move in space. I distinctly remember one Saturday rehearsal where Meredith had the entire cast walk in a grid. During this exercise, they were asked to pick a line from the play and repeat it as they walked around the room. Meredith would call out instructions as the actors walked in the space. She would ask the actors to pick up their pace, sometimes to even run, she asked them to create different tempos for how they spoke their lines, and to generate new emotions for the words. Then, as the actors passed each other in the space, they were asked to acknowledge each other through some sort of gesture.

By working this technique into our process, Meredith created an environment that allowed our actors to try new things. Throughout the process the actors filled up a toolbox with various tools that they could then pull from within any scene or moment. It served as a layering experience so that the actors could transform into the characters and genuinely tell the story.

Much like the transformations that occur within the play, I saw a transformation happen in rehearsals. Meredith transferred ownership to the actors. She gave them freedom to make choices, and to develop the skills needed for them to discover their own sense of how they fill the space. Rather than setting anything in stone, she would give them notes about other possible ways to achieve their goals. By making discoveries in the moment, Meredith could add the next layer. She was inspired by what the actors brought to the table, and could see where they needed to go next. This was sometimes frustrating for the actors because they wanted things to be set in stone, but as an educator Meredith is working towards preparing them for the outside world. The
actors need to learn how to find the central core and heart of a character on their own, and through our process Meredith provided them with the tools to do so.

I think it is worth noting that both Meredith and I graduated from the University of California San Diego, so I too had exposure to “Viewpoints” prior to this experience. This shared knowledge, not only allowed me to better serve the production, but it also validated my general feelings for the project overall. If I was not sure before that serendipity brought us together, I was sure now.

It is important when working with Meredith to establish an open-ended dialogue. Her form of collaboration requires the input of others every step of the way. Email exchanges with Meredith reflect her style of open-ended communication. She sometimes sent multiple emails in a row, almost like a stream of consciousness. New emails were generated as she had new thoughts. This sometimes meant four emails in my mailbox within a span of ten minutes, which was at times difficult to keep up with. Learning how to facilitate conversations to meet her open-communication style is a skill I will take with me and apply to all future teams. Sifting through chains of emails greatly improved my organization skills. Because Meredith wrote in a stream of consciousness, I would scan through each email to make itemized lists of things that needed to be further discussed or actions that needed to be taken. Flagging important items to return to later strengthened my ability to organize information. It also taught me to establish a flow of communication with my team early in the process to make the rest of the process run more efficiently.

Once we were up and running, another transfer occurred where Meredith trusted me to maintain the show. This meant that I began to give the actors notes each night that she would otherwise give. I learned how to deliver a note in a productive way. A specific instance of this
collaboration occurred during our final rehearsal before tech. I spoke with Meredith about an actor appearing bored in a scene that I knew Meredith felt was essential to propel the story forward. Meredith helped me realize that the boredom I was witnessing was not the actual note to give. To get the actor to understand the note, she told me to approach it from a different angle. It was not that the actor was bored, it was that she was not connecting to her objective in the scene, and so she seemed less present, and less motivated. This was a good lesson because I learned how to constructively deliver actor notes, which is a task we are responsible for during the run of a show.

Maintaining a show is one of the most important roles that a stage manager has. It is our responsibility to uphold the overall vision. To prepare, I took extensive notes in rehearsal about things Meredith would say to the actors, so that when it came time for me to maintain the show, I knew what avenues to pursue. This transfer of ownership was great training for future projects.

Meredith is also an extremely detail oriented director. She focuses on the elements of the production that enrich the play. For instance, when we needed a prop straw, she insisted on reusable straws because Andromeda would not have plastic in the house. This may be a detail that the audience would never notice but it creates texture and color, which helps to build the world of the play, and helps tell the story. For Meredith, everything starts with the body on the stage, and the choice that every artist makes informs the whole picture. It is essential for the design, even the smallest of props, to also use the characters to inform the world (Alexander, 2019). You can see an image relating to Meredith’s attention to detail in the realistic scenic and props design depicted in Appendix C.

Such attention to detail made *Mammoths* stand out from most other production processes that I have worked on. Working with Meredith is an educational experience. Details continue to
emerge even after opening night because the actors continue to build and develop their characters. The work is never done and there is always something else to be learned, especially in an educational setting where the runs are short.

Working with Meredith has made me a better stage manager. I would not have learned as much on *Mammoths* with any other director. Being able to ensure forward movement of the production meant adapting to Meredith’s style and helping others adapt as well. It was sometimes challenging to motivate the actors when they were feeling frustrated but learning from Meredith has better prepared us for the professional world. The actors have the tools they need to develop a character on their own, and I have learned to efficiently facilitate communication as well as how to maintain a show.

**Communication**

As a stage manager and student, we are presented with a unique set of challenges. Being a manager requires leadership responsibility and communication with all members of the team. In an educational setting, we are leading and communicating with a group of people who are typically older and more experienced, who have institutional knowledge that we do not, and who have usually worked together before. This puts us in an interesting position because we end up having a relationship that extends beyond the classroom, and we must act as the person in command of others in the room who might know more than we do. It is also tough walking into a situation where everyone else knows each other better than we do. These specific challenges are easy to overcome with time. In time, the faculty and staff grow to trust us and respect us for being good at what we do. Ultimately, we know more about the show and it is imperative to the overall success of the production that we communicate effectively and share our knowledge.
Since this was my first mainstage production as the lead SM, I was nervous about overcoming the challenges associated with working in an educational institution. Yet those challenges were nothing compared to some others that developed as the process progressed. One of the biggest challenges that I dealt with during the pre-production process was establishing boundaries for myself while also acting as the go-between for the designers and director.

At the University of Iowa, the design process happens months before rehearsals even begin. This means that the exchanging of ideas happens right away. Final designs were due before winter break, but towards the end of break Meredith was concerned that she had not seen any updated designs. This was when she and I set up our phone call to develop a plan. Together we decided that I should send out an email reminder about updating designs. I also told her that I would speak to each designer individually to get an update from them about how their process was going. From speaking with them I realized that they did not think about sending new renderings or pictures because final designs were in. In their minds, there would only be small changes but the overall concept was decided upon.

Ultimately both parties wanted the same thing. Updates were being made as Meredith wanted, but they were not being shared. The designers were ready to work independently but Meredith wanted to be involved in every step of their process. She wanted the process to be more of an open book with a constant flowing of ideas. I asked the designers to check-in more and suggested that they meet with Meredith at least once a week. As a result, Courtney and Jess set up phone meetings and most others would catch her after the production meeting.

**Balance**

Facilitating communication between production team members is part of the job. However, it was difficult for me to overcome my instincts to not be overly protective of my time.
off. I am a firm believer that to meet the demands of this field we need time to re-charge our batteries, so during breaks and in between productions I like to check-out from work more than I normally would. I quickly found that I would not be able to do that with this production.

Although the production process began before break with designs due, I did not expect that I would need to be available so soon since technically my process did not start until a week before rehearsals. Thus, I found myself getting irritated at the influx of emails that I was receiving over winter break.

In the end, setting up a time to chat with Meredith was a good use of time. We created and executed a plan that promoted open-ended communication amongst her and the designers. Spending an hour of my time, made our process run more smoothly as the production moved along. Meredith and I developed a strong base off which we would continue to build. The designers knew that they could come to me if they ever had any questions and Meredith felt better about the progress we were making as a team. Through this experience, I learned a valuable lesson regarding boundaries. If I did not want to be contacted over winter break I should have made that clearer. However, sometimes it is better to swallow your pride and think about what is best for the entire production.

Props

Another bump in the road that we experienced prior to rehearsals beginning was a lack of prop support. In general, this is something that the University of Iowa Department of Theatre always struggles with, but it was amplified on our production because our scenic designer, Jess, was building our show remotely. This made it difficult for her to make concrete decisions about props because she was not in town and could not physically go on a props run. As a result, getting props to work with during rehearsals became problematic.
Typically, the director likes props in rehearsal for when we begin staging, which usually happens within the first or second week. During my prep, I will reach out to the props person to create a list of rehearsal props. This becomes slightly more complicated at UIowa because of how the props department is set-up. Rather than a props master or designer, we have a part-time props artisan who oversees building and pulling props. Traditionally the scenic designer then corresponds with the props artisan on what to pull and what to build. In our case, the props artisan was Nic Wilson. Nic was cautious about sending over rehearsal props before getting approval from Jess. As a designer himself, Nic knew that directors often fall in love with rehearsal props and as a result, a lot of rehearsal props make it into the performances. Nic did not want this to happen with a prop that Jess did not approve. Therefore, Nic was reticent to supply props.

By day three we had some base items to work with that Nic had dropped off, but this show quickly became a prop heavy show, and it was difficult to keep up. The report had requests for additional props almost every night. Half of the play took place in the Dean’s home, specifically in the living room and kitchen/dining room. The kitchen and dining area needed to look realistic. As such, Meredith requested props on the counter that the actors could play with if they wanted some stage business. Many of the other scenes themselves called for very specific props as well. A list of props can be found in Appendix B.

As we began staging, the need for rehearsal props kept increasing. It is important for the actors to get used to their environment, and for them to get used to having things in their hands, because it influences how they move through the world of the play. Props greatly contribute to acting choices relating to building characters and relationships. At times, it felt as though I was failing in my communication with our props team because it felt like I could never get a concrete
answer about when we could expect certain items. To help solve the issue, I set up a meeting with Nic and we went down to props storage together to pull items. This was helpful because I could get a better feel for where Nic was in his process and he got a better understanding of our needs. Physically checking-in with Nic was very useful because despite our best efforts to make our reports as clear as possible, it is still just words on a page, and talking things out helps the designers create a better picture in their mind. Apart from protecting Jess’ design, I think that the magnitude of props notes made it extremely challenging for Nic to truly understand what we wanted, which added to the delay.

Overcoming our complications with props was an ongoing endeavor. Twice during the weekly production meetings, we released everyone early so that we could have a breakout meeting with just the prop team. Meredith and I would try to prioritize which items we wanted first to help alleviate some of the stress on Nic and Jess. During these breakout sessions, we would go through the props list item by item and make sure that everyone was clear about what we needed. Sometimes we would even pull up pictures. We were successful in getting props that we desperately needed into rehearsal because of these breakout meetings. However, a lot of items were not added until the technical rehearsals once Jess was physically in town.

**Recording Blocking**

During rehearsals, the stage manager is responsible for recording the movement on stage that the director sets. Since directors tend to not begin staging right away, as was the case with Meredith, the stage manager has a little leeway for prepping their blocking pages.

Upon entering grad school, one of my biggest missions was learning how to efficiently take blocking. This was a goal that I set with my advisor at the time, David McGraw, in our
initial meetings about what I hoped to get out of the program. I was excited to continue exploring ways to notate blocking during this production process.

For *Mammoths*, I was successful in creating a blocking page template during prep week that I printed directly onto the script (Figure B.7). Yet, blocking notation was tricky for this production because we would re-visit and re-stage the same scenes multiple times. I was never sure when the actors were just exploring an idea or when they stumbled upon something that I should keep a record of. Meredith would work with the actors until everyone felt the scene was in a good place, and then we would revisit the scene later. I would try to follow along with whatever they ended on so that my records reflected the most recent go at a scene, and if I ever fell behind or missed something they were usually happy to run through it again. As we re-worked scenes I would add inserts on top for new blocking, so that I had a record of each take. By the end of the rehearsal process, my blocking was much more organized and I could efficiently follow along with the pace that Meredith set for staging.

One of the biggest takeaways from this process is that blocking is a lifelong skill. One learns something new every show. New technologies designed to help stage managers notate blocking are also constantly being developed, so there is always more to learn. I would not say that I found the perfect method for blocking notations but I definitely grew leaps and bounds.

**Scheduling**

Another challenge that we came across during the rehearsal process was scheduling. Even over winter break it was clear that scheduling would be a difficult task for this show. It was practically impossible to find a time to audition another Early Man when our initial casting choice declined the role. Finding a time for the entire artistic team to meet was also extremely challenging before break and throughout the entire process. Ultimately, Meredith had individual
meetings with people over the phone and in person, and she would meet with Molly and Akeem on Wednesdays. I was unfortunately unable to attend these Wednesday meetings because of class.

The biggest scheduling road bump was deciding on a rehearsal schedule. Since Meredith was working with Molly as the assistant director, and Nina as the production consultant, it was especially difficult to agree on a schedule. Essentially there were three directors trying to decide how best to spend the time. It is hard enough to figure out the daily or weekly schedule with just one director but with three different voices, it was even harder.

At the beginning of each week I would send out a draft of the entire weeks forecast, for the directing team to look over, and it proved challenging to get a response from everyone. Thankfully this challenge sorted itself out. By the second week, I was no longer going through Nina for scheduling approval. Since she had limited availability, she requested instead to be sent the schedule, and to be notified of important days that Meredith wanted her there. Eventually I just okayed the schedule with Meredith and she took on the responsibility of communicating with Molly. I would check with Molly to make sure that she was prepared and available for what we had planned, but overall Meredith and I worked out the schedule together. This worked well for us since it allowed everyone to accomplish what they wanted to in the time given.

Beyond nailing down a plan that worked for everyone, Meredith was also adamant from the beginning that we have two rehearsal spaces. This is asking a lot in a department that puts on an average of twenty-five productions per semester because rehearsal spaces are limited. Yet, I received approval to split up the rehearsals so that the leading ladies would rehearse with Meredith in one room while Molly worked with the Early Man in another. Having a second space granted us the ability to generate a general shape of the scenes. It also allowed the actors to
explore some character choices and gain insight into the world of the play. There were times that Molly requested Meredith’s assistance so we would schedule time for them to work together but overall, we worked scenes separately. Time was then built into the schedule each night for Meredith to review Molly’s work. It took about a week to work out some kinks, but eventually we found a scheduling rhythm that worked well for everyone.

A new scheduling challenge arose when the actors started to come to me with concerns about certain scenes they felt had not been visited enough. I passed these concerns along to Meredith and we would adjust the schedule accordingly. I was happy that the actors felt safe enough to bring these issues to me so that we could work to fix them. Ultimately it is the actors who are onstage performing every night and so we all want them to be confident in their product.

Finding a time to have a design run was another huge scheduling nightmare. None of the designers were free at the same time. This was even more difficult than usual because our two out of town designers could never be in town simultaneously, until tech. Since we were unable to find a time that worked for everyone, we decided to record the runs for Courtney and Jess and invited the rest of the designers to attend a Saturday rehearsal with a scheduled run. I would record the run and then uploaded it to a secure shared folder. All files were deleted at the end of the process for copyright reasons.

**Production Meetings**

Early in our process our production meetings were very long, so I would split the meetings up to use everyone’s time more efficiently. With the help of my Production Stage Manager, Melissa L. F. Turner, I prioritized topics to discuss at the end, so that only those involved in that discussion could stay but everyone else was free to go. Minutes from one such meeting can be found in Appendix B. The main reason for this new approach was that Meredith
did not love the traditional structure of production meetings: she felt that we never had time to truly discuss the important matters. Also, these Friday morning meetings were often the only time that everyone from the artistic team was available to talk with Meredith. This resulted in conversations taking longer than a simple check-in would normally take and it meant that not everyone from the full production team needed to be there. Structuring the meetings in this way proved very useful. It made the designers feel more comfortable to have real conversations with the director, without the added pressure of impressing the leaders in the room.

Beyond the need to have breakout meetings, our weekly production meetings proved challenging because we would have to Skype in our two out of town designers. This was not ideal because the connection was continuously spotty and it was very difficult for us to hear them, and for them to hear us. It almost was not worth the trouble. We found that Meredith having separate meetings with them on the phone was more useful.

At the production meetings each week, we would decide what separate meetings Meredith needed to have and I would help schedule them. Jess and Courtney were each in town at least once before tech, so Meredith could meet with them in person which is always the best option. Taking charge of how to use our weekly meetings productively felt very empowering. It felt like I was demonstrating how to be a good leader and that I was looking out for the best interest of the entire production which is ultimately my main responsibility as the stage manager.

**Tech Day 1**

Tech is when everything comes together. The technical process can vary from company to company but it generally consists of a paper tech, dry tech, and full tech. Rather than having a paper tech for *Mammoths*, we decided that the designers could just send me their cue sheets. If I had any questions as I put the cues into my book, I could reach out to them with questions. This
seemed to work out fine for me and the lighting designer as it made doing a cue-to-cue on our first day of tech run very smoothly. The downside was that it did not provide an opportunity for the sound designer and lighting designer to get together to discuss sequences. In hindsight, I should have insisted on a paper tech so that sound and lights could be more in sync.

**Sound Day 1**

It was evident on the first day of tech that our sound designer, Elin, did not have enough content. This was surprising because we invited Elin to rehearsal multiple times so that they could get a feel for the show and perhaps be inspired by the action onstage. We also scheduled meetings between Elin and Meredith, where they discussed what the world of the play sounded like, and where they developed a game plan for how to create the soundscape for our show. Together, as a directing team, Meredith, Nina, and Molly decided that our production of *Mammoths* was depicting “magical realism”. It was important to Meredith that the sound design reflect that.

Despite our best efforts, Elin seemed to enter tech still confused about where cues should go and they did not have a clear vision for how to create the soundscape that Meredith desired. Elin gave me cues that they were confident about, but they had to create content for the more “magical” moments and did not want us to stop and wait for them while they worked. Instead, they would work separately from the rest of the group, and would call Meredith over to review the content as it was generated.

Courtney and I, the lighting designer, moved through the show very quickly on the first day of tech, but we had to skip sound. This was not ideal because Courtney could not time any of her light cues to the sound cues. Consequently, we would have to go back later and re-tech those
moments so that everything timed out, and so that Meredith could get a feel for how those moments were meant to be; with both lights and sound working together.

Many factors contributed to the challenges that we experienced with Sound during tech. I could tell that Elin was intimated by being the only undergraduate designer. This was also their first traditional sound design experience. Additionally, there seemed to be hesitation to try out any sound that was not originally their idea. In a discussion about the challenges we faced in tech, Meredith explained that this can be a typical experience when working with a young designer. Often, young designers will feel that any suggestion for how to edit or adapt their design means that they are failing as a designer. (Alexander, 2019). By the end of the process I do believe that Elin was proud of their design.

This process demonstrated for me and Elin what collaboration truly means. Collaboration is a negotiation between the director and designer regarding each parties vision of the piece. A good collaboration meets somewhere in the middle. This was evident in our pre-show playlist. The playlist that played as the audience walked in was a combination of old and new music. Meredith and Elin each brought in a whole list of music to play, and the playlist merged the two lists together. It blended two different eras to mimic the audience’s experience. By collaborating on the pre-show songs, Meredith and Elin could fulfill both of their desires while also helping to create the world of the play.

Navigating tech without sound was tricky. Tech is when a stage manager can really shine. It is their responsibility to keep forward momentum and make sure that the show is ready for opening night. To move the process forward on Mammoths, I would stay with Melissa, my PSM, and Meredith until about two in the morning each night of tech to help Elin create content that worked for our show.
It is important that all the designers feel supported by the stage manager no matter what level of experience they have. So, I had to be sure to acknowledge our senior designer’s frustration in addition to helping Elin. Jess, the scenic designer, and Courtney both design for a living. They have also been through this graduate program so they are used to the production process. Understandably, it was frustrating for them to have another designer slow down the process and appear unprepared. Staying late with Elin helped to mitigate this frustration. Like previous production meetings, at the end of each tech we would go through notes from every department and then release everyone except Elin. This way Elin could work without any pressure from the other designers, and the other designers would not feel like their time was being wasted. By the end of the first day, Elin knew that they needed to get sound into the computer for us to tech with the next day.

**Scenic Day 1**

Besides not having sound to work with on the first day of tech, I felt that the first day ran incredibly smoothly. However, things slowed down when we got to scene shifts. In the original design, the furniture was set to be on automated tracks. This meant that for the cosmic shift, all the furniture could disappear in a flash. Due to budgetary and time restraints, the automation was not possible. As a result, Jess worked with Meredith to redesign the furniture placement to accommodate for things not being able to shift for most the play. It also meant that when it came time for the big shift, we were going to see crew members come onstage to strike everything. When we got to this transition in tech, Melissa and Jess jumped up to assist in staging. Melissa would assign tasks to the ASM, Alexis, and the crew, while Jess helped facilitate the style of movement and gave instructions for what times to remove certain items.
Tech Day 2

In my opinion, the second day of tech ran less smoothly. We took time to work the quick changes, and it always takes a while to work out the kinks. The script calls for a papier-mâché Woolly Mammoth puppet that Andromeda wears. Our puppet was named Herald, and was designed by Zamora Simmons, in collaboration with Akeem. He was made of a variety of materials including pool noodles and streamers (Figure C.6) It took time to fit the puppet harness to our actress playing Andromeda, Mackenzie Elsbecker. We also had to be careful about how many times we ran the change for fear of destroying the puppet. Thus, they took a lot of care and time in teaching the crew how to assist Mackenzie into and out of the puppet costume. This resulted in a lot of waiting around in the house since Courtney had completed what she needed to and Elin needed time to program.

We did run into some obstacles from working quick changes at the top of day. First, it left Jess open to be able to fuss with props. Adding props during tech is not unusual because tech is when we put everything together. However, adding props to the stage while we waited for costume changes meant that the actors did not know there were new props, nor did they have time to work with them. As a result, when the actors got to a scene where they encountered a new live prop, it was a shock to them. It also meant that Jess would give the ASM a ton of notes at inopportune times. Alexis had a lot to worry about backstage, but Jess would constantly pull her out to deal with props. This made it difficult for Alexis to focus on anything else, so she often felt like she would have to play catch-up. Luckily, we had two amazing crew chiefs that I could help delegate tasks to. If Jess was working with Alexis, I would ask Stefan Queck or Emma Bibb, our deck and wardrobe chiefs, to be our eyes and ears for whatever was happening backstage. Then Alexis could go to them for notes.
Waiting for changes also perpetuated the other designer’s frustration towards Elin. Courtney wanted to run moments in which lights and sound happened together, but Elin was not ready for that. There was nothing we could do besides give Elin the time they needed. To use this time efficiently, I would try to make sure that conversations were happening that needed to be, and when possible, I would let Meredith give notes to the actors or designers to fix things.

Once we finished our cue-to-cue and worked the quick changes, we did a stop-and-start run of the show. We were not able to finish the entire show before dinner break, so we picked up where we left off after dinner. I learned the downside to getting in a run rather than working moments. Especially because we would start and stop for Meredith to fix things with the actors, or for Melissa and Jess to work with the crew, we did not run the show in real time. That made doing quick-changes difficult. We ended up waiting for the actors to get changed and would then push-on.

After the run, we ran into an issue of not knowing what to work on. Akeem worked the challenging quick-change with the actors again, and Meredith would watch to give notes as well as offer solutions for how to make it quicker. Courtney used the time to adjust a few things but she got done quickly. Jess did not feel like she had much to work on, besides some kitchen business with the actors so again we were left waiting for sound. Ultimately, Meredith gave notes to the actors, we had a quick production meeting, and then we released everyone while we worked with sound.

This was a great learning process for me because I discovered the value in creating a work-list before a run. If I had encouraged the designers to come up with things that they wanted to work before the run, we could have avoided some of the awkwardness in trying to figure out how to best spend our time after the run. Releasing everyone to give Elin time to work was also a
new tactic that I will carry with me to future projects. We had practiced something similar with props during earlier production meetings and it seemed to work well. A rehearsal report from the second day of tech can be found in Appendix B.
PART III: CONCLUSION

The experience that I gained from working on UIowa’s production of *Seven Homeless Mammoths Wander New England* greatly shaped who I am as a stage manager. I learned more from *Mammoths* than I had from any prior production experience. Coming away from this process, I am a stronger stage manager and I have a better sense for what kind of work I want to pursue in the future.

Although I came into this process with a strong base of skills, the success that I achieved on this production accentuated my strengths. My organizational, communication, and leadership skills are sharper and more refined. My ability to connect with people helped me facilitate productivity. To overcome challenges and work towards resolutions, I start by genuinely listening to people and their concerns. As a result, I was successful in cultivating a strong team dynamic between me and the ASM, and with the entire artistic team. I developed a strong relationship with the director which helped me uphold and maintain her vision for the show. I learned new techniques for scheduling as well as blocking, I generated new paperwork that I will take with me to all future shows, and I went above and beyond to ensure the forward movement of the production, especially during tech.

There were many lessons learned that I have already taken with me and applied to future projects. My ability to mentor young ASMs transferred directly to my next project on the New Play Festival. Successfully navigating communication between the director and the rest of the team allowed me to do the same with my fall production, *Northanger Abbey*. I would not have been able to handle such a taxing project, had I not developed stronger time management, and organization skills on *Mammoths*. This show prepared me well for a future in stage management, and greatly defined my overall stage management style.
I like to manage by putting people first, by establishing a strong team-dynamic, by facilitating a productive flow of communication among team members, and by finding a connection to the shows that I work on. This connection stems from the content and the storytelling, but also by what kind of personal development I feel the experience can offer. I felt attached to this project on a cosmic level. Theatre has the power to create social change, and I want to be a part of that. I think that we all have shows that we feel provide defining moments for our career, and this was mine.

I left the process feeling much more confident in my abilities as a stage manager. I felt confident when applying for jobs that I would not have applied for just one semester before. This was my re-entry into the theatre department after a brief hiatus over in Dance and Opera, and I made a strong entrance.

One of my favorite aspects of grad school is that you receive feedback and are required to think critically about the production process. Every production comes with their own set of challenges. That is what makes working in theatre so unique; the learning never stops. I learn something new from every show that I work on which is a big reason I love what I do. I am constantly working at bettering myself and working as a stage manager provides a great platform for my personal development. *Mammoths* was no exception. In the end, one of my biggest takeaways was that it is not my job to make anyone else do their job. Experiencing this lesson early will help me achieve longevity in this career. Letting go of that added stress, I will not burnt-out as quickly. Just like the transformations that occur in *Mammoths*, working on this production transformed me. I grew exponentially throughout this process and feel like I found my home.
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Appendix A: Company Information

Figure A.1: Production Personnel

**SEVEN HOMELESS MAMMOTHS WANDER NEW ENGLAND**
Production Personnel

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Position</th>
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<td>Molly Winstead</td>
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<td>Nina Morrison</td>
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<td>Scenic Designer</td>
<td>Jess Fialko</td>
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<td>Light Designer</td>
<td>Courtney Schmitz</td>
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<td>Merric Bower</td>
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<td>Assistant to the Production Director</td>
<td>Kristi Clarida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Props Artisan</td>
<td>Nic Wilson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costume Shop Manager</td>
<td>Megan Petkewec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Stage Manager</td>
<td>Melissa Tuner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Theatre</td>
<td>Bryon Winn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenic Change Artist</td>
<td>Kaitlin Younger</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Version #2 Updated: 1/17/18
## SEVEN HOMELESS MAMMOTHS WANDER NEW ENGLAND

### Cast List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dean Wreen</td>
<td>Cristina Goyeneche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greer</td>
<td>Elyse Fisher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andromeda</td>
<td>Mackenzie Elsbecker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Man 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>Ashlynn Dale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caretaker</td>
<td>Cristina Ranslem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Art Borreca</td>
</tr>
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</table>
## Appendix B: Production Paperwork

### Figure B.1: Prep Week Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SM</th>
<th>ASM</th>
<th>SM Team</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Production Calendar</td>
<td>Request Rehearsal Props</td>
<td>Ground Plan Plotting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rehearsal Schedule</td>
<td>Character Scene Breakdown</td>
<td>Ground Plan Taping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Schedule</td>
<td>Daily Schedule</td>
<td>Rehearsal Prep List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request Rehearsal Space</td>
<td>Run Sheet/ Shift Plot (WWW)</td>
<td>Actor Packets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contact Sheet</td>
<td>Costume Breakdown</td>
<td>Transition Plot</td>
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<td>Check-In Sheet</td>
<td>Props Pre-Set List</td>
<td>Rehearsal Room Inventory</td>
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<td>Scene Timings</td>
<td>En/Ex Plot</td>
<td>Set Up Rehearsal Room</td>
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<td>SM Checklist</td>
<td>Quick Change Plot</td>
<td>Online Callboard</td>
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<td>Production Meeting Agendas</td>
<td>Production Meeting Minutes</td>
<td>Hallway Callboard</td>
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<td>Actor Tech Talk</td>
<td>Binder Labels</td>
<td>Show Info Sheet</td>
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<td>Production Team Tech Talk</td>
<td>Sign-In Sheet</td>
<td>Check out Prop &amp; Costume Cabinet</td>
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<td>Tech Schedule</td>
<td>Running Order</td>
<td>Crew Training</td>
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<td>SM Team Duties</td>
<td>First Entrances</td>
<td>Script Copies</td>
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<td>First Meeting W/ Director</td>
<td>Pre/Post Show Checklist</td>
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<td>Blocking Slip Sheet</td>
<td>Wallet Cards</td>
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<td>Conflict Chart</td>
<td>Crew Email</td>
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<td>Social Media Contract</td>
<td>Emergency/Health Form</td>
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<td>Rehearsal Report Template</td>
<td>Line Notes</td>
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<td>Performance Report Template</td>
<td>Prop Table Set-Up</td>
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<td>SM log pages</td>
<td>Prop &amp; Costume Cabinet Signs</td>
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<td>Set Up Distro List</td>
<td>Cast Contact Sheet</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Rehearsal Email</td>
<td>Update Props List</td>
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<td>Welcome Letter</td>
<td>Update Contact Sheet</td>
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<td>Tech Request</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Cue lights</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Headsets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Running Lights</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hooks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Quick Change Area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update Wiki</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Created by: Meg Sugden  
Last Updated: 4/9/19
Figure B.2: Early Set Design

Scenic Rendering by: Jess Fialko
Figure B.3: Early Ground-Plan

Vectorworks Rendering by: Jess Fialko
### Props List

#### Color key

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color Code</th>
<th>Item Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Consumable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Performance prop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beige</td>
<td>Movable furniture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Kitchen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lazy susan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chopping board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea kettle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea bag dish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea bags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar packets / sweetener</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar packet holder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wooden tea bag box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dishes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saucers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Napkins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild Whattamelon Whammy cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wine glasses (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knives (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forks (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladies / big spoons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water inside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marinol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pill bottles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tic taks (pills)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utensil holder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silverware holder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone with long twisty chord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail container</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small tub (for dirty dishes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other consumables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bean soup / stew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolls</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please contact Alexis Hinman if you have any questions or concerns.

Partial Props List

Courtesy of Alexis Hinman
SEVEN HOMELESS MAMMOTHS
WANDER NEW ENGLAND

Production Meeting Minute #5
Friday, February 16th, 2018

Director: Meredith Alexander
Stage Manager: Meg Sugden
Assistant Stage Manager: Alexis Hinman

Start: 10:00am
Stop: 10:35
Meeting Length: 35:00


General:
1. We have our first Monday evening rehearsal this Monday, February 19th at 8pm. This is also the crew chiefs first day.
2. The Early Man actors have approved the brown canvas for the padded floor in the diorama.
3. The second version of the tech schedule was passed around during the meeting. You can also find the tech schedule on the Wiki.
4. We may add a brush up rehearsal Tuesday, March 6th. If we decide to add this rehearsal, the crew will not be called.
5. We had a run through Friday evening starting at 7:30.
Deadlines:
1. Focus: Tuesday, February 20th
2. Crew view: Thursday, February 22nd
3. Crew training: Friday, February 23rd
4. Tech rehearsals: February 24th-25th

Directors:
1. We are working to establish the role of the Caretaker within the world of the play. We now have him staged to move off his platform for a few moments throughout the play. The space upstage of the couch, in front of the diorama, still feels like the museum space, and it is an area he can explore.

Scenic:
1. Thayer will be ready for rehearsal this Saturday.
2. The Caretaker's office will need to be glow taped. The edges are difficult to see since both levels of the floor are the same pattern.
3. For the final transition to the museum, the couch will definitely be moved offstage. We are interested in exploring the idea of the table and bed also moving offstage, but we will decide in tech. We are hoping that we can accomplish this with light.

Paints:
1. Everything looks great! We love the possum in the diorama!
2. The scrim will be installed on a later date.

Props:
1. The bed will be in the space on Saturday to work with during rehearsal.
2. Props had a breakout meeting in the conference room after the full production meeting.
**Lighting:**
1. The light sculpture is in the space. Final trims of the light sculpture will be decided in tech. We will not be able to adjust the trims for the lights above the Diorama.
2. Focus is scheduled for Tuesday, February 20th. The electrics crew is available during the morning and evening. The cast will rehearse in Room 172 that day.
3. Stage Management is working with Joshua on cue light placement in the space.

**Costumes:**
1. Megan has made a page-by-page breakdown for all the looks in the show that we currently have.
2. We would like for Greer to be wearing slippers in the scene where she meets Andromeda for the first time.
3. The brass plaque on the diorama and the Caretaker’s nametag do not need to match, but should be within the same world. The nametag should be legible.
4. Akeem would like to schedule a pieces and quick-change meeting with stage management.
5. We have decided to cut the Caretaker's slippers.
6. Greer will be wearing fake glasses with contacts.
7. Ashlynn and Cristina R. will be dying their hair, and Cristina G will be trimming her hair. The shop can pay for the appointment if they bring the receipt.
8. In addition to the soft look in the beginning, we would like Andromeda to have her hair in a braid in the bed scenes, in a ponytail during the second act when she’s stoned with Greer, and down during the ritual scene in the museum.
9. The Early Men will be barefoot except for the final scene. We plan to have slippers for them to wear backstage.

**Sound:**
1. Meredith and Elin had a breakout meeting earlier this week.
2. Changeover from Vera Stark is going well. Rachel will be able to install the hotspots once the set is in.

3. There is a sound meeting scheduled for Monday, February 19\textsuperscript{th} at 3:30 in Thayer. The plan is to go through and listen to everything, in the space.

**Marketing:**
1. Thank you for the feedback on the playbill! It has been sent to print.
2. Stage management will work with Meredith on asking if any of the actors would like to speak to the press and will email Kristan a few names.
3. Stage Management would like to get some copies of the poster to handout, if Alysha has any left over.

**Facilities/House Management:**
1. We will be rehearsing in Thayer everyday next week except Tuesday.

**Production Stage Management:**
1. Alexis, the deck crew chief, and one of the deck crew members will be trained on automation. We would like to find a time to do the training during the day, next Friday, February 23\textsuperscript{rd}, 2018.

**Production Management:**
1. No notes at this time. Thank you!

**Distribution List:** Alexander, Bower, Celestine, Clarida, Dejus, Fialko, Hellige, Hinman, Kwon, McClellen, Morrison, Loula, Oravetz, Paradis, Petkewec, Schmitz, Simmons, Sugden, Turner, Wilson, Winn, Winstead, Younger
Figure B.6: Early Man Cycle
Figure B.7: Blocking Slip Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Pg.</th>
<th>Timings</th>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Actor</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dean Wreen</td>
<td>Cristina G.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greer</td>
<td>Elyse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caretaker</td>
<td>Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andromeda</td>
<td>Mackenzie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Man 1</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Man 2</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DEAN WREEN. Tell me about it, it's –
(GREER begins reciting, *in a world-weary tone, from the first lines of "I'll Be There For You" by the Rembrandts.*)

DEAN WREEN. -What?
(GREER continues reciting from song.)

DEAN WREEN. Are you reciting doggerel of some kind?
GREER. Never mind. You know, I'm ravenous. All I had to eat today was coke frizzy. Would you, perhaps, make me the chemo special?

DEAN WREEN. Do we have egg noodles?
GREER. I think so. Check?
(DEAN WREEN gets up, crosses to the kitchen.)

DEAN WREEN. Hey, make enough for the three of us, please.

DEAN WREEN. Sure. *(whisper shouting across the room as she goes to cook)* Hey, crazy good news on the mammoth front, you'll be glad to hear. Ben had this inspired idea to call Joe Ahern over at Williams and see whether the [Sterling-Clark] would be at all interested in a trade where we –

(On "Sterling-Clark," a cell phone chimes. GREER finds it on the coffee table, consults it, rouses ANDROMEDA gently.)

Is that your phone? Is that a text? Who's texting you?

GREER. *(to ANDROMEDA)* Hey. It's time.

(ANDROMEDA stirs as GREER retrieves the remote, zaps the TV on. Theme from Friends fills the room...)

(DEAN WREEN stares at her ex-girlfriend.)

DEAN WREEN. You watch situation comedies now?

GREER. The universe is expanding...

(Lights extinguish on the house.)

(Lights up on THE CARETAKER. No longer inside the Museum - someplace bigger.)

*Please see Music Use Note on Page 3.
**Please see Music Use Note on Page 3.
(DEAN WREEN trails off in a haze of anxiety.)

ANDROMEDA. (concerned) Bear?

DEAN WREEN. Get over here.

(DEAN WREEN tackles ANDROMEDA, kisses her passionately. Rolls her over so ANDROMEDA is straddling DEAN WREEN. ANDROMEDA reaches over and snaps off the light.)

ANDROMEDA. (in darkness) Bear! Oh, Bear!

(They drown each other in love.)

(They drown each other in love.)

(Briefly, darkness on stage.)

(Then THE CARETAKER switches on his desk lamp, sits in his pool of light.)

(As he speaks, the glowing lights of the vigil appear, floating, bobbing in the darkness around him, waist-high.)

THE CARETAKER. Candlelight Vigil Marks Passing of Local Institution. By Adam Bonner, Staff Writer. The handicapped access ramp leading to the Pratt Museum of Natural History was aglow Thursday evening as dozens of community members holding candles, flashlights, and solar-powered lanterns turned out to protest the museum's closing.

(A wave of canned laughter.)

(Lights warm gently on the kitchen, center.)

(GREER is curled up in an afghan on the couch, remote in hand, watching television – deeply engaged.)

THE CARETAKER. "I remember coming here on school field trips back when I was a child," said longtime resident Fred Wyckoff of Wyckoff's Evergreen Nursery, who attended the event with his wife, Evelyn, both wearing hand-lettered sandwich board signs that read, "Don't Let Pratt Go Extinct." "I always had a special feeling for the mammoths. I always felt like they were the silent
Figure B.9: Production in Progress Sign

MAMMOTH CROSSING

PLEASE FIND AN
ALTERNATE ROUTE

Used Courtesy of Alexis Hinman
Seven Homeless Mammoths
Wander New England

Rehearsal Report #25

Location: David Thayer Theatre
Date: February 25, 2018
Stage Manager: Meg Sugden
Assistant Stage Manager: Alexis Hinman
Location: David Thayer Theatre
Date: February 25, 2018
Stage Manager: Meg Sugden
Assistant Stage Manager: Alexis Hinman
Late/Absent: None
Accident/Injury/Illness: None
Director: Meredith Alexander
Playwright: Madeleine George
Production Consultant: Nina Morrison
Dramaturg & Assistant Director: Molly Winstead

Rehearsal Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11:00am</td>
<td>Dry Tech Final Moment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:22am</td>
<td>Tech pages 88-98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:20pm</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30pm</td>
<td>Quick Change Rehearsal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15pm</td>
<td>Stop &amp; Go Run-Through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00pm</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:20pm</td>
<td>Continue Stop &amp; Go Run</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:20pm</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30pm</td>
<td>Finish Stop &amp; Go Run</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:10pm</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:15pm</td>
<td>Actor Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00pm</td>
<td>Work Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00pm</td>
<td>End of Rehearsal/ Tech Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00pm</td>
<td>End of Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00pm</td>
<td>Finish Laundry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

General:

1. While actors were getting into costumes, we did a dry tech work-through of the “Trade” and the final moment of the show. Once actors were in costume, we continued tech from where we left off last night. We worked from page _. After break we did a quick change rehearsal and walked Mackenzie through her mammoth puppet change. We had her walk her path in the puppet and had her practice getting stuck. After a quick break we began a stop and go run of the show. We made it to page 56 before the dinner break. After dinner we picked up where we had left off. Elin took this time to build sound cues in the design lab. After getting through the entire show, we took a short break. Then, Meredith gave the actors a few notes and we created a work list. During the work session to end the evening, we practiced both of the Dean’s quick changes, we cleared up some of the kitchen business and we worked a few of the
Caretaker’s crosses. We look forward to working more notes before the run tomorrow.

2. We are aiming to start the dress rehearsal at 7:45pm tomorrow evening.
3. Electrics will be in the space at 2pm tomorrow and will need dark time.
4. Sound will be in the space at 3:30pm tomorrow and will need quiet time.

**Scheduling:** Monday, February 26th, 2018

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<thead>
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<th>When</th>
<th>What</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Where</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:00-3:00pm</td>
<td>Dark time</td>
<td>M. Bower and C. Schmitz</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30-5:00pm</td>
<td>Quiet time</td>
<td>E. Dejus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00pm</td>
<td>Crew called</td>
<td>Full crew</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00pm</td>
<td>Tech Final Moments</td>
<td>M. Bower, E. Dejus, J. Fialko, C. Schmitz</td>
<td>Thayer Theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00pm</td>
<td>Cast Called to Wardrobe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30pm</td>
<td>Add Actors to Final Moment</td>
<td></td>
<td>Full company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:45pm</td>
<td>Dress Rehearsal I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00pm</td>
<td>End of Rehearsal Tech Notes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cast released</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30pm</td>
<td>End of Day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scenic:**

1. Jess gave her notes to Trevin.
   a. A squeaky cable for one of the automation cues
   b. A “mouse hole” in the set
   c. Fingerprints from dust on the molding above the diorama
   d. The most downstage masking, house left, needs to be tied off
   e. The chairs that are currently being stacked and stored behind the seating bank, house left, need to be removed so that we can store our Mammoth puppet there. It is currently blocking the fire exit.

**Props:**

1. Jess gave her notes to Nic and Stage Management.
   - Glass coke bottles
   - A “U” shaped mug
   - Looking at a different bedside lamp
   - Water in the tea kettle
   - Apple juice in the picnic basket
SEVEN HOMELESS MAMMOTHS
WANDER NEW ENGLAND
Rehearsal Report #25

- D batteries for the flashlight
- Stemless wine glasses
- A different wine rack
- Groceries for the grocery bags

Costumes:
1. Akeem and Zamora took notes to work tomorrow.

Sound:
1. Elin took notes to work tomorrow.
2. Rachel - the monitors in the hallway were not giving feed from the house this evening, and the ones in the greenroom were continuing to cut in and out.

Lighting:
1. Courtney and Merric took notes to work tomorrow.
2. Josh - we are getting a new practical for the bedside lamp

Marketing:
1. There are no notes at this time, thank you.

Facilities:
1. There are no notes at this time, thank you.

Stage Management:
1. We will be adding carpeting to the escape platform of the diorama and the deck surrounding it.

Production Management:
1. There are no notes at this time, thank you.

Appendix C: Production Archives

Figure C.1: Early Man Scene

Photo by: Miranda Meyer

Pictured: Cristina Ranslem and Ashlynn Dale
Figure C.2: Elyse Fisher and Cristina Goyeneche as Dean Wreen and Greer

Photo by: Miranda Meyer
Figure C.3: Greer and Andromeda Watching Friends

Photo by: Miranda Meyer
Figure C.4: Realistic Scenic & Props Design

Photo by: Miranda Meyer
Figure C.5: Art Borreca as the Caretaker

Photo by: Miranda Meyer
Figure C.6: Herald the Puppet Side View

Photo by: Miranda Meyer
Figure C.7: Company Visit to the University of Iowa Museum of Natural History

Pictured: Marguerite (Meg) Sugden, Art Borreca, Alexis Hinman, Meredith Alexander, Elyse Fisher, Ashlynn Dale, Cristina Ranslem, Mackenzie Elsbecker
Figure C.8: Stage Management Team

Pictured: Marguerite (Meg) Sugden and Alexis Hinman