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# Standing Up for Justice: Reexamining the Evidence in Twelve Angry Jurors

Jerry Entze

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**Standing Up for Justice: Reexamining the Evidence in  
*Twelve Angry Jurors***

Presented to the Graduate Council  
**University of Portland**

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
**Master of Fine Arts in Directing**

by Jerry Entze  
**November 2013**

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

*Twelve Angry Men* first caught my attention in high school. My high school English teacher also directed the drama productions and had posters for past shows up around the room. It turns out *Twelve Angry Men* was one of the first shows she directed and thus the poster was prominently displayed over the chalkboard. For the most part, the poster was more interesting than whatever happened to be on the chalkboard, so I spent a significant amount of time staring at the poster. Finally, I discovered that there was a movie by the same name, so maybe now I could find out why all these men were so angry. I watched the film with Henry Fonda. It was not quite what I expected, but I was intrigued.

As a teenager, the jury system was a mysterious unknown that drew me in and the film afforded an interesting glimpse into that adult world. Would Fonda be able to persuade the others to rethink their hasty decision? Or would the mean – and yes, somewhat scary – Lee J. Cobb bully them into a guilty verdict? *Twelve Angry Men* certainly is not a typical murder mystery, but the element of mystery is still there. One cannot help but root for the poor accused boy, especially when one realizes what a sloppy defense he received. These twelve strangers are charged with determining whether a young man will live or die. The weight of their decision adds to the tension in the room and helps keep the viewer engaged. More than the mystery, I found myself compelled by the strength of Juror 8's resolve. The film caused me to question what I would do in a similar situation. Would I have had the guts to stand up to a room full of strangers? I wanted to say yes, but I was not sure I could. That first viewing left me intrigued with the jury system and most importantly wanting to be more like Juror 8.

When it came time to choose a thesis show, this play kept popping up in my mind. The seeming simplicity of it belies the emotional impact it has on an audience. More important than its unique take on the murder mystery genre is the key themes it presents: the idea of standing up for one's beliefs; the idea of taking civic responsibilities seriously; the idea of respecting and defending the rights of an individual regardless of race, gender, or social standing. These are important ideas that transcend time and remain relevant to a modern audience. With so many potential themes to choose from, selecting one became difficult until I remembered what stood out to me my first time viewing it: Juror 8's ability to stand up for his beliefs despite persistent opposition. The other themes could be found in the beliefs that drive Juror 8 in his quest. Peer pressure is something we all deal with regularly especially in the close confines of a university campus, so I knew this was something our audience could relate to.

One of the first issues that arose in selecting *Twelve Angry Men* was that of casting. What to do when there are far more women than men in the University of Portland Drama Program? Not to mention, would a modern audience buy an all-male jury? I believe the script strives for realism and to honor that sense of realism meant having a mixed-gender cast. This also best fit the needs of the Drama Program at the University of Portland. Being able to cast on a gender-blind basis made this an excellent choice for an academic program. If necessary final gender decisions could be determined based on the acting pool that auditioned. I decided to have the protagonist and main antagonist be of the opposite sex. I believe this provided an interesting

dynamic and moved the show in a direction that quelled any complaints of it simply being a staged version of the film.

To help make the casting of both men and women seem more realistic, I decided to move the play from its original mid-1950s setting to that of the early 1960s. This is not a major jump, so I felt the dialogue would hold true. By the 1960s the feminist movement was growing along with the Civil Rights movement, ensuring that equality and racism were on everyone's mind. Research into the culture and historical events of the early 1960s along with the history of women jurors enabled a better understanding of the world of the play.

*Twelve Angry Men* has an unusual history in the annals of American theatre presenting a unique research opportunity. Tracing the development of the script from the original teleplay to screenplay and eventual stage play enables one to see how the story came to succeed in a variety of media forms. Its universal themes manage to transcend form of delivery.

From a director's standpoint, one of the main challenges I saw in this production was dealing with twelve actors who are on stage for the entirety of the show. What does one do with so many actors in a small, confined space? How does one keep the show from becoming stagnant? These and other related questions of composition and picturization seemed likely to be the biggest directorial complications in this production.

My goal was to create a show that engaged the audience. A show that not only entertained them but also caused them to think. My hope was that the audience would

ponder some of the themes the show presents, hopefully realizing the importance of standing up for what one believes in.



## **Chapter 2: Research**

When developing a production concept it is useful to have a working familiarity with the history of the play as well as the social and historical context in which it is set. Developing this background of knowledge serves to better prepare one to address questions raised in the script. When choosing to set a play in a specific time period, whether it be the period the play was originally written in or another, it becomes imperative to learn about the period in order to make sure it is accurately represented on the stage.

### **From Television to Film to Stage**

*Twelve Angry Men* has a unique history; Reginald Rose first wrote the story as a teleplay for CBS's live drama anthology *Studio One*. The show was a success, winning three Emmys and catching the eye of Hollywood legend Henry Fonda. Fonda then collaborated with Rose to bring the story to the big screen in 1957. Although a box office failure on its initial release, the film did garner three Academy Award nominations including Best Picture, and it is now considered a classic. In 1964, Rose adapted the story for the stage, and it made its professional theatre debut on London's West Side. However, despite numerous regional and international productions, the play did not make its Broadway debut until 2004, fifty years after Rose first put the idea down on paper and two years after the prolific writer's death.

Born in New York City in 1920, Reginald Rose attended City College (now City University of New York), but did not graduate. He served in the army during World War II, rising to the rank of first lieutenant. After the war, he worked as a copywriter for an advertising agency. He sold his first teleplay, "The Bus to Nowhere," to CBS in 1951; it

aired on the show *Out There* that December. Soon Rose became a nationally known television writer working for all three networks. Most of his work, however, was for CBS's *Studio One*. His most memorable work aired here: "The Remarkable Incident at Carson Corners" (1953), "Thunder on Sycamore Street" (1954), and of course "Twelve Angry Men"<sup>1</sup> (1954). Rose went on to create, write, and supervise the successful television show *The Defenders* (1961-65). He remained an active writer for both television and film through the 1990s when he worked on remakes of *12 Angry Men* (1997) and *The Defenders* (1998) (Munyan 15-17).

In addition to his work in film and television, Rose wrote five stage plays. These include *Black Monday* (1962), *Dear Friends* (1969), *This Agony, This Triumph* (1972), and *Twelve Angry Men* (1964, 1996). Furthermore, several of his teleplays have been adapted for the stage and remain popular shows for the Dramatic Publishing Company ("Reginald Rose").

Rose died on April 19, 2002 in Norwalk, Connecticut, at the age of 81. Tina Kelley of the *New York Times* writes: "Mr. Rose stood out among the writers in television's golden age for his willingness to tackle social and political issues." Carola Kaplan maintains that Rose's career was shaped by his initial work as a television writer: "His scripts were topical and controversial; he used narrow, often indoor settings, and he centered conflicts on small but crucial individual moral choices ... at its best Rose's work is powerful, committed, intense; at its worst it is didactic or descends from drama into sociology." Rose is noted for taking on difficult social issues and a willingness to

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<sup>1</sup> Since the play was an episode of a TV show, the title is in quotation marks. This is how the 1954 version will be referenced. Likewise, the theatrical script will use the italicized title *Twelve Angry Men*, and the film version will use numerals (*12 Angry Men*) as that is how the title appears in the film.

deal with the darker side of humanity. He felt a strong duty to social justice that occasionally led to unconvincing happy endings. Rose, himself, maintained that “in all my work ... my main purpose has always been to project my own view of good and evil – and this is the essence of controversy” (qtd. in Kaplan).

The idea for *Twelve Angry Men* grew out of Rose’s own experience on a jury. In early 1954 Rose served on the jury for a manslaughter case in New York. He recalls being “hugely impressed with the almost frightening stillness of the courtroom, the impassive, masklike face of the judge, ... and the absolute finality of the decision I and my fellow jurors would have to make at the end of the trial” (Rose, *Six Television Plays* 156). Although he regretted being summoned for jury duty at first, Rose’s opinion changed the moment he walked into the courtroom and realized that the fate of a complete stranger was in his hands. He became so earnest that “I probably was unbearable to the eleven other jurors” (Rose, *Six Television Plays* 156). Serving on this jury became a momentous event for Rose.

Rose recalls that shortly after the trial, “I had an idea for a play about a jury with evidence that needed to be more thoroughly examined and the idea of one man holding out against the others and beginning to convince them” (qtd. in Kisseloff 259). It dawned on him that “no one anywhere ever knows what goes on inside a jury room but the jurors, and I thought then that a play taking place within a jury room might be an exciting and possibly moving experience for an audience” (Rose, *Six Television Plays* 156). Rose began drafting an outline shortly after the trial. Due to the intricate movements of the play, the outline took longer to write than the actual script and came in at a stunning twenty-seven pages. His average outline ranged between two and five

pages. “This detailed setting down of the moves of the play paid off, however. The script was written in five days” (Rose, *Six Television Plays* 156). In fact, his outline was so detailed that the initial draft was about fifteen pages too long and had to be trimmed down for the fifty-minute airtime of *Studio One*.

When revising Rose cut passages intended to flesh out the characters in order to maintain necessary plot elements. Rose writes, “This left the bare frame of the plot and the skeletons of the people. To this day I have not been able to decide whether the cuts made ‘Twelve Angry Men’ more effective or not” (*Six Television Plays* 157). The cuts left the characters as identifiable types, yet Rose felt there are enough personal insights revealed in the dialogue to create a realistic sense of each character. “What ‘Twelve Angry Men’ has to say about democracy, justice, social responsibilities and the pressure of the times upon the people who live them has some importance,” Rose maintains, “and perhaps helps overshadow the meager development of some of the characters” (*Six Television Plays* 157). Leaving the characters somewhat vague also leaves them open to interpretation by the actors and director, thus opening up the possibility for a fresh approach to the show. The freedom of interpretation explains at least one reason why the show remains so popular nearly sixty years later.

“Twelve Angry Men” aired on Monday September 20, 1954 as the season opener for *Studio One*. By that time Rose was a well-known name in television and the show received high numbers. Robert Cummings played Juror 8 against Edward Arnold’s Juror 3. Leonard Traube notes that the cast provided “interesting studies of men groping to do the right thing in ... exceptionally skilled performances” (108). Traube not only was

impressed by the acting but by the direction of Franklin Schaffner, the staging, and the cinematography. He asserts that

Seldom in TV history has a story been able to achieve so many high points with such frequency and maintain the absorbing, tense pace. Limited to the jury room ... the playout scored impact after impact as the plain and not so plain joes struggled with their consciences and with each other to arrive at a just verdict. (109)

The show was an instant success and went on to win several Emmy Awards including Best Direction, Best Actor, and Best Written Dramatic Material.

With its success on television there is little surprise that “Twelve Angry Men” would catch the attention of Hollywood film studios. Adapting teleplays to film was not uncommon. In fact, this had proved quite successful, highlighted by Paddy Chayesfky’s *Marty* which became a box office hit and multiple Oscar winner with its big screen adaptation in 1955. United Artists expressed interest in adapting Rose’s teleplay and asked Henry Fonda to play the lead. Intrigued by the teleplay, Fonda went a step further and decided to produce the film. Always looking for roles with substance such as those he played in *The Grapes of Wrath* and *The Ox-Bow Incident*, Fonda believed Juror 8 would provide him another substantive role (Fonda 248). He secured the film rights in the summer of 1956 and formed Orion Productions with Reginald Rose to make the film. They hired Sidney Lumet to direct. Although well known in the television industry, Lumet had never made a feature film (McKinney 195). Filmed on a single set in a West Fifty-fourth Street studio, the film took a mere seventeen days to shoot and came in under budget with a remarkably low price tag of \$340,000 (Fonda 249).

Rose adapted his teleplay for the screenplay, assumingly adding back the fifteen pages he had to cut for the original broadcast. In fact, *12 Angry Men* clocks in at ninety-

six minutes, nearly double that of its television predecessor. Rose contends, "As a motion picture ... *Twelve Angry Men* has grown in stature. ... [M]uch of the extra time has been spent in exploring the characters and their motivations for behaving as they do toward the defendant and each other" (*Six Television Plays* 157). Indeed the film gives each juror an occupation and significantly more exposition than the limited time of the teleplay allowed. Rose apparently spent a great deal of time on the screenplay, noting that *12 Angry Men* is "without question the most intricate plot of anything I've ever written" (Rose, "Trying Talesman" 133). Rose continues: "From the moment I set down the first word of the screen play the job became one of pitting character against character in such a way that their natural reaction to conflict brings out the proper elements of the plot in proper order" (133). Even though on the surface, the jurors all seem to be caricatures, it is clear that Rose spent a significant amount of time working on their individual characteristics so that they play off of one another in such a way that the plot is furthered by their arguments. French film director and critic Francois

Truffaut asserts:

[T]he stereotyping of the jurors is so nuanced that instead of twelve "specimens," we have only six, each represented twice. ... Each character trades details with an almost identical counterpart, rather than displaying the broad and somewhat strained strokes that are usual in this sort of "conflict cinema." (127)

Rose carefully considered the back-story of each character, creating not just a microcosm of society, but a group of characters who play off of each other's strengths and weaknesses.

Released in April 1957, the film was well reviewed but proved a disappointment at the box office. Fonda recalls that he, Lumet, and Rose "dreamed of putting it into a

small East Side movie house, the kind that held a few hundred people at the most, and we hoped that word of mouth would spread” (250). However, United Artists had a different plan. The studio executives loved the film and thought with Fonda’s name attached it would be an instant blockbuster. They insisted on opening it Easter weekend at the Capitol Theater which sat more than forty-six hundred people. On opening day, *12 Angry Men* barely filled the first five rows; it was pulled after a week. Despite low ticket sales the film did remarkably well on the festival circuit winning awards in Berlin, Japan, Australia, Italy, and Scandinavia (Fonda 250).

The *New York Times* review calls the film “a penetrating, sensitive and sometimes shocking dissection of the hearts and minds of men who obviously are something less than gods. It makes for taut, absorbing and compelling drama that reaches far beyond the close confines of its jury room setting” (Weiler 24). Weiler praises Rose’s delicately balanced script, commends the effort to define what “beyond a reasonable doubt” means, and finds Fonda’s performance “his most forceful portrayal in years” (24). He finds little to fault with the film, other than its exclusion of the “fair sex.” He concludes that it is “powerful and provocative enough to keep a viewer spellbound” (24).

Other film critics concurred. *Time* calls it “a mixture of classic craft and hard-cover whodunitism that sometimes suggests a weirdly successful collaboration between Aeschylus and Agatha Christie. Scenarist Rose has jittered his melodrama with fierce juridical excitement” (“*Twelve Angry Men*” 94). While the *Saturday Review* concludes “Reginald Rose makes a tight, absorbing drama” (Alpert 29). The film went

on to earn three Academy Award nominations and is now considered one of Fonda's best performances and an American classic.

Seven years later Rose adapted his story again, this time for the stage. *Twelve Angry Men* made its professional theatrical debut on July 9, 1964 at the Queen's Theatre in London. The cast included Leo Genn and Walter Fitzgerald under the direction of well-known American director Margaret Webster. Rose apparently attended rehearsals, but his thoughts on the production remain unknown ("London" 9). The production received lukewarm reviews. A general concern seems to be that the story was too well known and getting the play after a major film version instead of before was unusual. Philip Hope-Wallace of *The Guardian* complains, "The twelve are types but well drawn in simple sub-melodramatic terms. There are acting opportunities mostly muffed or missed in this now ruffled production." He concludes, "It works but it is all rather sad and feeble" (11). The *Sunday Times* maintains "The characters, though stereotypes, are, like the play, well-made. The performances, like the accents, are patchy" (L. 25).

Only the *London Times* found the production praiseworthy. It exalts the diversity of the jurors who use their individual strengths to tear the prosecution's case apart. But it is more personal than that: "the climax is, of course, not the victory of logic but the defeat of prejudice" ("Twelve Angry Men Put Jury System on Trial" 7). The reviewer does admit the American accents are sketchy, but believes the actors effectively portray complex characters dealing with real human motives. The production "triumphs over the problem of keeping 12 men together in a single room, moving, grouping and isolating them for apparently mundane and naturalistic reasons but always at the dictates of the argument" ("Twelve Angry Men Put Jury System on Trial" 7). Despite this



rather glowing review, British audiences tended to side with the other reviews and the production closed after only ninety-nine performances (“Today in Theatre History”).

The play saw a resurgence in popularity during the 1990s in the wake of the O.J. Simpson trial. Suddenly audiences were clamoring for more inside stories, and *Twelve Angry Men’s* behind closed doors look at the criminal justice system provided such an outlet. The result was two major productions during this time period. The first was a revival on the London stage directed by Harold Pinter. The second was a made-for-TV film starring legendary actors Jack Lemmon and George C. Scott. Rose was involved with both productions.

Most reviews of the Pinter production note its timeliness in wake of the O.J. Simpson trial and that of Rosemary West who was convicted of ten murders in 1995. Before the production opened, Pinter told a reporter “he is irritated by people already drawing parallels with either the O.J. Simpson or Rosemary West trials.” Pinter maintains, “It is about the bigger, vital issues of civil liberties and social justice” (“Diary” 17). Some reviewers disagreed, however, finding the play dated and the plot simplistic. *Variety* claims, “that the playwright’s liberal, humane voice nowadays seems so passé” (Wolf 47). However, despite initial misgivings, most critics found the show engaging. Although finding the cast “a cross-section of stereotypes,” Benedict Nightingale of the *London Times* determines that “*Twelve Angry Men* is a melodrama, yes: but it is one that, 40-odd years after it was written, still grips, still startles, still chills” (“Making the Heart” 42). Jack Tinker of the *Daily Mail* concurs: “one would like to think that one sober spokesman for the possibility of doubt can halt the slide into dangerous moral certainties which is, at present, engulfing the world. A totally absorbing evening” (5).

Pinter's direction was called "adroit" while noting "Pinter deploys his superb cast like a master chess player" (Tinker 5). Despite its age, the play managed to still strike a chord. The *Sunday Times* found the play "both a protest and an act of faith, and like all such plays has its awkwardly didactic moments ... but these are swept aside by the tide of argument and moral convention" (Peter 14). Nightingale agrees "Pinter's cast draw you into a period when individual conscience and individual decency had to stand up to prejudice and mob-thinking: McCarthyite America and, in some parts of the world, the 1990s too" ("Theatre" 14). Perhaps *The Independent's* Paul Taylor saw what Pinter aimed for: "Where the piece still has bite is in its depiction of the bigotries that people bring with them into the jury room and their consequent reluctance to respond to reason." He determines the play "an eloquent demonstration of the dangers of sentencing any man to death" (Taylor 6). Although over forty years had passed, Rose's play clearly remained effective under Pinter's direction.

Over the years Reginald Rose had been approached numerous times about remaking the film version. "They all wanted to bring it up to date," Rose says. That would mean adding women to the jury which Rose felt would require a complete rewrite, so he resisted (Hamill). He finally said yes when MGM/UA and Showtime approached him about remaking *12 Angry Men* for the cable channel. They wanted Rose to do any rewrites, and the only changes were in adding "some black actors and a few new lines to freshen it" (Hamill). With Jurors 1, 2, 5, and 10 now black, Showtime and director William Friedkin brought together "arguably the most impressive cast ever assembled for a single Showtime production" including veteran film actors Jack Lemmon, George C. Scott, Karl Madden, and Hume Cronyn (Richmond).

The show aired in August of 1997 and was a clear success. Rose was happy to see his show come full-circle back to television. In fact, Friedkin wanted to do it live like the original but logistics made that impractical. However, it was filmed in sequence (Richmond). Tony Scott finds “Rose’s intelligent characterizations remain involving,” while the *New York Daily News* determines the remake “pretty damn terrific” (Bianculli). So did members of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences who honored the show with six Emmy nominations; the show also received two Golden Globe nominations with George C. Scott winning Best Actor in a Supporting Role.

Finally, in 2004 the Roundabout Theatre Company brought *Twelve Angry Men* to Broadway. Fifty years, one month, and eight days after it originally aired on CBS, Rose’s jury room drama at long last debuted on the Great White Way. Talk of updating the script for the Broadway debut was inevitable but ultimately rejected. “It’s a period piece,” says director Scott Ellis. “I find pieces in period are interesting to see how they still relate to today. Do you still connect with it today? ... And ultimately I think it was the right decision” (Roundabout 1). Apparently so. *Twelve Angry Men* became the surprise hit of the season, extending its run several times.

The cast consisted of Broadway veterans lead by Philip Bosco and Boyd Gaines (as Jurors 3 and 8, respectively). Their performances were universally praised. Ben Brantley notes, “The actors in this adaptation of Reginald Rose’s popular ... drama from the 1950’s ... are having an awfully good time. So, it might be added, is much of the audience.” Likewise, *Newsday* proclaims, “for the pleasure of watching a dozen beautifully seasoned actors do what they obviously love to do, it is hard to imagine a more enjoyable hour and forty-five minutes than “*Twelve Angry Men*”” (Winer).

Despite the inevitable comparisons to *Law & Order* (on which most of the cast has guest-starred), critics and audiences alike found the show enjoyable. Commending Ellis's decision to keep the show period, Brantley says, "sometimes the best way to present a fossil is just to polish it up and put it on display without disguise, annotation or apology." David Rooney finds the uniform color and gender of the jury "does nothing to dim the ongoing relevance of the play's themes of judgment, prejudice and the right to defend an unpopular opinion." While Tony Vellela contends "*Twelve Angry Men* reminds audiences what great dramatic theatre can be" (8). Clearly the play brought a sense of nostalgia to the New York stage which had found itself riddled with celebrity stunt casting, lack-luster musicals based on some pop icon's greatest hits, and the occasional British import.

In an interview with *Dramatics*, Gaines says, "The greatest strength of the writing is how [Rose has] captured group dynamics. People tell me they thought time just flew by" (Vellela 8). The cast enjoyed the opportunity to work on a well-crafted ensemble piece. Their experiences on the various *Law & Order* incarnations proved helpful. Those shows do not deal with the personal lives of the characters and neither does *Twelve Angry Men*. Character traits are revealed through the action and how the men relate to one another.

The *Daily News* finds not one play at work in Rose's script but two: a mechanical whodunit and "a Frank Capra-like paean to the jury system." The two may not seem to go together, but "Ellis has managed it beautifully, creating a powerful ensemble from his impressive cast. The characters do not have names, only numbers, but the actors have given them great individuality" (Kissel 63). While the characters may suggest

stereotypes, the actors are strong enough to make each one work: “No one breaks or reshapes the assembly-line mold of his character. That would spoil everything. But each infuses a now clichéd type with an enjoyable vigor that suggests that even moss-smothered trees still have sap in them” (Brantley).

What keeps an old and clichéd script alive? Perhaps it is the sense of nostalgia and hope for a better and simpler time in a time that is anything but simple. Brantley sums it up best: “There’s nothing like a nostalgic glimmer of old-fashioned hope in hope-poor times to make a jaded theatergoer take out his handkerchief.”

### **1960s Culture**

The early 1960s in America signaled a change from post-war America to one that became known for its counterculture and rejection of the 1950s prosperity. The decade began with the election of the young, handsome John F. Kennedy to the presidency. The youthful president was open to change, reflecting a young generation ready to move away from the conformist and consumerist ideals of their parents. Shortly after his inauguration, Kennedy “initiated the Peace Corps, calling on young Americans to help in the ‘great common task of bringing to man that decent way of life which is the foundation of freedom and a condition of peace’” (Anderson 25). College students took an active role in society in unprecedented numbers, “for the first time in years they began organizing, questioning, and debating” spurred on by civil rights sit-ins and fear of nuclear war (Anderson 25).

The counterculture movement was a reaction against the “straight” culture priorities of the previous generation. As historian John Robert Greene points out, “the children of the Great Depression and World War II wanted as much comfort and luxury

as they could afford – and in the immediate postwar period, they could afford quite a bit” (138). While there were a significant number of young activists in the South and on college campuses, it is important to remember that “most young Americans ignored the protests of their brethren ... they stayed in college, avoided the drug culture, and, following college, got white-collar jobs” (Greene 138). Free love and drugs have come to define the countercultural movement; however, they affected the straight culture as well. Instead of dropping acid “the straight drug of choice was copious amounts of alcohol and valium” (Greene 142). When the birth control pill appeared in 1960, it allowed Americans of all walks of life to enjoy more sexual freedom. Indeed women were encouraged to be as sexually promiscuous as men. A best seller in 1962, Helen Gurley Brown’s *Sex and Single Girl*, encourages a woman “to make love whenever ‘her body wants to’” (Greene 142). As Greene points out, “despite the strong puritanical strain in American culture that spoke against such inhibition, by the 1960s Americans – straight and hippie – were ready to ‘make love, not war’” (142).

The early 1960s also saw a surge in civil rights activism, which began in earnest on February 1, 1960 when four African American students tried to order at a “whites only” lunch counter at a Woolworth’s in Greensboro, North Carolina. When they were refused service, they returned the next day with thirty other students, effectively beginning the sit-in movement (Anderson 19). The movement met with significant success with activists integrating theatres and soda shops “in nearly 200 cities” (Anderson 27). The success of the sit-ins encouraged a step up in the battle against racism. Activists, known as Freedom Riders, boarded interstate buses in an effort “to desegregate bus terminals wherever the buses stopped” (Patterson 469). The activists

forced the president to uphold anti-segregation laws. Kennedy “ordered the Interstate Commerce Commission to issue rules prohibiting racial discrimination in interstate facilities, and although there was resistance, by the next year most interstate travel and facilities had integrated” (Anderson 30). Desegregation continued to prove a much-contested topic. Due to a lack of cooperation from Mississippi state officials, Kennedy responded by ordering the U.S. Army to the University of Mississippi campus in order to ensure African American students were allowed to register and attend classes in the fall of 1962. In 1963 Martin Luther King lead a dramatic protest against discrimination in Birmingham provoking “white violence, worldwide television coverage, and rising outrage against racism in the United States” (Patterson 444). The spotlight on King continued as he lead the March on Washington later that year, signaling the apex in the Civil Rights movement which lead to the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Fashion in the early Sixties borrowed from the 1950s, and was glamorized by the Kennedy style. “Men adopted JFK’s narrow-lapel jackets, refused to wear hats, and wore light pastel dress shirts ... women adopted Jackie’s pillbox hats, empire-style evening wear, and European-style bouffant hair” (Greene 146). Blue jeans became popular among young activists “to show their solidarity with the workers and the oppressed” (Greene 146).

Pop culture during this time carried over greatly from the 1950s as well with westerns (*Gunsmoke, Bonanza*) and variety shows (*The Ed Sullivan Show, The Red Skelton Show*) dominating television. Sitcoms presented the “ideal” American family, i.e. white and middle-class, with some of the biggest hits being *The Dick Van Dyke Show* and *The Andy Griffith Show*. Films reflected the fears of cold war with crime films, notably

the advent of James Bond in 1962's *Dr. No*, but musicals ruled the box office. Film historians "explain the direction taken by Hollywood in the early 1960s quite simply – a cold war, then Vietnam-obsessed America craved escapism at the drive-in" (Greene 150). The only film to address social consciousness directly was the screen adaptation of *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962) which galvanized audiences with its brutal depiction of southern racism (Greene 147, 149-150). By 1960 the rock n' roll craze of the Fifties had died replaced by teen idols such as Fabian, Paul Anka, and Bobby Vee. However, a resurgence in folk music opened the door for protest songs. Spearheading the movement was Bob Dylan who "wrote and sang with a conscience, rather than with, and about, teenage angst" (Greene 152). Dylan's 1963 hit "Blowin' in the Wind" served as a soundtrack to the protest movements. While the culture of the early Sixties contained many holdovers from the Fifties, change crept in as college students and activists began questioning the affluent lifestyle brought on by the postwar boom. Perhaps the title of Bob Dylan's 1962 hit sums it up best: "The Times They Are A-Changin'."

Understanding the culture and greater world outside the confines of the script, helps determine the frame of mind with which the characters approach the subject in the script. In this case, it was important to realize among other things that some characters may be invested in the countercultural movement while many would not, helping to establish a preexisting division among the cast. Appreciating the influence of pop cultural on society helps in the creation of an environment authentic to the period.



## Women Jurors

An overview of the history of women jurors, especially in the state of New York, helps one understand how diverse of a jury one might have expected to see in the mid-twentieth century. A woman's right to sit on the jury in the United States has a complicated history. Washington and Wyoming allowed women to serve on juries in the late 1800s while they were still territories. The right was rescinded when they reached statehood. States were in charge of setting jury guidelines and most had clauses barring women from service. Utah was the first to include both sexes, allowing women to serve on juries in 1898. Although other states slowly followed suit, the battle for equal jury rights stretched throughout much of the twentieth century. In fact, it was not until the "U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Taylor v. Louisiana* [1975] that women's jury service was finally placed on an equal footing with men's" (McCammon, et al 1108). Prior to that in states where women were allowed to serve on the jury, it was on a voluntary basis not compulsory like it was for men.

Many thought the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1920 would automatically grant women the right to serve on juries as jurors were often pulled from eligible voters; several states did allow women to serve on juries at that time but not all. Even as recently as 1966 "three states (Alabama, Mississippi, and South Carolina) still barred women from state juries" (Nemeth, Endicott, and Wachtler 293). Women were allowed to serve on federal juries as early as 1946 when the Supreme Court ruled in *Ballard v. United States* that women could serve "in the same capacity as men" (McCammon et al 1108). In addition, the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1957 also stipulated that women had the right to sit on federal juries (Nemeth, Endicott, and Wachtler 293).

According to *Time*, feminist drives for jury rights in New York began shortly after women received the right to vote with the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. For years proposals were denied for various reasons including one that claimed lawyers had “difficulty in talking to women jurors” (“Jury Women” 38). Finally in the fall of 1937 New York State women won the right to serve on juries (Faulk 10). Blanche Best and Carrie Harris became the first women to serve on a jury in New York. They served on the jury in a rural court in Sloansville on a case involving a reckless driving charge (“First Women” 1). In conjunction with the new law, the League of Women Voters organized jury schools to teach women “the rudiments of court machinery and what to do when called for service in the jury box” (Mackenzie 59). A year later over eight thousand women had registered for jury duty in New York County alone where one observer noted, “women are doing a capable job as fair, impartial trial jurors” (Mackenzie 59). Indeed women proved so capable as jurors that that concern shifted from their ability to make impartial decisions to whether or not they should be asked to remove their hats while in the jury box (Mackenzie 59). By 1947 women made up about fifteen percent of the eligible jurors in New York county where the commissioner of jurors stated, “after almost ten years’ experience with them, I can say that their record does not suffer by comparison with that of the men” (Faulk 10). Yet women were still allowed to exempt themselves simply on the basis of their gender since their primary role of caregiver was understood to take precedence over civic duty. The automatic jury exemption for women in New York remained on the books until 1975 when State Supreme Court Justice Irwin Brownstein found “this anachronistic view of the role of

women in society is totally without foundation” and ruled the law unconstitutional (“State Court” 37).

Despite women being allowed to serve on the jury in the 1950s, the ease with which they could be exempted created a situation where an all male jury was not uncommon. Boyd Gaines, star of the Broadway production, explains the rationale for an all-white, all-male jury in the 1950s: “in those days, New York law restricted the jury pool, to keep the ‘riff-raff’ out of the court system. It was very racist. The playwright’s notes indicate that there was a 90 percent chance that a jury would be all white males” (Vellela 7). As the courts adjusted to female jurors, many still believed that a woman’s inherent sympathies made it difficult for her to render an impartial verdict in cases of extreme violence such as murder. Moving the setting of *Twelve Angry Jurors* to 1963 allows roughly ten additional years in which female jurors would become more common and accepted in the court system.

### **Jury Behavior**

The jury system relies on a group of people to make a decision. Group decision making has inherent problems. As Randolph N. Jonakait points out, “A group may diffuse responsibility, and its members may weigh the matter less fully than they would as individuals” (41). Groups are easily subjected to mob mentality and “can be extraordinarily credulous and open to easy domination” (Jonakait 41). Group decision making is often time consuming as it requires finding a resolution to conflicting opinions that would not be present in an individual decision making process. Group decision may seem inefficient, but one must remember “a jury is not just any group. It is

a special body with a special task, and its construction as a group actually provides it with special strengths for its assigned job” (Jonakait 42).

Juries sit through a trial bombarded with information. They must reach a decision based on that information. Therefore, a collective group memory has a distinct advantage. A prime example of the importance of collective memory from the script is when the jurors determine whether a key witness wore glasses or not. While a single individual may not have been able to recall this key fact, the group collectively can, enabling the final decision to be weighed against more complete and accurate information. “The jury as a group has a self-correcting mechanism for misremembered evidence that an individual acting alone does not have” Jonakait concurs (43). The value of a piece of evidence is not always readily apparent. A group deliberation can bring out the importance of the evidence, such as when Juror 5 establishes that an experienced knife fighter would not stab downward with a switchblade knife. Other jurors, inexperienced with knives, missed this key piece of the evidence, showing that group interpretation often leads to a more fully accurate appraisal of the evidence (Jonakait 44). As the jury debates, conflicting inferences about evidence must be dealt with. The jurors are forced to consider the perspectives of others and in doing so “may also begin to rethink [their] positions as [they are] forced to articulate them to others” (Jonakait 46). Compelling the individuals to evaluate their positions causes them to recognize just how strongly they hold their position.

In addition, “a jury decision is more likely to confront and overcome biases and prejudices than an individual determination” (Jonakait 46). No one is without bias but an individual acting alone is unlikely to be aware of his or her bias, while working in a

group the bias is likely to be recognized and challenged by the others. A jury consists of a group of strangers trying to convince one another; in such situations one will often try to make a good impression. Therefore, “in order to be an effective persuader, a juror may find that she will have to try to overcome her own biases” (Jonakait 47). Reginald Rose incorporates two examples of this in the script. Juror 10’s bigoted rant shows what happens in an extreme case when one cannot overcome ones prejudices. The climax of the play provides the other example, when Juror 3 realizes his bias and is able to overcome it.

Jury studies show that most juries disagree initially. If the original split is fairly even it is difficult to predict which side will triumph; however, if one side greatly outweighs the other the initial majority prevails in most cases. “Common sense tells us that a division of votes that borders on unanimity – that is, eleven to one – means that the eleven are sure to triumph” (Zerman 135). To explain this Zerman points to a fundamental rule of group behavior: “people want to identify with and be part of the majority” (136). In *Twelve Angry Men* Juror 8 shows unusual strength of character, as most people would succumb to the attacks of the majority. The lone dissenter will “almost inevitably ... give in” (Zerman 137). When the sides are unevenly divided after the first vote, those in the minority will soon find themselves on the defensive trying to justify their position to the majority. The minority position is easier defended if two or more jurors hold that view; however, studies show that if the initial vote is not a tie, “in most cases a jury’s first ballot ... indicates what the final verdict will be” (Zerman 137). If a majority feels one way persuading them to change takes great perseverance and

determination as strength is built in numbers making it easier for the majority to remain unified.

Analysis of previous productions of a play helps one better understand the intricacies of the script. Critical reviews of past productions shed light on possible problem areas in the script and can help one better prepare to tackle those difficult passages. In addition common themes may occur in the discussion of previous productions helping to reveal those that transcend time and keep the play relevant. The additional research will prove helpful in rounding out the world of the play and in understanding group dynamics. Understanding political conditions and social conventions help further develop characters and aid in understanding their motives.

Research helped to shed light on the world of the play and the era I chose to set it in. Making the women in my cast aware that their characters would have been on the jury voluntarily helped them in developing their characters. Also knowing that many women would consider it a privilege to serve on the jury instead of the required inconvenience they might associate with jury duty today, would change the frame of mind in which the character approaches the situation. With Civil Rights at the forefront during this time, it became important to determine where characters stood on the issue. In turn, this helped determine whether the character would have any inherent prejudice against the defendant, who is a minority. While not all of the research proved beneficial, some clearly helped enhance and inform the production.

### **Chapter 3: Script Analysis**

Understanding the basic structure of a play provides an important awareness of how the action develops the plot. After examining the basic structure of *Twelve Angry Jurors*, this chapter will take a closer look at the important moments of action: the introduction, inciting incident, important turning points, and the climax. Additionally, given circumstances and their importance to the world of the play will be addressed. Lastly, a character analysis will determine how each character fits into and supports the action of the play. First though, it is important to address the two versions of the script.

#### **The Rose and Sergel Scripts**

My research revealed that two versions of the script exist. The one I used is an adaptation by Sherman L. Sergel and published by the Dramatic Publishing Company. This seems to be the most widely produced version, at least in the United States. The other version is written by the original author Reginald Rose and published by Samuel French, yet remains only available through their London store. The Samuel French edition is the one revised by Rose and used by Harold Pinter in his production of the play as well as the 2004 Broadway production. Why Samuel French does not make this version available to their American costumers is unclear. After the success of the Broadway production, Penguin Books published a “Penguin Classics” edition in 2006, which is a reproduction of the Samuel French text.

While the Sergel adaptation is based on the original 1954 teleplay, the Rose script is a close approximation of the 1957 big screen film with Henry Fonda. Whereas Sergel breaks the script into three acts, mirroring the commercial breaks for television, Rose divides his into two acts with the break occurring at the heated moment when

Juror 3 screams, "I'll kill him! I'll kill him!" (*Twelve Angry Men* 37). In both versions, the action continues immediately with no lapse of stage time during the breaks.

The basic action and a significant portion of the dialogue remains the same in both versions. Perhaps the biggest change is that Rose adds a second set, the interior of the washroom. This allows two or three jurors at a time to escape the group and have private conversations, thus eliminating the awkward exchange between Jurors 2 and 4 at the water cooler in the Sergel script. In addition, Rose cuts the role of the clerk and provides more character development for the jurors. By the end, each juror's occupation has been revealed or hinted at. Juror 7 has tickets to a baseball game instead of a Broadway show and sports become a more prominent topic throughout. Juror 12 spends more time talking about advertising, even sharing some of the jingles and phrases from his work. In general, more is learned about all the jurors than in the Sergel adaptation, yet they still remain nameless. Although the Rose script is not significantly longer, not being confined to the specific runtime of a television show allowed him to expand what is revealed about each character.

The Rose version of the script clearly shows an author given the chance to go back and revise a previous work. This is certainly not a unique process in the theatre world. Neil Simon revised *The Odd Couple* as *Oscar and Felix* while William Inge's *Summer Brave* is a revision of *Picnic*. Rose tries to clarify and heighten the drama in his revisions. The story of the eyewitness provides an example of the revisions Rose made. Her testimony and the discrediting of it signify a major turning point in both scripts. In both, her testimony comes into question when it is determined that she would not have had her glasses on when she allegedly saw the murder. In the Sergel script some of the



jurors recall her wearing strong bifocals and never removing them. In Rose's revision she does not wear glasses on the witness stand but constantly rubs her nose where she has indentations clearly left by wearing glasses. Rose also removed Juror 4's reenactment of the murder, but keeps Juror 8's reenactment of the old man getting from his bed to the front door. Another added bit used to help bolster the defendant's story occurs when Juror 8 proves that an average person may forget the title of a movie he saw recently when he shows that even Juror 4 is unable to name the last film he saw only a few days ago.

No one has written critically about the two versions of the script. As far as I have been able to determine, Rose never publicly commented on the Sergel adaptation. When preparing the show for Broadway, director Scott Ellis told *Variety* he had serious reservations because "I had been given this really bad amateur version that had been floating around and performed at high schools everywhere" (Hofler). Reginald Rose's widow confirms that "Reginald did not write the amateur version of the play" but "insists all the changes [for the London production] were her late husband's" (Hofler). Ellis begs to differ though: "I can't imagine being in a room with Harold Pinter and his not giving some direction" to the playwright (Hofler). The tone of the *Variety* article leads one to believe that the Sergel script is generally considered the amateur version while the Rose script is the professional version.

The fact that the Sergel edition is used widely for amateur productions is not surprising. Drama programs at the high school and collegiate levels generally have more women than men in them as is the case at the University of Portland. Sergel anticipated this creating an all-female version of the script in addition to the traditional

all male version. The Dramatic Publishing Company encourages mixed-gender productions using a combination of both the male and female versions of the script. The Samuel French edition gives no indication that changing the gender of the cast is in any way encouraged.

Adding women to the jury was always my plan so the Sergel script fit my needs. Casting the play with a mixed-gender cast means revising the script – combining *Twelve Angry Women* with the male version to create the *Twelve Angry Jurors* script. The differences between these two versions are minute. The language is softened some for the female version, most notably in the way they address the defendant. In the male version, he is referred to in the pejorative as “the kid” while in the female version they refer to him as “the boy” which comes across not sounding as harsh. Other changes include rather insignificant details like the Foreman having an aunt who makes dresses as opposed to the uncle who is a tailor in the male version. Another example occurs when the jurors are reviewing evidence, and Jurors 3 and 12 begin a game of tic-tac-toe. In the female version, the two pour over a crochet pattern instead. As these examples show, the differences between the two versions are not great or overly significant. I used the male version as my primary script and only made the changes that seemed necessary for the gender of any specific juror. Most of the changes were simply correcting pronoun gender.

While the Rose version may be the more polished script, both versions successfully tell the story. The differences are not so great as to make one version significantly superior or inferior to the other. With its flexible casting options, the Sergel scripts seem destined to remain popular among the amateur theatre groups. Rose

remained opposed to adding women to the jury as evidenced by his not doing so in the revisions he made in the script for Pinter and Showtime in the 1990s. Until an acting edition of the Rose version becomes available stateside, it seems likely to remain the domain of professional theatre groups who seek it out.

The following analysis focuses solely on the Sergel version. Since I decided to do the show as *Twelve Angry Jurors*, and I also liked the idea of a single set, the Sergel script seemed the best option.

### **Structure**

One must remember that initially the script was written as *Twelve Angry Men* for an all-male cast and so the language of the play may feel overtly masculine even when women are added to the cast as in the case of this production. Nonetheless, the basic conflict-resolution structure of the play holds true. *Twelve Angry Jurors* takes a group of twelve strangers from various walks of life and places them in a small room to decide the fate of yet another stranger. At first, it seems like a clear-cut guilty verdict, but Juror 8 is not convinced “beyond a reasonable doubt.” Juror 8’s questions lead to a reexamining of the evidence. As the jurors led by Juror 8 take a closer look at the evidence presented, one by one they began to side with Juror 8. While many believe the accused probably did it, the unsound evidence leaves a significant amount of doubt. The whole case revolves around the reasonable doubt clause. By the end, only Juror 3 holds out for the guilty verdict. Eventually he concedes that the evidence is not solid, and they return a not guilty verdict.

The script is divided into three acts. However, the action is continuous as each act picks up immediately where the preceding act left off. The play obeys the Unity of

Time with the action happening in real time. *Twelve Angry Jurors* is a serious play written in a realistic and representational manner. No one breaks the fourth wall. There is no abstraction in terms of the action or the set. *Twelve Angry Jurors* is a dialogue-driven script, and the language reflects that of everyday Americans in the mid-twentieth century. Oddly, however, no one in the script is given a name. Jury numbers or titles – judge, guard, etc. – serve to identify the characters. The actions and personalities are more important than names in this case. The lack of names simplifies changing the gender of the characters.

The introduction to the play finds the twelve jurors entering the jury room and settling down before beginning the task at hand. Here we see the jurors in a more relaxed state before deliberations begin. The dialogue is more informal as well. The introduction provides significant exposition for the audience. Juror 7 indicates his impatience to be done as he has tickets to a Broadway show that evening. He also complains about the heat and lack of air conditioning. We learn the trial lasted six days and that Juror 12 is in advertising and concerned about missing so much work: “In six days my job could be gone, and the whole company, too” (Sergel 11).<sup>2</sup> Juror 4 confirms she has a custom-tailored outfit and is thus assumed to be wealthy. In addition the Foreman brings up a similar case in which the jury returned a not guilty verdict, and it was later discovered the defendant had committed the crime, thus indicating the importance of the decision this jury faces. Key information in the introduction reveals that the defendant is a young man of an undisclosed minority – one of “them” – who is accused of killing his father with a knife.

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<sup>2</sup> All references to the script are from the *Twelve Angry Men* version unless otherwise noted. Gender pronouns have been changed to match the casting of this production.

The introduction ends when the jurors gather around the table for the first vote. The result is eleven to one in favor of guilt. Juror 8's not guilty vote serves as the inciting incident. The rest of jury believes quite strongly that the boy is guilty and expected the first vote to be the deciding one. In fact, Juror 3 states, "... this is open and shut. Let's get it done" (Sergel 13). When asked why she voted not guilty, Juror 8 replies, "There were eleven votes for guilty – it's not so easy for me to raise my hand and send a boy off to die without talking about it first" (Sergel 15). She indicates that she is indecisive about his guilt or innocence and wants "to talk for a while" (Sergel 15). By simply not voting with the majority, Juror 8 sets in motion the action for the play. Her dissent necessitates further action, as the jury must reach a unanimous verdict. Juror 8's desire to discuss the trial forces her and the rest of the jury to reexamine the evidence in order to reach a consensus.

The other eleven jurors try to convince Juror 8 that she is wrong by going over the evidence against the defendant. She does not buy it, responding, "Somehow I felt that the defense counsel never really conducted a thorough cross-examination. Too many questions were left unasked" (Sergel 22). One of the strongest pieces of evidence is the murder weapon – a unique switch knife – which the defendant admitting buying. Juror 8 contends that the knife may not be so unique and to the surprise of the others produces a knife exactly like the murder weapon. Facing the possibility of a hung jury, Juror 8 calls for another vote. She requests a secret ballot and abstains from voting. If all eleven still think the boy is guilty, she will not stand against them any longer. The secret ballot vote becomes the first main turning point. Although it appears that Juror 8 is ready to give up at this point, I believe she senses from the reaction to the second knife

that some of the jurors are starting to doubt. She is correct. The vote reveals that Juror 9 now sides with Juror 8 by voting not guilty. In explaining why she changed her vote, Juror 9 says, “She gambled for support and I gave it to her. I want to hear more” (Sergel 29). Gaining the support of another juror boosts Juror 8’s confidence to continue reexamining the evidence.

Juror 8 proceeds to call into question the testimony of the old man who lives below the crime scene. Another major turning point occurs when she decides to reenact his testimony and determine the amount of time it would take the old man to get from his bed to the front door of his apartment where he claims he saw the defendant running down the stairs. The old man swore under oath that it took fifteen seconds, yet when Juror 8 recreates the walk from bedroom to the front door it takes thirty-nine seconds. The result of the reenactment surprises most of the jurors. Juror 11 proclaims, “She may have been a little bit off on the speed that the old cripple moved at – but twenty-four seconds off ... well, now, you know” (Sergel 42). By calling the validity of the old man’s testimony into question, Juror 8 gains four more supporters resulting in a six-to-six split after the ensuing vote.

Juror 4 concedes that the old man may have been wrong about the amount of time it took him to get to the door but right about what he saw. To prove this she goes about reenacting the murder, which takes twenty-nine and a half seconds. This discovery causes the group to rethink their stance once again, as Juror 12 points out: “So now both time sequences check ... what with running downstairs and everything, it does pretty much check out on times” (Sergel 52). Juror 4’s logical demonstration sways three of the jurors to switch their votes back to guilty providing another major turning

point in the play. This is a major setback for Juror 8, but she refuses to give up, declaring: “You are now admitting that the old man lied in one case and told the truth in the other. I admit that this does tend to confirm the story of the old man, but in part he is now a proven liar – and this is by your own admission” (Sergel 52). While she has lost some support, Juror 11 remains solidly on her side. He maintains that “I am now in real doubt – real doubt” (Sergel 52) and picks up the argument, helping to define reasonable doubt.

Another turning point comes during the discussion of the angle of the stab wound and how to properly use a switch knife. Juror 8 continues to lose ground when Juror 3 demonstrates that it is possible to stab downward into the chest of someone taller. However, the previously quiet Juror 5, having grown up in the slums, provides the crucial information to turn things around to favoring reasonable doubt again. Juror 5 witnessed many knife fights growing up and demonstrates how to properly use a switch knife: “Anyone who’s ever used a switch knife would never have stabbed downward. You don’t handle a switch knife that way. You use it underhanded” (Sergel 56). This new information helps Juror 8 prove how disjointed the prosecution’s case is against the boy. Putting the various pieces of evidence and testimony together presents at best an uneven story. Juror 8 determines that

For the kid to be guilty he must be stupid, then smart, then stupid and then smart and so on, and, also, for the kid to be guilty the old man downstairs must be a liar half of the time and the other half of the time he must tell the truth. You can reasonably doubt. (Sergel 58)

By proving that the circumstantial evidence does not match up, she shows that there is room for reasonable doubt. The jurors vote once more with the result being nine to three in favor of acquittal.

The final major turning point occurs when the testimony of the eyewitness is called into question. When Juror 2 cleans her glasses it reminds Juror 8 that the eyewitness wore glasses and claimed to see the murder take place when she looked out the window from her bed through the passing cars of an elevated train. The jurors with glasses confirm that one does not wear glasses to bed leading Juror 8 to resolve that

I think it's logical to say that she was not wearing her glasses in bed, and I don't think she'd put them on to glance casually out the window. ... She testified that the murder took place the instant she looked out, and the lights went out a split second later. She couldn't have had time to put on her glasses then. Now perhaps this woman honestly thought she saw the boy kill his father. I say that she only saw a blur. (Sergel 61-62)

With the authority of the eyewitness's testimony now dubious, Jurors 10 and 4 finally concede there is a reasonable doubt leaving only Juror 3 who steadfastly maintains the boy is guilty. The vote is once again eleven to one only this time it is in favor of acquittal. Juror 8 successfully stood up against intense peer pressure and persuaded ten of the jurors to switch their votes.

The climax of the play occurs when Juror 3 finally concedes to a not guilty verdict. By changing his vote Juror 3 concedes to Juror 8 allowing the triumph of logic and the successful fruition of Juror 8's refusal to bend under peer pressure. Once Juror 3 realizes even his closest ally, Juror 4, sees the reasonable doubt, he recognizes that he has transferred the hatred for his son to the defendant. He has based his argument on emotion despite Juror 4's continued warnings against emotionally colored arguments. His concession serves not only as a victory for Juror 8 but for the judicial system which relies on logic and reason to administer justice. The denouement immediately follows the climax. After the other jurors have filed out, Juror 3 takes the second knife, still on the table, and returns it to Juror 8. They both utter the phrase "not guilty" and exit. The



play ends with the recognition that the right decision has been made and justice has been rendered.

### **Given Circumstances**

Another important element to consider when analyzing a play is the given circumstances. Knowing when and where the play takes place, in addition to prior relationships and preceding events helps one understand why the action of the play unfolds the way it does. According to the stage directions *Twelve Angry Jurors* is set in a jury room in the present. The script is copyrighted 1955. Stage directions also indicate that it is a summer afternoon. We discover that it is New York City as a significant part of the evidence revolves around an elevated train and Juror 7 mentions he has tickets to a Broadway show. Summer is clearly indicated in the dialogue as several characters complain about it being hot, and they engage in a debate over whether the window should be opened or not.

By keeping the setting in a single room, Rose enables the action to unfold uninterrupted, creating a more intense situation. Although broken into three acts, the action remains continuous and the act breaks seem to simply be left over from the original teleplay indicating where the commercial breaks took place. If performed without an intermission, as I chose to do, the action and tension continues to steadily build until the climax. With all the action happening in one place the jury room takes on greater significance than it might otherwise have. The stage directions describe it as “a bare, unpleasant room” (Sergel 9). Yet other than basic furnishings not much else is revealed about the room in the script. We are told there are a window, a clock, a water cooler, and a long conference table with “twelve uncomfortable-looking straight chairs”

(Sergel 9). The very plainness of the set description indicates that we are to focus on the characters and action. By indicating that the room is bare and unpleasant, we know the jurors are not going to be comfortable and so this helps indicate the agitated state of mind the characters are in during the course of the play.

The trial that they just sat through serves as the preceding event that affects all the jurors. We learn the prosecution presented sloppy evidence and the defense basically did nothing. Even the judge seems disaffected. Why else would he allow such sloppy work on the part of the attorneys? The judge is the first voice we hear and his attitude sets up the tone with which the play proceeds. Since no one except Juror 8 appears to have given much thought to this case, it seems appropriate that the judge be apathetic. The defendant, after all, is one of “them” and clearly not someone worth caring about in the eyes of most. Cleverly Rose does not define which “them” the defendant belongs to; the audience is left to speculate and determine for themselves which minority the jurors are talking about. All we know is that the defendant is nineteen, impoverished, has no mother and had a very poor relationship with an abusive father, who he is accused of killing.

Attitudes towards racism play an important role in this show. The defendant, whose life the jurors hold in their hands, is clearly a minority. Juror 10 is the most blatantly racist, declaring early on: “You’re not going to tell us that we’re suppose to believe him, knowing what he is. I’ve lived among ‘em all my life. You can’t believe a word they say” (Sergel 16). Juror 4 also is racist, but in a different sense. She is more of an elitist. One gets the sense that she feels superior, not only to the accused, but to the rest of the jurors as well. At one point, she says, “I think we ought to behave like [ladies

and] gentlemen” (Sergel 16). Jurors 8 and 9 are the most open-minded and accepting in terms of race. Juror 8 views the accused as a troubled kid, but gives no indication that race affects the desire to see the boy receive justice. Juror 9, the eldest member of the jury, shows that with age comes wisdom. Her response to Juror 10’s accusations is: “What a terrible thing for a man to believe! Since when is dishonesty a group characteristic?” and she takes it a step further by concluding, “You have no monopoly on the truth!” (Sergel 16).

While racism is still an issue today, the way the script addresses and treats it as a given by some of the jurors helps place the show in a specific era. While Juror 10’s extreme viewpoints do not represent everyone’s opinions, his beliefs are not as shocking to the rest as they would be in a modern setting. Racism plays an important role in the structure of the story and reveals the social system of the play. The way racism is treated speaks to the social atmosphere of the 1950s and helps define the historical period of the play. The characters represent a variety of social backgrounds, yet the general acceptance of racism by most, indicates a universal prejudice, not one tied to a specific social group; it was a cultural norm.

As tends to often be the case, the early 1960s bear strong resemblance to the preceding decade. Therefore, setting the show in 1963 allows for the opportunity to explore some advancements in social ideals while remaining close enough to the Fifties that the dialogue and action stays believable. One of those changes involves the incorporation of women on to the jury. Although women had been allowed to serve on juries, it was on a volunteer basis; they were not summoned to serve as the men were.

## Character Analysis

Stage directions give a limited description of each character. However, we really learn about them in how they interact with the rest of the group. No prior relationship exists amongst the jurors. They first met at jury selection. The exciting aspect of this is that the audience gets to know each character at the same time the characters learn about each other. I think here the lack of names helps create the sense of a real jury where no one knows anyone else; they are in fact strangers and thus nameless. The jurors are also representative of society and being unnamed opens the door for treating them simply as types. While on the surface each juror does seem to represent a stock character, Rose attempts to provide individual characteristics through the dialogue and action. Initially written for a fifty-minute run-time, there simply was not room for detailed character development.

One of the interesting things about this play is that all of the characters (with the exception of the guard) are on stage for virtually the entirety of the show. Therefore, determining minor and major characters cannot rely simply on stage time but must look to the amount of time they speak or actively aid in the action of the play. Juror 8 as the main protagonist and Juror 3 as the main antagonist are clearly the most prominent characters. However, Jurors 4, 7, 10, and 11 all demand significant amounts of stage time as well, making them candidates for major character status. The other jurors, especially 5 and 6, constitute the minor characters. While they may bring forth important ideas, they do not seek to control the conversation at any time.

As previously stated little is given about the characters in the script. Writing for the confines of television, Rose provides only a shell of each character, leaving lots of

room for the actor to develop and refine the character. The focus here will be on what each character contributes to the action of the play and any other clear observations that may be derived from the script. See Chapter 4 for my more specific concept of each character including age and occupation. To simplify things the jurors will be discussed in numeric order.

The Foreman seems to be an average blue-collar worker not sure what to do with the authority placed on him, although he is impressed by his position and proceeds rather formally. He is described as “not overly bright, but dogged” (Sergel 4). It should be noted that he does implement Juror 12’s suggestion that they go around the table and explain why they voted the way they did. However, it should also be noted that he skips himself in the process. He tries to be fair, always seeking a group consensus before doing anything and even allows Juror 5 to pass on explaining her vote. While he makes no significant contribution to the critical analysis of the evidence, he does manage to keep the jurors on task for the most part.

Juror 2 is meek and hesitant to speak her mind, as evidenced when she is forced to talk. When Juror 8 asks if she’s heard of the Fifth Amendment, she stammers:

**TWO** (*flustered*): Well, sure – I’ve heard of it. I know what it is ... I ... what I meant ... well, anyway ... I think he’s guilty! (Sergel 18)

She does, however, pay close attention to details. She is the one who questions the downward stab of the knife, noting that the father was significantly taller than the defendant. By innocently cleaning her glasses, she helps Juror 8 call into question the testimony of the eyewitness who lives across the el tracks.

The most important relationship that precedes the play is Juror 3’s troubled relationship with his son. This juror seems to take the case personally and is set on

executing the defendant as a means of placating his failings with his own son although he seems unconscious of doing this until the very end. This is hinted at early on when he rails: "It's the kids. The way they are – you know? They don't listen" (Sergel 21). He is a strong willed, extremely opinionated and prone to emotional outbursts that he instantly regrets. Most notable is the instance when Juror 8 calls him a sadist. As their argument builds, he lunges at Juror 8 screaming, "Let me go! I'll kill her! I'll kill her!" (Sergel 43). In doing so he disproves his previous argument that no one would say "I'm going to kill you" or a derivative thereof without actually meaning it. The stage directions describe him as "a humorless man who is intolerant of opinions other than his own, and accustomed to forcing his wishes and views upon others" (Sergel 4). At various points he refers to the other jurors as bleeding hearts and old ladies, allowing their emotions to sway their opinions, which is ironic considering he is the one who most allows emotion to color his thinking.

I don't believe that he is an inherently malicious man just angry that his life has not turned the way he wanted. When he finally switches his vote to not guilty at the end, the decision is about more than the case at hand; it is also him realizing the reasons behind his son's actions. Of all the jurors, he experiences the biggest change by the end.

Juror 4 is wealthy and smart. She feels she is superior to the rest of the jurors. Her only concern is the facts; she is appalled by the behavior of the other jurors. The heat does not seem to effect her as she remains calm and unemotional throughout. Juror 4 is driven by logic. She notes the weakness of the defendant's alibi, focuses on the uniqueness of the knife, and calls Juror 8 out when she tries to make an appeal to pity. She quickly points out that the fact that the defendant has had a hard life does not

excuse murder: "All right, [life's] hard, sure – it was hard for me. Everything I've got I fought for. I worked my way through college. ... I fought, yes, but I never killed" (Sergel 16). She concedes that the defense did a lousy job, but holds steadfast to a guilty verdict until the key piece of evidence is determined unreliable. Recognizing that the impaired vision of the lady who witnessed the murder may have caused her to be mistaken in what she thought she saw, Juror 4 matter-of-factly changes her vote to not guilty.

We learn a lot from the dialogue about Juror 5, whom we assume, based on the way the others treat her, might be a minority. She reveals that she is of the lower class having grown up in the slums. She is greatly aware of her lower status and this explains why she does not say much or overtly contradict the others. She does object to Jurors 4 and 10's generalization that the "slums are breeding grounds for criminals" (Sergel 21). She is proof that they are not. However, her background becomes important to swinging the votes of the jurors. She is the only one of the group to have experience with switchblade knives. By demonstrating how to properly use a switch knife, her knowledge proves that the accused would not have made the type of wound that killed the father. This is Juror 5's one crucial contribution to the action of the play. Without her knowledge about knife fights, a major turning point would not happen and it would be that much harder for Juror 8 to gain a consensus.

Juror 6 has a hard time forming strong opinions. She is described as "honest but dull-witted" and apparently not used to thinking for herself (Sergel 4). Juror 6 focuses on the fact that the boy had motive to kill his father. She is a peacemaker. When things get heated, she suggests "How about sitting down?" (Sergel 31). She never takes a strong stance of her own and always second-guesses her opinions. For example, when

defending her guilty vote early on, she concludes, “Well, it doesn’t exactly prove anything. It’s just part of the picture. I didn’t say it proved anything” (Sergel 20). Juror 6 contributes the least of any juror to the action of the play.

Juror 7 is the least serious of the jurors; he just wants to get this over with. He states early on “I would have done anything to miss this” (Sergel 12). He spends most of the play trying to hurry things along. He wants to get out of there whether justice is served or not. The stage directions describe him as “a loud, flashy, glad-handed salesman type who has more important things to do than sit on a jury” (Sergel 4). He takes great offence to Juror 11’s uncertainty that he understands the term “reasonable doubt” and lumps Juror 11 with all immigrants claiming they try to take over and run things once they get to America. When the jury becomes deadlocked at six to six, he strongly favors declaring a hung jury, as it promises the speediest solution. He participates in the reenactment of the murder, but adds nothing to the argument. Juror 7’s primary contribution comes in providing a rundown of the defendant’s prior criminal record.

Juror 8 is clearly the protagonist. She is the one driving the action. At the top of the show the other eleven jurors oppose her. They are ready to convict the defendant and go home. Juror 8 is the only one who wants to discuss the case. She is the one who wants to make sure they give the defendant a fair shake. Clearly educated and intellectual, she insists on the judicial decree of innocent until proven guilty. In her opinion the prosecution did not prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. However, it is important to note that she does not necessarily believe he is innocent. When asked if she believes the defendant’s story, she replies, “I don’t know whether I believe it or not.



Maybe I don't" (Sergel 15). Her objection to voting guilty is that she does not feel comfortable sentencing a man to death without discussing it first. There seems to be some uncertainty in her stance early on, but as the discussion continues and she keeps finding further loopholes in the evidence, her convictions grow stronger.

She is described as "quiet, thoughtful" and one "who sees all sides of every question and constantly seeks the truth. ... Above all, [she] wants justice to be done, and will fight to see that it is" (Sergel 5). We learn that she clearly has doubted the prosecution for a while when she produces the second knife. By proving that the murder weapon is not unique, she sets in motion the unraveling of the evidence. As the jury discusses each key fact used as evidence against the defendant, Juror 8 continues to find loopholes, systematically raising serious doubt or disproving each component. All the time building the case for reasonable doubt, which culminates in her "Is he dumb or is he smart?" speech. Perhaps the most rousing speech of the play, here Juror 8 pieces together the inconsistencies of the evidence showing that no sane person would make the inconsistent choices necessary if the evidence is to be believed. She concludes, "To say that he is guilty you have to toss his intelligence like a pancake. There is doubt, doubt, doubt" (Sergel 58). If that is not enough she further establishes that based on their reenactments, for the defendant to be guilty the old man who lives downstairs must lie half the time and tell the truth the other half.

While Juror 8 remains steadfast in her views, she is open to hearing opposing views. She encourages those who oppose her to explain why and perhaps it is her open-mindedness and sense of compassion that helps draw the other jurors to her side. She does not seem to gloat when proven right and treats others fairly. She remains open to

the very end encouraging Juror 3 prove why they should side with him, even though she clearly believes he is in the wrong. She fights for what she believes in, but she fights fairly.

Juror 8 also reminds her fellow jurors that in the American legal system the defendant is assumed innocent until proven guilty. This is most abundantly clear early on when Juror 2 attempts to explain her initial guilty vote:

**TWO:** I just think he's guilty. I thought it was obvious.

**EIGHT:** In what way was it obvious?

**TWO:** I mean that nobody proved otherwise.

**EIGHT:** Nobody has to prove otherwise; innocent until proven guilty. The burden of proof is on the prosecution. The defendant doesn't have to open his mouth. That's in the Constitution. The Fifth Amendment. You've heard of it. (Sergel 17-18)

She reiterates the point later on when Juror 7 asks "If the kid didn't kill him, who did?" To which she replies, "As far as I know, we're suppose to decide whether or not the boy on trial is guilty. We're not concerned with anyone else's motives" (Sergel 30). Her knowledge of the law proves she is educated and intelligent enough to know how to apply the law to the case at hand.

Another character who is revealed through the dialogue is Juror 9. At first, she seems rather meek and feeble, yet she is the first to join Juror 8 in standing up for the defendant. We know from the stage directions that she is elderly and has made peace with her station in life. However, that does not mean she is satisfied with her place or where her life has led her. She is a keen observer, and notes several seemingly insignificant details about the witnesses that help discredit their testimony. The biggest being what she reveals about the elderly man who lives below the defendant:

**NINE:** This is a quiet, frightened, insignificant man who has been nothing all his life – who has never had recognition ... Nobody knows him after seventy-five years ... A man like this needs to be recognized – to be questioned, and listened to, and quoted just once. (Sergel 34)

How does she know this? Because “I speak from experience” (Sergel 34). In describing the witness, Juror 9 has described herself.

In addition, by voting not guilty in the secret ballot, Juror 9 ensures the discussion, and thus the play, continues. She senses Juror 8’s gamble for support and due in part perhaps to the compassion her advanced years have brought, she decides to side with Juror 8. Thus without Juror 9 chances are no consensus would have been formed and it would have been declared a hung jury.

A bigot and the most racist of the group, Juror 10 serves as a secondary antagonist. He is described in the stage directions as “an angry and bitter man – a man who antagonizes almost at sight. ... Here is a man who has been nowhere and knows it deep within him” (Sergel 5). He is obviously concerned with money. He mentions how much the taxpayers are paying for this trial. He is quick to generalize, assuming that everyone of the defendant’s ethnicity is a liar and prone to violence. His prejudice is deep seated and he is amazed to discover the others do not share his bigotry. This is proven when the other jurors ostracize him near the end of the play when he makes a lengthy racist tirade. Perhaps the most negative of the jurors, he seems the least effected by the proceedings. Although Juror 4 puts him in his place after his tirade, there is no indication that he has had a change of heart or made any significant character growth.

Through the dialogue we learn that Juror 11 is a recent immigrant to America. We do not know what country he is from other than a stage direction indicates that it is

European. Wherever he is from, it is not a free society. He indicates that beating there is an art form, that there were no movie theatres, and being able to disagree and hold an opinion opposite of the majority is one of the key reasons he came to America.

Interestingly his grammar tends to be clearer and more correct than some of the native-born Americans. In fact, he corrects Juror 10 who ironically proclaims: "He's a common ignorant slob. He don't even speak good English!" (Sergel 36). To which Juror 11 responds, "He *doesn't* speak good English" (Sergel 36), causing Juror 10 to come off as an ignorant slob himself.

Interestingly Juror 11, presumably the only immigrant, proves the most patriotic. As the proceedings digress to fighting, he reminds the other jurors,

**ELEVEN:** We have a responsibility. This is a remarkable thing about democracy. ... That we are notified by mail to come down to this place – and decide on the guilt or innocence of a man; of a man we have not known before. We have nothing to gain or lose by our verdict. This is one of the reasons we are strong. (Sergel 44-45)

He takes the task they are charged with seriously, and his tiff with Juror 7 over the definition of reasonable doubt proves he has little tolerance for those who do not. He also helps Juror 8 by reminding everyone how dark the hallways of the tenement are and calling into question whether the old man could have adequately recognized a figure running down the dark hallway.

Proud of her job, Juror 12 wastes no time in letting everyone know that she is in advertising. Clearly her job is her life and she tends to think in numbers and graphs; she is constantly doodling throughout the deliberations. Other than suggesting that those who voted guilty should explain why in order to convince Juror 8 she is wrong, Juror 12 adds little of substance to the debates. Like Juror 7, she complains about wasting time

and is ready to declare a hung jury. She is superficial and a bit of a snob, more worried about her job than about justice for the defendant. Nonetheless, she, perhaps informed by her job, seeks to please the crowd.

All of this leads to a greater understanding of how to direct the script in rehearsal. Understanding the action provides a structure and helps determine tempo. Knowing the given circumstances enables a better comprehension of why the action unfolds as it does and leads to a more authentic approach to the characters and their motivations. Character analysis helps develop a realistic approach that keeps the jurors from being mere caricatures. Together these provide a greater insight into the world the playwright has created.

## Chapter 4: Approach

The following conceptual approach is based on the document I gave each designer as we began working on this project. The goal was to share my ideas with the designers and get everyone on the same page as we began collaborating on the show. As this was a stand-alone document there may be some repetition of analysis from the preceding chapters. I have since reexamined the document in order to refine my ideas.

*Twelve Angry Jurors* examines one person's struggle to find justice. Can one person's doubts save another's life? The importance of "beyond a reasonable doubt" becomes a driving force. Juror 8 has a nagging doubt about the evidence presented, yet initially she is the only one to doubt. Does she succumb to peer pressure and vote with the majority? Or does she stand up to the rest and follow her instincts? What would we do if faced with a similar situation? Sadly, chances are most of us would go with the majority. After all, it is much easier to just go with the flow and avoid conflict. We all face peer pressure in our daily lives and have most likely succumbed to it on more than one occasion undermining our personal beliefs along the way. Reginald Rose presents in Juror 8 an example of what happens when a person does speak out and refuses to let peer pressure win. In this situation Juror 8 finds herself in a room full of strangers fighting for yet another stranger. She loses nothing personally either way the verdict goes, except integrity. Rose ups the ante for dramatic effect. Not only does Juror 8's personal integrity stand on the line, but the integrity of the jury and in a larger sense the justice system.

Along the way, Rose brings up several universal themes. Themes that make the play relevant for today's audience including standing up against peer pressure, the

importance of an impartial jury, and the need to respect and defend the rights of an individual regardless of race, gender, or social standing. I believe these ideas warrant further exploration as they impact our every day lives. Whether dealing with racial profiling or prejudice in any of its many forms our audience faces these issues on a daily basis, if not personally than in the news. My hope is that the audience will recognize themselves in the show, and if they are not already doing so, strive to stand up for their beliefs knowing that doing so not only makes them a better person but may enhance society as well.

Written in 1954 the play is clearly a period piece and doing it as a period piece seems the most likely approach to succeed. However, that does not mean it cannot be moved in time. To help “modernize” the play to include both male and female jurors, I am moving it forward about ten years to the early 1960s. The name thus becomes *Twelve Angry Jurors*. I see the play as representational and realistic. The characters maintain a fourth wall and never directly address the audience. The world of the play conforms to an everyday reality. Reginald Rose wrote the play this way and I think it will play best from this perspective. The jury represents a microcosm of society. Moving it to the early 1960s maintains a close enough tie to the original timeframe that the language and attitudes still ring true. In fact, the racism element becomes even more apropos in the heated environment of the civil rights movement that dominated the Sixties.

Using a mixed-gender cast allows the discussion to move beyond racism to incorporate sexism as well. Juror 10 is not only racist but through his action toward the women jurors could easily come off as a male chauvinist as well. Adding gender issues

to the milieu of the show only enhances the importance of what Juror 8 is striving for – a fair evaluation of the evidence presented without regard to the social, sexual, or racial standing of the defendant. After all, justice is supposed to be blind.

Working to combine the two versions of the script – *Twelve Angry Men* and *Twelve Angry Women* – provided a chance to think about gender roles as well. In assigning juror genders I tried to determine what would make the most interesting combinations while trying to make sure the juror’s characteristics fit the assigned gender. Final decisions on gender will be made during casting. Although I would like an evenly split cast when it comes to gender, I recognize that there are more women in the program and assume that I will likely end up with more women than men in my cast.

Even though the play is set in the past, the ideas and themes it addresses are timeless. In a current society that feels oppressed by the one percent, Rose provides a nice reminder that everyday, ordinary people can make a difference and that everyone’s opinion matters. One of the strong images of the play is of the American judicial system and how it incorporates democracy into its function. The final decision rides not on the potentially elitist judge but on a jury of peers. Rose also seems to be saying that if everyone takes their role seriously the system will work.

The play takes place in real time during the late afternoon and early evening of a steaming hot summer day in New York City circa 1963. The humidity and the temperature are both near the century mark. There is no air conditioning. The jury room is small and stuffy offering little to no respite from the heat of the crowded courtroom. The window is their one means of respite. Although it is probably not much better outside than it is inside. It takes little to imagine how frayed the nerves of the



jurors are in this situation. Hot and uncomfortable, tempers are likely to flare. The environmental conditions set the stage for a tense, heated deliberation.

The set for *Twelve Angry Jurors* is quite simple, in that it is one interior that does not change. However, there are several things the set needs to accomplish. There should be a sense of history to the room. The courthouse is old, and I would like there to be a sense that a great many juries have deliberated in this room and many more will follow. A rather timeless quality to the room may be represented by keeping the set simple and fairly plain. Perhaps a dark wainscoting and a rather neutral paint – something like cream, tan, light gray, etc. – nothing that shouts 1963 but rather evokes an early era. A single door and a window provide the only breaks in the wall. The outside of the door is labeled “Jury Room” and contains a lock so the jurors can be locked in the room. A frosted glass window in the door would nicely reflect the age of the building. An audible click would be nice, but the dialogue makes it clear whether the audience hears it or not. A coat rack or closet near the door might add a nice touch.

A few wall decorations may include a portrait of President Kennedy, which serves as the only direct indication of the period. In addition, perhaps a framed copy of the Bill of Rights and other patriotic garb could adorn the walls. Somewhere the phrase “The true administration of justice is the firmest pillar of good government” might appear to remind jurors of their duty. As the general public does not see this room, little has been done in the way of upkeep or updating. The set wants to create a sense of closeness approaching claustrophobia. The room should appear cramped but functional. The sense of closeness helps reflect the weight bearing down on the jurors as they debate. To help the audience appreciate the close confines of the jury room, I

want the set built as far down on the thrust as possible. While I want a proscenium-style set, I want the action happening close to the audience.

The large table dominates the room and is the main playing space. A water cooler and the window provide areas of escape and important additional playing areas. Perhaps a couple additional chairs on the opposite side of the stage from the water cooler could become another minor playing area.

Props and set pieces are few but need to be period or even pre-date the period. The water cooler can be the glass-jar variety. The table should look old and well worn; I would prefer it be wood. The chairs look about as old as the table and mostly match. There may be a “newer” one or two. The chairs should be wood as well. The switchblade knife is the key prop. Finding two identical ones that appear unusual or unique may prove difficult though. I like the idea of an electric fan that does not work. Other miscellaneous props may be used to help create the sense that this is a well-worn room.

Lighting needs to reflect the harsh fluorescent lights of the period, as the window probably does not let in a sufficient amount of light. Maybe this can be used to help create a sense of uneasiness as well. Natural light coming in through the window can provide some warmth. I would like pre-show lighting to mostly be the late afternoon sun coming in the window. When the tide changes after the reenactment of the murder and Juror 8 starts to lose support, I would like to add a storm so the light coming in from the window will need to darken. Perhaps we can even add a strike or two of lightning. To support this shift a subtle darkening of the whole area might be

helpful. The idea behind the storm is to help signal a significant shift in the play with the added benefit of giving a chance for the lighting and sound to change.

Costumes will definitely be period and specific to each character. Knowing the gender of each character becomes highly important at this point. The men run the gamut from blue collar to white collar and the women from housewife to career woman. The Sixties silhouette should be readily apparent. Since some of the characters are older, their clothes may not necessarily be “modern” but reflect an earlier time. Makeup needs to be natural with the exception of those playing older characters who will need to look aged. Makeup should reflect the characters as well. For example, the career woman’s makeup will differ from the housewife’s. The men should look natural.

Since the script does not provide specific information about the jurors’ ages, occupations, or stations in life – with the exception of Juror 12’s occupation – I came up with the following to help guide the costume designer. I based my character concepts on the mannerisms and comments spoken by or about each juror in the play, trying to minimize the influence of having seen the film version multiple times but not completely ignoring it as these are essentially the same characters. I also took into consideration the gender of each juror, which was not finitely decided until final casting.

I see the Foreman as a Barney Fife (from *The Andy Griffith Show*) just more on the serious side. He is not used to being in this formal of a position or situation. Like Barney when Andy is gone, he tries to proceed formally and follow the rules, but does not handle criticism well. He probably coaches a high school sport or works at a low-level office job. Jack Lemmon from *The Apartment* is another possibility. He is rather

young, I would say mid-twenties and still single.

Juror 2 is most likely a housewife. Her husband is the controlling type; she is timid and rather meek. Her opinion is always that of her husband so with him not around, she is easily swayed. Although an introvert, she does pay attention to details and works up the courage to bring up her concern about the angle of the stabbing. She indicates that it is difficult to stab down into someone taller. She wears glasses and is young, early to mid-twenties. I see her as Betty Draper type from the first couple seasons of *Mad Men*.

Juror 3 has a son who is at least eighteen, making him middle-aged (forty-ish anyway) and probably married. I get the feeling that he has worked hard for what he has and is perhaps self-employed (his quick temper would get him fired from most other jobs). He probably runs a small store of some type, maybe a hardware store. One of the most important relationships that precedes the play is Juror 3's troubled relationship with his son. This juror seems to take the case personally and is set on executing the defendant as a means of placating his failings with his own son. I do not believe that he is an inherently malicious man just angry that his life has not turned the way he wanted. When he finally switches his vote to not guilty at the end, the decision is about more than the case at hand; it is also him realizing the reasons behind his son's actions. Of all the jurors, he experiences the biggest change by the end. Lee J. Cobb did such a great job playing this character that I still see Juror 3 as that type of guy.

Although she may appear to be a trophy wife, Juror 4 is intelligent, logical, and college-educated in her late twenties to early thirties. She wears glasses probably resembling Jackie O, or maybe Audrey Hepburn in her sense of style. She tends to see

things in a clear-cut manner: black and white, one could say. She probably found and married the right guy in college and has enjoyed the privileged life ever since. She feels she is superior to the rest of the jurors. Her only concern is the facts; she is appalled by the behavior of the other jurors. The heat does not seem to affect her as she remains calm and unemotional throughout.

Juror 5 grew up in the slums and is greatly aware of her lower status, which explains why she does not say much or overtly contradict the others. Nonetheless, she takes the case seriously. Probably the youngest member of the jury, she is in her very early twenties, and based on the way others treat her, most likely a minority. She does menial labor of some sort but is set on raising her position in life. She prefers to go unnoticed yet has a sense of wholesomeness – perhaps wears brown to reflect her neutrality and her desire to not stand out.

Juror 6 never takes a strong stand of her own and always second-guesses her opinions. She is not used to thinking for herself. A maid or some other type of domestic worker, she is middle-aged. I see her as a younger version of Aunt Bea. She is a peacekeeper, so I see her in green to reflect her calm tendencies.

Loud and flashy, Juror 7 is the least serious of the jurors. He cares little about the task at hand, making it to a hit Broadway show that evening is more important. He is a salesman and has the energy and belligerence to go with it. He is married and on the young side, probably late twenties. I see orange complimenting his flashy style.

Juror 8 is a professional. While never revealed in the script, her job demands a higher education, something along the lines of an architect or accountant. As a woman in a man's world, she has great strength but that does not mean she lacks compassion.

She wants justice and believes everyone deserves to be treated with the same respect regardless their gender or race. She is single and around thirty. She exudes both confidence and trustworthiness, so blue is the color that comes to mind for her.

Juror 9 is elderly and has made peace with her station in life. However, that does not mean she is satisfied with her place or where her life has led her. She is a keen observer, and notes several seemingly insignificant details about the witnesses that help discredit their testimony. Probably a widow and not a flashy woman so muted tones seem to suit her best, maybe even brown or gray. She is in her late seventies. Juror 9 is the most sedentary of the jurors but keeps herself occupied by knitting.

Juror 10's life has gone nowhere. He is a blue-collar worker – perhaps he works at an auto repair shop or hardware store – and is obviously concerned with money. He is quick to generalize and tends to buy in to stereotypes. His prejudice is deep seated and he is amazed to discover the others do not share his bigotry. He is around 40 and married. Juror 10 conveys red to me due to his aggressive behavior.

The script indicates that Juror 11 speaks with a European accent. This seems too vague, so I decided he immigrated from Germany most likely during Nazi occupation. Juror 11 is middle aged and married. I see him as some sort of tradesman perhaps he works on clocks. As someone who has fought to make a new start, yet wants to remain inconspicuous, black and white elements might be fitting for his attire.

Juror 12 is the only juror whose occupation is revealed in the script. She is an advertising executive and continually reminds everyone that she is in advertising. Like Juror 8, she is a young, smart woman in a man's world. Clearly her job is her life and she tends to think in numbers and graphs; she constantly doodles throughout the

deliberations. She is superficial and a bit of a snob. She is single and in her mid-twenties. Being on the creative side, she probably likes purple. I see her as having a Mary Tyler Moore look. She is a cross between Peggy and Joan on *Mad Men*.

*Twelve Angry Jurors* requires a rather simple sound design: incidental music for pre-show and curtain call, and ambient street noise with rain and thunder for the storm. Pre-show incidental music will be period. I plan on keeping it to music released between 1960 and 1963; I want something the jurors may have heard on the radio on their way to the courthouse. I want the music to help establish the time period, but also reflect the somber theme of the play. Pop music tends to be too upbeat, so perhaps something more along the lines of jazz or blues. Possibly something with a patriotic feel to it would be appropriate, especially for the curtain call. There are no scene changes to worry about. Sound effects include ambient outdoor noise to support the window being open. The storm needs thunder and rain. I plan on doing the show without an intermission thus limiting incidental music to pre and post-show only.

Overall, the goal is to create a show set in a specific period and presented in a representational, real-world manner. While this is a play that depends a great deal on language, the set, costumes, makeup, lights, and sound can go a long way in bringing the show to life by creating a realistic environment that supports the action of the script.

## **Chapter 5: Design Process**

I found the design process interesting, challenging, and ultimately rewarding. I was excited to be working with professional designers, and they did not disappoint. The process began the preceding semester as conversations with the various designers via email and in person. I sent each designer a copy of my approach (Chapter 4) detailing my vision for the play as it stood at that time. I went into these meetings with some specific ideas but leaving the door open for each designer to expand on those ideas and enhance them with their own.

### **Costume Design**

Admittedly I know little about costume design; however, by setting the show in 1963 I knew there was a specific look that I wanted to capture. I had done research into what was popular during this era, but it was important to me that the show present a broad spectrum of society, not just the Audrey Hepburns and Jackie Kennedys. Fortunately, I had Professor Gregory Pulver as my costume designer, and he was able to help me determine how to achieve the appropriate look for each character. Our early discussions were rather limited as we did not know the gender of the characters until casting was finalized.

Before he presented any costume ideas, Professor Pulver asked for a detailed description of each character, including age, occupation, personality, and the color I most associated with them. Doing the detailed descriptions helped me think even more clearly about each character than I had previously so that when we met to go over initial design ideas we were able to have constructive discussions about each character. Professor Pulver created a PowerPoint with an array of style and color possibilities for



each of the characters. I found this immensely helpful, as I am very visual when it comes to design elements. I need to see examples so I have a visual reference to go back to. We went through each character discussing which of the possibilities he had found best fit the character in terms of social status, occupation, and personality.

I had not previously thought of the jurors in terms of specific colors, but when I did, clear distinctions arose. With the calm, logical jurors such as 8 and 9 I found myself leaning towards cool colors such as blue and green, while with the more emotionally charged jurors such as 3 and 10, warmer colors such as red and orange seemed more appropriate. Initially I had a specific color for each juror, but as the costumes came together, Professor Pulver brilliantly established color as means of connecting the jurors. Juror 8 we put in blue while gold ended up representing the other end of the spectrum by being the dominant color in Juror 3's tie and best represented in Juror 4's costume (See Appendix A). The amount of either of these colors indicated which position the other jurors sided with the most. It became a subtle way of foreshadowing the order in which the jurors switch their votes.

One of the limitations of *Twelve Angry Jurors* is that the show proceeds in real time with no set or costume changes. Therefore, the costumes the actors enter in have to do all the work of establishing character and time period. To combat this limitation, Professor Pulver established layers that could be removed as the show progressed. A prime example of this was the costume for Juror 5. She enters in a rather neutral brown pantsuit, but when she takes the coat off, she is wearing a blue blouse helping to indicate that she will side with Juror 8 in the end (See Appendix A). Another instance where the costume helped visually enhance the show and further develop the character

came with Juror 10. Juror 10 enters wearing a plaid sports coat one of the primary colors of which is a yellow-gold. While he is one of the last hold outs for a guilty verdict, once he removes the coat he is in a white shirt with no tie, providing a stark contrast to the rest of the jurors. Professor Pulver cleverly used white to isolate the most racist of the jurors. During Juror 10's bigoted tirade near the end of the show, the costume helps emphasize how different he is in his extreme views (See Appendix A).

From the beginning of our conversations it was clear Professor Pulver understood what I wanted. His designs perfectly reflected what I had envisioned for each character. With excitement I discovered we were on the same page, and other than a few adjustments based on what could be found and pulled, he stuck fairly close to our initial choices. Originally, I believed that the jurors should be "dressed up" for jury duty, after all it is a more formal affair especially back in the 1960s. However, Professor Pulver suggested that since there is so little character development in the script, that clothes would be key in helping define the characters. So the costumes became more an embodiment of what the jurors would wear to work, just spruced up a bit. Professor Pulver's suggestion ended up helping express the social standing of each character and furthered my goal of creating individuals, not just stereotypes.

I felt the collaboration with Professor Pulver was a successful one. He took my ideas and came back with more than I envisioned.

### **Dramaturgy**

At the beginning of this project, I had no expectations of having a dramaturge. However, when Professor Mead Hunter suggested that fellow graduate student Nathaniel Quinn could serve as my dramaturge, I was excited. I had never worked with

a dramaturge before and Mr. Quinn had never served as one, so it would be a new experience for us both. Fortunately, Professor Hunter was there to guide us. By the time Mr. Quinn joined the production team, I had already done a significant amount of research on the history of *Twelve Angry Men*. We decided it would best serve the production if he focused on etiquette and decorum of the early 1960s.

At the first rehearsal, Mr. Quinn presented his initial findings including some historical context for the actors. He addressed important events of the era and gave some of the top movies, TV shows, and songs. I felt his presentation effectively gave the actors a general understanding of the world we would be presenting on the stage. During the rehearsal process, Mr. Quinn worked on finding any additional information we might request. One of the big questions that arose during rehearsal was what would the women do with their purses? Mr. Quinn combed through etiquette guides until finding reasonable solutions. The problem that he encountered was that none of the guides address jury room decorum specifically, so he had to surmise from other social situations of a similar formality and setting.

Mr. Quinn delivered his findings to me directly, therefore enabling me to determine how and when the information was presented to the cast. Professor Hunter oversaw the process from a distance, but as Mr. Quinn proved more than capable, he did not need to intervene. While this may not have been quite the typical dramaturge/director relationship, I feel Mr. Quinn's research added to the production in a useful and helpful manner.

## Light Design

At first, I had some concern when it came to lighting. The lighting designer was the last to join the production team, and for a while I was worried that we might not have someone until the last minute. Fortunately, Em Douglas, a University of Portland alumnus who does free-lance lighting work around Portland, agreed to do the show. Like with the other designers, our conversation began via email. We finally met in person the week before auditions for our first in-depth design conversation. Ms. Douglas was laidback, easy to talk to, and interested in learning what my concept and expectations were for the show. I feel we had an easy rapport from the beginning.

Since *Twelve Angry Jurors* all takes place in one room, in real time, it does not call for many changes in the lighting. I wanted the look of harsh fluorescent lights that one typically finds in courtrooms and other government buildings coupled with a warmer light coming in from the window. The biggest light change came during the storm. We talked about having a bolt of lightning to signal the start of the storm and then darken the light coming in from the window. Ms. Douglas suggested darkening the interior lights as well so it would be clearer to the audience. She also came up with the idea of having the lights flicker. I liked this idea as it not only helped indicate the storm, but also set the place showing that we were in an old building that possibly had faulty wiring.

While the flickering for the storm worked, I never fully liked the flicker at the top of the show when the guard “turns on” the fluorescent room lights. To me this flicker ended up looking more like a light cue glitch than fluorescent lights warming up. Ms.

Douglas ended up shortening the length of the flicker improving the look of the effect so we kept it.

Other than this one element, the lighting proved effective and looked good. The backlight during the storm proved exceptionally advantageous as it lit the rain falling and hitting the window. In our design conversations we discussed how to help differentiate between Juror 8 and Juror 3 as they represent either end of the spectrum. We decided that Juror 8 as the heroine needed a warm light, leaving Juror 3 with a sense of coolness. Ms. Douglas worked to find ways to bump up the warmness or coolness when each of these jurors was delivering important information. Without hanging an excess number of lights, it became necessary to isolate the actors. Fortunately, I had already established stage right as Juror 8's principal playing area and stage left became more dedicated to Juror 3. While I obviously did not want the actors stuck on any one side of the stage, it was easy enough to have key moments in those areas where the light could help reflect the character. I appreciate how Ms. Douglas worked in elements like this to create lighting that helped tell the story or support character development.

### **Properties**

Working with the student props master went fairly well. I sent her a list of the required props early on, indicating that the switchblade knives were the most important. While she attended production meetings, she did not attend any rehearsals, not even the designer run. Attending a run would have enabled her to better understand how props were being used and what they were needed for. The paper cups for the water cooler became one of the more frustrating elements. She provided only a

small number of cups initially, which we went through in one rehearsal. The stage manager and I repeatedly asked for more cups, noting that a significant number was used in each run, yet we still ended up running out of cups during rehearsal. Eventually she finally brought in a substantial number, but only after repeated requests. Had she attended a run, she would have been able to more accurately determine the number of cups needed.

Most of the other props could easily be obtained and caused no concern. Items such as notepads, pencils, ashtrays, and so on proved no problem. My only issue was the amount of time it took some of these props to be delivered. She received the list early on and as the first production of the semester, I believed props would appear in a timely fashion. She did do a good job of hunting down the knives and making sure the props were as period appropriate as reasonably possible.

### **Set Design**

Heading into the production I had a clear idea of what I envisioned for the set. I wanted a proscenium with a representational set. With the show set in New York City, I wanted the jury room to look old. New York is an old city and I saw the trial taking place in one of the old courthouses. The room needed a sense of history. I did not want it to scream 1963. I hoped the audience would get a sense that many previous juries had spent long hours deliberating in the room, and many future juries would too: a continuing legacy in the pursuit of justice.

I found a couple images that reflected my vision, and at our first in-person meeting, Professor Larry Larsen and I went over these images and ones he had found as well. Our ideas were similar and I left the meeting having a very good feeling about the

set. The one image we both ended up liking the best included a large window running nearly the whole length of the back wall. I liked the idea of a large window, but was concerned how it would work as the dialogue indicates only one window that opens. Professor Larsen created a four-panel window of which only one side opened. It worked with the dialogue and looked great (See Appendix B).

When I told Professor Larsen that I wanted the table to run horizontally across the stage but not be perfectly parallel to the audience, he suggested shifting the whole set about seven degrees. Professor Larsen's idea proved a great one; it allowed the table to be at an angle to the audience thus improving sightlines, while still remaining parallel to the back wall of the set (See Appendix B).

The basic set requirements for *Twelve Angry Jurors* are quite simple. There needs to be a door, a window that opens, and a table large enough to sit twelve. These are the basics. I knew I wanted a water cooler and a couple extra chairs to create an additional playing space. Professor Larsen suggested added a second door on the other side of the stage to serve as a restroom, which along with a window seat helped provide additional areas for the actors to use. We agreed that the water cooler and two chairs would be down right. Initially I suggested a chair or two stage left but due the angle of the set we thought they might hinder sightlines so the area remained open. As the rehearsals progressed, down left became the smokers' corner and therefore underused. Keeping it open helped with sightlines, but the actors had no reason to use the area, other than to occasionally move away from the table for a smoke. I asked Professor Larsen if we could add a chair and ashtray to that area to help give the impetus for actors to use it.

He concurred and we were able to place a chair and ashtray stage left without interrupting the sightlines.

The finished set exceeded my expectations. Helping to create the sense of realism I wanted, Professor Larsen's attention to detail was crucial. He painted the floor to look like old institutional tile and built a table large enough to sit all the jurors. Enhancing the sense of realism tremendously, Professor Larsen added a rain machine for the storm. At first I was a bit skeptical about his idea to build a rain machine. Unsure how it would work, I feared it might make too much noise and over power the actors. In the end it proved effective and garnered praise from the audience.

### **Sound Design**

I ended up designing the sound for the show myself. With no scene changes or an intermission, the pre-show music became my biggest concern. I wanted the music to set the time period since the set did very little to indicate it. However, after listening to dozens of songs, I realized that most of the popular songs of the early 1960s were sugar-sweet love songs. This would not do, as I wanted the music to help set the tone as well. I wanted songs that were a bit more somber and ended up using popular music with a jazz influence. The only sound effects in the show are thunder and street noise, which seemed simple enough. I found what I thought an acceptable clap of thunder, but upon hearing it in the theatre it sounded more like a gunshot. I eventually found a couple thunder tracks that actually sounded like thunder. I spent quite a bit of time agonizing over the curtain call music. The show ends on a serious note; however, I did not want the curtain call song to be too somber. I happened upon an instrumental piece



called “Green Onions” by Booker T & the MG’s, an upbeat but not too cheerful of a song. Overall, I felt the sound design proved effective.

I wanted the work with the designers to be a collaborative process, knowing the best results always come from shared ideas. I feel a successful collaboration was attained. The designers took my ideas, expanded on them, returning a final product that for the most part exceeded my expectations. I learned a lot working with the designers, as our conversations were always helpful and illuminating. Their ideas helped shape and inform the production while staying true to my approach.

## **Chapter 6: Auditions, Casting, and Rehearsals**

I am always excited for auditions. Auditions provide the first chance you get to see the actors and get a sense of how casting will go. In an academic setting where you get to know the students, I find it interesting to see how the actors have grown and matured since last working with them. I went into auditions with a clear idea of what I was looking for in the major roles of Jurors 3, 8, and 10. Casting the right actors in these roles was important to the success of the show. I knew I needed students who could understand the characters both intellectually and emotionally. The casting of Juror 10 especially concerned me as I knew the role with its blatant bigotry would be outside the comfort zone of the students. Before auditions, I put together an information sheet that gave a synopsis of the show and a brief description of the characters, which was posted in the lobby the week before auditions so students had a better idea of what the show was about before they auditioned (See Appendix C).

I entered the audition process with a plan that included a preferred breakdown of gender among the cast. However, knowing that there are far more women in the program than men, I was open to and in fact expecting to have to cast more women than I initially wanted. I know magic can happen during auditions and callbacks, so I kept my eyes open for any strong women I could put in one or more of the roles I earmarked as male. The nice thing about doing *Twelve Angry Jurors* is that the director gets to make the final decision of the gender of each character.

The number of students who turned out for auditions, including more men than we anticipated, pleasantly surprised me. However, I knew not to be too optimistic as the spring musical was also casting from the same pool of actors. My goal for the first night

of auditions was to determine whom I wanted to see again. In addition, I noted specific roles as possibilities and whom I might want to see them paired with. I came up with a list for callbacks that I was quite happy with. In callbacks I looked for students who comprehended the role, took direction, and had the potential to work as an ensemble. I was not interested in casting any divas. I called back a wide variety of possibilities for each role. Since all twelve jurors are on stage the whole time, I knew I needed a cast that could work together well.

Choosing sides for callbacks proved more difficult than I originally imagined. It is nearly impossible to find an extended passage with just two or three people talking in this script. It tends to happen with just the leads making it impossible to have readings for all the characters. This proved frustrating. The only solution I found involved coming up with readings that reflected what I needed from a character even if it was not that specific character speaking. Therefore, many actors had to read parts they were not being considered for. This led to some confusion, but in the end it worked out. Needless to say, I kept the sides short and numerous people read the same cutting. The trick was reminding myself which character I was considering for each actor.

### **Auditions and Casting**

The spring shows always casts during the first week of the semester. All three shows for the semester cast at the same time. Taking this into consideration, I went into general auditions the first night knowing I would call back more actors than I might otherwise do, so I could hopefully have multiple choices for each role. This proved an effective strategy.

The first night we saw a great many familiar faces and several new ones as well. I was excited that many of the newcomers were men as it opened up the possibility of keeping my original gender breakdown. For general auditions most students performed prepared monologues while some did cold readings. Either way I looked for actors who made strong choices and stuck with them. Volume and connection to the character were also important to me. While I watched the auditions, I looked for these qualities, noting who had them and who did not. I also noted any specific characters I thought of while seeing the audition and made sure to clearly mark the actors I definitely wanted to see in callbacks.

After auditions, I went home and worked on determining a callback list for the next day. In addition to my notes, I checked audition forms for scheduling conflicts. I was disappointed to discover that two of the actors I liked could not do my show due other commitments. Attributing the rather high turn out to the fact that a musical was being cast at the same time and knowing that I would inevitably lose a few of my first choices to the musical, I decided to call back nearly everyone who did not have a scheduling conflict. At this point the small number of actors I saw as potential Jurors 3 and 8 concerned me. I hoped some more would come to light during callbacks.

Knowing that seeing specific pairings would be next to impossible the first night of callbacks since the musical was calling large groups at a time, I decided to limit my focus. I looked primarily for the ability to take direction and a general understanding of the character. I also considered the actor's range. Could they adapt to the character, or was what you saw what you got? The night proved rather disordered, but it really did help narrow down my choices and allow me to realize who I wanted to see paired up

the following night. The students running callbacks were quick and organized. The only downfall came from my lack of specific pairings. I compiled a list of actors I wanted to see read specific parts and left the pairings up to the students and whoever happened to be available. This led to me seeing some students numerous times and others only once or twice. The situation was not the best, but nonetheless I finished half an hour early. By the end of the night I had a pretty good idea of whom I wanted to cast. At this point Juror 10 became my primary concern as I had yet to see a really strong reading for that character.

The second night of callbacks went much smoother. I compiled a specific list of the actors I wanted to see read together. I focused this time on how well people worked together. I looked for actors who supported their scene partner by listening and responding and who were team players. I often had the actors switch roles to see if they could handle a different part and still be a team player. Pleasantly surprised by the effort and ability of several of the newcomers I knew they would make my shortlist for casting. Most of my hunches about who would work well together were confirmed. After a few really strong readings, I saw the cast come together in my mind. Those running the callbacks did an amazing job of keeping things moving smoothly and effectively. They went down my list and I saw all but one pairing in record time. We decided to call it a night as the actors for the one pairing were both called for the other shows. I had worked with the actors together before, so seeing them read together was not absolutely necessary. I left the theatre that night feeling good about the talent I had seen and knowing that I had some difficult decisions to make.

Casting is always difficult but was compounded this time knowing that I may lose some to the musical and having to take into consideration seniors who needed capstone roles. Fortunately, the seniors were a quite talented group and would have made my shortlist anyway. Casting Juror 8 was the easiest. I knew who I wanted after the first night of auditions. Finding a suitable sparring partner to play Juror 3 proved more difficult. Fortunately during the second round of callbacks two actors upped their game and I knew at that point either would do well. Juror 12, the ad executive, was also a concern. The character does not have many lines but since I wanted a woman to play the role I knew I needed a strong actor. Juror 12 has an attitude and presence about her that the more inexperienced actors did not manage to find during callbacks. One of the more experience students showed promise and I had confidence she could pull it off. Juror 10 remained the most difficult role to cast. He is the least likable character in the play and more outside the experience of the students. The other roles were all rather easy to cast thanks to the talent of our acting pool. Based on the talent I saw in auditions, I determined that I would be fine if two of the roles I had earmarked as male went to women instead.

With my ideal cast in hand I headed off to the general casting session. Knowing that two other shows were pulling from the same acting pool, I had come up with several options for each character. As the casting process proceeded, I happily noted that there were not too many conflicts with the other directors over actor choices. While I got many of my first choices, it is unrealistic to expect to get all of your first choices, and I had planned accordingly. So I was not overly disappointed when a few of my first choices went to other shows. I managed to hold on to the actors I felt I really

needed to make the show a success. In the end casting proved quick and painless. I ended up only changing one of the roles I had intended to cast as male to female. The actor I cast had brought an energy and perspective to the role I had not anticipated and I looked forward to where the character would go with her in the part. Overall, I was very pleased with my final cast.

The auditioning and casting process went quite well. My initial concerns over casting with two other shows were waylaid for the most part. In fact, the musical probably brought out more actors than what might have otherwise auditioned providing a deeper pool of actors. Holding callbacks at the same time as the other shows proved the most difficult part of the process. This makes seeing specific pairings of actors hard, but working with the actors during callbacks enabled me to make informed guesses as to how they might work with another actor. In the end, I feel my casting choices were strong and the cast worked well together as an ensemble.

### **Rehearsals**

Several difficulties are inherent in being the first show of spring semester. As the first show, rehearsals start two days after casting, giving the actors little chance to read the script prior to the first rehearsal. Therefore, the actors did not have the opportunity to think critically about their characters or the play in general before we dived into discussions. Complicating matters this year the weeklong break fell at the end of regular rehearsals, so we rehearsed for four weeks, were gone for a week, and came back to three dress rehearsals before opening. Knowing this I realized the show needed to be as ready as possible before the break as there would be no time to fix anything major once we got back. To help facilitate this I scheduled runs for most of the fourth week as I

wanted the actors to have a strong sense of the rhythm and pacing of the show as whole before they took a whole week off. Thankfully the short run time of the play allowed us to do a complete run and then work on any problem areas I noticed during the run for a while afterwards. I emailed the cast a schedule for the following week every Friday (See Appendix D). Even though I had a master schedule for ideal rehearsals, by sending the schedule out a week at a time it allowed me to make necessary changes as it became clear what moments needed more work.

Knowing that a designer run would happen toward the end of week three, the goal was to have initial blocking completed by then. *Twelve Angry Jurors* presents a unique situation for rehearsals. Twelve of the thirteen cast members are onstage virtually the entire show. This made figuring out call times easy as everyone, with the exception of the guard, was called every night for the entire rehearsal. I tried to work around the scenes with the guard so that actor did not have to attend every rehearsal. The problem I ran into was breaking the script into beats of action for rehearsals. Since everyone stays onstage there are no French scenes to help in this endeavor. Having never directed a show with this many actors onstage at the same time before, I underestimated the amount of time it would take to block the beats. Initially my beats were too long, often running five to eight pages, and progress was stunted as it became impossible for me to keep track of everybody for that length of time. I felt stretched too thin and the actors felt a lack of cohesive direction. Fortunately, we caught this early enough to nip it in the bud. I went back through the script and broke it into significantly smaller beats, sometimes focusing on just half a page but never exceeding two pages. As



we started working these smaller moments, the change led to more productive rehearsals and a general improvement in the rehearsal atmosphere.

At the first rehearsal I shared my thoughts on the play and what I thought were the important ideas and themes it communicates. Nathaniel Quinn, our dramaturge, presented on cultural and historical events of the early 1960s to give the actors some context for the play. Since most of the students in the cast already knew each other quite well, I felt there was no need to do any group bonding exercises. In fact, I wanted more of the opposite impression. The jurors are all strangers so a major concern I had was that the existing friendship among the cast would carry over on to the stage. In order to get them started thinking about this, we played a couple of improv games based on status after the read through. When you walk into a room full of strangers one of the first things you do is try to figure out how and where you fit in. I told the actors to keep this in mind as they worked on developing their characters.

The next two days were spent doing table work. Since the script is so vague about the characters, I decided to meet with each actor individually to talk about their character. The amount of thought and insight the actors brought to these conversations pleasantly surprised me considering they had only had the scripts a couple of days. I presented some ideas I had about the characters, but encouraged the actors to continue to explore and develop the characters as rehearsals went forward. Many of these conversations proved insightful as the actors brought up ideas and insights I had not considered.

After the two days of table work we got on our feet and began blocking. In hindsight I realize it would have been beneficial to bring the whole cast together for

more group-based table work. However, at the time I was concerned about getting the show blocked before the designer run. As mentioned earlier, blocking got off to a bumpy start; however, once I regrouped and refocused my blocking strategy things went rather smoothly. We worked several small sections individually then put them together to run a larger chunk of the show. I felt it important to run larger chunks of the show to allow the actors to see how the smaller sections fit together and to begin to get a sense of the overall structure of the show.

As we finished blocking, I encouraged the actors to explore and follow their instincts. It was clear from the beginning that keeping the actors at the table for any length of time would not work; it became static and no matter where we placed chairs sightlines were an issue when all twelve sat at the table. Therefore, I established the rule that only time everyone could sit at the table was for the votes. Finding places for everyone to go so we did not have too many at the table became a challenge. Thankfully the set designer included an additional door for a restroom giving the actors who did not have many lines another place to go. Thinking that logically after sitting in the courtroom all day the jurors would need a bathroom break, we tried to work it so everybody went to the bathroom once. I hoped this would serve as a means to keep the stage picture changing and help reduce the congestion on the stage. The only problem was that the bathroom door was stage right, same as the water cooler causing stage right to be overused. Stage left felt underused as it was mostly where the jurors who smoked escaped to do so. I worked with Jurors 4 and 8 to make use of the whole stage during some of their longer speeches. The actor playing Juror 8 took this idea and made

great use of it by delivering certain points of her speech to specific jurors, giving her a clear motivation for moving around the room.

While most of the time the entire cast was at rehearsal the whole time, on occasion I met just with Jurors 3 and 8 to work and discuss their moments of confrontation and then the reconciliation at the end. As Juror 3 almost stabs Juror 8 at one point, it was important for me to talk this moment through with the actors and make sure they were comfortable with the action. As the actors are about the same height, it was Juror 3's idea to have Juror 8 stand on a chair to get the necessary height difference required in the script for the stabbing demonstration. This created a greater than necessary difference, placing Juror 3 at eyelevel with Juror 8's breasts which only added to the tension of the moment. We also worked on the moment when Juror 3 lunges at Juror 8 at screaming, "I'll kill her! I'll kill her!" This felt flat in rehearsal and by allowing the actors a chance to discuss the scene it came up that there needed to be clear indication when the moment of danger had passed giving Juror 8 the necessary motivation for her line about him not really going to kill her. In addition, we discussed the final moment of the show when Juror 3 gives the knife to Juror 8. I felt this was a key moment and needed to be played just right for the audience to get it. The actors seemed to enjoy the opportunity to discuss these key moments, and I appreciated the insight they brought to the discussions. They then worked the shared insights into their actions.

The short scene between Jurors 2 and 4 at the water cooler became one of the most troublesome aspects of the script. The scene bears no relation to the previous action or the action following; it seemed to be randomly placed in the script and serves

mainly as exposition. The actors and I struggled to find believable motivation to move into the scene. We worked on it several times, but it still did not feel right. After consulting Professor Andrew Golla, who agreed with its awkward placement, we determined the best solution was to add a line to serve as a transition. This helped but the scene still felt cumbersome. I met with Jurors 2 and 4, and we talked through the scene. At first, they were a bit unclear on their motivations for the scene. We spent time brainstorming motivations for delivering expository information. By allowing the actors the opportunity to discuss what their characters wanted during the scene, we were able to find sufficient motivations and the scene worked much better.

Unfortunately, the actors were not completely off book by the designer run which marked the first time we ran the show in entirety. The designer run was a good experience for all of us as it allowed us to see how the show was coming together at that point. As might be expected several problems became clear during the designer run. One was the opening and closing moments and how the jurors entered and left the room. It looked too much like staged action, lacking fluid, natural movement. The heavy use of stage right became readily apparent and the final moment for Juror 3 was unclear and awkward. It also became clear that the period decorum and articulation were deficient.

As we entered into the final week of regular rehearsal, we began running longer chunks of the show while working on the problems noted in the designer run. We spent time working on the entrance emphasizing that this was the first time they had seen the room and maintaining a more formal decorum as they were amongst a group of strangers. We also worked on the exit with the goal of remaining in character and

recognizing that each exit was the end of that character's story arc. We did run throughs the final three rehearsals, working on problem areas afterward with whatever rehearsal time was left. The biggest challenge at this point was getting everyone off book. When there was a problem with a moment, it became difficult to determine if we needed to rework the moment or if the problem simply existed due to the actors stumbling with their lines. Fortunately, the final rehearsal before the weeklong break for the Region VII Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF) was our best run through to date, and we left feeling confident about the show.

At this point it became time to add the technical elements to the show. The stage manager, Em Douglas (lighting design), and I met for paper tech. Since I served as the sound designer, I had marked in the script where all the sound cues needed to happen. Ms. Douglas and I made sure the stage manager had all the necessary light and sound cues recorded. There were not many of either due in part to the single location, so paper tech went quickly and smoothly.

Technical rehearsals started with level sets on a Saturday morning. I had already set the sound cues up in QLab, enabling a quicker set up once the files were transferred to the computer in the booth that would run the sound during the show. Since the cues were already set up all we had to do was go through them and adjust the levels depending on if they were too high or too low. While the stage manager and I did this, Ms. Douglas and the light board operator worked on light levels and finishing writing light cues.

After a lunch break the actors came in for cue to cue. Since there were not many cues, it went smoothly and we finished early. There were a few light cues that needed

fixed and the thunder sound effect proved ineffective. I knew Ms. Douglas would fix any lighting issues while we were gone at KCACTF, which just left finding a new thunder effect. I had a week to find one so I realized it would not be a problem.

The first dress rehearsal was rough but it could have been worse considering it had been over a week since our last run through. The time away from the show was evident with several missed cues and awkward crosses all of which were compounded by it being the first time the actors were in costume. Having full costumes gave the actors more business, such as removing and hanging up coats and hats. This was also our first run through with a fully functioning rain machine which proved quite a bit louder than anticipated. Professor Larsen said he would work to quiet it down some, but clearly the actors would have to talk over it just as one would in a real rainstorm. The new thunder sound effect worked well and the only thing we fixed on sound was to bump up the level of the street noise. The costumes looked great; they were exactly what I wanted. Professor Pulver, however, decided to change the Foreman's vest so it better fit the color scheme he had developed. This was a minor change and the new vest looked good.

The second dress rehearsal added hair and makeup. Since the actors were so close to the audience we kept makeup to a minimum. The first night the makeup was a little heavy on some of the actors, but I later found out that some of them had forgotten their makeup kits and had to use whatever was available. The most troublesome factor was determining the proper amount of graying for Jurors 3 and 11. Both were playing middle-aged men and I wanted the salt-and-pepper look, but the first night they came out with mostly white hair. That proved an easy fix and there were no further problems

with it. The makeup for Juror 9, the oldest character, looked great. It effectively aged the actor without looking overdone.

By the final dress rehearsal the actors had found their rhythm again and had figured out any costume-related business. The technical elements came together and proved a great compliment to show and served well to support the action. Although a few blocking issues persisted that I would have liked to fix, it was clear the cast was ready for an audience, and I was eager to see them perform for a crowd and be able to feed off their energy.

Overall, the process from auditions through rehearsals proved exciting, complicated, frustrating, but overall fulfilling. It may not have been a perfect process, but much was learned and gained through the experience. I felt privileged to have a talented and hard working cast and believe that in collaboration with the technical crew we put together a successful show that kept the audience engaged and interested.

## **Chapter 7: Post Production Responses**

Once the show went up and we had an audience, I watched their reactions during each performance. Each night was slightly different, but the audience remained engaged throughout the run of the show. As the tension in the show increased, I noticed that several people were on the edge of their seats completely absorbed by the show. I was pleased to note that even those students who were clearly there for a class assignment eventually put their phones away as they were drawn into the performance. We had large crowds every performance, and the audience response at the end was enthusiastic. I waited in the lobby as the patrons left and overheard mostly positive comments about the show. Overall, the audience seemed to really enjoy the performance and left pleased with their time spent in the theatre.

Audience satisfaction is always an important goal when putting on a show; however, critiques from professionals in the field help one grow as an artist. To that end the Drama faculty saw and responded to the show. In addition, there was one response from outside the program. Professor John O'Hagan from the University of Wyoming responded as the representative from the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF). These responses proved beneficial as they brought up not only areas where I need to improve but also moments and elements that worked really well. By addressing both positive and negative aspects of the show, the responses let me know what to watch out for in future productions, as well as what to build on.

Professor O'Hagan gave the first response I received to the production. He was very constructive and encouraging in his assessment of the show. He was impressed with the show's technical elements. Professor O'Hagan especially like the rain machine



and felt the placement of the rain served as a good break in the building tension. He also loved that we had a working clock on the stage. He was complimentary of the pre-show music noting that it effectively set tone while immediately making clear the time period. He also really liked the costumes finding them not only supportive of the characters, but of the time period as well.

Professor O'Hagan provided mostly positive comments about the acting, noting a strong dynamic between Jurors 3 and 8. He especially liked Juror 8 as a woman and felt that having Jurors 3 and 8 be opposite genders proved more intriguing and heightened the tension. He joked that that dynamic is missing in the performances of Henry Fonda and Lee J. Cobb in the film version. He thought having the two be opposite genders was a bold choice that worked extremely well. Professor O'Hagan indicated that he initially had doubts about Juror 12, the ad executive, being a woman but in the end felt that the actor pulled it off nicely and made it work for her. He liked how the actors took it slow in the beginning taking time to establish the location and situation. He talked about the characters as types and while he thought the cast generally did a good job of making the characters seem real, there were still moments when certain characters seemed to push ideals in a way that lacked complete believability. Although he believed the world of the show, he indicated it could have been stronger with a clearer physicality and pursuit of objectives. He congratulated the cast on great diction, noting that he never missed a word.

As for blocking Professor O'Hagan noted that it was a difficult and confining space to work with, but he felt I could have found a more effective way to move and highlight the characters. For example, he lost Juror 8 at the top of the show when she

remains upstage at the window. She became lost in the action of all the other characters. He was glad that I did have her move around and eventually take a more powerful position on the stage. Another moment he took issue with was Juror 10's racist tirade near the end. He felt having the other jurors get up and turn their backs on him was too heavy-handed; it felt too much like a director choice and not one motivated by the action. He felt that there was a steady, clear rhythm to the show but thought it could benefit from a greater range in tempo to provide variety. Overall though, he thought the story was clear, and the theme came across as strong and important, making it a successful production.

In addition, the Drama faculty provided a response to the show. In general there seemed to be a consensus that the production successfully told the story of the play. Everyone noted that the show was well cast but that blocking became repetitive and needed work to include variety. Professor Mead Hunter felt the production was mostly successful. He noted that the aged script stood up well, better than he thought it would. He thought the switch in gender for some of the roles worked, indicating that he bought Juror 12 as a female ad executive and commended the actor on working hard to make it believable. However, he thought that the way the genders broke down among the cast lead to too much of a women versus men dynamic with the female jurors in general changing their votes to not guilty sooner than the male jurors. Professor Hunter applauded the performances I got out of the actors, noting that several gave deeper, more rounded performances than he had previously believed them capable of doing. One exception was Juror 10's racist tirade which he felt came off as unnatural and broke from the realism of the rest of the show. He noted that the blocking tended to favor

stage right and needed to be more balanced. Professor Hunter liked the rain effect and thought the show benefited from it.

Professor Gregory Pulver talked mostly about costumes. While he appreciated that I let him go with his instincts, he cautioned that I tend to put too much trust in the designers. He suggested having more direct contact and making sure my opinions were clear. However, he found my character analysis to be very good. Professor Pulver also noted some blocking issues but conceded that I was confined by the script and set. However, he believed it could have been improved some. In addition he found the show to be very well cast. Professor Larry Larsen also thought I was too compliant with the designers. He mentioned that designers need feedback and even if I was happy with what they were doing, I should not hesitate to ask questions, such as “What if ...?” or “How about ...?” There was a general consensus that the technical elements successfully supported the action of the show.

Professor Andrew Golla brought up several issues with the blocking. He found that I lacked variety in my blocking technique as the actors repeatedly hit the same positions. For example, Juror 11 always moved to an up center position for his speeches. He suggested finding more blocking moves and to work with the actors to get them up and moving earlier instead of waiting for their lines to move. He noted that this was better with Juror 4, and I needed to work on getting the rest of the cast to that level.

Professor Golla also thought that more table work would have been beneficial. Spending more time on table work would have helped the actors further develop their characters and their relationships with the other characters. He further noted that I needed to think more about the specificity of the feedback I gave the actors with the

goal of being clearer and more specific in my notes. Nonetheless, he did note that the story came through, and he could tell when characters shifted to having doubt. He wondered if it would have been beneficial to have more characters speak with a dialect in order to more accurately represent New York City. While a dialect can help with character development, he cautioned that it could become all about the dialect which at times was an issue with Juror 11.

Additional areas of concern about the acting included Juror 4's constant talking down to the rest of jury and rudely striving for status. Professor Golla believed it would have been more effective, and she would have come off as less a villain, if she were nicer and politer to the other characters. Another area that needed work was at the end when the jurors exit the room. He felt relationships between the jurors needed more development at this point. He also lost focus as Jurors 2 and 6 upstaged Juror 3 where the focus should have been. Professor Golla had concerns about Juror 10's racist tirade as well. While he recognized that the other jurors needed to react to the speech, he felt the way I blocked it lacked individuality and specificity in character motivation. It came off as too choreographed and looked like blocking instead of motivated movement.

The show was not without its positive aspects though. Professor Golla noted the opening when the jurors enter the room as being especially good. They came in as though they had never seen the room before, looking around and checking it out. He said it made the stage feel more like a found place instead of a constructed set and added to the realism of the show. He thought one of the things that really made the show work was that the actors actively listened to their scene partners and stayed involved even when not speaking.

The responses from the various individuals proved helpful to me in figuring out both what worked well in the show and what did not. The responses helped clarify why some aspects worked and what could have been done to make others work better. All the issues and concerns brought up by the respondents made sense. I was able to understand where they were coming from and thus was able to use the feedback to help refine my own thoughts on the production.

## **Chapter 8: Production Reflection**

The process of directing *Twelve Angry Jurors* was a great learning experience, which I believe ultimately ended in a successful production. The show and the process were not perfect. Mistakes were made, but lessons were learned. I am confident I have grown as a director as a result.

Auditions and casting proved less problematic than anticipated. I believe the show was well cast with everyone bringing something to his or her character to make the character unique. I was pleased that enough men auditioned so I was able to reach my original goal of an almost evenly split cast of men to women.

Determining which of the jurors should be women was rather difficult since all the roles were originally written for men. I knew going in that I wanted Juror 8 to be a woman. Although Henry Fonda gave a defining performance as Juror 8 in the film, I have always felt there was something about the compassion and intellect of the role that would be well suited for a woman. I decided to keep Juror 3, the main antagonist, as a man to explore a shift in dynamics from the all-male version. The way men argue with each other is different than how they argue with a woman. The same can be said for women, so having the main confrontation between opposite genders was a bit of a risk, but I think it paid off. The dynamic between Jurors 3 and 8 was engaging and added to the show.

Although I went into the audition process with a general idea of which jurors I wanted as women and which as men, it really did come down to the callbacks for a final decision. Juror 12, the ad executive, was a tricky one. Very few women would be that high up in the work place in 1963. I must admit there was some influence from *Mad*

*Men* which, when coupled with a strong actress who I knew could pull it off, cemented my decision to have Juror 12 be a woman. Initially I had wanted Juror 5 to be a man. As the only juror who has experience with knife fights, it just seemed more likely to be something a man would talk about. However, the woman I ended up casting in the role brought an interesting dynamic to it. The audience sympathized with her in a way I do not think they would have had it been a man. The actor did a good job of conveying the anxiety and fear of growing up in a neighborhood where knife fights occurred regularly. While the character ended up going in a different direction than I originally planned, I think it proved a good change and made the character more interesting.

Juror 10's anger and hostility were some of the reason why I wanted the character to be a man. Also, I thought it would be interesting if his barefaced bigotry extended to women as well. While I feel the actor playing Juror 10 did well with the long, challenging monologue, it was difficult to get him to maintain that strong sense of bias throughout the show. Intellectually the actor understood the character but had trouble physicalizing it. I anticipated Juror 10 being a difficult role and I was correct. In hindsight, I should have budgeted more time to work with the actor on this role. Keeping the same mindset throughout is key here and I needed to work with actor on determining what we could do that would help keep him there mentally. More time spent finding the moments that trigger his bias and how he reacts in those moments would have been helpful.

I am happy with the final gender breakdown and think it worked well. My only regret is that at times it became a battle of the sexes with most of the female jurors switching to "not guilty" before the male jurors. While Juror 4, the rich lady, was the

exception, if I were to do this again I would seriously consider casting a woman for at least one of the other antagonists to provide a better balance.

Since the script gives very little personal details about any of the characters, the actors had to construct their characters almost from scratch. Some deduction about characteristics is possible based on how they interact with the other jurors, but not much. This left the actors without much to go on. While we spent about three days on table work, it would have been more prudent to spend an entire week before starting blocking. I spent most of table work meeting with the actors individually, and while those conversations allowed us to discuss a character specifically, it did not leave time to discuss the play as a whole. I realize this would have been beneficial as we could have tackled the structure of the play and how each character fits into that as a group. More time to figure out characters and the conflict-resolution structure of the play might have made blocking smoother. We did spend some time talking about status and its importance, especially in a room full of virtual strangers, but while that was helpful, I think that I could have enhanced it with further examples and additional specific techniques. Looking back, I realize the play is more complex than it initially appears and additional table work would be advantageous to the production.

I knew blocking *Twelve Angry Jurors* would be a challenge. However, it proved even more difficult than I anticipated. I had never directed a show with such a large cast before. Even more than dealing with a rather large cast, the task was magnified due the whole cast remaining on stage for the entire show. In most shows, no matter the overall cast size, you are normally dealing with only a handful of actors in any given scene with only a few moments featuring the entire cast. The fact that the jurors remain on stage



throughout proved daunting. What do you do with twelve people in a confined space for an hour and half? Keeping them all at the table for any length of time gets boring quickly. They are there to discuss the trial though, and in a real world situation most jurors probably would remain seated.

However, there needs to be action, some movement anyway, to keep the audience engaged. So the question became how to keep things feeling realistic without becoming stagnant? The water cooler and bathroom helped give the actors somewhere to go; however, with both on stage right things got rather congested on that side of the stage. I eventually added a chair and ashtray on stage left, but it essentially became the “smokers’ corner.” I now realize I should have started with a chair – or something – stage left and worked to have it used more often and by a greater variety of the jurors. I remember in discussions with the set designer talking about leaving stage left open to give more playing room. Due to the slight slant of the stage, we determined that leaving stage left open would improve sightlines. What I failed to consider though was the motivation for the actors to use the area. Having it open allowed plenty of room for them to move in; we just lacked a reason for them to move to that area. I did like that the last jurors to change their vote spent more time on the left side of the stage with left traditionally being associated with the sinister, while Juror 8 made most of her arguments from the right or righteous side.

Initially, as we started blocking, I had some clear pictures I wanted to hit; however, I quickly became overwhelmed by the process of trying to keep track of twelve bodies at all times. Since the actors did not fully know their characters yet they needed more specific notes to understand the motivation to go certain places. Yet I

found myself giving broad, more general notes while trying to hit certain stage pictures. Before long everyone became confused and little concrete progress was being made. Fortunately this was caught early enough that we were able to turn things around before the show completely fell apart. I apologized to the cast for my lack of clarity, and we regrouped with a clearer vision of what needed to happen. I realized that I was attempting to cover too much text at once, and there was no way I could keep track of everyone for such extended periods. I went through the script and redefined smaller beats of action. This helped tremendously; I do not know why I did not do it to begin with. Now we were able to focus on the show moment by moment and things started going a lot smoother. I found myself able to give more specific notes and not get lost tracking everyone. While I still need to work on specificity in my notes to the actors, I feel I improved in this aspect and hope to continue to do so.

In addition, I also took time to do some further table work. I met with each actor again. We talked about character development, character relationships, and the general process. These conversations were beneficial in letting me know how each actor was approaching his or her character and how that character was relating to the other jurors. This also gave the cast the opportunity to ask me any questions they had about any element of the show. Meeting with the cast individually at this point proved beneficial as it was nice to check in with everyone and great to hear their individual thoughts on their characters about halfway through the rehearsal process. This is something I will seriously consider doing more often in the future.

While blocking the show, I tried to stay away from images in the film versions. It was tempting at times, especially when working on a particularly troublesome moment

to look and see how they handled it in the film. However, I knew that what works on film will not necessarily translate to the stage. Only in one instance do I think an ingrained image from the film played a significant role in the image I tried to create on stage. That moment is during Juror 10's racist tirade when the other jurors get up and turn their backs to him. The image works well on film – obviously it is seared into my memory – and the script does indicate that turning their backs on Juror 10 should happen. However, in what had otherwise been a reasonably realistic show, this moment feels heavy handed, breaking from the tone of the rest of the production. I think there has to be a way to create the stage picture of everyone disagreeing with what Juror 10 says in a more realistic manner. I like Juror 10 being isolated. I just needed to find a more natural way to play that moment. I think we could still isolate Juror 10 without it being so heavy handed. The movement of the other actors needed to be more motivated and subtle. All things considered though, I believe the actor playing Juror 10 did a great job with a difficult monologue.

Another blocking issue that I wish I had noticed earlier and fixed was that Juror 11 delivered almost all of his lines from up center. I know this was not my original intention, and I remember initially I had him stage left for some of those lines. However, somewhere in the process everything drifted up center; that became his spot. While the confrontation about the window naturally needs to be up there, I needed to find more variety for him. This is a case where had I been more specific in my direction and notes the issue probably would not have arisen. I feel that incorporating the stage manager into more actively helping track movement and noting blocking would have been beneficial as well.

I feel that the blocking was more successful with Juror 8. While stage right became her spot, I made sure she used the rest of the stage as well. She was not stuck in one spot. I liked her working her way around the room as she built her case, checking in with individual jurors to see if they were connecting to what she said. The blocking for Juror 3 also proved mostly successful as he made effective use of the entire playing area and did not become stuck in any one spot.

A major blocking problem also resulted from a poorly written moment in the script. After Juror 9 reveals she is the one who changed her vote, Jurors 2 and 4 move down to the water cooler for a brief conversation. This conversation seems to be randomly added by the adapter with no logical connection to what happens before or after. It serves the purpose of enhancing the gravity of their decision as a jury, but its placement is awkward at best. Juror 10 has just said, "let's go on," and then this random conversation between two jurors happens. I was at a loss of how to transition into this moment; it clearly breaks from the main action with no strong motivation as to why these two jurors decide to have a private conversation. Nothing we tried seemed to work effectively. Fortunately, Professor Golla came up with the suggestion of adding a line for the Foreman about taking a moment to cool off before continuing. Just adding this simple line helped because it gave a reason for the two to pull away from the other jurors. The trick then became what to do with the other jurors while this conversation takes place. Having them freeze is too unrealistic. Yet too much movement would pull focus. I determined that only a few of the other jurors would move and tried to time their movement in such a way that it did not distract from Juror 2 and 4's conversation. In the end, the balance was almost there, but still leaned toward a little too much action

on the part of the other jurors. It is a difficult and poorly written moment, but at least I was able to make it less disjointed than it initially felt.

One moment I found successful was the opening when the jurors first enter. They just spent all day in a hot courtroom and now they find themselves stuck in a small, stuffy jury room. Initially this was a difficult moment and we worked on it quite a bit. We talked about the actions one takes when entering a new room, taking in the details. Then we determined what would be most important to each character: getting a drink, going to the bathroom, having a smoke, getting some fresh air at the window, and so on. Once these concerns were figured out, we could choreograph the movement to keep it from being too chaotic. To start with a prolonged moment of silence as everyone took the room in and found their places was risky, but I think it succeeded. The line at the water cooler, the bathroom, the smokers, those at the window – it came down to determining natural places people would go when entering a room with a group of strangers. I wish we had worked in some more ad-libs, but there was enough action that it never felt too stale. Decorum became a major concern here too. How should the ladies carry their purses? How do we sit? and numerous other questions arose. Having a dramaturge to help figure these issues out was a big help. The only problem with this moment was that Juror 8 got lost in the shuffle. She remained staring contemplatively out the window until the first vote. I liked having her lost in her thoughts, ignoring the chitchat going on around her; however, it would have been nice for the audience to see that more clearly. In the end I think it worked though because she is the last one to the table so all eyes are on her and she stands out from the rest of the group at that point.

Overall, I am pleased with the opening and think it did a good job of setting the tone for the show.

However, I was not as happy with the ending of the show. I think the very last moment when Juror 3 hands Juror 8 the knife and she is left alone on stage worked, but from Juror 3's concession through the exit of the other jurors was not all it could have been. At first, it was not clear whether Juror 3's "All right" was an indication that he switched to not guilty or that it was going to be a hung jury. A conversation with the actor about making sure his action/motivation was clear on that line waylaid the confusion. However, the other jurors exiting did not match their entrance. By the end, they know each other better and relationships have developed. We should have seen some of that in their exit. We talked about each juror's exit being the end of his or her story arc and finding a fitting action to reflect that. More time should have been spent on it. This was one area where I ran out of time because I focused more on other problem areas. When Juror 3 goes and gets the knife, it never was clear why he spent the moment looking at the knife before giving it to Juror 8. Although we talked about this moment a few times, we needed to come up with a clearly defined action to help visualize his thoughts. The actor came close to getting it at times, and as he is an experienced actor I trusted that he would find it. I now realize that it was a moment that required significantly more of my time than I had anticipated. Had we worked it more in rehearsal focusing on exactly what needed to happen, I believe it would have worked. What I wanted the moment to indicate was Juror 3 recognizing the logistics of using a switch knife underhand and realizing that his emotional involvement in the case blinded him to logical reason. I have no doubt the thought process was there; it just was

not clear to the audience what it was. In hindsight, I should have started working on this moment earlier in the process spending time with the actor to not only help him get there emotionally but to figure out a specific set of actions that would convey the meaning to the audience. Had I insisted on a more consistent and specific set of actions, the moment could have worked.

While there were some blocking issues, successful elements of the show were in acting and diction. We spent a significant amount of time working on articulation and making sure each word was clear. Early on lines were often mumbled or otherwise indistinct. I strongly encouraged the actors to memorize their lines with clear diction instead of just focusing on the words. At least some of the actors tried this technique and it seems to have helped as even the KCACTF respondent noted how clear the words came across. I am very proud of this achievement, as it seems there is always at least one or two actors who you just cannot hear or understand.

Staying in character throughout the show was a successful achievement for this cast, even when they had pages between lines. We worked on staying engaged with the action throughout whether they had lines or not. Staying focused showed the actors were invested in what was happening thus making it easier for the audience to remain invested as well. The show was engaging in part because each actor took the role seriously and remained focused throughout. By doing this we were able to give focus to who needed it. By making sure the non-speaking jurors put their attention where the focus needed to be, it helped the audience know where they should be focusing as well. There were a few instances when someone pulled focus when they should not have, but overall the cast did a great job with this difficult task. Jurors 9 and 12 really stood out.

Neither has many lines, but they became interesting characters as the audience could see them taking in the information others presented and reacting to it.

Once the actors got off book, they were better able to engage with each other. I wish I had set an earlier deadline for getting off book. Had we been off book a bit earlier, I think we could have spent more time smoothing out some rough moments instead of wasting time while actors called for lines. Lines were finally getting better and progress being made when we hit the KCACTF break. The final regular rehearsal before we left was one of our best. Taking a whole week off so close to opening proved somewhat problematic. For one, the actors got out of the rhythm of the show and lost the build up of the previous rehearsals to carry them into dress. The first dress rehearsal when we got back was rough. Not only did the actors have to deal with costumes for the first time, but they also had to find the rhythm of the show again.

Working with designers is still a new process for me. Having not had much previous experience working with a design team, I have little to compare this experience with. That said I was extremely pleased with the final product. I felt initial conversations with Professors Larsen, Pulver, and Ms. Douglas all went well. They all seemed to get my concept for the show and took my ideas and made them bigger and better than I had imagined.

I knew the set would look great, but I never expected the set crew to build me a table, let alone a rain machine. Both were fantastic and added a great deal to the show. Honestly, I had mixed feelings about the rain at first. I was not sure if it would add to the show or just seem gimmicky. But in the end, not only did it look great, it served to release some tension and underscore a shift in the show. I know I probably seemed too



complacent in regard to design elements. Now that I have more experience working with designers, I would be more comfortable in expressing my opinions and offering feedback. I feel the dynamic with the designers in this case was complicated by knowing they were also my professors, which inherently leads to a different type of relationship than the typical one between designers and directors. However, had I not liked something I would have raised questions about it. In this case, I was pleased with pretty much everything. A rather small detail that I would add if doing this again is to label the bathroom door as such. We had “jury room” on the main door, why not “restroom” or some such nomenclature on the bathroom door? I did not think of this in time, but have learned that I need to pay attention to these types of details more carefully.

Professor Pulver took the costumes in a slightly different direction than I initially visualized, yet the reason was clear and I loved the final look. The costumes told us about each character which really helps in a show where we learn so little about the characters from the dialogue. Professor Pulver’s decision to add the use of blue and gold elements in the costumes to reveal where on the spectrum the character stood added a nice touch. From our early conversations onward, Professor Pulver seemed to understand exactly what I wanted and the final costumes exceeded my expectations. I believe my work with the costume designer was the most successful of the process. My idea of a great collaboration is to share ideas and allow each member of the team to add their expertise to the project. I feel this happened in my work with Professor Pulver. I gave him a clear idea of how I saw each character and he not only found costumes to fit my ideas but also used coordinated colors to reveal even more about the characters and add visual interest.

Overall, I think the technical elements served the show well. The time period and the setting were clear. The visual spectacle was just what it needed to be.

One sign of a show's success is its ability to hold the audience's attention and keep them engaged throughout. I feel *Twelve Angry Jurors* did that amazingly well. I spent time each performance watching the audience. I noted people sitting on the edge of their seats or leaning forward, clearly engrossed by the action on stage. Even those attending merely for a class assignment – they are fairly easy to spot – may have started out detached, but most ended up paying attention as they were drawn in to the show. Having the audience appreciate the show is a great reward for all the hard work everyone put into the process of putting it all together.

While there are still areas I need to work on, I feel the experience of directing *Twelve Angry Jurors* has helped me grow as a director. I think I can better handle the pressures of directing a main stage show now, and I have a better grasp of how to handle a large cast more effectively. In addition, I learned a great deal about working with designers.

## Chapter 9: Conclusion

Tackling Reginald Rose's *Twelve Angry Jurors* proved challenging and instructive. I made some mistakes that I will learn from, but also found some success on a difficult project. One of the challenges was presenting a sixty-year-old script in a way that it became relevant for a modern audience. One of the biggest successes of the show was the fact the audience left the show affected by what they saw. While it is often difficult to make such an old show relevant, it became clear that many key issues and themes in the script are still ones dealt with in today's society.

Initial research for the production proved frustrating. Next to nothing has been written about the show using a mixed-gender cast, and the vast majority of criticism written about *Twelve Angry Men* revolves around the 1957 film. While the basic structure is the same, I was more interested in discussions of the stage version. Reading criticism of the various film versions helped give me a broader perspective on the show and a clearer idea on the important themes present in the script. However, I had to sift through significant amounts of extraneous information. I finally discovered that there seemed to be three key professional productions: the 1964 stage debut, the 1996 production directed by Harold Pinter, and the 2004 Broadway debut. I was disappointed by the lack of any cohesive discussion on the stage productions. The research did help me understand certain elements of the script better as I headed into script analysis.

To help me gain a better understanding of the time period and of jury service, I did additional research into these areas. Finding information on 1960s culture was not difficult but necessitated a clear focus on the early Sixties. Information on jury service

proved beneficial in understanding the group dynamics present in a jury room. Some history on the role of women and juries felt relevant as well to make sure I had an accurate understanding of when women began serving on juries.

In script analysis I found many themes that seemed both important and relevant to today's audience. Choosing a specific theme to focus on became difficult. I ended up focusing on the ability of one person to stand up against the group and effect a positive change, so finding the turning points that helped or hindered Juror 8 in her endeavor became the emphasis. Character analysis proved difficult. As very little is revealed about the characters in the script, I focused on how they support the main action saving more detailed character descriptions for my approach as determining gender enabled a fuller character breakdown.

In the approach I tackled gender breakdown which proved surprisingly easy for some characters and more difficult for others, the goal being to create some sort of balance. The determining factor became waiting to see who auditioned and what the actor pool for the production would be like. Fortunately, a good number of talented students auditioned, and I ended up with a final gender breakdown that worked well. I also focused on creating a realistic world for the show. The costumes were perfect, reflecting both the period and the characters, while the set contributed a real-world feel to the production. All the technical elements came together nicely to support and enhance the production.

Rehearsals proved problematic at the beginning when my focus was too broad. Once I refocused and became much more specific, rehearsals went more smoothly. I learned having a clearer focus from the start is a must. Allotting time to work with

specific actors on difficult moments is something I need to pay more attention to in the future. Had I done this more effectively some of the problem areas could have been fixed. Anxious to get the actors on their feet and start blocking, I cut short the time spent at the table. I now know to never underestimate the value of table work. Blocking proved extremely difficult. Dealing with twelve actors in a confined space is hard enough but it is greatly compounded when those twelve actors remain on stage for the entirety of the show. Trying to keep things balanced and fluid became a major task that never proved entirely successful. I need to work on finding more ways to vary the stage picture while keeping the actors' movement motivated.

The positive response I received from audience members after the show was reassuring. One of my goals was to produce a show that the audience found engaging. The production was not perfect, but the audience response was mostly positive. One of the most rewarding experiences was sitting in the audience every night and observing the effect the show had on them. The show held their attention and the applause was genuine. Comments, both unsought and solicited highlighted the positive aspects of the show while helping me understand which areas could have used improvement.

The thesis process allowed me to put the last three years of coursework to practical use in a single production. I learned what my strengths and weaknesses are, and I will focus on improving these areas as I continue to develop my directing skills. The process has been illuminating and ultimately rewarding.

**Appendix A:  
Costumes**



Juror 8 represents the blue end of the spectrum.



Juror 4 represents the gold end of the spectrum.



Juror 5's costume at top of the show.



Juror 5's costume without jacket.



Juror 11's costume with jacket.





Juror 11's costume without the jacket.

## Appendix B: Set Design



The four-panel window with the panel by the fan being the only one to open.



The set was built at a slight angle to improve sightlines.

## **Appendix C: Audition Information**

### ***Twelve Angry Jurors* Casting Information**

Reginald Rose's *Twelve Angry Jurors* takes a group of twelve strangers from various walks of life and places them in a small room to decide the fate of yet another stranger. At first, it seems like a clear-cut guilty verdict, but Juror 8 is not convinced "beyond a reasonable doubt." Juror 8's questions lead to a reexamining of the evidence. As the jurors take a closer look at the evidence presented, one by one they began to side with Juror 8. While many believe the accused probably did it, the evidence leaves a significant amount of doubt. The whole case revolves around the reasonable doubt clause. By the end, only Juror 3 holds out for the guilty verdict. Eventually Juror 3 concedes that the evidence is not solid, and they return a non-guilty verdict.

- Jurors will be cast on a gender-blind basis.
- All actors cast as jurors will need to be at every rehearsal.

#### **Character Descriptions**

Juror 1 – mid-20s, foreman of the jury. Non-confrontational, #1 is not used to being in a position of authority, does not accept criticism well, but wants to be fair.

Juror 2 – mid-20s, meek and timid. The other jurors easily sway #2. However, #2 pays close attention to details and will point out inconsistencies in the other jurors' statements.

Juror 3 – 40s, strong-willed, extremely opinionated and used to forcing opinions on others. Has had a hard life capped by an estranged relationship with a son.

Juror 4 – early 30s, logical, intelligent, and the wealthiest of the jurors. #4 is very practical, feels superior to the rest of the jurors, and is appalled by their behavior.

Juror 5 – early 20s, grew up in the slums and is very aware of lower status that brings. Prefers to go unnoticed, yet has a sense of wholesomeness.

Juror 6 – 40s, weak-willed and never takes a strong stand; #6 dislikes conflict and tries to maintain peace.

Juror 7 – late 20s, loud and flashy; #7 is the least serious of the jurors and sides with the majority; a bit of a jokester and rather ostentatious in style.

Juror 8 – 30, professional, has great strength and compassion. #8 is persuasive and remains calm even under personal attack; wants to see justice done; exudes a sense of confidence and trustworthiness.

Juror 9 – 70s-80s, mild and gentle, defeated by life and waiting to die. Serving on this jury is #9's one chance to make a difference.

Juror 10 – 40s, angry and bitter. #10 is a bigot who places no value on anyone else's life; has been nowhere and is going nowhere.

Juror 11 – 50s, an immigrant from Germany who speaks with an accent; has witnessed great injustices and is intent on administrating justice as a jury member. Self-conscious about the accent, #11 nonetheless has a high regard for democracy and the American legal system.

Juror 12 – mid-20s, works in advertising and as such seeks to please the crowd; however, #12 is rather arrogant and impatient to return to work.

Guard – 20s, bored with seemingly thankless job, yet recognizes the importance of the job the jury must do. (Minor role; need not be at every rehearsal.)

### **Tentative Rehearsal Schedule**

Sunday through Thursday 7:15-10:45 p.m. (Jan. 20-24; 27-31; Feb. 3-7)

Sunday through Wednesday 7:15-10:45 p.m. (Feb. 10-13)

Final rehearsal either Thursday February 14 or Friday February 15, 7:15-10:45 p.m.

Tech: Saturday February 16; Dress rehearsals: February 24-26

**Performances:** Wednesday February 27- Saturday March 2 at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday March 3 at 2 p.m. (Strike following Sunday's performance)

The above rehearsal schedule may change; performance dates will not.

**Appendix D:  
Rehearsal Schedules**

***Twelve Angry Jurors*  
Rehearsal Schedule**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Scene (pg#)</b>	<b>Actors called</b>
<b><i>Week 1</i></b>			
Sun. 1/20	7:15-10:45	Intro, Read through, and Table work	All
Mon. 1/21	7:15-7:45	Table work	#1
	7:45-8:15		#2
	8:25-9:00		#10
	9:00-9:20		Guard
	9:30-10:00		#4
	10:00-10:25		#5
	10:25-10:45		#8
Tues. 1/22	7:15-7:45	Table work	#7
	7:45-8:25		#6
	8:30-9:00		#9
	9:00-9:30		#3
	9:30-10:00		#11
	10:10-10:45		#12
Wed. 1/23	7:15-7:30	Block 1	Guard
	7:30-7:45	Block 1-2	All
	7:45-8:00	Block 2-3	1-12
	8:00-8:15	Block 3-6	1-12
	8:15-8:30	Block 6-9	1-12
	8:40-9:00	Block 9-11	1-12
	9:00-9:15	Block 11-16	1-12
	9:15-9:30	Block 16-19	All
	9:30-9:45	Block 19-23	1-12
	9:45-10:00	Block 23-26	All
	10:10-10:45	Block 26-27	1-12
Thurs. 1/24	7:15-8:45	Run/Work 1-16	All
	8:55-9:55	Run/Work 16-27	All
	10:00-10:15	Block 27-30	1-12
	10:15-10:30	Block 30-34	1-12
	10:30-10:45	Block 34-38	1-12

**Twelve Angry Jurors  
Rehearsal Schedule**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Scene (pg#)</b>	<b>Actors called</b>
<b>Week 2</b>			
Sun. 1/27	7:15-8:30	Run/Work 27-38	1-12
	8:40-9:30	Block 38-46	All
	9:40-10:45	Block 46-57	1-12
Mon. 1/28	7:15-8:30	Run/Work 38-57	All
	8:40-9:30	Block 57-62	1-12
	9:40-10:45	Run/Work 57-62	1-12
Tues. 1/29	7:15-8:30	Block 62-70	1-12
	8:40-9:30	Run/Work 62-70	1-12
	9:40-10:10	Work 40-43	1-12
	10:20-10:45	Work 54-57	1-12
Wed. 1/30	7:15-10:45	Run/Work 40-70	All
Thurs. 1/31	7:15-10:45	Stumble through	All

**Twelve Angry Jurors  
Rehearsal Schedule**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Scene (pg#)</b>	<b>Actors called</b>
<b>Week 3</b>		<b>Off book this week!</b>	
Sun. 2/3	7:15-10:45	Work 1-20	All
Mon. 2/4	7:15-8:15	Knife special	#3, 4, 5, 7, 8
	8:25-8:45	Table work	#3
	8:45-9:05		#4
	9:05-9:25		#5
	9:30-9:50		#7
	9:50-10:10		#8
	10:10-10:30		#2
	10:30-10:45		#6
Tues. 2/5	7:15-10:45	Work 20-38	1-12
Wed. 2/6	7:15-10:45	Designer Run	All
Thurs. 2/7	7:15-7:35	Table work	#1
	7:35-7:55		#9
	7:55-8:15		#10
	8:15-8:35		#11
	8:35-8:55		#12
	8:55-9:15		Guard
	9:25-10:45	Run/work 1-16	All

***Twelve Angry Jurors***  
**Rehearsal Schedule**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Scene (pg#)</b>	<b>Actors called</b>
<b><i>Week 4</i></b>			
Sun. 2/10	7:15-10:45	Run/work 1-40	All
Mon. 2/11	7:15-10:45	Run/work 40-70	All
Tues. 2/12	7:15-8:45	Run Show	All
	9:00-10:45	Specials TBA	TBA
Wed. 2/13	7:15-8:45	Run Show	All
	9:00-10:00	Specials TBA	TBA
Thurs. 2/14	No Rehearsal		
Fri. 2/15	6:00-7:30	Run Show	All
	7:45-9:30	Specials TBA	TBA



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