

PRODUCING VOODOO CHARM,  
AN ORIGINAL CHILDREN'S PLAY:  
THE DIRECTOR'S VIEWPOINT

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A THESIS  
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN SPEECH-DRAMA  
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE  
TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF  
ARTS AND SCIENCES

BY  
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DENTON, TEXAS

JULY, 1968

# Texas Woman's University

Denton, Texas

July, 19 68

We hereby recommend that the thesis prepared under

our supervision by M. Suzanne Oeschger

entitled Producing Voodoo Charm, an Original

Children's Play: the Director's Viewpoint

be accepted as fulfilling this part of the requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts.

Committee:

Dwight J. Eaton  
Chairman

Paul A. Hutchins

Jean P. Roach

Accepted:

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Dean of Graduate Studies

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express sincere appreciation of Mr. Gregory S. Eaton for his guidance as director of this thesis; also to Mr. Paul A. Hutchins and Dr. Josh P. Roach without whom this study could not have taken place.

I am grateful to Mrs. Jewel B. Taaffe without whose permission the production could not have taken place. I appreciate Miss Judy Lynne Harvey's help as the production designer and for her drawings of the floor plans which appear in this thesis.

In addition to the above I wish to thank Mrs. Gregory S. Eaton for her invaluable assistance and time-consuming work for the betterment of this study. Deepest gratitude is expressed to Mrs. Paul A. Hutchins for her concern and understanding.

To all those people who were involved with the production as cast or crew members and to the efforts of all those who made the production possible, I wish to express my gratitude.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### The Play

Jewel B. Taaffe's Voodoo Charm is an original and unusual play for children between the ages of eleven and fourteen. It is original because it is not an adaptation of a story from another medium nor a revision of another play. The story originated in the author's mind and is the result of her own creative processes. Since most of the plays for children in North America are based on fairy tales or standard plots such as Tom Sawyer, Voodoo Charm is unusual because it fits into neither of these categories. Television, motion pictures, and new educational techniques have expanded children's knowledge and understanding beyond their immediate environment. Both entertainment media and formal education indicate that children are receptive to more information and are more aware of problems than children's plays written in the past have presented.

Voodoo Charm entertainingly offers fresh, new material with both cultural and historic value. Authors writing for children have presented scant information about Southern Louisiana with its French cultural heritage. Mrs.

Taaffe has set her play in the bayou region and the New Orleans of 1872. The people in the story depict the bayou trappers, the noble Creole ladies and gentlemen, and the Negro and white working classes of the period. Their clothes and the music they created provide insight into the cultural values of the era. Historically the play occurs during the Mardi Gras when the first Rex was crowned. Alexis, the Russian Grand Duke, actually visited New Orleans during the 1872 Mardi Gras, and Marie Leveau and her daughter were real people. In Voodoo Charm the playwright has taken actual people and placed them in a fictitious situation. For aesthetic appeal the script offers the unique settings of the bayou and Jackson and Congo Squares in New Orleans. Street singers and descriptive accounts of the Mardi Gras parade add to the story's authenticity.

In addition to the cultural, historic, and aesthetic values of the play Voodoo Charm attempts to intensify the understanding of the benefits of friendship and love.

#### Definition of Terms

The following terms have longer dictionary definitions and are more varied in common usage. I have limited the definitions here to apply to theatrical practice and to clarify the exact meanings used in the thesis. The other stage terms used below have standard meanings in North American theatre.

Original: created spontaneously, not based on previous creations.

Design: the plan, construction, and appearance of scenery and costumes.

Special effects: the use of recorded music, offstage voices, and light changes which affect the mood and aesthetic quality of the play.

Audience contact in Voodoo Charm: breaking the usual aesthetic distance between stage and audience by having performers go into and come from the seating area.

Children's Theatre as it applies to this production: the art of presenting a play written especially for them to young people in the sixth grade through junior high school level.

#### Statement of Purpose

Voodoo Charm offered me a unique opportunity with a new script. From an original point of view I had to study its requirements and its interpretive problems. As in all plays the director had to analyze the script in terms of characters, technical needs, staging, audience contact, and special effects. But, as this play had never been produced, the director had no critical guides, and the playwright had given limited stage directions.

Since plays at Texas Woman's University must be cast from students enrolled here, a unique challenge existed in

analyzing each character in terms of adapting to an all female cast. Miss Judy Lynne Harvey used Voodoo Charm for her design thesis. This necessitated coordination with an original script, original designs, and an original directing experience.

Voodoo Charm was presented on Redbud Auditorium's proscenium stage at Texas Woman's University. The production prompt script is included here in order that it may be useful to others directing an original children's play.

The final test of a play written for production is its presentation. The performances of Voodoo Charm further revealed the playwright's and director's strengths and weaknesses. The reasons why the weaknesses occurred and some suggested means to eliminate them led to a further analysis of the script and its presentation.

Choosing the script, analyzing it, preparing it for production, producing it, and evaluating the presentation resulted in a thorough learning experience.

#### Statement of the Problem

The director-investigator's problem is the presentation of an original children's play at Texas Woman's University. To complete the study, I needed to evaluate the script, the production, and the learning experience.



## CHAPTER II

### A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SCRIPT

Jewel B. Taaffe's Voodoo Charm has been written in order to entertain and to instruct. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the script within the scope of the playwright's goals.

Mrs. Taaffe intends to create a French atmosphere with sets, dialogue, and action. Originally the Prologue was to have taken place inside the trapper's cabin on the bayou. The director felt, for staging purposes and a closer association with the bayou, that the scene should be placed outside the cabin. To heighten the illusion and mood the apron was established as the bayou. Jean sat on the edge of the stage and skipped imaginary stones toward the audience. This brought the scene physically closer to the viewers. The author agreed to this change which better established Jean's feelings for the bayou. Because of the lack of scene descriptions the designer created a completely original set with a work table, bench, traps, skins, foliage, and a stool, all of which adequately indicated a bayou atmosphere.

Acts One and Three take place in Jackson Square,

the heart of the French Quarter. Although Mrs. Taaffe did not describe the square, the designer's research led to a satisfactory, artistic representation. Since research material is available, the author's request to use Jackson Square is reasonable. The square contains ornate wrought iron decorations on the buildings, park benches, and surrounding fences. The setting provided insight into the French culture of the era.

Act Two, set in Congo Square, is more challenging to a designer. It is difficult, if not impossible, for a director to obtain a description of this square in that period. Congo Square, a meeting place for Negroes, was on the outskirts of the city. It was an open marshland without trees or buildings. The playwright mentions a platform to be used by the dancers. The dialogue refers to "Congo Square." In order to remain true to the author's purpose in using the actual place, the director could not change the setting. The playwright needs to give a more detailed description. Voodoo Charm was well into rehearsal before the problem was solved. The solution is discussed in chapter three.

The dialogue creates the intended French atmosphere. The bayou trappers speak a Cajun dialect, an Anglicized form of French peculiar to Southern Louisiana. The audiences apparently understood Mrs. Taaffe's version of Cajun speech.

Act One opens and closes with street singers selling

their goods to the people in and around Jackson Square. The author gives no suggestions as to how these cries are to be sung. She does not indicate any characteristics of the street singers such as race, clothes, or personality. This was a handicap to the director.

Most of the French atmosphere created through dialogue is achieved by injecting French phrases of greeting and exclamation. The French phrases are carefully explained by action or the English meanings used in the dialogue that follows. The language of the three acts is more subtle than that of the Prologue. In the acts the French Zeitgeist is created with language rhythms and gestures rather than with French phrases. Yet the Prologue is more satisfactorily written. Cajun speech is based on French but is primarily English, and in the Prologue there is a better use of language rhythm. The language in the acts does not create satisfactorily unified rhythms in its French characters.

The creation of movements and gestures which would depict a French atmosphere are, for the most part, left to the director and actors. As a guide for them the playwright should have suggested some typical actions and reactions. These gestures and movements are outside the common realm of experience.

Through her characters Mrs. Taaffe attempts to express a feeling of Louisiana French culture. All of

the characters except Jacques Sansone do this. Jacques's dialogue is not conducive to French movements and gestures. As indicated in the script's actions, Jacques's personality is flamboyant, light, quick tempered, teasing, and very French. The ponderous dialogue prevents proper character expression.

Most of the characters have clearly expressed motivations and feelings. Henriette, however, is a character whose purpose is not fully explained by the play's action. It was hoped that the actress chosen to portray this role would be able to overcome this weakness with direction and self-created meaning. The playwright needs to use more action and better, if not additional, dialogue to clearly define Henriette's motivations. Henriette loves Jean. She wants to take the boy away from his father, not because of spite or an antipathy to Louis, but because she honestly feels that this would be best for Jean. That Henriette loves Jean is not always clear, and it should be.

The actions of Joe Lamotte, the antagonist, are also incomplete. Although his actions are the basis of the plot, he does not appear until the final scene when he speaks his one line. Exposition does indicate his evil actions and character but not enough to create a shock effect when he appears. Lamotte is relatively unimportant in the final scene because his actions seem insignificant beside the struggle of Jean and his father to return to

the bayou, Henriette's determination to keep Jean, the actions of Marie Leveau and her daughter, the appearance of the Grand Duke, and the celebration of the Mardi Gras.

The voodoo magic is friendship. The idea is worthy, but its execution needs to be developed more effectively. The Congo dance scene should include more of the mystery of voodoo magic, and the following scene should not be so explicit in explaining what the magic is. For the actors, the mystery is sufficiently developed since they do not discover the magic of friendship until the final scene. It is this scene which should clarify the "true magic" for the audience.

Humor is in the script but rarely came across as such in the production. An example is in Act Two, scene two. Marie Leveau and Jacques Sansone are close friends and establish their relationship for the audience by teasing each other. Because most of the dialogue is ponderous, the playwright fails to achieve a balance between light humor and serious purpose. Humor in other parts of the script often was successful, especially when Henriette and Annette were together. Their humor was aimed at the adults for the most part and helped parents and teachers to enjoy the play with the children; however their dialogue did not bore the youngsters. With some minor rewriting all the humor can be sufficiently developed to add to the play's entertaining qualities.

The script does not include a cast list and needs one with a brief description of the principle characters. An example would be: Marie Leveau, a Negro with a queenly bearing. A list of this type would help the director to identify the characters in the initial readings of the script and would serve as a guide in casting the play.

There is no mention of the time of day included with the scene descriptions. The director set the Prologue just before dusk. The fading of the sunlight contributed to the somber tone at the end of this scene. Act One, because of the actions of the street singers, was in the early morning. Act Two, scene one, was in the morning because dialogue establishes morning as the time for the Dance Calinda. Act Two, scene two takes place a short time later. I set the time as slightly after noon. Act Three, scene one, was placed in the morning around ten o'clock because the ladies have been shopping. Act Three, scene two takes place several days later at the Mardi Gras. I have used a common parade time, two o'clock.

The people who appear in Jackson Square need to have some purpose for being there. The time of day would help to indicate their reasons for coming to the park. The author would have aided the director by giving general insight into the French culture as depicted by these people. Do they come to the park to shop, to watch their children play, or to spend leisure time before the day's work begins?

If the scene takes place in the evening, do the people walk through the square as lovers or sit on benches enjoying the cool breezes the night brings with it?

Despite the play's weaknesses, its fresh material holds the plot together. It offered a challenge that seemed worthwhile to a director, and I accepted it.

## CHAPTER THREE

### PRE-PRODUCTION PROBLEMS

In order to prepare Voodoo Charm for production I needed to select a cast, schedule rehearsal times, approve the set and costume designs, and supervise the preparation of special effects. With these requirements problems developed. This chapter analyzes these problems by explaining why they occurred and whether or not they were successfully handled during the rehearsal period.

Tryouts were scheduled at 7:00 P.M. on March 27 and 28 in Redbud Auditorium. I began the readings by giving my interpretation of the play and a brief summary of each character. Before the tryouts were scheduled, I had analyzed the script in terms of characterization in order to give a capsule summary to those who would come to the auditions.

The character analysis presented at tryouts was similar to the following: Louis Livaudais, a man in his early thirties, supports himself and his son by trapping in the bayou. Jean, Louis' son, is an energetic and obedient twelve year old. Both Louis and Jean love each other and the bayou above all else. Henri, a fellow trapper and their friend, must leave the bayou in order to earn a living. Joe



Lamotte has stolen his furs, traps, and pirogue, a log boat used in the bayou waters. Lamotte makes his living by stealing from the other trappers and destroying their equipment. He is the villain. Henriette, Jean's maternal aunt, is a Creole lady who lives in New Orleans. She loves Jean and wishes to take him away from the bayou life. She wants to raise him as a French gentleman and honestly believes that she is doing what is best for the boy. Annette, her friend, has a sarcastic sense of humor and becomes aware of Jean's unhappiness in New Orleans. Both women are well-bred ladies about forty years old. Phillipe, Annette's son, is about Jean's age and is a nondescript but friendly boy. Annette's Husband is a cultured Creole gentleman. Marie II is a pretty Negro girl of twelve who befriends Jean and helps him to solve his problem. Marie Leveau, the little girl's mother, is the Voodoo Queen in New Orleans. A legend in her own time, this regal, light-skinned Negro makes charms to help the good people and at the same time is capable of making evil charms as a just means of punishing the wicked. Jacques Sansone, the pirogue maker, is a strong, sturdy man. A stereotyped Frenchman, he is flamboyant, teasing, quick tempered, and kind. Alexis, the Russian Grand Duke, is a bearded gentleman with a thick accent who is a guest of the city for the Mardi Gras celebration.

In addition to the above, Voodoo Charm requires many extras. A male street-crier announces the Grand Duke's

arrival. Street singers sell their goods to people in Jackson Square and its surrounding area. In the park adults and children play, relax, shop, and pass through. There are also the parade participants.

The audition material included the Prologue; the Act One street singers; Act Two, scene two; the Annette-Henriette dialogue in Act Three, scene one; and most of Act Three, scene two. Since the characters in these scenes seem to express themselves clearly, I selected the readings in order to give the girls opportunities to display ability and versatility.

There were casting problems. Some girls who might have been competent decided not to be in the play. Others showed weaknesses in the second reading that were not apparent in the first. A sufficient number of talented girls eventually appeared so that there could be a cast with the potential to fulfill the play's and the director's requirements.

Voodoo Charm has parts for a number of Negroes, and only one read. She had to refuse a part because she had to go on a late-scheduled choir tour. The designer recruited a talented girl for the role of Marie II. Professor Roach discovered an inexperienced girl with regal bearing who had the potential to be a good Marie Leveau. Unfortunately, she could not begin rehearsals until after the Easter vacation. Only two other Negroes were willing to appear as dancers.

Because of the limited number of talented actresses available, I cast each person who read and who was willing to perform. I had to double-cast four roles. One actress played Henri and the Grand Duke. Another took the parts of Annette's husband and the street-crier.

The first two weeks were spent on blocking. Stand-ins took Marie Leveau's place, and this proved unsatisfactory as is noted below. I worked and reworked each scene until we achieved a satisfactory pattern of movement. The Prologue and Act Two, scene two, took the most time. The Prologue was difficult to stage. The crowded setting did not allow the actors enough room for broad movement. The actors also were slow in developing the feeling that they were on a bayou. In the second scene of Act Two Marie Leveau and Jacques Sansone are the only two characters on stage. Without the Voodoo Queen I could not effectively block this scene. Since I broke the groups down to units of three or four each, there was not much difficulty in blocking the first act crowd scenes. Without dancers, actors, music, and a basic set design I could not attempt much with Act Two until after the Easter holidays. As the basic format of Act Three, scene one, was similar to that of Act One, I had no difficulties. The greatest challenge to ingenuity was the last scene of the play. Here all the actors appear. At the end of this scene I decided to create a close audience involvement with the Mardi Gras by bringing the extras in a parade through

the auditorium.

In spite of the fact that we needed a Marie Leveau, the cast's progress during the rehearsals before Easter was satisfactory. Each member seemed to be developing an understanding of her character, the blocking, and the movements. At Texas Woman's University, B average students are allowed to leave a day early for vacation. Because many cast members had a B average, I had to cancel the April 10 rehearsal. Before they left, I told the actors that they must learn their lines since no script would be allowed on stage when rehearsals resumed on April 16.

After the Easter holidays the director and performers used the early rehearsals to re-establish forgotten business and movements and to bring the developing production back to its pre-vacation level. The girl playing Marie Leveau began her rehearsals. She worked hard on creating her characterization and quickly reached a crystallization comparable with the other actresses. The earlier blocking of her scenes now proved to be useless. As she was inexperienced, though talented, the director found it necessary to spend more time with her than a well-trained performer would have needed. I realized that the Voodoo Queen needed careful blocking if she were to dominate her major scenes and to be an important figure in the other scenes in which she appeared.

As we moved away from fundamental blocking, I observed that Henriette and Jacques were not developing in

the direction in which the playwright indicated they should. The actresses and the director discussed the motivation, feelings, and desires that each character should have. Henriette seemed to need more dialogue and actions to express her love for Jean. We analyzed each line. I suggested that she soften her tone when speaking to and about Jean, that she find reasons to touch the boy gently, and that she watch her inclinations toward sarcasm and make her humor more gentle. The actress playing Jacques felt, as I do, that Jacques's dialogue was too heavy, without the rhythm necessary to interject teasing and exclamations during the expression of a serious purpose. We tried to find places for shrugs and for both broad and quick gestures. Although each performer worked hard, I doubted, by opening day, that we had made much progress.

Because of the size of the cast and the limited number of students available, I had to cast as street singers girls who, with one exception, could not sing very well. The one vocalist, a freshman voice major, was able to offer only limited suggestions for improving the quality and projection of the street vendors. The girls were inexperienced, and I feel that I did not have the time to give them the guidance that they needed.

The extras were also inexperienced. In the Jackson Square scenes, I had difficulty in making them look relaxed and appear to be New Orleans citizens, each of whom had a

reason for being in the square. I added business such as having them buy food and flowers from the street singers, knit, play jacks, and even talk softly to one another.

"Dance Calinda" is a voodoo rite performed by Negroes. This is important for the first scene of Act Two. As I had only two Negro dancers in the cast, I asked the white extras and street singers to appear in the scene and to dance and sway with their backs to the audience. During the scene the stage was to be dimly lit, and the sky gradually was to become red. One purpose of this was to intensify the mood; another to silhouette the figures in front of the dance platform, figures supposedly of black people. The designer built most of the sets alone and did not have sufficient time to work with the light crew and to work out the choreography satisfactorily. Because of these facts and because the stage was too often used for non-Speech Department activities, there were not enough technical rehearsals. When I discovered that the action just before and after the dance revealed most of the participants as white, it was too late to make changes for the presentation. We could not mask the entrances and exits of the white dancers.

The designer gave me a workable and aesthetically pleasing set. I had requested, however, that she show me sketches of the sets before they were to be constructed. Because this was not done, and because I did not have, in

scale, floor plans for the early stages of rehearsal, I later had to reblock many scenes. Because of the lack of building time and construction help, the actors worked with the full sets for the first time at the technical rehearsal on April 28.

Since there was only one girl able to build costumes, the performers wore them for the first time at the dress rehearsal. Since the clothes were period pieces, the actors had some difficulty getting used to them. It was during the April 29 rehearsal that we discovered a difficult costume change between the two scenes in Act Three. Jean had to change from his New Orleans street dress to his costume for the Mardi Gras. The author has not allowed time for this change. In an attempt to add time between Jean's exit and his return, I had the street singers do a reprise of their songs at the beginning of scene two. In rehearsal this seemed to be adequate for Jean's change.

The street vendors sing and so do the two Maries. With each unit we had problems. I was not sure how the street sellers should sound and had no specific music for them to refer to. One night, while not rehearsing, I watched the movie Saratogo Trunk with Clark Gable on television. In it was a New Orleans street singer selling blackberries. I listened to her phrasing and observed that the singing was like a chant. With those clues I taught the Voodoo Charm street singers how to sell their

wares. We did have music for the two Maries. We were, however, in the final stages of rehearsal before I could find a girl to play it and teach it to them. Miss Martha Chandler, a talented pianist at the university, rearranged "Believe in Yourself" so that it was easier to sing. She tape recorded the song so that the Maries could study it and so that it could actually be used during the play.

Our Jean could not play the harmonica, and we had to tape "Alouette" for her. The recording cut down the harmonica's natural range and liveliness. Reed Eaton, a talented thirteen year old who could play the harmonica, recorded it on the first technical rehearsal night. We lost valuable time in rehearsal synchronizing Jean's cueing gestures with the sound technician. With some minor exceptions we were successful. If there had been more time, the girl playing Jean might have learned to play a simple tune on the harmonica.

The playwright naturally requested music during the Mardi Gras parade. Mrs. Taaffe told us that she hoped to have real musicians in the celebration. Because most of the university musicians are connected with the Music Department's performing groups, we were unable to find any who could work with us. The University Serenaders were able to find time to record the music on the day of the final dress rehearsal. Although I was not satisfied with the recording quality, there was no time to re-record or to find an



adequate substitute.

The lighting crew was inexperienced. Once again because of an inadequate number of technical rehearsals, there was not time to coordinate their work with the action on stage. There were no major problems, however, during the performance.

By the final dress rehearsal Voodoo Charm, in spite of rehearsal problems, was unified enough for public presentation. We felt that the play would be an interesting and aesthetically pleasing experience for its audiences.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PROMPT BOOK

Voodoo Charm was presented on May 1 and 2, 1968, at 1:00 P.M.; May 3 at 8:00 P.M.; and May 4, 1968, at 2:00 P.M. and at 8:00 P.M.

Following is the production prompt book. Brackets indicate the director's notations for business, blocking, and an occasional dialogue change. The author's suggestions appear in parentheses. The abbreviations for stage directions are those in common, accepted usage for scripts in English.

Mrs. Taaffe suggested "Believe in Yourself" for Leveau's song because it is similar to music of the period. The director chose "Alouette" for the harmonica music since it can sound happy or sad depending on the tempo in which it is played. The Texas Woman's University Serenaders recorded Mardi Gras music which the author suggested as typical of the period. The music is not presently available; therefore it is not included with this script but may be obtained as indicated on the program listing. As a type of music, rather than specific music, is needed in other places in the script, the director has indicated suggestions.

The following script is not available for future production. For permission to produce the revised and improved script of Voodoo Charm, please write:

Mrs. Jewel B. Taaffe

3900 Napoli Drive

Metairie, Louisiana 70003

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE FOR VOODOO CHARM

directed by Suzanne Oeschger

WED.	3/27	READINGS	7--10 P.M.	REDBUD
THURS.	3/28	READINGS	7--10 P.M.	"
FRI.	3/29	CALLBACK	7--10 P.M.	"
SAT.	3/30	CAST POSTED	REDBUD & MUSIC-SPEECH	
<hr/>				
SUN.	3/31	DISCUSSION	7--10 P.M.	REDBUD
MON.	4/ 1	BLOCK PROLOGUE & I	7--10 P.M.	"
WED.	4/ 3	BLOCK II	7--10 P.M.	"
SAT.	4/ 6	BLOCK III	7--10 P.M.	"
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SUN.	4/ 7	RUN THROUGH	7--10 P.M.	REDBUD
MON.	4/ 8	WORK PROLOGUE & I	7--10 P.M.	"
TUES.	4/ 9	WORK II & III	7--10 P.M.	" TV STUDIO
WED.	4/10	WORK INDIVIDUALS	7--10 P.M.	" CANCELLED
<hr/>				
TUES.	4/16	PROLOGUE & I LINES	7--10 P.M.	REDBUD
WED.	4/17	II LINES	7--10 P.M.	"
THURS.	4/18	III LINES	8--10 P.M.	"
FRI.	4/19	LINE RUN THROUGH	8--10 P.M.	"
SAT.	4/20	LINE RUN THROUGH	1-- 5 P.M.	"
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SUN.	4/21	RUN THROUGH	7--10 P.M.	REDBUD STAGE
MON.	4/22	RUN THROUGH	7--11 P.M.	" TV STUDIO
TUES.	4/23	" "	7--11 P.M.	" TV STUDIO
WED.	4/24	" "	7--11 P.M.	" TV STUDIO
THURS.	4/25	" "	7--11 P.M.	" TV STUDIO
FRI.	4/26	" "	8--12 MID.	" STAGE
SAT.	4/27	TECH	1-- 5 P.M.	" STAGE
		RUN THROUGH	7--10 P.M.	"
<hr/>				
SUN.	4/28	TECH	9 A.M.--2 P.M.	REDBUD
		RUN THROUGH	7--11 P.M.	"
MON.	4/29	DRESS	7--11 P.M.	"
TUES.	4/30	DRESS	7--11 P.M.	"
WED.	5/ 1	SHOW	11 A.M.--2 P.M.	"
		BRUSHUP	7--11 P.M.	" *
THURS.	5/ 2	SHOW	11 A.M.--2 P.M.	"
FRI.	5/ 3	SHOW	7--11 P.M.	"
SAT.	5/ 4	SHOW	1:30--4:30 P.M.	"
		SHOW	7--11 P.M.	"

\*This brushup rehearsal was not needed.

THE DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH  
TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

Presents

**VOODOO CHARM**

by Mrs. Jewell Taaffe

Director ..... Suzanne Oeschger

Designer ..... Judy Harvey

Faculty Supervisors of Production Details .....  
Paul Hutchins, Gregory Eaton, Josh Roach

Student Crews:

Lighting ..... Jo Wetherill, Elsie Johnson, Kathy Emmons,  
Helen Dallas, Ann Kaempfer

Costumes ..... Ann Kaempfer, Susan Dodgen, Martha  
Richardson

Sound ..... Gloria Gale

Props ..... Sue Rozdil

Stage Manager and Assistant Director .... Martha Richardson

Stage Crews ..... Stephanie Bednarski, Becky Fitch

Credits:

Music played by special arrangement with the Serenaders  
under the direction of Dr. Turicchi

Music used by special permission from the French Quarter  
Music, New Orleans

Musical accompaniments by Reed Eaton (harmonica),  
Martha Chandler (piano), Pat Wyatt (drums)  
Gloria Gale (piano)

## CAST

Louis Livaudais, a trapper ..... Lynn Stephan  
 Jean, his son ..... Leslie Harms  
 Henri, another trapper ..... Irma Guadarrama  
 Marie Leveau, the queen of voodoo ..... Abbie Sue Woods  
 Marie II, her daughter ..... Brenetta Broussard  
 Henrietta, Jean's aunt ..... Caryne Brown  
 Jacques, a builder of pirogues ..... Gale Harmon  
 Annette, Henrietta's neighbor ..... Kathy Ramsey  
 Annette's husband ..... Cynthia Lindsay  
 Phillipe, Annette's son ..... Mary Lynn Urso  
 Joe Lamotte, the thief of the bayou ..... Karen Barkofsky  
 Grand Duke Alexis ..... Irma Guadarrama  
 A man of New Orleans ..... Cynthia Lindsay  
 Dancers and Street Singers ..... Liz Rodden, Marti Richardson,  
 Barbara McConnell, Helen Dallas, Colleen Jones, Annie  
 Brazell, Rosla Hocker, Catherine McCreary, Cathy Boynton,  
 Janet Wright, Rudy Leslie, Rose Ann Stafford, Dorothy  
 Williams

Prologue: A trapper's cabin in one of the bayous of Louisiana.  
 Early spring.

Act I: Jackson Square in New Orleans, a few days later.

Act II: Congo Square, the next day.

Act III, Scene 1: Jackson Square, two weeks later.

Act III, Scene 2: Jackson Square, the day of Mardi Gras.

## PROLOGUE

[Outside a trapper's cabin on one of the bayous of Louisiana. The front curtain is parted eight feet at the center. A front corner of the cabin shows center stage at the curtain line. Foliage of cypress trees is visible above the cabin roof. Stage right near the cabin is a work table. Upstage of the table is a bench. About seven feet stage left of center is a low stool located two feet up from the edge of the stage. The stage is in full view when the audience enters. When the house lights are down, LOUIS enters and sits on the bench. As the lights come up on stage, JEAN enters stage left of cabin playing "Alouette" on his harmonica. He crosses stage left of the stool and sits on the floor with his legs hanging over the edge of the stage. The orchestra pit should be established as the bayou. JEAN stops playing the harmonica to skip stones. He chooses two imaginary stones, throws them, and watches them skip before the dialogue begins.]

STAND BY  
LC #1, 2

STAND BY  
SC #1

LC #1

LC #2

SC #1

LOUIS            In just one more month, Jean, we finish  
the trapping and take the skins to New

Orleans to sell. [moving on line, crosses SL placing left foot on the stool] Then we take the pirogue and fish, huh? How about that, my son?

JEAN Papa, when you go to New Orleans with the furs, will you buy more traps? So many more muskrat we could catch with more traps.

LOUIS Yes, Jean, [sits on stool] we will have enough furs in another four weeks to make up for all the skins Joe Lamotte stole from us. We buy more traps to make up for all the ones he steal. I go to Jacques Sansone at the French Market and get the new ones. He make the best traps in New Orleans.

JEAN [looking at LOUIS] Why would Joe Lamotte steal from us? Why do that, Papa?

LOUIS Some people steal for meanness, others for gain; with Joe Lamotte I suppose it is a little of both. Much easier to steal traps from us than to work harder and make or buy his own. The more traps he has, the more animals he catches. The fewer traps we have, the less we catch. The less we catch, the more animals to go into his traps.

JEAN Are there not enough muskrat in the bayou for all of us?



LOUIS            Enough for all if the work goes into it.  
                  Enough for all if one is not too lazy to pole  
                  the pirogue out into the swamps far enough to  
                  set the traps where the animals are plentiful.

JEAN            Then Joe Lamotte is lazy, mean, and [skips  
                  stone vehemently] a thief.

LOUIS            So it would seem, Jean. Perhaps we should  
                  feel sorry for one who lives life in such a  
                  way. But enough. [stands] Go for me to the  
                  pirogue and [JEAN rises quickly and obediently,  
                  shaking the water from his hands and feet]  
                  bring it to the back of the cabin. [JEAN  
                  crosses SR behind the stool but is stopped by  
                  his father] There is a small leak I would fix  
                  before we go out to set the traps again tomorrow.

JEAN            Oui, Papa. [crosses R to table, fingers furs]  
                  We have some beautiful skins already, no?

LOUIS            [crosses to JEAN] We have some beautiful skins.  
                  When we pick up the traps tomorrow, we have more.  
                  We set them a few more times, then New Orleans.  
                  [motions JEAN to go for the pirogue]

JEAN            [looking off L] Look, Papa, here comes Mr.  
                  Champagne.

LOUIS            [looking off L] Henri? I wonder why he make  
                  the long trip from his cabin to ours now. I  
                  hope there is no trouble.

HENRI [said in wings for effect of distance] Louis,  
Louis, my friend, comment ca va? [HENRI enters  
L of cabin and crosses to C]

LOUIS Très bien. How goes it with you?

JEAN [crosses to HENRI in front of LOUIS] Bon jour,  
Mr. Champagne.

[LOUIS places a hand on JEAN'S shoulder and  
gently pushes him SR of cabin]

LOUIS [motioning HENRI to bench] Sit down, mon ami.  
[HENRI sits on DS end of bench] I am glad to  
see you but a little surprised. It is a long  
way from your cabin to mine. Usually you do  
not make the trip before the season is over.  
[places feet on US end of bench]

HENRI I know, Louis, and it is with a heavy heart  
that I make the trip now.

LOUIS A heavy heart, with trapping so good?

HENRI (shaking his head) Not so good for me, my  
friend. I have lost my pirogue and most of  
my traps.

LOUIS Lost them?

HENRI Gone, stolen!

LOUIS Your traps and pirogue?

HENRI Oui. [crosses DR, almost to edge of stage] I  
look for the boat yesterday to go pick up the  
traps, and it was not there. [imitating the

action] I take the old raft and pole it out into the swamp to see for my traps and they were gone, [to LOUIS] every one.

LOUIS [moves to SL side of table] C'est terrible, terrible! It is Lamotte, Henri. He means to run us both [hits fist on table] from the bayou, so he alone will trap here.

HENRI He has succeeded with me, Louis. Without traps and pirogue I have nothing. I am taking my skins, the few that I have, to New Orleans to sell. Some are from early in the season. Tomorrow I leave to see what I can get for them.

LOUIS Lamotte! That Louisiana polecat is slicker than a weasel.

HENRI We can never catch him at it, and we never see the traps he steals or the skins.

LOUIS He steals them before we put our mark on them, then he marks them as his own and sells them. That is the way he must work.

HENRI The traps he just hide in the bayou I guess. He will be caught at it someday. [sits on DS end of bench]

LOUIS Someday that thieving trapper will make that one mistake, and he himself will be trapped.

HENRI I cannot wait for that someday, my friend. I find another way to make a living.

LOUIS           What will you do?

HENRI           I will go to the north and get a job in one of  
the factories there.

LOUIS           [crosses SL putting foot on stool] A northern  
factory? [this must be a fast cross]

HENRI           Oui, my sister's husband he go there after the  
war and work. He say the pay is good. That  
will be easier and better after all.

LOUIS           [moving two steps L] Easier perhaps, but better?  
No. A man belongs to himself [gestures widely to  
front] here on the bayou. [to HENRI] It is he  
and nature who pull together or fight each other.  
Nature is a fickle friend but sometimes a good  
one.

HENRI           So it was until Lamotte come to the bayou and  
take from me what I need to belong to myself.  
Traps and pirogue, my friend, with these we  
struggle with nature and also find her gifts.

LOUIS           And what wonderful gifts we find. [crosses to  
table] Jean's mother left a fine home in New  
Orleans when we married to come to the bayou  
with me because she loved it as I do.

HENRI           But, Louis, perhaps this life shortened the  
end of hers.

LOUIS           It was not here she died [withdraws two steps]  
but in the city of the hated yellow fever.

HENRI I did not know.

LOUIS [crosses L, foot on stool, head up, remembering]

She and Jean were visiting her sister. While she was there, the fever spread like a fire through all of New Orleans. Two days later she was dead.

HENRI I am so sorry.

LOUIS [to HENRI, foot off stool] I went there to get Jean. His aunt did not want to let him go. She said with no mother a boy could not be taken care of properly on the bayou. I took my son with me, and we have been here ever since. He was eight years old then, and in these four years he has been a fine son to me. I have never regretted bringing him back. We have found nature's gifts together and are happy here.

JEAN [bursts in from SR crossing to LOUIS] Papa, Papa!

LOUIS [his hand on JEAN'S shoulder] What is it, Jean?

JEAN The pirogue! The pirogue! Oh, Papa!

LOUIS What about the pirogue? Did you bring it back?

JEAN (near tears) I couldn't, Papa.

LOUIS Why not, Jean? Why not?

JEAN It's chopped and split to pieces. [gestures behind cabin] I found it sticking out of the mud in the swamp.

LOUIS           Chopped, split, sacre nom!

HENRI           [standing]   That devil, Lamotte!

LOUIS           He ruin you, Henri, and now me.

HENRI           [moving to SR side of table]   The bayou is his.  
We are both finished.

JEAN            What can we do, Papa?

LOUIS           [sitting on stool]   I don't know. It takes  
months just to find a good tree to make into  
a pirogue.

HENRI           There is only one thing you can do: the same  
as I am doing.

LOUIS           [crosses to table]   I could never work in a  
factory, never. (pause) [touching the skins]  
There is another choice.

HENRI           What is it?

LOUIS           I will find work on a ship sailing from New  
Orleans.

JEAN            [jumping excitedly]   Will they take me too?

LOUIS           No, my son. You will have to stay with Mama's  
sister while I am gone.

JEAN            [moves one step CL]   Aunt Henriette?

LOUIS           She is a fine French lady [crosses to JEAN]  
with a fine house. Do you remember?

JEAN            I remember. She did not want you and me to  
come back here when Mama died. She wanted  
us to stay with her. She was angry when we

would not.

LOUIS She was angry because she wanted to bring you up as a fine gentleman. Her anger has cooled and [to HENRI] her determination too, I hope.

JEAN Will she want us there, Papa?

LOUIS She is not married and probably very lonely. She will be glad to have you back.

JEAN How long must I stay there?

LOUIS Long enough for me to make one trip on a boat to the north as a helper, then back to buy the finest pirogue on the bayou, fine traps, nets, all kinds of things so that we can come back again.

HENRI What about Lamotte?

STAND BY  
LC #3, 4

LOUIS Time will deal with him. I have faith in justice.

JEAN But I will miss you, Papa. [crosses DL to stool] I will miss the bayou, the moss, the birds, the cypress trees. (he picks up his harmonica) It is so beautiful here.

STAND BY  
SC #2, 3

LOUIS (going to JEAN, putting one arm around his shoulder) I know, but how much more beautiful everything will look

when we come back. [crosses to C]

Come, let us get the skins ready and into the wagon. Will you help, Henri?

HENRI Of course. [crosses between bench and table to LOUIS] If we work fast, we can leave together in the morning.

LOUIS In the morning--the last one for some LC #3  
time to come that we will see the  
egrets and heron light on the water  
as the sun comes up. (JEAN begins to SC #2  
play a sad little tune on his har-  
monica rather softly) ["Alouette"]  
Let us not be too sad. [gesturing to  
JEAN to come on] Who knows? Perhaps  
in New Orleans there is a sun too.  
[exits SR of cabin with HENRI]

[JEAN continues his song, slowly LC #4  
looking at the bayou, then crosses  
to go out, shakes his head dejectedly,  
and exits SR of cabin] SC #3

[As CURTAIN CLOSES harmonica music swells  
and crossfades into light "Happy Farmer" type  
music, which ends when Act One curtain opens]



## ACT ONE

(Jackson Square--townspeople and street sellers are walking about) [The stage is set as an area in the park. Downstage right is an iron bench with a trash basket on its upstage side. Upstage left is another iron bench. A row of buildings typical of New Orleans' French Quarter can be seen stage left running from down left to up left center. Four feet in front of the buildings and placed at the same angle is an iron fence with a lamp post at each end. This arrangement gives the effect of a street between the fence and the buildings. The fence continues along the back of the stage with an opening center and lamp posts on each side. Behind the upstage fence is a street wide enough for exits and entrances. The back of the stage should be masked with a drop depicting either sky or distant buildings. MARIE II is sitting on the downstage end of the bench right. A little girl is sitting, playing jacks, upstage of the trash basket. Her back is to the audience. Two women and a man are below the fence, about six feet stage right of the gate. Two Negro women are standing stage left of the gate. Two white

STAND BY  
LC #5

women are sitting on the stage left bench. The  
street sellers chant or sing.]

LC #5

OYSTER SELLER [enters UL and crosses C through  
fence to DRC]

Oyster man! Oyster man!

Get your fresh oysters from the  
 oyster man!

Bring out your pitchers, bring  
 out your cans,

Get your nice fresh oysters  
 from the oyster man!

BLACKBERRIES [enters DR, crosses to ULC]

Blackberries, fresh from the vine  
 Blackberries from Barataria  
 Bayou Goula, Bayou Delacroix  
 Blackberries, lady  
 Fresh from the vine.

VEGETABLES [enters DSL, crosses to USR]

Sweet peppers, okra for gumbo  
 Fresh tomatoes for shrimp creole.

CANTALOUPE [enters UR, crosses through fence  
to DSCR]

Canta--loupe--ah!

Fresh and fine

Just offa de vine

Only a dime.

(These street cries solo, blend, then overlap [and repeat]. LOUIS and JEAN enter through center gate upstage. They are carrying bags containing their clothing and the skins. They stand center listening. Some sellers exit, others remain and take . . . standing positions on stage [with the townspeople.])

JEAN           It has been so long I almost forgot how beautiful is New Orleans.

LOUIS          Oui, my son. It has its fascination too. You sit here, look at everything, and soon I be back. [starts out L, but JEAN grabs his arm following]

JEAN           Where do you go first, Papa?

LOUIS          To the French Market to sell the skins, to Jacques Sansone, then to the house of your Aunt Henriette. She live only a little way from the square.

JEAN           Why do you not take me with you?

LOUIS          Ladies are very strange creatures, my son. Even the wisest men have not understood them or been able to say just how they will act. It is best that I go to see her alone, then we both come back for you.

JEAN           Are you sure she will let us stay, Papa?

LOUIS          Of course she will let us stay. She will

talk a great deal at first, like all ladies;  
 then she will fuss like most ladies (JEAN  
laughs); then she will smile and say, "How  
 good to have you back. Come and stay."  
 Then when she has seen you she will say,  
 "Oh, mon pauvre petit, my only nephew, your  
 father does not feed you well. You are a bag  
 of bones. He probably feed you only shrimp  
 and oyster shells. It is a wonder you are  
 not wearing muskrat skins instead of clothes.  
 Poor little boy of the bayou." (they laugh)

JEAN Does she really think I will be wearing skins?

LOUIS No, Jean, I only joke with you.

RICE CAKE SELLER [enters DSL to fence]

Beautiful rice fritters

I have rice fritters

Fine rice fritters

(LOUIS and JEAN move to her)

If you have no money, taste,

it's all the same.

(they take a taste)

Rice fritters, quite, quite hot

Fine rice fritters!

[LOUIS gives a few pennies to JEAN, who buys  
a rice cake]

LOUIS I must go now. Enjoy the sights of New Orleans.

I will be back soon. [exits DL]

[the RICE CAKE SELLER crosses to SR singing  
and JEAN slowly follows her, stopping when  
she exits DR]

JEAN (looks around and sees a little girl of about  
his age seated on the bench SL. She is  
a . . . Negress and very pretty. She is  
making something. He stands watching her  
then moves closer trying to see better.  
She looks up.)

What are you doing?

MARIE I am making a lucky charm.

JEAN A lucky charm; what for?

MARIE To make good things happen.

JEAN Will they?

MARIE I don't know. It is not a very strong charm  
because I am not very old. [shows him the  
charm] It can only be a little charm with a  
little magic. It is Mama who makes the great  
magic.

JEAN How does she do it? Is your mama a witch?

MARIE (laughing) Oh, no! She is Marie Leveau.

JEAN Marie Leveau?

MARIE Haven't you heard of her?

JEAN No, I have not.

MARIE [standing] She is the queen of Voodoo in

New Orleans.

JEAN     [backing up slightly]   Voodoo? What is that?

MARIE     Where have you been that you have not heard of it? It is magic.

JEAN     I suppose I have never heard because I live in the bayou outside the city with my Papa.

MARIE     The bayou? What do you do there?

JEAN     We trap and fish.

MARIE     Is that why you are dressed so strange?

JEAN     It has been many years since I have been to the city.

[BLACKBERRY SELLER moves DSL singing. JEAN crosses to her motioning for MARIE to follow. JEAN buys a small bag of berries, which they share, and the seller exits DL]

MARIE     [moving two steps C] I thought even in the bayou they would have heard of Mama, so powerful she is.

JEAN     No, I have not heard of her. [moving to C beside MARIE] What can she do?

MARIE     She can make anything happen.

JEAN     What kind of things?

MARIE     She makes bad things happen to bad people and good things happen to those who deserve good things.

JEAN     She must be very busy then.

MARIE Oh, she is. Besides making magic she is also hairdresser for the French and Spanish ladies, the Creoles, who live in this part of the city. Mama is very wise; she knows everything.

JEAN Does she really know everything?

MARIE Oh, yes; for her it is very easy.

JEAN Do you know everything too?

MARIE Oh, no. I only know a little because I am not yet grown. What is your name?

JEAN Jean Livaudais.

MARIE I am called Marie II because I am named for my Mama. [moves three steps R of C] Are you really from the bayou? [sits DS end of SR bench]

JEAN Oui.

MARIE It must be very lonesome there. What do you do when you do not trap or fish?

JEAN It is not lonesome. There is lots to do. [sits sideways on bench with feet up]

MARIE What?

JEAN There are other children there, not so close, but they are there. We play games, ride horses, make music, dance--

MARIE Dance, I love to dance.

JEAN I can play the harmonica too. My Papa he teach me that.

MARIE	A harmonica, how wonderful!	STAND BY
		SC #4
JEAN	Would you like to see it?	
MARIE	Do you have it with you?	
JEAN	<u>Oui</u> , I always have my harmonica with me.	
MARIE	Will you play it for me?	
JEAN	Now?	
MARIE	Please, I would love to hear it.	
JEAN	All right. ( <u>He takes it out and begins to play. It is a song</u> MARIE	SC #4
	<u>has heard. ["Alouette"]</u> )	
MARIE	I know that song! ( <u>she begins to dance</u> ) [ <u>this moves her C and SL</u> ]	
JEAN	You knew that dance too. [ <u>crosses to her</u> ] ( <u>finishes the song</u> )	
MARIE	Yes, that was much fun. [ <u>laughing, sits on her knees</u> ]	
JEAN	<u>Oui</u> , for a moment it almost made me forget [ <u>crosses to SR bench and sits</u> ] that I am not feeling too much like fun today.	
MARIE	Why not?	
JEAN	Our pirogue was split to pieces.	
MARIE	Who would do a thing like that?	
JEAN	Joe Lamotte, a bad trapper.	
MARIE	Is that why you came here?	



JEAN           We had no way to get out to the traps without a boat. We could not make enough money to live.

MARIE          What will you do here? [crosses DSL two steps]

JEAN           Papa is going to get a job on a ship leaving New Orleans, and I am going to stay with my aunt until he comes back with some money for us to buy a new pirogue and some new traps.

MARIE          Will you like it here?

JEAN           [crosses to MARIE] I will miss Papa and the bayou.

MARIE          Will the new pirogue cost very much?

JEAN           Oui, pirogues are made only from the finest cypress. Then it takes much time and great skill to carve out the boat. It will cost much.

MARIE          If I could make great magic, I would get a new pirogue for you.

JEAN           Magic?

MARIE          Yes. But since I cannot, I will bring you to see Mama. She will help you.

JEAN           I could not ask your mama to help me.

MARIE          You will not have to. I will ask for you, but you must come with me.

JEAN           Now?

MARIE          No, tomorrow. We will go to the dance in Congo Square.

JEAN           What is that?

MARIE          It is a park at the edge of the city, [crosses DSR] less than a mile from here. [gestures offstage] The people of color dance there on Sunday. Mama leads the dance because she is the voodoo queen. After the dance we will talk to her. Can you meet me here in the morning?

JEAN           I don't know. Perhaps my aunt will let me come out to the square. I will ask her.

MARIE          Bien. We can then walk to the dance.

JEAN           How wonderful if your mama really could help me.  
[MARIE exits DSR, JEAN trails after her waving]  
(HENRIETTE and LOUIS enter from DSL)

AUNT           Well, where is the boy, Louis? You should have brought him directly to me. [moving DSCL]

LOUIS          (seeing JEAN offstage) [crosses to C] Jean.  
Jean, come and greet your Aunt Henriette.

JEAN           (enters and crosses to where they have stopped)  
Bon jour, ma tante. (he bows politely)

AUNT           Mon pauvre petit! [crosses to JEAN] Has your papa been starving you on the bayou? Look at your clothes. It is a wonder he does not dress you in animal skins. (JEAN and LOUIS exchange glances)

LOUIS          [crosses slightly DSR] Muskrat skins, Henriette?

AUNT           Humph! Your Nanan will look after you, Jean, and

properly too.

JEAN           Nanan?

AUNT           That is what you are to call me, Jean, "Nanan,"  
for I am your godmother as well as your aunt,  
and it is a much closer relationship than just  
aunt.

JEAN           Oui, Nanan.

LOUIS          Jean, there is something about living with your  
aunt that we had not discussed or even expected.  
[crosses SRC]

JEAN           [countering] What, Papa?

LOUIS          Henriette, would you like to explain to Jean or  
shall I?

AUNT           I will be the one to explain, of course, Louis.

LOUIS          (archly) Of course, Henriette.

AUNT           Jean, you are to be enrolled immediately in  
Madame Felice's school for young gentlemen.  
You will be taught the proper subjects and  
correct behavior.

JEAN           But, Nanan--

AUNT           You will go to this school and remain with  
me for one year.

LOUIS          Henriette, surely--

AUNT           It is the only condition under which you may  
leave the boy, Louis.

JEAN           But why, Nanan?

AUNT           It would break my heart to have you  
for a few weeks or months and then  
send you away so soon without any-  
thing having been accomplished.

JEAN           Papa, one year!

LOUIS          We have little choice, my son.

JEAN           But, Papa, I have gone to school.  
Did you not tell Nanan that Made-  
moiselle Clotilde comes to teach  
us twice a week for two long months  
every year?

AUNT           Twice a week! You will go to school  
every day, Jean, and live like a  
gentleman for at least one year.  
Come it is settled. We go home now.  
(she starts out L)

STAND BY  
LC #6

JEAN           (looking appealingly at LOUIS)  
School every day, and to stay away  
from you, Papa, and the bayou for  
so long.

AUNT           Come, Jean. Louis. [crosses USL  
and exits]

LOUIS          Let us go, Jean. Maybe it takes  
just a little longer for the sun  
to shine for us in New Orleans.  
[crosses USL and exits]

(Street criers move in with slower,  
sadder sounding calls. Curtain falls on the  
street criers' songs, and the music surges to  
Congo drums which lead into Act II.)

STAND BY  
SC #5

CHIMNEY SWEEP     [enters USC, crosses DSL]  
Chimney sweep, Chimney sweep  
Lemme sweep your chimly, m'am.

FLOWER SELLER     [enters from audience SL,  
crosses UCR]  
Flowers for madame  
Camelias red and white  
Pretty flowers for madame  
Flowers, flowers.

PRALINE LADY     [enters USC, crosses through  
C to DR]  
Praline, praline, praline  
                  with coconut  
Praline with pecan  
Pralines, Mesdames, Monsieurs

BLACKBERRIES     [enters SR, crosses USC]  
Blackber--rieeeeeees! Fresh  
                  and fine  
Fresh from the vine  
Three glasses fo' a dime  
Blackber--rieeeeeees!

LC #6

[CURTAIN FALLS. Transition music begins.] SC #5

## ACT TWO

## Scene One

(Congo Square) [A large platform is center stage. Downstage right is a wooden, weather-beaten bench. The platform is masked left and right with an oak and cypress tree cut out drop.] (Negroes are gathering [downstage of the platform] for the dance. MARIE and JEAN enter stage right. JEAN is dressed much differently [black suit with ruffles] from the previous scene.) [The sky is blue when they enter]

STAND BY  
LC #7

LC #7

STAND BY  
LC #8

MARIE        Here is the place where the dance will be, Jean. Look everyone is waiting for Mama.

STAND BY  
SC #6

JEAN         I can stay only until lunchtime. Aunt Henriette would not like it, I think, if she knew I had gone so far.

MARIE        It was not so very far. We will not be long. They dance only for a short time, and it will soon begin. Here comes Mama.

[LEVEAU enters L followed by two

other Negroes. They mount the platform with LEVEAU in the C. The Negro crowd gathers around her cheering.]

CROWD Marie! Marie Leveau! Begin the music. SC #6

[As the dance progresses, the sky changes from blue to deep red and returns to its natural blue at the finish]

LEVEAU Dance Calinda! [She begins to dance to a rhythm of crude drums. The LC #8

others join her. She is a handsome and commanding figure. At the end of the dance she moves off the platform and seeing MARIE she crosses DR to her] (jokingly) Marie, ma fille, you come to the dance this morning to learn to be a queen?

MARIE [crossing to meet LEVEAU] No, Mama. I come to ask a favor for my new friend, Jean.

[JEAN is unsure of the "voodoo queen" and stands a little behind MARIE for the next few lines until he gains his confidence with the stranger]

LEVEAU A new friend? Bon jour, Jean.

JEAN [a boyish half-bow] Bon jour, Madame.

LEVEAU Are you new to the city, Jean?

JEAN Oui, Madame. I come from the bayou.

LEVEAU Do you wear those clothes on the bayou?

JEAN Oh, no. [crosses to LEVEAU, MARIE counters]  
Papa and I are trappers. We do not dress like this.

LEVEAU Come let us sit here. [they cross to bench, MARIE sits DS on the floor, LEVEAU is C on the bench, JEAN is US on the floor] You must be about the age of one of Marie's brothers. She has many you know.

JEAN She has?

LEVEAU We are a large family. There are ten of my children. They are my greatest delight and deepest happiness. If you are a friend of Marie's, I will do what I can for you.

JEAN Thank you, Madame.

LEVEAU What is it that I can do?

JEAN I hardly know how to begin. Papa and I, we try not to ask others for things.

LEVEAU Why, Jean? When we have troubles, it is good to ask the help of friends.

JEAN Papa has taught me a strong man makes his own way. A favor is something for which I find it hard to ask. I don't know if I can.

MARIE I will ask for you. Jean and his father have



great trouble, Mama.

LEVEAU      Trouble?

MARIE      Oui. An evil trapper has broken their boat,  
and they cannot trap or fish until they have  
a new one.

LEVEAU      And this new one, is it so hard to get?

MARIE      A new one costs a great deal of money and takes  
much time to make; so Jean's father has to go  
away to earn the money, and Jean must stay in  
New Orleans with his aunt. He will miss his  
papa and his beautiful bayou.

LEVEAU      What would you have me do, Marie?

MARIE      [stands and crosses behind LEVEAU putting arms  
around her] Give him a charm which will bring  
him luck and a new pirogue quickly.

LEVEAU      A charm? Is that what you want, Jean?

JEAN      Yes, Madame, if you have one strong enough for  
a new boat.

LEVEAU      I see. [crosses DC] Yes, there is a charm  
strong enough even for that, my boy.

JEAN      [jumping up] Oh, how wonderful!

LEVEAU      (crosses to JEAN) You love your papa very much,  
do you not?

JEAN      I do, Madame.

LEVEAU      Where is your mama, Jean?

JEAN      She died of the yellow fever some years ago.

LEVEAU      [crosses DC] Yes, it was a bad year, the year of the fever. Many people I nurse through it. Two of my own children died.

JEAN        I am so sorry.

LEVEAU      It was a year of sorrow for man. [crosses to JEAN after a short pause] I will give you a charm, Jean, for a new pirogue.

JEAN        Thank you, Madame. Will it really work?

LEVEAU      Yes, because it is a very special charm. Not only a new pirogue but new knowledge will come with it when you know its true meaning. (she reaches into her pocket and gives him a small bag) Here, Jean. It is strong magic I give to you.

JEAN        Magic? May I look inside the bag, Madame?

LEVEAU      If you wish.

MARIE       What is it, Jean? [crosses excitedly to JEAN, and they open the bag together]

JEAN        [puzzled] It is only some gold cloth and a flower shaped like a heart.

LEVEAU      (smiling) Did you think to find a pirogue inside?

JEAN        Oh, no, but--is this a magic flower and a magic cloth?

LEVEAU      In a way, Jean, in a way. You must believe that help will come. Believe that and very soon the

magic will work, and you will understand the gold cloth and the flower that is shaped like a heart.

JEAN Will it really get us a new pirogue?

STAND BY  
LC #9

LEVEAU It really will, if you believe.

JEAN I will try very hard, but a piece of gold cloth and a small flower, how can they--

LEVEAU [this line must cut in quickly over  
JEAN'S and be delivered with certainty]  
That is the secret which you will know one day, not too long away. Wait and see, Jean, wait and see.

[BLACKOUT]

LC #9

STAND BY  
LC #10

ACT TWO

Scene Two

(Congo Square) [A short time later.

LC #10

MARIE LEVEAU is standing center. JACQUES

SANSONE enters from stage left. He is a very  
busy Frenchman and in a hurry.]

JACQUES What is it you would see me about today, Marie?

LEVEAU In a moment you will know.

JACQUES      Why could you not tell me at the market?

LEVEAU        It is more private here. Come let us sit down.  
                 [crosses three steps to bench]

JACQUES       I am very busy, Marie, selling my traps and  
                 skins. Livaudais brought in some good ones.  
                 I must try to get a good price for his.

LEVEAU        Livaudais? [pause, turns to bench] Louis  
                 Livaudais? [sits C]

JACQUES       Oui. How did you know it was Louis? [crosses  
                 to US side of bench]

LEVEAU        I know many things, Jacques. In fact there are  
                 those who say I know everything. (she smiles)

JACQUES       [putting foot up on bench] You are very wise,  
                 Marie, and I am constantly amazed at what you  
                 do know.

LEVEAU        That is my business as well as dressing the  
                 hair of the Creoles.

JACQUES       Perhaps that is the secret of your knowledge--  
                 the talkative Creole ladies who say so much  
                 while you comb the hair?

LEVEAU        You will get no answer to that, Jacques  
                 Sansone. But to my reason for calling you  
                 away from the market.

JACQUES       Ah, yes. What is it?

LEVEAU        It concerns Livaudais.

JACQUES       Why so interested in Louis?

LEVEAU Louis and Jean.

JACQUES You know of his son Jean too?

LEVEAU I do. I also know that the pirogue belonging to them was destroyed by another trapper.

JACQUES Oui, [crosses DSC] Joe Lamotte. [vehemently]  
He is a bad one, Marie. I know him.

LEVEAU If you know he is bad, why do you sell his skins for him?

JACQUES I sell them because selling skins is my business. If he says they are his, what right have I to question where they came from or whose traps he used to collect them?

LEVEAU You think then that he steals them?

JACQUES [moving about two steps to MARIE] If I knew that for sure and could prove it, Marie, he would be in jail and the honest trappers free of him and his thieving ways. [turns to C]  
But I can prove nothing. He is sly.

LEVEAU One day, perhaps, he will make a bad mistake.

JACQUES I hope so--a mistake that will send him from the bayous of New Orleans forever.

LEVEAU He has done great harm to Livaudais and the boy. They can no longer trap without a pirogue. He must have another.

JACQUES [crosses to MARIE] Oui, but you don't get one just like that. (snaps fingers)

LEVEAU Perhaps not just like that, (snaps fingers)  
[stands] but I think they can get one before  
too long. [crosses DSC with mystery in voice]

JACQUES Marie, he has no money to buy one even if I had  
one to sell, and I have none.

LEVEAU [withdrawal] A good pirogue maker like you,  
Jacques, and none to sell?

JACQUES You don't understand, Marie. It takes a perfect  
tree for a perfect pirogue, and I make only  
perfect pirogues.

LEVEAU [laughing over her shoulder as she crosses SL]  
Are there no perfect trees?

JACQUES Of course, but it takes time to find them and  
bring them here to my shop in New Orleans, you  
know that.

LEVEAU I also know, Jacques, where to find the perfect  
tree. [looking off left]

JACQUES You do? How far away is it?

LEVEAU Not too far. [looking off left]

JACQUES How long will it take to cut it down?

LEVEAU It does not have to be cut down.

JACQUES What kind of tree is it that I can make a  
pirogue from without first cutting down?

LEVEAU [to JACQUES] Un moment, Jacques. You know the  
LaClaire Plantation?

JACQUES Ah, the LaClaire Plantation with the beautiful

cypress trees. I know it.

LEVEAU Maybe there.

JACQUES [withdrawal] They will not sell their trees.  
I have already tried to buy.

LEVEAU You remember the storm we had last week, with  
the big wind?

JACQUES How could one forget?

LEVEAU One of the cypress was felled in that storm.

JACQUES [crosses to bench] It must have been a rotten  
tree.

LEVEAU [following him] It was not a rotten tree.  
[sits] It was one of the most beautiful of  
trees.

JACQUES What happened to it then?

LEVEAU In the high winds smaller trees fell against  
it, and the weight of them and the moisture  
of the ground uprooted the big tree. It fell  
over loosened from the roots.

JACQUES A beautiful LaClaire cypress! What a shame.  
[crosses C]

LEVEAU It is lying there across the carriageway to  
the plantation home.

JACQUES Can we get it?

LEVEAU Madame has told me she would be glad to have  
it taken away.

JACQUES But a tree of that size--how to get it here?

LEVEAU [rises, crosses to JACQUES] You rush ahead of me, Jacques.

JACQUES What do you mean?

LEVEAU I mean I talk of the tree for one reason, so that Louis Livaudais may have his pirogue.

JACQUES You mean you want me to make a boat for Louis out of that LaClaire cypress and give it to him?

LEVEAU That is exactly what I mean.

JACQUES I want to help, but, Marie--

LEVEAU Two perfect pirogues can come from that tree, Jacques.

JACQUES I would like to help Louis and his boy. He is a good trapper and brings me fine skins. He has worked hard for he and the boy--but to move that tree and cut the pirogue would take much time.

LEVEAU How much time have we before the ship must take Livaudais away from New Orleans? Did he tell you?

STAND BY  
LC #11

JACQUES The boat sails in two weeks, the day after Mardi Gras.

LEVEAU The pirogue must be ready before then.

JACQUES [withdraws] C'est impossible, Marie.



I cannot do it by then!

LEVEAU Yes, you can. My sons will go with you to the plantation. Together you will cut the tree into two sections, large enough for two pirogues, load it onto two wagons, mine and yours. We will move the sections to your shop. With the help of my boys it can be done.

JACQUES Perhaps, but I am proud of my work. The pirogues I make must be perfect. Perfect work is not fast.

LEVEAU Helping another speeds the hand and makes it more sure and skillful. It will be the best pirogue you have ever made because you do it from your heart.

JACQUES You have helped me many times, Marie. When my little girl and wife were so sick with the fever, you stand by and nurse them. You help make them well again. A friend is true gold.

LEVEAU Will you be a friend to Livaudais and the child?

JACQUES If we can move that tree and get it carved into a pirogue in two weeks, it will be by Leveau magic.

LEVEAU      Ah! Isn't there magic to all  
friendship?

[MARIE moves across the stage on  
this line exiting stage right.

JACQUES is stage left. He looks  
after her in amazement, throws his  
hands over his head and turns to  
exit stage left.]

[CURTAIN]

LC #11

## ACT THREE

## Scene One

(Jackson Square, as before. Two or three street sellers are onstage) [As the curtain opens, the ICE CREAM SELLER is chanting, moving from downstage right to up center stage left. Two Negro ladies are standing upstage right about six feet from the gate. On the bench stage left are a woman and a little girl. Outside the fence in the left corner two Negroes are talking. HENRIETTE and JEAN enter with ANNETTE DUVAL, a friend of HENRIETTE'S, from upstage right through the center.]

STAND BY  
LC #12

ICE CREAM SELLER      Ice cream, le--mon--ade  
                            Made with brown sugar  
                            And a rotten egg.

LC #12

ANNETTE      (laughing) Some ice cream, Jean?  
                    [they move CS and stop]

JEAN          No, thank you, Madame.

ANNETTE      No ice cream? Are you ill, Jean?

AUNT          Of course he is not ill, Annette.

JEAN          No, Madame, I just do not feel like  
                    eating any right now.

ANNETTE      Very well, perhaps later.

RICE CAKE SELLER      [enters USL and moves DSL and exits singing]  
 Beautiful rice fritters  
 I have rice fritters  
 Fine rice fritters.

AUNT                    Here, Jean, go for me to the seller of rice cakes and get a bag to bring home.

JEAN                    Oui, Nanan. [he runs off SL after the RICE CAKE SELLER]

AUNT                    Does not Jean look the perfect gentleman since he has come to stay with me?

ANNETTE                [crosses to bench R] He does, Henriette. [sits on DS end] A transformation has taken place.

AUNT                    [crossing to her] In appearance, yes; but it will take much more time to make him into a Creole gentleman from the heart.

ANNETTE                Is that so important?

AUNT                    Important? It is most important. Perhaps when Louis leaves for the trip to the north, it will be much simpler.

ANNETTE                When does he go?

AUNT                    His ship sails the day after Mardi Gras, and he will be gone some three months.

ANNETTE                That is a long time for a boy to be away from his father.

AUNT                    [sitting] Louis must leave Jean with me for at

least one year. That was the understanding.

ANNETTE One year? Why?

AUNT I feel that at the end of that time, Jean himself will choose to stay longer.

ANNETTE Do you think you can change him so much in a year?

AUNT Louis will simply have to adjust. The boy will prefer to stay in New Orleans even without his father.

ANNETTE Do you really believe that?

AUNT How could he possibly choose that wild bayou life to the comfort and culture living here could offer him?

ANNETTE [standing and crossing DS] Henriette, the boy is not happy. He wilts like one of the plants of the bayou when taken from their home.

AUNT He will change. You will see. The Mardi Gras will help. The parades, the music, the costumes, the gaiety,--who could be sad?

ANNETTE A boy about to leave his father would be.

AUNT Nonsense! (she pauses after this line; we can see she is not firmly convinced it is nonsense)  
[she sees JEAN enter SL and changes the subject]  
I have chosen the most wonderful costume for Jean!

ANNETTE What is it to be?

AUNT He is to be dressed as a prince. (JEAN has come back in time to hear this. As he crosses to

them, his expression is one of complete disgust)

ANNETTE (without enthusiasm) A prince. How beautiful.  
(great hubbub offstage as a group enters  
followed by a man carrying an important looking  
proclamation) [man enters from USR through C  
gate to CS]

AUNT What is this? They seem so excited.  
(all move center as the man reads)

MAN To all the citizens of New Orleans! The  
 Grand Duke Alexis, heir to the throne of  
 Russia, will be our guest for the Mardi Gras.  
 In his honor let everyone wear costume on  
 that day and welcome the Grand Duke to the  
 "city that care forgot." Let all join in  
 the gaiety of the Carnival. For the first  
 time there will be a King of the Mardi Gras;  
 Rex, Lord of Misrule will reign. Everyone in  
 mask and costume to join the Mardi Gras and  
 become for one day the loyal subjects of Rex.  
(man attaches proclamation to fence and exits  
USR; crowd disperses)

AUNT [she and ANNETTE sit, JEAN is beside the bench  
upstage] Did you hear that, Annette?

ANNETTE A real Grand Duke! Here in New Orleans for the  
 Mardi Gras.

AUNT What do you think of that, Jean? Surely your

bayou could offer you nothing so exciting.

JEAN No, Nanan, we have never had a Grand Duke there. It is too bad. He is missing so much. [JEAN starts to sit but AUNT pulls him up, brushing off his clothes]

ANNETTE Well, Henriette, there's an answer for you.

AUNT Jean, what a strange boy you are. I am so happy to have real royalty in the city I am bubbling. Your face looks like three days of bad weather.

JEAN Maybe I am not old enough to be happy about something when I am sad.

AUNT Age has nothing to do with it. Look at me-- I try to be cheerful when I do not feel so.

JEAN How old are you, Nanan?

ANNETTE (amused) Jean! After a certain age a Creole lady is "entre des age," and that's enough for anyone to know.

JEAN But that only means between two ages. Between which two are you, Nanan?

AUNT Any two you choose. Really you must be more polite. [JEAN crosses behind the bench]

ANNETTE [crossing to her] Come, Henriette, we must attend our shopping at the French Market.

AUNT [crosses CL] Yes, after that there is much to do if we are to be ready for the Mardi Gras

and the Grand Duke.

ANNETTE I must have a costume for Phillipe.

AUNT Perhaps your son would like to dress as a page to Jean. How adorable that would be. The prince could have his own page.

ANNETTE (archly, but with humor) Undoubtedly it would be quaint, but I believe Phillipe would prefer to be at least a nobleman to Jean's prince.

JEAN [seeing MARIE enter USCR, crosses to AUNT]  
Nanan, may I wait here in the Square until you are through?

AUNT Yes, I suppose that will be all right. We will not be long. [pauses, then as she and ANNETTE exit SL] Please stay away from the Americans and the other riff-raff.  
[JEAN waits until their exit is complete, then he and MARIE meet CS]

MARIE Jean!

JEAN The charm, Marie, it is not working. There is not yet any sign of a pirogue.

MARIE Don't stop believing, Jean.

JEAN [sits RC on floor] It is so hard to do. My Papa leaves very soon and I stay here with my Aunt Henriette.

MARIE [kneeling beside him] (touching him gently on the shoulder) Try to be cheerful, Jean.



JEAN            [with complete dejection]    How can I be?

MARIE           What do you do sometimes when you are  
very happy?

JEAN            I play my harmonica.

MARIE           Play now.

JEAN            No. I cannot.

MARIE           Pretend that you are happy and maybe  
you really will be.

STAND BY  
SC #7

JEAN            I don't think I can pretend that.

MARIE           Try. Please try--I will dance for  
you. [stands]

STAND BY  
LC #13

JEAN            (slowly taking his harmonica out of  
pocket. After a pause he stands up  
and begins to play ["Alouette"],  
MARIE dances a few steps, but JEAN  
stops playing) [crosses DSL to lamp  
post and leaning against it] It is  
no use, Marie, I do not know how to  
be happy when I am sad. Perhaps later  
when I am "between two ages."

SC #7

[CURTAIN]

LC #13

## ACT THREE

## Scene Two

[Jackson Square. The stage is set as before with the street singers selling their goods. This is done in the form of a reprise with their entrances and exits the same as before. Singing the same songs, the BLACKBERRY LADY enters down right and exits up center left, the VEGETABLE MAN enters down left and exits up right center, the CANTALOUPE LADY enters up right and exits down right, the RICE CAKE LADY enters down left and exits down right, the CHIMNEY SWEEP enters up left and exits along the buildings down left, and the PRALINE LADY enters up left and exits down right. All the songs are repeated twice. The curtain rises and the sellers begin their songs. ANNETTE, her HUSBAND, and PHILLIPE enter upstage right, come through the center gate, and move to center stage as the last of the sellers exit. They buy a few pralines and cross to downstage right with their backs to the down left entrance. PHILLIPE is dressed as a French cavalier. Both ANNETTE and her HUSBAND have masks.] (AUNT and LOUIS enter with JEAN, dressed as a prince, from [down] stage left. LOUIS is dressed in his trapper's clothes. The

STAND BY  
LC #14

LC #14

AUNT has . . . [a mask].)

AUNT           [SLC]   There, Louis, there is Annette and her husband. See, Jean, there is Phillipe. His costume is attractive, but not nearly so beautiful as yours.

LOUIS           Enough, Henriette, let us join them. [crosses C]  
They have probably been waiting for some time.

ANNETTE       [turning to see them] We were beginning to worry that you would miss some of the parades.

AUNT           [crosses R] You need not have feared that. It just took so much time to get Jean's costume exactly right. It is not every day we have a Grand Duke as a spectator at the Mardi Gras.

ANNETTE       Spectator! Mais non. He is a participant. He will not be on the reviewing stand but somewhere in the crowd.

AUNT           In the crowd! He could be standing right next to us, and we would never know. What kind of a costume is he wearing?

HUSBAND       No one knows.

LOUIS           Here at the Mardi Gras Rex is king for a day, and a Grand Duke is a commoner. Most people would be what they are not if only for a day.

HUSBAND       How about you, Louis?

LOUIS           (smiling) I would be what I am every day.

[crosses to HUSBAND and they continue to talk quietly]

PHILLIPE [looking to the back of the auditorium SL]

Look, Jean. Let's go see them. [crosses DS]

AUNT Come back when the parade comes so that you do not become lost in the crowd. [crosses with ANNETTE to bench SR and sits on the US end.]

JEAN and PHILLIPE cross to SL facing the audience]

PHILLIPE Look there at that boy! [points to SL back of auditorium]

JEAN He can have fun in his costume; we can barely move in ours. I feel as though my skin was sewed into it.

PHILLIPE Forget the costume. Everyone is having fun. Soon the parade will come.

JEAN I have never seen a parade.

PHILLIPE It will be wonderful. I have never seen a Rex parade before, but I know what it will look like.

JEAN How do you know that if you have never seen it?

PHILLIPE I have heard Mama and her friends talking about it. His costume will be gold velvet, and he will wear a purple velvet cape trimmed in ermine.

JEAN What is ermine?

PHILLIPE It is white fur with small black spots on it. He will wear a crown also with many colored jewels.

JEAN           real ones?

PHILLIPE      No, but even so they will be very beautiful. On top of his crown will be three plumes: green, purple, and gold.

JEAN           Why all those different colors?

PHILLIPE      They are the colors of the Mardi Gras. He will ride on a white horse--the most beautiful to be found in New Orleans.

JEAN           (impressed for the first time) A white horse!

PHILLIPE      Then marching bands, and everyone will dance and sing.

(LEVEAU enters upstage left with MARIE through the center. Her costume is very bright and bejeweled but still in the same style as the previous scene. . . . [She carries a mask.])

JEAN           [seeing LEVEAU enter] There is Madame Leveau! Wait here, Phillipe, I must talk to her. [runs to her side] Madame, Madame!

LEVEAU        [moving to JEAN] Jean, welcome to the Mardi Gras!

JEAN           The charm, Madame, it has not worked.

LEVEAU        Are you sure, Jean?

JEAN           We have no pirogue and Papa leaves tomorrow.

LEVEAU        Tomorrow has not yet come. Jean, I have a special Mardi Gras song for you today. Marie, let us sing for our friend!

[PHILLIPE moves up with JEAN, not to be left out.  
LEVEAU sits center of the upstage left bench. MARIE crosses  
behind the bench and sings over LEVEAU'S shoulder.<sup>1</sup> JEAN  
sits on the downstage end of the bench and PHILLIPE listens  
over his shoulder.]

PHILLIPE Look! (At the rear of the auditorium a strange  
procession enters [from stage left]. It is led  
by . . . [two men carrying a pirogue; they are]  
followed by a figure costumed as a frontiersman  
and a man, obviously a trapper, being shoved  
along by . . . [JACQUES SANSONE])

JEAN A pirogue, a pirogue, Papa, it is a pirogue!  
[rushes SR to LOUIS; PHILLIPE crosses DSR]

LOUIS Never did I expect to see one at the Mardi Gras.

JEAN It is the pirogue of the charm! I know it is.

LOUIS Charm? Mon Dieu, someone is dragging Lamotte  
 down the street!

(The group reaches the stage and sets the pirogue  
down before LOUIS and JEAN.) [The two carriers move stage  
right behind the bench. The FRONTIERSMAN, JACQUES, and  
LAMOTTE move center. MARIE stands on the bench. LEVEAU  
stands beside her.]

JACQUES Bon jour, mes amis! Before I attend to my  
 little errand, permit me to leave this small

---

<sup>1</sup>The song and the music are at the end of the  
 script.

souvenir of the Mardi Gras. The larger souvenir must come with me to the calaboose.

LAMOTTE You no good skin peddler, you'll never get me to the jail--[LAMOTTE breaks away from JACQUES. The FRONTIERSMAN catches him assisted by ANNETTE'S HUSBAND, who moves center. ANNETTE and HENRIETTE stand in front of the bench. JEAN moves downstage to examine the pirogue, followed by PHILLIPE. LOUIS moves center to LAMOTTE. The FRONTIERSMAN is the DUKE in disguise.]

DUKE (heavy Russian accent, thrusting LAMOTTE at JACQUES) Here, tie him this time. There is no room in New Orleans or anywhere else for thieves.

LOUIS Well, Lamotte, you make the one big mistake, n'est pas?

JACQUES He did, my friend. He come to me this morning when the market open and he try to sell me skins clearly marked with the mark of Placide Bourgeois. Placide tell me last week he have some skins stolen. This is the devil that steal them, but not before Placide mark them.

LOUIS This time you trap yourself, Lamotte. The bayou is finally rid of you.

JEAN Papa, look at the pirogue.

JACQUES Yes, look, my friend, it is yours.

LOUIS But, Jacques, I cannot pay--

JACQUES A gift of the Mardi Gras!

LOUIS You made the pirogue, Jacques, for me?

JACQUES Not alone. (looking at LEVEAU) Marie Leveau makes strong magic.

LOUIS Magic? What is this?

DUKE It is a gift to a real frontiersman whose frontier is the Louisiana bayou--from his friends--so a boy and his father can live as they want to--free and together.

JACQUES Louis, the pirogue is yours.

LOUIS Thank you, thank you. It is a wonderful thing you have done. (LOUIS looks at the pirogue, JEAN crosses SL to LEVEAU)

[HENRIETTE and ANNETTE cross DS to look at the pirogue, JACQUES and HUSBAND shove LAMOTTE to the bench SR where he is forced to sit. LEVEAU, with MARIE, moves C to JEAN]

JEAN The charm--it has worked. Thank you, Madame, for giving it to me.

LEVEAU Do you know the meaning of the charm now, Jean?

JEAN The meaning? No, I know only that Papa does not have to leave.

LEVEAU You remember the cloth of the gold color?

JEAN Oh, yes.



LEVEAU        It is the gold of friendship.

JEAN           And the flower that is like a heart?

LEVEAU        When friendship flowers in the heart, many things are possible.

JEAN           I believe I understand.

LEVEAU        The charm is to believe that a friend will help when help is needed.

LOUIS         (he has overheard this last line) [crosses to LEVEAU C] Madame, Jacques, my heart is bursting with happiness and joy. What can I say?

DUKE           Say that friendship is pure magic. [Dosveedaneeya, dosveedaneeya.]<sup>2</sup> [he exits USL]

JACQUES       [looking after him] A nice fellow! He saw us carrying the pirogue and asked about it. When we told him the story, he asked to come along. He speaks very funny.

AUNT           Annette, do you think--

ANNETTE       I think it could very well have been.

AUNT           The Grand Duke himself, to take an interest in Louis and Jean.

ANNETTE       More than an interest--he said a boy and his father belong together.

LOUIS         (overhearing this) You at a loss for words,

---

<sup>2</sup>This is the phonetic spelling of goodbye in Russian.

Henriette? Do not worry, I will  
not break my promise to you. You  
gave us shelter when we needed it.

AUNT I know you will not break your word.

LOUIS Then what is it?

STAND BY  
LC #15

AUNT Can I be less of a friend than they?

LOUIS What do you mean?

STAND BY  
SC #8

AUNT Take the boy with you, Louis. He  
may not go to school every day,  
but he is happy there with you,  
and a boy does belong with his  
father. I see that now.

JEAN Thank you, Nanan. (he hugs her)  
Marie, Marie, [crosses and takes  
her by the hand to the pirogue,  
and they get in] I'm going back  
to the bayou. I'm going back.

[Carnival music begins, and the  
parade bursts in from the back of the audi-  
torium stage left. They have noise makers  
and are masked.]

SC #8

PHILLIPE Look, the parade! It's coming!

[All on stage move left to watch the  
parade. It moves onstage past the buildings  
stage left and continues around the stage  
through the center gate. The people on stage

follow it around.]

[CURTAIN]

[CURTAIN RISES]

[The parade goes through the auditorium LC #15  
for the curtain call.]

Believe In Yourself

Music by  
Julia Horany

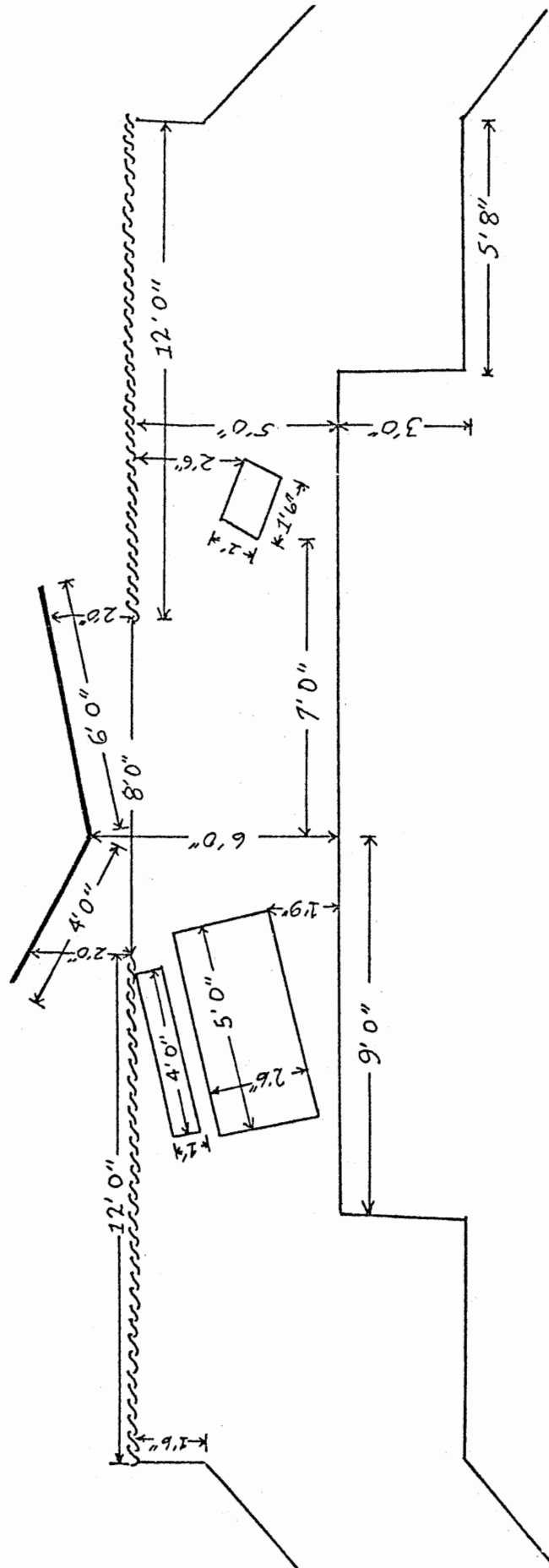
Be- lieve in your self Be- lieve in your Keep a hope in your

heart that all things will mend With the faith you provide And the

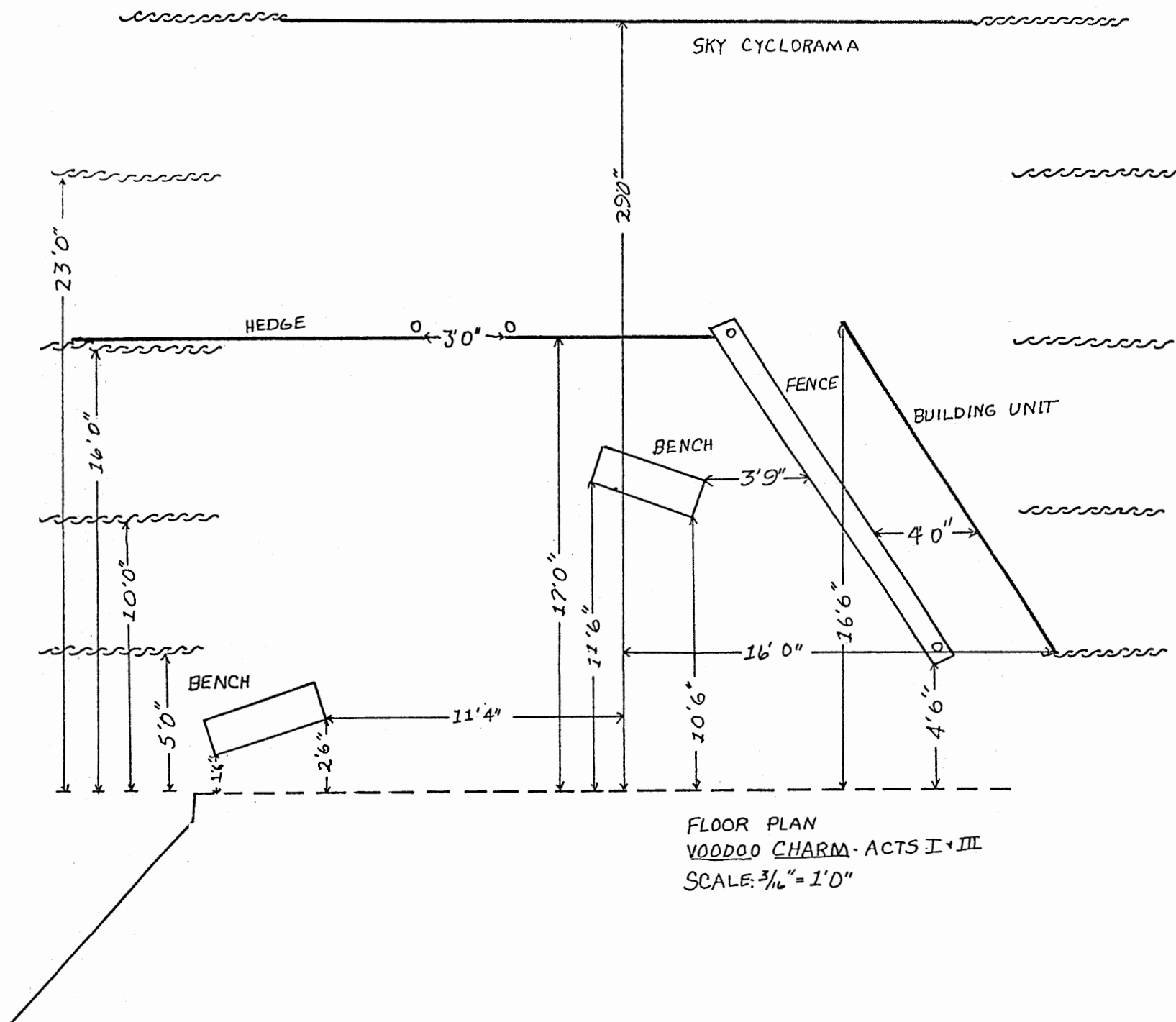
help your friends We'll help each other When ever we can Be- lieve

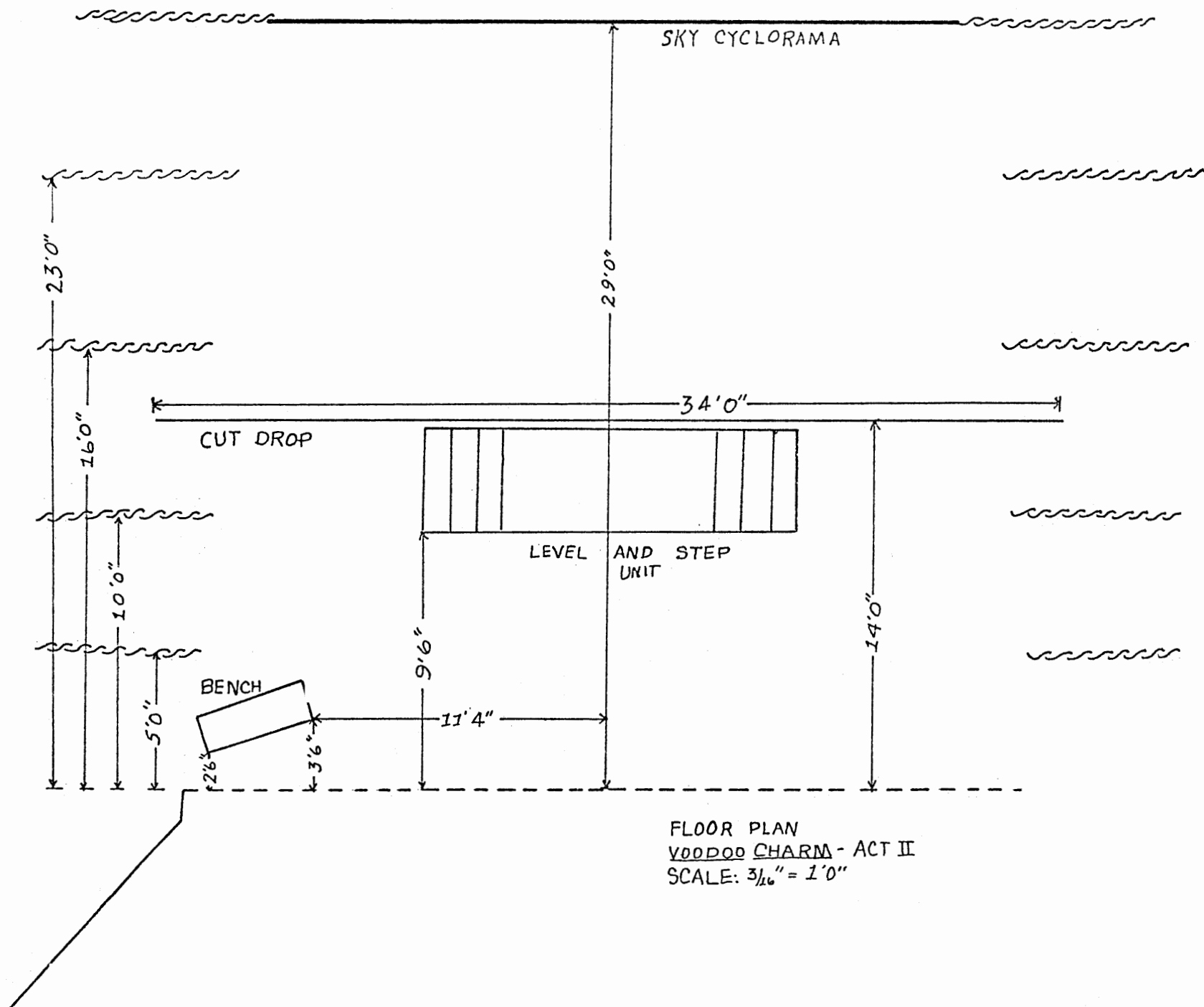
in each other Be- lieve in a friend Be strong and keep faith And all

things will mend With the help you provide And the help of a friend.



FLOOR PLAN 1  
 V00000 CHARM - PROLOGUE  
 SCALE  $\frac{3}{4}$ " = 1'0"





## Light Cues

Light Cue # 1--Lower the house lights to a complete blackout.

Light Cue # 2--Bring up the lights for the prologue.

Light Cue # 3--The lights begin to dim slowly.

Light Cue # 4--The lights dim slowly to black.

Light Cue # 5--The lights come up on stage for Jackson Square.

Light Cue # 6--Blackout.

Light Cue # 7--The lights come up on stage for Congo Square.

Light Cue # 8--The blue sky light dims slowly to red and then back to blue.

Light Cue # 9--Blackout.

Light Cue #10--The lights set for Congo Square, fast dim up.

Light Cue #11--Lights dim out.

Light Cue #12--Lights dim up for Jackson Square.

Light Cue #13--Blackout.

Light Cue #14--Lights dim up on Jackson Square.

Light Cue #15--The light dims as the curtain falls, then dims up again quickly for the curtain call. The house lights dim up as the parade moves through the audience.



## Sound Cues

Sound Cue #1--Harmonica music ("Alouette") begins and stops on Jean's signal.

Sound Cue #2--Harmonica music begins.

Sound Cue #3--Transition music begins and ends as the curtain rises.

Sound Cue #4--Harmonica music begins and stops on Jean's signal.

Sound Cue #5--Transition music begins and ends as the curtain rises.

Sound Cue #6--Drums begin for dance.

Sound Cue #7--Harmonica music begins and ends on Jean's signal.

Sound Cue #8--Carnival music begins.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### AN ANALYSIS OF THE PERFORMANCE

Voodoo Charm's production brought out scripting and directing errors that were either not observed or solved during rehearsals. These errors included guiding character development of Henriette and Jacques, the problems of double-casting, the street sellers' effectiveness, the unsuccessful attempt to use white people as Negroes in the "Dance Calinda," and the mood created by sending the parade through the audience.

Henriette's character was not that which was desired by the playwright and director. She did not show that she really loved Jean. I should have required the actress to change her method of delivery earlier in rehearsal. She should have experimented more with touching Jean lovingly, and I should have asked Henriette to add affectionate glances. In performance she did not seem to respond understandingly to Louis and Jean's difficulties. Jacques's character also was never fully expressed. He did not use the quick, lively French movements and gestures which the director had requested. Jacques needed to use broader gestures to express his feelings and to laugh more often.

Jacques and Marie Leveau needed more rehearsals together. The children in the audience were restless during their scene each time it was played. Livelier dialogue, a faster tempo, and more movement could have made this scene more interesting.

Double-casting did not work. It was obvious that Henri and the Grand Duke were being played by the same performer. To combat this, makeup was changed radically, but this was not sufficient. We needed to have a more drastic costume change. The lack of time prevented the costumer from building two distinct costumes for Henri-Alexis. I should not have used the same performer for Annette's husband and the street-crier because physically this actress was hard to disguise.

The reprise of the street singers for Jean's costume change was unsuccessful. There was not quite enough time for a change with the result that Jean entered somewhat disheveled. In addition, I feel that the pace of the show suddenly dragged and that the Mardi Gras excitement was missing. I should have had other people entering and exiting from the stage in order to make preparations for the parade. As the reprise was staged, each seller entered an empty stage and sang to the non-buying air. Additional dialogue for Annette and her family could help solve the costume changing problem.

The "Dance Calinda" in Act Two, scene one, was badly

staged. The use of white people as Negro dancers did not work. There are several ways this dance could have been successfully arranged even with the use of white actors. The available side stage could have been lighted to provide a place where Jean and Marie II talked before the dance. The main stage would be dimly lit to mask the dancers. After the dance was over, the stage could have remained dim until the dancers exited. Another method that could have been tried was to have Jean and Marie II play the beginning of the scene in front of the closed main curtain. Only a small change was needed in Jean and Marie's dialogue to indicate that they were approaching the square rather than being in it. Jean and Marie could have come from the audience or from the wings on their way to the square. As their dialogue ended, the curtain could have been raised to reveal the dancers dimly lit. Either of these changes would have been more effective than that of the actual production scene.

The parade from the back of the auditorium was unsatisfactory because there was an insufficient number of people in it. This might have been avoided by bringing the parade in from one wing of the stage and having the actors join in as it left through the auditorium. The director intended to use the parade for a strong audience contact and involvement. There was an indication that this would have worked with a larger, more elaborate parade since the children did respond excitedly even to the few actors parading.

In spite of these problems the audience seemed to enjoy the production of Voodoo Charm as it was presented to them. Many of the difficulties recognized by the director may have been overlooked by the children in the audiences. The above suggestions for improvement would have made the play more aesthetically satisfying to the director.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Voodoo Charm provided a valuable learning experience for the director. I faced new problems since this was the first time I had ever worked with an original script, a large cast, and a designer whose work would be part of her thesis.

Mrs. Jewel B. Taaffe wrote Voodoo Charm as partial fulfillment of her thesis. The play had never been produced, and I learned that often a line that is acceptable on a printed page is difficult to speak. With the author's permission we had to change a line occasionally. At other times, we had to change the order of words because a line might be a tongue-twister or too sibilant to be spoken distinctly. Each character in a play has a rhythm that helps to explain his personality. I now realize fully that each character's rhythm must be consistent. Whatever changes the director makes, however, must be limited by the author's intended characterization and overall plot purposes.

What seem to be adequate stage directions in the script may not work on the stage. Here a director's imagination must be fully utilized in order to expand,

contract, or change movement and business. The before mentioned descriptions of our problems with "Dance Calinda" illustrate this.

In using a large cast for the first time I became aware of many difficulties in directing several people together, many of whom have small parts. There must be careful planning in fully utilizing rehearsal time. Within these times costume calls can be arranged so that they do not interfere with the staging. Those not on stage can be with the costumer. At some times actors can be rehearsing lines or working out stage business with the stage manager while the others are with the director. From now on I will allow time for individual conferences with actors about problems with characterization, motivation, movements, gestures, and vocal expression. While I am not certain how to counteract the waning interest of actors with minor roles, I know that I must develop a plan to meet this situation in future productions. I have developed patience and methods of leadership with both individuals and groups and know that I must continue developing in these areas.

Having been trained in art, I had to put aside my own ideas for design. This I know I must do. But I also have learned that a director must be the final judge of the complete presentation. The director must be the person who gives the final "yes" or "no" to lighting, costume, and set designs. While the director often must compromise, he must

never compromise with the requirements of the script and the overall effect of his production. In an academic situation it is difficult to maintain a balance between friendship and the attempt to develop a professional attitude. This handicaps communication between a director and a designer. As I develop in experience and confidence, I feel that I will be better able to communicate my aims as a director.

Directing Voodoo Charm was a valuable experience. I am now more aware of the difference between a written script and a performed play and why the latter must depend on the former. I have developed as a director and am better prepared for my next play.