

A DIRECTOR'S STUDY AND PROMPT BOOK OF GIAN-CARLO  
MENOTTI'S THE SAINT OF BLEECKER STREET

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A THESIS  
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
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We hereby recommend that the thesis prepared under  
our supervision by Joan Elizabeth Melton  
entitled "A Director's Study and Prompt Book of  
Gian-Carlo Menotti's The Saint of Bleecker Street"

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

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DEDICATION

To Mother

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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## INTRODUCTION

Through the years the lament has been sounded periodically that opera is a dying, or a dead, art form. And through the years there has always emerged some new composer to give opera a new lease on life, to prove that it is still a vibrant form. Sometimes a composer has done this by the application of new techniques and approaches. Less frequently, opera has been revitalized only because the composer has brought to it the freshness and vigor of a talented personality. The latter is the case of Menotti.<sup>1</sup>

Gian-Carlo Menotti, born in Cadigliano, Italy, on July 7, 1911, began composing at the age of six and wrote his first opera at the age of eleven. At the age of twenty-three he wrote Amelia Goes to the Ball, which established him as an operatic composer.

Menotti's operas are: Amelia Goes to the Ball, The Island God, and The Last Savage written for the traditional opera house; The Telephone, The Medium, The Saint of Bleecker Street, The Consul, and Maria Golovin written for the theatre; The Old Maid and the Thief, Amahl and the Night Visitors, and Labyrinth written for special media; and Martin's Lie written for Canterbury Cathedral.

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<sup>1</sup>David Ewen, The Complete Book of Twentieth-Century Music (New York: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1952), p. 241.

### Statement of the Problem

The investigator proposed to study the opera The Saint of Bleecker Street, and on the basis of this study to develop a prompt book feasible for use in a staging situation.

### Justification of the Problem

The Saint of Bleecker Street, Menotti's favorite of all his works, won the Drama Critics' Circle Award as the best musical play of 1954, and the Pulitzer Prize for 1955.

The critics of The Saint of Bleecker Street generally agree that it is flawed by ambiguities of conflict, but they generally agree, also, that this opera "is without question his [Menotti's] finest work to date. In a sense it is the culmination of all his previous efforts and represents a complete synthesis of his lyrico-dramatic style."<sup>1</sup>

After studying the various operas written by Gian-Carlo Menotti, the investigator selected The Saint of Bleecker Street because the opera requires the direction of a large cast and chorus, requires many scene and costume changes, and contains music of many styles and idioms ranging from the contrapuntal writing of the large choruses to the simple harmonizations of Italian folksongs.

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<sup>1</sup>J. T. Howard and George Bellows, A Short History of Music in America (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1957), p. 395.



### Purpose of the Study

The investigator proposed specifically:

1. To devise a personal interpretation of the chosen opera.
2. To analyze the score in terms of the technical needs, i.e., staging, costuming, make-up, properties, sound, and special effects.
3. To execute designs to meet these needs.
4. To formulate a personal analysis of each character.
5. To set up a feasible rehearsal schedule.
6. To compile a prompt book useful to the director in all phases of production.

### Limitations of the Study

Although The Saint of Bleecker Street was not studied for a specific production as a part of this study, the investigator's prompt book was designed for a college opera workshop comparable to the workshop at Texas Woman's University under the direction of Joan Wall. The general director, acting as conductor, stage director, and business manager, appoints students to assist with costuming, stage crews, properties, and publicity. Also working closely with the general director are the speech and drama department, which provides lighting for operatic productions, and the Texas Woman's University carpenter crew, which constructs the sets.

The investigator's prompt book for The Saint of Bleecker Street, compiled for an opera produced under similar working conditions to those at Texas Woman's University, does not include a lighting plot or a schedule for the actual construction of the set.

#### Definition of Terms

In this study the following terms are frequently used:

Direction.--"The methods and techniques of one who superintends the rehearsals of a production and is responsible for its entity."<sup>1</sup>

Production.--"All the elements involved in putting a play on the stage."<sup>2</sup> "Also the time during which the play runs."<sup>3</sup>

Staging.--"The entire set-up of a modern play . . . scenery, lighting, properties, publicity, even the artists themselves are included in this all embracing term."<sup>4</sup>

Prompt Script.--"The copy of the play [libretto] kept by the director or stage manager in which all business

<sup>1</sup>Wilfred Granville, The Theatre Dictionary (New York: The Philosophical Library, Inc., 1952), p. 57.

<sup>2</sup>Joan E. Dietrich, Play Directing (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1953), p. 464.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Granville, op. cit., p. 151.

and other information necessary to the production are recorded."<sup>1</sup>

Proscenium.--"The wall which contains the permanent arch separating the auditorium from the stage."<sup>2</sup>

Casting.--"The process of matching the actor to the role."<sup>3</sup>

Musical director of an opera.--"Is specifically in charge of all that pertains to music. This includes coaching the singers, training the chorus, selecting and rehearsing the accompaniment, and conducting performances."<sup>4</sup>

Stage director of an opera.--"Is specifically in charge of all that pertains to the total visual impression--set, decor, costumes, groupings, and action."<sup>5</sup>

### Procedure

Procedures followed in the development of this study were as follows:

1. To gather biographical material concerning the life of Gian-Carlo Menotti from available books and periodicals.

<sup>1</sup>Gilmor Brown and Alice Garwood, General Principles of Play Directing (New York: Samuel French, 1940), p. 175.

<sup>2</sup>Dietrich, loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 456.

<sup>4</sup>Louis H. Huber, Producing Opera in the College (New York: Columbia Bureau of Publications, 1956), p. 12.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

2. To review and report the published criticisms of The Saint of Bleecker Street.

3. To analyze the whole work in reference to musical and dramatic style.

4. To analyze each character in order to guide the singer in a conception of his part.

5. To study the score and experiment to discover appropriate means of blocking, costuming, and the use of make-up, properties, sound and special effects.

6. To initiate a prompt book to be used as an aide to directing.

#### Probable Values

It is anticipated that this study will be of value for the following reasons:

1. The development of a higher degree of skill in preparing an opera for production on the part of the investigator.

2. The provision of a guide for future studies of the preparation of operatic productions in the opera workshop of Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas, as a part of the program for a Master of Arts degree with a major in Voice.

The introduction presented a list of the operas of Gian-Carlo Menotti, the statement and limitations of the problem, the purpose and limitations of the study, a definition

of terms frequently used, the procedure followed in the development of the study, and the probable values of the study.

Chapter I, a biography of Menotti, includes a sketch of the composer's life and a brief discussion of his works.

Chapter II reviews the criticisms of the Broadway production of The Saint of Bleecker Street.

Chapter III, the director's approach to the opera, presents a brief synopsis of the opera, an evaluation of the libretto, character sketches, a brief discussion of probable rehearsal technique, and a description of the stage settings to be developed from the ground plans.

Chapter IV, the prompt book, presents the libretto of the opera and the director's notes regarding the entire production.

## CHAPTER I

### GIAN-CARLO MENOTTI

I wish I could say that I had a poverty-stricken childhood and that my family opposed my studying music and becoming a composer. It sounds so romantic for a composer to have been poor, and to have had to fight the opposition of an inartistic family. I have to admit that my family was rich, even bourgeois.<sup>1</sup>

Gian-Carlo Menotti is considered by many critics to be the most outstanding composer of opera in America today. Winthrop Sargeant calls him "a master of opera."<sup>2</sup>

There is a rare and precious element in everything he has set his hand to for the operatic stage--an element that is perhaps best summed up by saying that he knows what opera is and how to write it. He is more at home in the operatic medium than any other living composer I know of. He seems to comprehend intuitively just what type of drama is suitable for opera; just what parts of these dramas are suitable for arias, ensembles, climaxes, and passages of simple musical dialogue; just what words are suitable for melodic purposes; and just how they can best be placed for effective vocal use. Nearly everyone of his operas (regardless of its musical or dramatic power) might be taken as a model by someone anxious to learn how an opera should be put together. As a master of solid construction, he far outranks, to my mind, such celebrated figures as Stravinsky, Berg, Britten, and Walton, and I am not at all sure that his best work, for all its relative simplicity, won't outlast theirs in the long run.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel Chotzinoff, "The Guilt of Gian-Carlo Menotti," Holiday, XXXIII (June, 1963), 108.

<sup>2</sup>Winthrop Sargeant, "Musical Events," New Yorker, XXXVI (February 27, 1960), 133.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



Menotti was born July 7, 1911, in Cadegliano, Italy, a tiny town on the shores of Lake Lugano, with Switzerland on the opposite shore. Gian-Carlo was the ninth of ten children. His father made money in an export-import business in South America, and his mother was a dynamic woman who took up painting at sixty and guitar-playing at sixty-two. Both parents were musical, and the mother, noticing that Gian-Carlo had special gifts, began to give him piano lessons when he was four. It was a musical home; on quiet winter evenings in this sleepy town, the Menotti children would get out instruments and play chamber music.

Gian-Carlo had many relatives, especially uncles.

"To describe all of them would take seven volumes at least."<sup>1</sup>

On my mother's side I had relatives full of personality and with a bias toward art. One of them was an uncle who couldn't bear living with his cold, stingy, inartistic wife. He got so angry with her that he built himself another house and filled it with objects d'art. To his wife's horror he gave keys to his house to all his friends. This uncle had a great influence on me. He was ultra-decadent and theatrical, and I adored the unusual things he did, such as filling his house with doves.<sup>2</sup>

Another of Gian-Carlo's uncles was headed for the priesthood. The day he was to be ordained, he packed up and went off to South America, which was then primitive. In South America this would-be priest founded what was the first export-import house there. Then he invited Gian-Carlo's

<sup>1</sup>Chotzinoff, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

father to join him in business and share the profits. "That's how my father made lots of money," says Gian-Carlo.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, my father hated business and had no love for material things. I, myself, don't mind either of these things. The only thing I shared with my father was a love of sharpening pencils. He was crazy about pencils. We children could steal and lie and he didn't mind, but if we took one of his pencils he got really mad. I still love pencils. In Mount Kisco, in my house, my maid sharpens my pencils every day and lays them out like my shirts.<sup>2</sup>

Gian-Carlo's father returned to Italy, leaving his business in the hands of a trusted employee who regularly sent him packets of money. "So actually we eight children . . . had a comfortable life. All eight were always dressed in white, so naturally we had to change quite often. Our life in a small village on Lake Lugano had a Russian, Turgenev-like quality," says Menotti.<sup>3</sup> Every day in the long winter his mother taught the villagers to sing Gregorian Chants, and his aunt and his mother played the classics, four hands, on the piano.

Menotti's first composition, written when he was four years old, was called Snow. At six he remembers that he set "erotic verses" of D'Annunzio to "angelic little tunes." At twelve he wrote his first opera, The Death of Peirrot, which was written to his own libretto and contained a last act in which the entire cast meets death by either murder or

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 109.



suicide. At sixteen he wrote his second opera, The Little Mermaid, based on the fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen.<sup>1</sup> Both operas, Menotti says, are fortunately gone and forgotten.

Gian-Carlo tried to get into school plays, received a part once and was not used again. "I was an unutterable ham," he explains. When he was nine his mother gave him a marionette theatre. He made his own sets and costumes and invented his own stories, mostly about dragons, ogres and princes. Once he had the devil as a character and, to get a realistic effect, burned sulphur behind his puppet set. The smoke was so suffocating that it drove the family out into the night.<sup>2</sup>

As he grew up Gian-Carlo got what he calls "the usual European classical education--a great bore."<sup>3</sup> In 1924 his mother took him to Milan, where the aging Umberto Giordano (composer of Andrea Chénier) looked over his operas, listened to his playing and decided that what Menotti needed was a more flowing and robust piano teacher. That year he entered the Milan Conservatory, where for three years he studied solfeggio, harmony, and the rest of a conventional musical curriculum.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Winthrop Sargeant, "Profiles--Orlando in Mount Kisco," New Yorker, XXXIX (May 4, 1963), 63.

<sup>2</sup>Howard Taubman, "Gian-Carlo Menotti," Theatre Arts, XXXV (September, 1951), 78.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Sargeant, "Profiles . . .," p. 63.

Gian-Carlo treated his studies at the conservatory "cavalierly and learned little."<sup>1</sup> Why bother to work? He could compose easily. He played the piano with facility and was welcomed in the salons of the most distinguished families, where he was pampered and flattered.<sup>2</sup> "They called me a prodigy," he says, "but I was a spoiled brat."<sup>3</sup>

When I was fourteen a big change came into my life. My father died. And to make things worse, his trusted employee in South America wrote that there would be no more money for us. Before leaving for South America to find out what had happened to my father's business my mother went to Milan to consult her friend Arturo Toscanini about what to do with me. She adored having an artist in the family, as did all my relatives, but she needed advice about me. Toscanini told her that the best thing for my musical development would be for me to go to the United States, where I wouldn't know anybody and was not likely to be coddled and spoiled as I would be at home. My mother took his advice, and we sailed for New York. We were very sad. It was Christmas, and we spent the holidays alone in a room in a hotel! Then we went to Philadelphia to the Curtis Institute of Music where I played some of my things for Scalero, an Italian composer who taught composition at Curtis. I was given a scholarship. And one rainy afternoon I saw my mother off at the Broad Street Station. Both of us wept. For the first time in my life I was left alone without family or friends. I remember my terror.<sup>4</sup>

Before Gian-Carlo's mother left Philadelphia she asked Rosario Scalero to take her son in hand. Scalero had a heart-to-heart talk with the youngster, making it clear

<sup>1</sup>Howard Taubman, "A Prodigy Grows Up," New York Times, June 1, 1947, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Taubman, "Gian-Carlo Menotti," p. 78.

<sup>4</sup>Chotzinoff, loc. cit.

that he would not tolerate indolence. Gian-Carlo promised to work hard.

Rosario Scalero, a man of aristocratic and authoritative disposition, was also of Italian origin, although he had been raised in Vienna. He openly stated his dislike for most operas, except for the works of Richard Wagner. His other composer idols were Brahms and Schubert.<sup>1</sup>

Scalero used no textbook and was acutely sensitive to a private teacher-pupil relationship that incurred great responsibilities on both sides and often led to revolts.<sup>2</sup> Deriving his teaching methods from a Renaissance master, he would have his pupils study a piece, analyze it thoroughly, and try to write something similar in form. He would then analyze the work thoroughly and point out flaws and errors and suggest remedies or improvement. At one time during Menotti's training he had him write motets in sixteenth-century style for an entire year. Short cuts and the premature development of originality were not parts of his system of teaching. As a result of Scalero's perserverence in making Menotti compose simple motets we now find excellent samples of this style of writing in his operas in trios, quartets, and quintets. In addition to his other virtues as

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<sup>1</sup>Shirley Polk Corrie, "Gian-Carlo Menotti: A Study of the Man and His Operas" (unpublished Master's dissertation, Dept. of Music, Baylor University, 1965), p. 42.

<sup>2</sup>Nathan Broder, Samuel Barber (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1954), p. 16.

a teacher, Scalero insisted that his pupils gain a thorough knowledge of the techniques of the past.<sup>1</sup>

When Gian-Carlo arrived in Philadelphia he spoke no English and wore an exotic-looking pair of knickers that caused people to stare wherever he went. He soon got a more conventional pair of pants and started going to the movies four times a week in an effort to learn the language. "Luckily I got to know Sam Barber, a fellow pupil at Curtis," reports Menotti. "Sam who could speak French and Italian, was the hero of the school. In fact, he could do everything I couldn't do. He sang beautifully, played and composed."<sup>2</sup>

Barber was a nephew of the celebrated opera singer Louise Homer, who was the wife of Sidney Homer, a composer of songs. Barber's family--originally Quakers and more recently Presbyterians--were about as completely American, and even as completely Pennsylvanian, as is possible. They virtually adopted the lonely young Italian, and they had a great deal to do with his subsequent Americanization. Menotti lived with them for a time in West Chester, Pennsylvania and spent several summers with them in the Peconas, where the Barbers had a cottage, and at Lake George, where Sidney and Louise Homer were living. Sidney Homer called Menotti "Gianni" (a reference to Puccini's character Gianni

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<sup>1</sup>Corrie, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Chotzinoff, op. cit., p. 108.

Schicchi), played chess with him, and prophesied that Menotti, with his courtly manners, would wind up as a member of the Italian senate. The two young composers also spent some of their summers in Europe, visiting Italy and Vienna, where Menotti got his first thoroughgoing experience of opera by attending the performances of the Vienna Opera, then in its palmy days of Lotte Lehmann and Maria Jeritza. Looking back over this period in Vienna, Menotti describes it as "my first contact with sophistication."<sup>1</sup>

While at Curtis, Menotti says, "No one took me seriously at the school except Sam. I was a bit awed at Curtis. Everybody was a genius but me. All I had behind me were some bad marks for solfeggio at the Milan Conservatory and two little operas . . . They were very primitive."<sup>2</sup>

Gian-Carlo kept the promise that he made to Scalero when he went to The Curtis Institute. He learned to master his musical gifts; he learned English "and now speaks it fluently and idiomatically and writes it brilliantly;<sup>3</sup> he learned American ways. Most of all, he learned how to work.

When Menotti was twenty-two he began to compose Amelia Goes to the Ball while in Vienna. He had always dreamed of spending a winter in Vienna to get closer to the great composers who had lived there, especially to Schubert.

<sup>1</sup>Sargeant, "Profiles . . .," p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>Chotzinoff, loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Taubman, "Gian-Carlo Menotti," p. 78.



He managed to get to Vienna, where he rented an apartment from a huge Czechoslovakian lady who smoked cigars and spent her days eating pâte de foie and drinking champagne. Menotti says:

She was so huge and so lazy that she had a machine constructed that enabled her to shut and open the door without leaving her bed. In her room she had the most beautiful dressing table, and I was so taken with the extravagance and frivolity of this dressing table that it gave me the idea for my opera, Amelia Goes to the Ball. It is really very curious how that dressing table set in motion my mind to write an opera. Because Scalero's indoctrination of German polyphonic music had taken only too well with me, and I had come to detest opera.<sup>1</sup>

With Amelia, which Gian-Carlo wrote in Italian and later translated into English, he went to his personal experiences for his subject matter. This was to remain his approach in all his successful operas. His story which deals with a charming, scatterbrained young thing who bedevils a lot of people as she gets ready to go to a ball, recalled the salons of his youth with affectionate irony. "It revealed that the boy who had moved complacently in this glittering, superficial world was now adult enough to poke fun at it."<sup>2</sup>

When Menotti returned to America, he played Amelia for Mary Zimbalist, who was then Mary Bok. She took him seriously, and the Curtis Institute of Music of which she

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<sup>1</sup>Chotzinoff, op. cit., p. 111.

<sup>2</sup>Taubman, "Gian-Carlo Menotti," p. 78.

was a founder had Amelia produced in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York, in the spring of 1937 with Fritz Reiner conducting. In 1938 it was produced at the Metropolitan Opera in New York where it lasted for two seasons, "which for a contemporary opera at that institution is regarded as an extended run."<sup>1</sup> Menotti himself got \$462.50 from the Met.

American critics liked Amelia and said that it brought a breath of fresh air into the operatic world. Chotzinoff quotes Menotti as saying:

Amelia was done in Italy too, but for some unaccountable reason a strange hostility rose against me in my native land. I was insulted in the papers. I guess because America and not Italy had discovered me, and because I refused to join the Fascist party. They associated me with American ways, which they hated.

And you know, . . . in a funny way I consider Amelia my good-luck piece. At the same time it was my "bête noir," my doom, because its success condemned me to write operas, whereas I really love to write instrumental music.<sup>2</sup>

One critic says that Amelia is certainly one of Menotti's masterpieces, unlikely as such a thing may seem where a first publicly performed opera by a youngster in his early twenties is concerned. "It's composer evidently started full-fledged--already a master of his craft."<sup>3</sup>

After Amelia Goes to the Ball Menotti wrote The Old Maid and the Thief, a lyric comedy written in English

<sup>1</sup>Winthrop Sargeant, "Wizard of the Opera," Life, XXVIII (May 1, 1950), 87.

<sup>2</sup>Chotzinoff, loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>"Amelia Goes to the Ball," New Yorker, XXXIX (May 18, 1963), 96.

expressly for broadcast. In writing this opera Menotti remembered his visits to Samuel Barber's family in West Chester, and evoked the atmosphere of that quiet Quaker town. Commissioned by the National Broadcasting Company, The Old Maid and the Thief was heard for the first time April 22, 1939.

Three years after The Old Maid and the Thief, in 1941, Menotti wrote The Island God, a one act, philosophical opera about mythical characters. It contained full-scale arias and duets, somewhat in the manner of Puccini, and it called for an orchestra of the size found in big opera houses like the Metropolitan. It was, in fact, performed at the Metropolitan in 1942, but it was a complete flop. Menotti, always sensitive to public reaction, immediately withdrew it from circulation. It was never published and never recorded. Though its manuscript is rumored to still be in existence in Menotti's private files, nobody has been allowed to see it since its initial disaster.<sup>1</sup>

Its theme, however, is of interest to anyone curious about the composer's development. It deals with the relations between some island castaways and a pagan god who at first befriends them and then, to his dismay, finds that they are necessary to him, in his functions as a god, as he is to them. Sargeant says, "The opera opened a vein of irony and

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<sup>1</sup>Sargeant, "Profiles . . .," p. 66.



metaphysical thought that was to be mined in much of Menotti's future work."<sup>1</sup>

Menotti, in talking to Chotzinoff, said:

Don't speak of The Island God. The only way I can account for that fiasco--it was worse than a fiasco, it was a disaster--is that my old German indoctrination came to the surface again. I suffered an illusion of grandeur. Yet, you know, it had a certain value for me. In it I tackled a subject too heroic for my kind of music. The Island God taught me that I was no Wagner.<sup>2</sup>

Menotti also says that The Island God taught him what an effort it is to maintain the monster of success. "Right after the failure of The Island God I was dropped as quickly as I had been taken up. I tried to raise my spirits by writing a piano concerto," he says.<sup>3</sup> Menotti admits now that he wrote too intellectually, when first, last and always the appeal of any stage piece must be to the heart, and then the philosophy will take care of itself.<sup>4</sup>

In 1944 Menotti wrote Sebastian, a ballet originally in the repertoire of the Marquis de Cuevas Ballet International. In 1945 he wrote a Concerto in A minor for Piano and Orchestra.

Menotti won a \$1,000 grant from the American Academy and National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1945 and a

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Chotzinoff, loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Taubman, "Gian-Carlo Menotti," p. 78.

Guggenheim Fellowship of \$2,500 in 1946. On a commission from Columbia University and the Alice M. Ditson Fund in 1946 he wrote The Medium which was performed at the Brander Matthews Auditorium at Columbia University on May 8, 1946. The story deals with an old charlatan who pretends to commune with spirits of the dead and who, finally falling victim herself to the very illusions she has faked for others, goes mad. The opera was suggested by an actual occurrence. Menotti had spent a summer outside Salzburg near the home of a woman who regulated her life by table-tipping seances, and he had attended one of them, half credulous, half skeptical of what he witnessed.<sup>1</sup>

The Medium was presented with Menotti's The Telephone at the Heckscher Theatre by Lincoln Kirstein's Ballet Society in 1947. The Telephone is a one act opera about a girl so constantly on the phone that her suitor has to call her to propose to her.

The New York Times gave The Medium a bad review and the publishers that Menotti sent it to turned it down. On a very small budget the opera was produced on Broadway by Chandler Cowles and Efrem Zimbalist, Jr. For the Broadway opening the producers needed another review from the Times, so Menotti sent out a notice that he had revised the opera. He simply added one page of music. The Times critic went

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<sup>1</sup>Sargeant, "Profiles . . .," p. 69.

again to review The Medium, and wrote that it was an abridged version, "more compact." It was a favorable review about the very same opera he had heard and disliked before.

The Medium had a shaky start on Broadway. Its first performances were poorly attended. Menotti engaged a room in the hotel across the street just to stand at the window and count the people entering the theatre. After a few weeks, the producers, ready to give up, announced the closing. There was a rush to see the show; the closing notice was withdrawn and the double bill flourished. The Broadway production enjoyed a run of two hundred and eleven consecutive performances--something heretofore unknown and undreamed of in the world of opera. Since then The Medium has been presented all over the United States and Europe and has amassed almost 1,000 performances.<sup>1</sup>

Menotti considers The Medium the key work in his development as an operatic composer. He says that he has written better and worse music, but it was with this opera that he discovered what he could do in the lyric theatre. He states:

It contains the potentialities of my style. The one problem I am interested in is being able to unfold a story in a lyrical way; and by that I mean to make the recitative--the part that tells the story--part of the lyrical whole. Only Puccini has solved that problem. That is why I consider La Bohème the most important

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<sup>1</sup>Taubman, "Gian-Carlo Menotti," p. 79.

opera. Never to interrupt the lyrical flow and to indicate action at the same time, that is what I tried for. I am rather proud of The Medium because I believe it does this. "It's good theatre," some people say, "but there is no music." They are wrong. It takes great effort to do what I did in The Medium. Verdi said, "To write a good opera you must have the courage not to write." Another element I tried to develop in my music is the evocative, to create a picture out of notes . . . And another thing; contemporary subjects are important. The artist must find the poetry in contemporary life. When necessary I always sacrifice the libretto to the music. I cut scenes and scenes, often with bleeding heart, out of my operas. That was Wagner's tragedy. He wouldn't cut his words. A composer must not hesitate to be a surgeon and operate on himself.<sup>1</sup>

In 1950 The Medium was made into a movie with American singers and Menotti directing. It was filmed in Rome primarily for economic reasons. The cast could be moved across the ocean, an Italian lot rented, and scenery erected, all for about one-third of the cost in Hollywood.<sup>2</sup>

After the success of The Medium, Louis B. Mayer of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer made Menotti an offer for writing non-musical scripts for the movies in Hollywood. Menotti had certain reservations about Hollywood, but he was always interested in the challenge of something new and the financial rewards were undoubtedly enticing. He did not walk into the job naively, however. He drew up his own contract, stipulating that he was to have full charge of his scripts and would do his own directing, that not a word of what he wrote could be changed without his approval, and that if Metro-

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<sup>1</sup>Chotzinoff, op. cit., p. 110.

Goldwyn-Mayer failed to keep him at work he would be free to leave at any time. There was, of course, a certain lack of realism both in what M-G-M expected of Menotti and in what Menotti expected of M-G-M. He went to Hollywood and remained there for several months, installed in an office once occupied by Irving Berlin. He was given a dictophone and a secretary, and was wined and dined about town, much to his enjoyment, by many of the luminaries of the movie colony. He turned out two scripts which were not encumbered with the usual Hollywood conventions. The first one was called A Happy Ending. An old grandmother was left to die in a snowbank by her grandchildren. The grandmother was paralyzed and helpless, and though all her relatives felt very kindly toward her, they all thought that she would be better off dead. Her actual death was the result of an accident (she had been left out in the snow by mistake), but it was a great relief to the family, and their resulting emotions and pseudo-emotions offered Menotti a chance to portray the hypocrisy of otherwise nice people, and to express again his preoccupation with illusory appearances. The second script dealt with a subject related to The Consul. Neither script was ever made into a movie. The management of M-G-M was shortly shaken up, and Dore Schary took Louis B. Mayer's place. Mr. Schary did not think that Menotti's scripts were well suited to the

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<sup>1</sup>Hubert Mitgang, "Being a Tale of Film Making in Three Cities," New York Times, June 24, 1951, Section II, p. 5.



Hollywood screen, and suggested that Menotti write a musical based on Huckleberry Finn. At this point, Menotti left Hollywood for New York, taking with him the uncompleted score of The Consul, which he finished at Mount Kisco.<sup>1</sup>

The Consul opened on Broadway in March, 1950. It received rave reviews that assured it a long run, and Menotti's friends congratulated him jubilantly. His reply was, "Now is the time for humility."<sup>2</sup>

The theme of The Consul is the plight of a family caught in the toils of a police state and unable to break through the red tape of a consul's office so that it may escape to freedom. Again Menotti synthesized his own recollections and his sympathies into a moving opera. As a boy he remembered going boating with his brothers and sisters on Lake Lugano. Since they were so close to the Swiss border they would carry along their passports. He also remembered that, traveling in Europe once, Samuel Barber, who carried an American passport, had got through customs in a few minutes while he, with an Italian passport, was held and questioned humiliatingly for hours. Once when he was reading about a refugee who committed suicide after being turned down for a visa, he recalled the heavy-handed, slow-footed ways of bureaucracy the world over. He wrote The Consul, and in a

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<sup>1</sup>Sargeant, "Profiles . . .," pp. 70, 72.

<sup>2</sup>Taubman, "Gian-Carlo Menotti," p. 26.

passionate outburst sung by his heroine, he cries, "To this we've come; that men withhold the world from men."

The Consul won productions in a dozen countries in eight languages--English, German, Italian, French, Swedish, Finnish, Flemish and Turkish. It won the Pulitzer Prize, the New York Drama Critics Circle Award, and a variety of laudatory articles in national magazines. One critic said,

All of us who love the theatre worry for valid reasons about its present condition and its future health. But this much is clear. However ill or shrunken the theatre may be, it is a long, long way from dying so long as it possesses the vitality, the imagination, the sympathy, and the skill to make a production such as The Consul.<sup>1</sup>

Menotti believes that any subject is good for opera if the composer feels it so intensely that he must "sing it out." One day as he stood before Hieronymous Bosch's The Adoration of the Magi in Manhattan's Metropolitan Museum of Art, he felt the old intensity swelling up inside. He found himself thinking about miracles of faith, and of his own childhood lameness which was cured--miraculously, he believes --when he was four. As he stood there, he knew he had the subject for his seventh opera,<sup>2</sup> Amahl and the Night Visitors. In Menotti's treatment of the Christ Child theme, Amahl is a crippled lad who encounters the Three Kings, offers them his

<sup>1</sup>John Mason Brown, "The Consul," Saturday Review of Literature, XXXIII (April 22, 1950), 30.

<sup>2</sup>"Amahl and the Night Visitors," Time, LVIII (December 31, 1951), 30.

only possession, a crutch, and is miraculously cured.

Menotti was commissioned in 1949 by the National Broadcasting Company to write this television opera. It was premiered in 1951 on Christmas Day. Amahl won the George Foster Peabody Award for Outstanding and Meritorious Accomplishments.

Since Amahl is performed hundreds of times each year in schools, colleges, opera houses, on radio and television, Menotti calls this little work his bread-and-butter opera. Its continued success all over the world is a source of both income and musical satisfaction to its creator.

But even more satisfying is his remembrance of a certain rehearsal of Amahl, a runthrough without scenery and costumes and with an upright piano for an orchestra. The only spectators, aside from the cast and the people engaged in the production were Arturo Toscanini and Olin Downes, the then music critic of The New York Times. At the moment of the miracle, when the crippled Amahl offers his crutch as a gift to the Christ Child and is suddenly able to walk, Toscanini and Downes broke down and wept. Later Toscanini impulsively embraced Menotti. "Thank you my dear," the Maestro said, "You write music from the heart, not from the head, as all the other composers unfortunately do these days."<sup>1</sup>

In 1951 Menotti wrote an orchestral work entitled Apocalypse. In 1952 he wrote his Concerto in F for Violin and Orchestra. Famed violinist Efrem Zimbalist came out of a three-year retirement to play the Concerto's world premiere with the Philadelphia Orchestra in December, 1952.

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<sup>1</sup>Chotzinoff, op. cit., p. 108.



Menotti's next composition, in 1953, was The Hero, a song for voice and piano.

The Saint of Bleecker Street was commissioned by The City Center of Music and Drama under a grant-in-aid from the Rockefeller Foundation, but lack of funds prevented its production in the regular opera season at the Center. Instead it was presented by Chandler Cowles at the Broadway Theatre December 27, 1954. The plot concerns a simple Italian girl in the poor Italian quarter of New York's Bleecker Street, who receives the bloody stigmata as she ponders on the Passion of Christ. The Saint received unfavorable reviews and ran on Broadway for only ninety-two performances. It is Menotti's favorite of all his works. It won the Drama Critics Circle Award as the best musical play of 1954, and the Pulitzer Prize for 1955.

The Unicorn, the Gorgon, and the Manticore (The Three Sundays of a Poet) is a madrigal fable for chorus, ten dancers and nine instruments that Menotti wrote in 1956. The work was almost not performed at all. Since Menotti never puts notes on paper until the last minute, he was sending madrigals to Choreographer John Butler as he finished them, and did not complete the final one until a week before the premiere. The ballet's first run-through came only four days before the public was to see it.

Menotti was commissioned to write The Unicorn by the Library of Congress which needed something for the twelfth

chamber-music festival of the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation. He remembered the story-telling madrigal cycles of Orazio (L'Amfiparnasco) Vecchi, a sixteenth-century Italian, and he dug out an old script he once wrote after reading The Book of Beasts. He began to plot a work that is part masque, part ballet, part chamber music.

In The Unicorn, the Gorgon, and the Manticore, Menotti tells a tale of a poet who lives in a castle, yawns at town meetings, and goes neither to church nor to the local countess' parties. When he is seen one Sunday leading a unicorn by a silver chain, he is mocked, but soon the entire town is parading unicorns as pets. The next Sunday he is parading a gorgon. He says he has "peppered and grilled" the unicorn, and soon all the pet unicorns have been killed, and gorgons are the rage. On the third Sunday the poet appears with a manticore. He says the gorgon has died "of murder," which brings the same fate to the town's other gorgons, and manticores become the latest craze. When the poet appears no more, the townsfolk are infuriated and march on his castle to torture and kill him for his "crimes." They find him dying surrounded by his unicorn, gorgon and manticore, symbolizing the poet's youth, manhood and old age.<sup>1</sup>

For many years Menotti dreamed of bringing his native land closer to his adopted country. He realized this

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<sup>1</sup>"Madrigal and mine; Unicorn, the Gorgon and the Manticore," Time, LXVIII (November 5, 1956), 61.

ambition by organizing the Festival of Two Worlds in 1958. The purpose of the festival was to "introduce exciting new American talent to a truly international audience, giving them at the same time an opportunity to perform with and train under the tutelage of established artists in all fields; to bring young artists from the new world into contact with those of the old in an atmosphere conducive to the highest development of their talents; to bring the best of the national arts of America to our friends and neighbors abroad."<sup>1</sup>

For the site of his festival Menotti chose Spoleto, a tiny and ancient city of thirty-three thousand on the Umbrian plain about eighty miles north of Rome. Spoleto was the place Menotti had dreamed of as he had wandered about Italy for a year to find a suitable town for his festival. There was a handsome old opera house with a big stage and 1200 seats, as well as a small theater on the cathedral square. He bought a hotel near Spoleto and engaged an artist to put mirrors, curtains, and pictures on its naked walls. He called the hotel "El Mato," which is what the townspeople were calling him: "The Madman."<sup>2</sup>

Convinced that the motto from New York was serious, the Spoletini began to stir. All over town could be heard brooms, paintbrushes, and hammers. No detail was too trivial

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<sup>1</sup>"Spoleto Vision," New York Times (February 23, 1938), Section II, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Littell, "Festival in Spoleto," Readers Digest, LXXVIII (June, 1961), 240.

for the maestro's attention. He had trees planted, measuring in person the distance they should be set apart; he dissuaded one restaurant owner from installing neon lights, and treated another to gay murals for his dining room.<sup>1</sup>

.. On the day of the dress rehearsal, 300 costumes arrived from Rome, but in all Spoleto there were only twenty coat hangers, and not a single hairpin for the wigs. Nevertheless, that first Festival of Two Worlds was a huge success. They have continued to improve.<sup>2</sup> Each summer artists pour into this tiny town for thirty days of opera, dance, drama, and recitals and concerts.

Because the Spoleto festival costs four or five times as much as the boxoffice brings in, Menotti's chief worry has been raising from foundations and private patrons the money to keep going. He receives no compensation himself and when the first festival wound up badly in the hole, he dug into his own savings. He was deeply touched by the Spoletini restaurant owners, shopkeepers, antique dealers, and the proprietor of a villa rented for visitors, because they donated all their profits from the festival.<sup>3</sup>

Menotti has tried to keep the accent on discovery and youth. A dozen young singers or choreographers have launched their careers at Spoleto. Talent scouts for La Scala or the Metropolitan come to every opening.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 241-42.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Menotti is the last man to take the festival's success personally. He moves among his guests almost diffidently, as if astonished at what has sprung from his dream. Another composer might have made the festival a launching ground for his own works. But, so far Menotti's work has been represented at Spoleto by only one short opera, for which he composed the libretto, and Samuel Barber the music.<sup>1</sup>

The responsibility and most of the labor of organizing the festival's every detail are Menotti's. One writer told Menotti during an interview that he felt it was more important for him to write than to pour all of his energy into The Festival. Menotti replied:

Of course I'm flattered that you consider my music so important. But I am unable to take my music as seriously as you do. Life and people are more important to me. Spoleto is a symbol of my guilt complex. . . . You see, I have always been a happy man. And because I have been happy I never felt that writing was enough. It has been very difficult for me to ignore the world. I am terribly conscious of the world around me. This sense of guilt is, I think, a witness of my character. To satisfy my desire of feeling useful I waste my time in a sort of--a sort of unending, useless kindness. If I weren't a composer I would probably be a nurse in a hospital. This conflict in my life is tremendously strong. Spoleto satisfies my craving to be useful, to help people. At the same time, I often feel as you do, that I am wasting my time. You are right, of course. I should be composing. Yet I always regret not having a family and children. I feel selfish in dedicating my life to myself. I feel well. I sleep well. I'm happy. But often I feel I am wrong. One shouldn't be happy, should one? You see, fundamentally I am dissatisfied with myself because I believe exactly the opposite of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 244.



what T. S. Eliot expresses in The Cocktail Party. I don't believe that one can somehow find happiness or excuse in partaking of the things of the world. I feel that the fact that martyrs exist in the world is an indictment of anyone who is happy. To put it more bluntly, I feel that happiness is a form of cowardice.<sup>1</sup>

Maria Golovin, composed between 1954 and 1958, was commissioned by the National Broadcasting Company and produced August 20, 1958, in the United States' Pavilion at the Brussels World's Fair.

Set in a villa near a frontier in a European country, Maria Golovin unfolds a romance between Maria, whose husband is a war prisoner abroad, and Donato, a returned soldier blinded in the war. Donato at first seeks mere companionship with Maria. But within a month they are lovers. Donato becomes jealous and visualizes imagined rivals. He says, "When I had my eyes, I could close them and find peace. Now I imagine things. I see things." His love turns into hate, first suicidal, then homicidal. In the final scene, after Maria's husband has returned, Donato's mother motions Maria out of harms' way, aims the pistol in Donato's hand at the blank wall and sings, "Yes my son, kill her!" Donato fires. Horrified but unharmed, Maria remains silent. As Donato and his mother leave to seek sanctuary across the frontier, the mother sings, "She is yours forever now. . . . You're free."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Chotzinoff, op. cit., p. 105.

<sup>2</sup>"Maria Golovin," Time, LXXII (September, 1958), 40.

Labyrinth, commissioned by the National Broadcasting Company, was premiered in March, 1963. Written especially for television, this opera is full of video trickery. There is a gravity free tea party aboard a rocket, which is halted by the untimely arrival of a meteor, there is an ancient railroad car used as a swimming pool, and there is a dear old lady who puffs into a cloud of dust as the hero sits down on her.<sup>1</sup>

Labyrinth is the story of a bridegroom who has lost his key and forgotten his room number on his wedding night. As he and his bride wander through endless corridors and countless doors, a series of personages appear, each bearing--according to Menotti--a strong allegorical identity. An old man in a wheelchair, who represents The Past, lures the groom into a cobwebby conservatory filled with jungle plants to play a possibly symbolic game of chess. Another door leads him into a drab office where a horn-rimmed boss-lady screams into a jangle of telephones and thrusts envelopes to a flunky with: "Wrap it, lick it, and mail it!" She represents The Present, and is far too busy to help. An astronaut, who is The Future, offers a cup of tea but little sympathy. "Your key? But why look for key or door with so many stars to explore?" A mute bellhop prances in and out of doors, leers at the bride, is finally stabbed by a voluptuous lady spy who sings: "He was a counter-spy. He had to die."

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<sup>1</sup>"Menotti's Hour," Time, VIII (March 8, 1963), 46.



At last, after losing his bride entirely in a series of aquatic misadventures, the bridegroom winds up wet and nearly naked at the desk of the hotel. The hotel manager, in a sinister makeup, obviously represents Death. He has a key for the groom, the key he has been looking for all his life. The groom is told to lie down on a bench, and a coffin is built around him. When the manager and a lackey finish nailing it together, they carry it away, leaving the bridegroom lying dead on the bench, hands crossed on his chest. In one hand is the key.<sup>1</sup>

Menotti himself sums Labyrinth up:

I tried to see how unoperatic an opera could be. I defy all operatic traditions--for example, there's a hero who never sings an aria. In opera the score meditates upon the action--what moves you is the song of what is about to happen, or what happened. Here I have musical comment while things are still going on.<sup>2</sup>

The Death of the Bishop of Brindisi, Menotti's first drama cantata was performed first in Cincinnati, Ohio, May 18, 1963. It was later given in New York by the Boston Symphony Orchestra in October, 1964.

This large cantata concerns the deathbed hallucinations of one who long ago blessed an army of infants embarking on the Children's Crusade and who, remembering the disasters that followed, holds himself accountable for their tragedy. It requires a bass to sing the role of the Bishop, a soprano

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

for the role of a nun who is trying to comfort him in his distress, a children's chorus, which represents the doomed children, and an adult chorus, which represents first the enraged townspeople of Brindisi, and second, the judgment of Heaven, which absolves him of the crime that is on his conscience.<sup>1</sup>

At one performance of The Bishop Menotti said as the choir wept, "Nothing like this has ever happened to me before. I want the final chorus sung at my funeral."<sup>2</sup>

Commissioned by the Paris Opéra, The Last Savage premiered at Opera-Comique in Paris, October 21, 1963. It was presented in New York by the Metropolitan Opera.

In The Last Savage a millionaire's daughter, who is a Vassar girl, needs a noble savage for her life studies. A scheming maharajah helps her trap a fake abominable snowman whom she brings caged to Chicago. She dresses him up like Rock Hudson, seduces him and shows him off to a menagerie of North Shore friends at a cocktail party. The savage flees to dwell in the jungle in earnest; the girl follows on the "wings of love."<sup>3</sup> Departing civilization in soulful triumph, she surrenders herself to life and love in a cave--as native

<sup>1</sup>"The Bishop of Brindisi," New Yorker, XL (October 31, 1964), 23.

<sup>2</sup>"De Morte Et Conscientia," Time, LXXXI (May 31, 1963), 40.

<sup>3</sup>"Sad Savage; World Premiere of Menotti's The Last Savage," Time, LXXXII (November 1, 1963), 63.

bearers carry into the jungle her bathtub, her refrigerator, and her television set.<sup>1</sup>

Shortly after the presentation of The Last Savage at the Metropolitan, Menotti talked at length about himself and "the savage." When asked what the starting point of the composition of an opera was, he answered:

I always dodge this question, because with my own works I never know--not with any of them. Certain anecdotes I can remember, episodes that had to do with the formation of my idea, but not the first . . . The "wild man" symbolizes a duality in my own nature, and so, I suppose, in everyone's.<sup>2</sup>

Menotti says that in his slightly schizophrenic nature, one half yearns for solitude and the cave--solitude for work and contemplation, the cave for simplicity and peace, freedom from the complexity and pace of modern life. But the other half is driven by a guilt complex, a fear of not being useful to humanity--of being trapped by love. He says that to some extent his earlier operas treat this same theme--Amelia Goes to the Ball and The Old Maid and the Thief.<sup>3</sup> Menotti says:

It's always love, in the form of a woman, which ends up by trapping the man and subduing him. However, I do feel that whether we like it or not, we shall all soon be forced back to nature.<sup>4</sup>

Menotti says that all of his operas are unconsciously autobiographical, either in an obvious or a very secret way.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>"I Am the Savage," Opera News, XXVIII (February 8, 1964), 8.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

In The Medium and The Saint of Bleecker Street, for instance, there is the struggle of faith versus skepticism, which I have inwardly fought over and over again and am still fighting. In The Consul the subject is pity, of which I am a victim. In Amahl and the Night Visitors is reflected the fact that I myself as a little boy was cured of lameness by what was believed to be a miracle. This method of working from experience has been good to me.<sup>1</sup>

Menotti's next opera, Martin's Lie, was commissioned by the Friends of Canterbury Cathedral, which refused to allow its presentation when Menotti refused to submit his libretto in advance. Instead it was presented at Bristol Cathedral as the inauguration of the Bath Festival June 3, 1964.

An excellent character sketch of Gian-Carlo Menotti is included in Chotzinoff's article "The Guilt of Gian-Carlo Menotti":

Although Menotti looks world-weary and moves about indeterminately, as if occupied with secret, tortuous things, he can summon sufficient energy for whatever he wants to do or wants done. And when all else fails he can rely on his charm. His figure and his eyes inspire sympathy, and his persuasiveness is hard to resist. But underneath his tender, worried exterior a will and a determination reside and occasionally show themselves as implacable as they are ruthless. As a consequence, he has almost always triumphed over obstacles, and to insure his triumphs he has used cajolery in a variety of forms and often quite shamelessly, as in his frequent "raw" appeals to the inherent sentimentality or conceit of artists whose cooperation he desires, of wealthy persons whose donations make the Festival possible, of singers who will be induced to take less than their usual fees, and even servants who may be flattered into regarding long hours as a privilege and a contribution to patriotism and art.

In return Menotti dispenses warmth and tenderness, intimacy and, when he is flush, a generosity of such proportions as to have kept him, notwithstanding the large sums of money he earns, a poor man. He is a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.



St. Francis among musicians, distributing his wealth to the needy, or to some cause close to his heart, like the Spoleto Festival. And when his own resources are depleted he remorselessly extracts money from the rich to give to the poor. Children are his special concern; both in Italy and in America his benefactions to the young are quite out of proportion to his means. On the other hand, Menotti is a confessed hedonist. In this he also resembles his favorite Saint, but it is the young, rich, pleasure-loving Francis before he renounced the world. It is, I suspect, Menotti's inability or reluctance to cast aside the hedonism of the youthful Francis that is at the core of his guilt complex. The struggle with what he calls his baser self goes on and may never be resolved. In the meantime he salves his conscience with private charities and public atonements like the Festival of Two Worlds. And in the process his music lags behind.

Menotti remains a personality of contradictions. He is at one and the same time shrewd, tender, worldly, spiritual, unworldly, sensual and self critical. Although conservative in his own approach to music, his attitude to his colleagues is indulgent and progressive. He will not compose in the modern cacophonous, cerebral manner, but he has understanding and sympathy for the avant-garde in music, painting, in sculpture, in literature, indeed in every manifestation of art.<sup>1</sup>

Gian-Carlo Menotti has lived and worked in this country for more than twenty years without making any effort to become an American citizen. Explaining this, he points to the hundreds of Americans who have had villas around Rome and Florence for years, living there with no thought of ever becoming Italian citizens. "I don't believe in citizenship," he explains. "If I'm an Italian, I'm an Italian all my life. There's no reason to change my passport. I'd much rather be an Italian who lives here and writes American operas."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Chotzinoff, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>N. Lansdale, "Menotti Calls the Met a Museum," Theatre Arts, XXXVI (May 1, 1952), 92.

Menotti, although he has remained an Italian citizen, has received little recognition from his mother country. After the production of Amelia Goes to the Ball in America, he went back to Italy to visit his mother--his father had died some years before--and a leading fascist told him that if he would join the Fascist Party, his opera would be done in all the principal Italian theatres. Menotti did not join; Amelia was produced only in a small theatre in San Remo and "got short shrift there."<sup>1</sup>

When The Consul was produced at La Scala in Milan, the first opera composed in America to be put on in the 173-year-old theatre, there were violent demonstrations against Menotti and his work. A strong Communist contingent whistled and catcalled because it charged that the opera was attacking the Iron Curtain countries. Another group, defending the so-called honor of Italy, excoriated Menotti because he dared to live and make his career in America.<sup>2</sup>

Not all Italians have ranged against Menotti, though. One summer when he happened to be in Cadegliano a cable came to say that the Metropolitan would produce Amelia. The post-mistress, having read the cable, rode through town on her bicycle shouting the glad tidings. The entire village turned out to give him a party. His family, though it is proud, no

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<sup>1</sup>Taubman, "Gian-Carlo Menotti," p. 91.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



longer spoils him with praise. He keeps telling them that he is getting to be somebody in America, "but they just look at me sympathetically."<sup>1</sup>

Arturo Toscanini's friendship and support have somewhat made up to Menotti for opposition by the land of his birth. Menotti first met the maestro over thirty years ago when he was still a student. His mother, who knew Mrs. Toscanini, gave him a letter to her, and one day he went to call at the maestro's home on Lago Maggiore. He rang the doorbell and asked for Mrs. Toscanini. The servant went away and returned to say that the Signora was out but that the maestro was not doing anything and would the young visitor care to see him. "The young visitor was enchanted, and the conductor took a liking to the eager student and spent the day with him, talking about music."<sup>2</sup>

When The Telephone and The Medium opened on Broadway, Menotti wrote Toscanini saying he would like to invite him to the show but assumed he would not come. Toscanini replied indignantly that he would certainly come. He went three times. Toscanini followed the creation of The Consul avidly. He asked Menotti to let him see the score as he progressed with it. He attended the performance several times after making a special visit to listen to a run-through during the rehearsal period. At the end of the second act, the eighty-

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

three-year-old conductor got up and walked slowly to Menotti and embraced him. "The old Italian and the young one did not speak, but there were tears in their eyes."<sup>1</sup>

Like Toscanini, Menotti has felt that in Italy's time of trouble, he should retain a bond with those of his countrymen who were fighting for the democratic way of life.

Concerning Gian-Carlo Menotti's music one critic says:

By the standards of the day, Gian-Carlo Menotti is, I think, a truly remarkable composer, and his remarkableness is not less striking because it is evident to a fairly large and by no means culturally snobbish audience. . . . Menotti's aesthetic attitude boils down to a few simple points that would be quite obvious if we were not living in an era of vast artistic confusion. They are that any composer can learn a lot by studying, rather than angrily discarding, the great musical traditions of the nineteenth century; that music should be expressive, rather than dry and mathematical; and that its purpose is to please or otherwise move an audience, instead of mystifying or insulting it. His steadfast adherence to these points has earned him much condemnation and snickering condescension from those who hold the strange conviction that important twentieth-century music must be made as unpleasant as possible for its audiences. He has been accused of triviality, apparently on the ground that it is trivial to convey sincere emotion to the listener. He has been accused of not being properly revolutionary, this charge having usually come from fellow-composers whose revolution was fought half a century ago by Schoenberg and Stravinsky and is today about as vital as the issue of votes for women. His work has been deplored by pedagogues because, although it contains a great deal of the inimitable and unanalyzable factor known as talent, it offers virtually nothing on which to build a systematic theory of technical progress. He is a rarity among present-day composers if only because his aim seems to be simply to write music.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Winthrop Sargeant, "Musical Events," New Yorker, XXXVI (February 27, 1960), 133.

Menotti himself says, "I must tell you frankly that I am not a facile musician. What it takes other people days to do, takes me weeks. My music equipment is poor. I haven't got perfect pitch."<sup>1</sup>

He says that it is true that he began early, but that he was a bad student. He was a puzzle to his teachers, and had to learn in his own way or not at all. He had to develop a private technique; he had to fashion his own instruments or "weapons," so to speak.

It's a serviceable technique, but it's not the usual equipment. I could never say with Tchaikovsky who, when asked how he composed replied, "I sit down." I do sit down, but I have to get up every ten minutes. I compose fitfully. I always feel in composing that I come quickly to a point of saturation. I want to be always fresh. I get up. I eat an apple. The trouble with me is that in composing I play a dual role. I am the composer. But I am also the audience, and I want to be sure that I as the audience understand clearly what the composer intended. You can compare it with having bad breath. Everybody knows it but the fellow who has it. It is an effort to be on both sides--to breathe and smell your own breath!<sup>2</sup>

Although there is nothing technically novel about Menotti's music, the style of opera he has created is highly original. His operas are small-scale, intimate works that call for psychological subtlety rather than the old fashioned machinery of pomp and spectacle which most people associate with the idea of opera. He never piles up musical effects for their own sake or calls attention to the elaborateness

<sup>1</sup>Taubman, "Gian-Carlo Menotti," p. 78.

<sup>2</sup>Chotzinoff, op. cit., p. 108.

of his scoring. His tunes and harmonies are used sparingly and always for the purpose of intensifying an emotional or poetic idea.<sup>1</sup>

Menotti comes out of the great tradition of Italian opera, which is based on the beauty of vocal melody. He is a master of melody. "I am convinced," he states, "that every great melody is buried somehow deep in the memory of man, and when a composer brings it forth we all recognize it and respond to it at once, as though we had known it all our lives."<sup>2</sup>

To Menotti there is no dividing line between words and music. "He uses either or both in combination to achieve the maximum effect. And he uses the orchestra to support words or action and even to take the place of action, with the naturalness of one to whom it is an eloquent aid in the theatre."<sup>3</sup>

Menotti feels that "it is more important, . . . to say difficult things in simple language than to say--as is done so much today--very simple things in very complicated language."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Sargeant, "Wizard of the Opera," p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph Machlis, American Composers of Our Time (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1963), p. 155.

<sup>3</sup>Howard Taubman, "Proving Opera Can Be Modern," New York Times Magazine (March 19, 1950), p. 26.

<sup>4</sup>"The Last Savage," Opera News, XXVIII (December 7, 1963), 30.

Menotti is an enormously versatile man who, in addition to writing both the words and music of his operas, has written ballet scores, two concertos, and even a straight play. After he writes an opera, he assembles a cast, supervises the designing of the sets and takes full charge of the staging. When the film of The Medium was being made in Rome, Menotti insisted on being his own director. He spent three weeks studying the special techniques of film-making and then took charge of the shooting. He insisted on making the camera as flexible as his own imagination. Film experts were astonished to note that he achieved effects that old hands argued were "impossible." He did not know--and declined to learn--what was "impossible."<sup>1</sup>

Taubman says that one of Menotti's secrets is his sense of freshness and wonder in each experience. Since Menotti was born in Italy and did not come to this country until he was seventeen, he reacts to the English language as if it were something new, "even exotic." Common words such as "paper" and "pane of glass" have magic for him and make him think in terms of music.<sup>2</sup>

The creation of words and music are a single process to Menotti. He has a habit of singing out passages for hours until they come out right. One scene in The Consul gave him endless trouble, and he apparently kept up a

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<sup>1</sup>Taubman, "Gian-Carlo Menotti," p. 78.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



sustained racket. When it was finished, his cook said, "I'm glad that scene is over, it was driving me mad."<sup>1</sup>

Menotti lives at Mount Kisco, New York, with Samuel Barber in a house called "Capricorn" where they settled after the war. It was at Capricorn that Menotti produced the works that carried his name around the world. The house lies in the midst of a forest--a situation that both Menotti and Barber find very congenial--and the fact that it has separate apartments at either end allows each composer to pound away at his grand piano without disturbing the other. Barber's end has a Renaissance look about it, but Menotti's is almost monkishly medieval, with white walls whose spare decoration runs to religious figurines, surrealist paintings, and an occasional bit of African primitive sculpture. His studio is just about big enough to house his piano. One of its walls is almost entirely glass, which permits him to gaze at the surrounding pines and hemlocks while composing; otherwise the room is like a cell, bare and white, with a religious painting of a young girl dressed like a nun as its principal ornament. This, he explains, is a self-portrait by the young woman who inspired The Saint of Bleecker Street, and he may add that she died, a suicide, shortly after painting it. Its lonely position suggests that Menotti regards it as a sort of shrine. Not all of the house, however, is permeated with this monastic atmosphere. The living

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.



room is fashionably modern. A huge, hairy Briard dog named Fosca (Gloomy) guards it good-naturedly, and near the entrance door stands a half-life-size marionette--a knight in full armor, with a large hook projecting from its helmet. This is Orlando, the hero of many of those Neapolitan puppet shows that until recently were performed on Melberry Street, in Manhattan's Italian colony, setting forth episodes from legends surrounding Charlemagne's most famous paladin, the brave orphan who was really a prince.<sup>1</sup>

Gian-Carlo Menotti is a polished yet boyish and quietly exuberant individual with a poet's absentmindedness, a fiction writer's irreverence of fact and an insatiable curiosity about people. He says:

I've never tired of life. Life has been terribly short, much too short. I have such a desire to learn. In my oratorio The Bishop of Brindisi makes a final invocation to God. In spite of having caused the death of so many children in the ill-fated crusade, The Bishop says, "I don't understand why I have been allowed to make such horrible mistakes in my life. I still believe in God, because everything we've been given has a purpose. We have a hand to eat with, and the fact that we've been given a searching mind is enough proof to me that the answer exists and it will finally be given to us in relation to the search we've made for it."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Sargeant, "Profiles-- . . .," p. 60.

<sup>2</sup>Chotzinoff, op. cit., p. 111.

## CHAPTER II

### CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE OPERA

After selecting The Saint of Bleecker Street for study, the investigator studied the reviews of the Broadway production. Chapter II is a compilation of several critics' opinions of the opera.

Although a performance record of ninety-two performances is considered excellent in the world of opera, on Broadway a run of such length is considered to be a limited success.

One critic gave five reasons why he thinks The Saint of Bleecker Street was not a boxoffice success on Broadway. First of all, the writer believes that the opera was simply not "expense account meat"; it was violent, disturbing, and starless. Second, the human motivations were obscure and unconvincing. "Yet such was the fervor and talent of their musical expression that this fault alone would not have put people off."<sup>1</sup> Next, the critic says:

I believe the real reason was that The Saint of Bleecker Street was a play with such intensely Catholic associations that it set up deep reactions, conscious or unconscious, among non-Catholics that

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<sup>1</sup>"The Saint of Bleecker Street," Reporter, XII (April 7, 1955), 40.

ranged from upsetting to repellent. To these people, the simple girl who suffered the stigmata was not an adequate vessel for sainthood. Faith, pain, and sweetness are to many of us--and to the strictest Catholic understanding--not sufficient for a state of true holiness, which we recognize not as a divine accident but as the ultimate form of wisdom. We cannot care for Annina, and if we cannot care for her, the play's passion--however gripping and admirable musically and dramatically--becomes an assault on the mind rather than an affirmation of the spirit. The Saint of Bleecker Street disturbs many of us, not because it makes us think but because it tries to make us feel what we cannot believe.<sup>1</sup>

Other reasons that the opera had only a limited success were that it had no Jewish support (seventy percent of those who support theatre arts in New York are Jewish) and that it had no Catholic support in New York.<sup>2</sup>

Concerning the theme of the opera, Hayes says that the poetic truth of The Saint of Bleecker Street is large and profound, bridging the alien worlds of pure faith and destructive reason. One world is symbolized by the sickly Annina, whose experience of the stigmata visibly registers her piety; the other is symbolized by Michele her brother, a rebel "who has never asked for love, only understanding." A conflict springs out of Annina's religious vocation, or rather her brother's response to the vocation--for the opera records a conflict of superficiality of persons, ultimately of temperament. "That conflict is rehearsed in a variety of incidents--alternately comic, poignant, melodramatic."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Richard Hayes, "The Saint of Bleecker Street," Commonweal, LXI (February 4, 1955), 476.

Another critic says that Menotti is not so sure of his theme as he was in The Consul, in which he knew what was good and what was evil. "Menotti, like so many intellectuals spawned in this age of faithlessness," says Zolostow, "both wants and does not want the Roman Catholic framework of gothic belief into which he was born. The Saint of Bleecker Street is almost an argument with himself."<sup>1</sup> The critic states further:

I am sure that at this moment Menotti could not tell you point-blank whether Annina is a schizophrenic or a saint, whether the stigmata which appears so bloodily on her palms at the climax of Act I are mystical correlations of the body and blood of Christ or psychosomatic phenomena, a particularly bad case of neurodermatitis. . . . Menotti will have to make a choice between Vienna and Rome--between Sigmund Freud and Fulton Sheen. Until he makes a choice as a human being, his creative force is going to be splintered by all sorts of ambiguity. Ambiguity, moral and intellectual distress, may be brought to the psychoanalyst's couch or the priest's confession box, but the theatre requires clarity.<sup>2</sup>

"On a literal level the piece strikes me as bogus," declared one critic. He was not impressed with the heroine's hysterical religion--it was presented as a premise but not made moving except as a disease. Neither was he impressed with the brother's equally hysterical objection to her religious bent, since he believes in nothing whatever.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Maurice Zolostow, "The Saint of Bleecker Street," Theatre Arts, XXXIX (March, 1955), 22.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Harold Clurman, "The Saint of Bleecker Street," Nation, CLXXX (January 22, 1955), 83.

The critics agree that Menotti's characterizations in this opera are ambiguous. One critic believes that the trouble with The Saint of Bleecker Street seems to be a certain cloudiness in Menotti's approach to the problems of human behavior. Of the heroine, Sargeant says that he suspects that it was Menotti's intention to make her a figure of some grandeur, and to show through her actions the triumph of faith over sin. "Her important position in the plot and the amount of soulful ecclesiastical music that surrounds her main scenes would, at any rate, lead one to this conclusion," states the critic.<sup>1</sup>

. . . There is nothing in the opera, however, that indicates exactly why she deserves to be blessed with the unusual amount of sanctity she seems to possess, and since her overpowering holiness causes no end of havoc among the other characters of the drama, one's sympathy naturally tends to drift from her to her more sinful and more human associates. Piety is, of course, generally regarded as a virtue, but, as Wagner long ago demonstrated in *Parsifal*, it is not the most dynamic theme on which to build an operatic drama . . . Annina, with all her visions and all the psalm singing that surrounds her, has too few human frailties to make a convincing heroine, and in her relation to other principals, she often comes close to being an unctuous nuisance.<sup>2</sup>

Zolostow believes that the play's clarity is hampered most of all by the relationship between Michele and Annina. Most of the critics have interpreted Michele's skeptical hostility toward the Bleecker Street folk who venerate his

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<sup>1</sup>Winthrop Sargeant, "The Saint of Bleecker Street," New Yorker, XXX (January 8, 1955), 75.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



sister "as an expression of his attitude of progressive assimilation."<sup>1</sup> Michele is taken to be a modern young American struggling against the Old World, clannish mores of his priest-ridden neighbors. Beneath the brother's skepticism about Catholic ritual and Italian clannishness is a passionate and socially forbidden lust for his sister. Zolostow states that incest is the real conflict in The Saint of Bleecker Street.

. . . It is the match that touches off the fuse. Desideria is murdered after she accuses Michele of a perverse longing for Annina. The murder is dramatically and psychologically justified. But it is shrouded in ambiguity. Menotti ought to have written a duet for the sister and brother . . . in which they could have retraced the past, and in which we could have become aware of what was troubling the siblings. For just as Michele loves his sister more than he can ever love any other woman, there is a veiled suggestion that Annina is sublimating her need for her brother by means of hallucinatory episodes. Perhaps she really wants, not to be the Bride of Christ but to be the bride of her brother.<sup>2</sup>

According to Hayes, the weakest character in the narrative is Michele, who cannot at all sustain the weight of meaning imposed by Menotti and emerges only as a kind of dramatic pretext. This critic believes that the brother's rebellion seems "gratuitous, without motive. . . . What we see is a profound division of the human spirit, passionately annotated, in which the protagonists never join battle: the

<sup>1</sup>Zolostow, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



pain travels along the nerves; it does not penetrate more deeply."<sup>1</sup>

Sargeant states that Desideria is the only major character capable of arousing any great sympathy. She is capable of normal passions, and dies expressing them.

. . . her big scene in Act II is the most moving thing in the opera; this is so, I think, mainly because, for once, somebody is singing about an understandable and fairly universal form of emotion.<sup>2</sup>

While one writer says that Menotti is a magnificent inventor of plots and situations and is the best libretto writer this country ever produced,<sup>3</sup> another believes that he is a man of many pedestrian words and very little genuine poetry.<sup>4</sup> The latter continues that, like Tennessee Williams, Menotti is not ashamed to use any device that sacrifices logic in favor of theatrical impact, and that his story in The Saint of Bleecker Street is a thin one.

. . . brother and sister, and their neighbors, are as unreal as figures in a medieval book. That, however, is hardly a fault in an opera.

There is almost no dialogue, and at times the recitative is flat and monotonous.<sup>5</sup>

Another critic charges that the libretto is inconclusive: "Is the Author-Composer Menotti really on the side

<sup>1</sup>Hayes, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Sargeant, "The Saint of Bleecker Street," p. 75.

<sup>3</sup>Zolostow, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>4</sup>"The Saint of Bleecker Street," Newsweek, XLV (January 10, 1955), p. 62.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

of the saint, or on the side of the murderer-skeptic?" The critic concludes that Menotti likes being inconclusive. Menotti says that he is trying to show with his opera "all the kinds of human love--mother love, conjugal, fraternal, carnal, even incestuous love. Above all there is the love of God."<sup>1</sup>

Says Skeptic Menotti: "Whatever you believe, all men know that only the love of God is incorruptible." If the opera never quite makes up its mind as to whether faith or reason wins, Menotti thinks that is an Italian trait. "We are all rebels, and yet we wear a cross hidden under our shirts. We hate the clergy and love the church or hate the church and love God." He adds: "I offer no solutions. I am satisfied if I shock, that is, if I create strong emotion."<sup>2</sup>

The music with which Menotti has surrounded his theatrical undertaking, according to Kolodin, is "rather more varied than his dramatic invention." He states that there are mood and atmosphere in the opera from the very first and an unfolding abundance of melodic ideas which rise to a "superb sequence of solo pieces at the climax of Act II, when the brother's girl friend first taunts him for being ashamed of her."

The Menottian melodic line, it seems to me, is branching out and climbing higher along the wall of tradition than ever before; it is finding new crevasses, harmonic and rhythmic, in which to fasten its holds for further progress; the orchestral writing is

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<sup>1</sup>"The Saint of Bleecker Street," Time, LXV (January 10, 1955), 42.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

both more adventurous and much more explicit than in any previous score.<sup>1</sup>

Hayes says that Virgil Thomson's judgment of an earlier Menotti opera is still valid: "harmonically a bit fussy, melodically a shade undistinguished." Hayes continues:

The recitative, as ever, is expert; the verismo details unfailingly ingenious--a sweet trio of Neopolitan love songs is notably charming. There are passages of seductive richness and harmony, though again much of the orchestral writing is muddy and badly interferes with vocal projection. To the opera's loss, no single melodic theme dominates, and its absence is constantly felt: the demand was implicit in the situation, and its unfulfillment sometimes gives the work the aspect of an elaborate setting without a jewel. What is most expressive is a final scene of liturgical power recording Annina's consecration as a Bride of Christ. I cannot agree that the dramatic representation of so sacred a rite invades or abuses privacy; indeed, in its lordly beauty and reverity its essential piety--the musical writing here (largely choral) seemed to me entirely adequate to its subject, the one undiluted triumph of the opera.<sup>2</sup>

Of Menotti's music for The Saint of Bleecker Street Sabin concludes that the music is a "fantastic composite of styles and idioms held together by the sheer force of the composer's imagination . . ." At the first hearing, however, Sabin found the music "superficial and sometimes even tawdry," but he admired the skill that went into its manufacture and recognized its great emotional impact.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Irving Kolodin, "The Saint of Bleecker Street," Saturday Review, XXXVIII (January 8, 1955), 23.

<sup>2</sup>Hayes, op. cit., p. 477.

<sup>3</sup>Robert Sabin, "The Saint of Bleecker Street," Musical America, LXXV (January 15, 1955), 3.

The opening chorus and solos in Act I, Scene 1 seem a little stiff at first, but, once in motion, Sabin feels that the writing flows most naturally. Annina's scene where she receives the stigmata is a dramatic tour de force. Sudden bursts of dissonance and the high tones in the vocal line give effect. Sabin then adds that the musical materials are shoddy and second rate in general. "There are heavy overtones of Mascagni and Puccini in this first scene--and not the best Mascagni and Puccini--blended with a much more sophisticated harmonic palette."<sup>1</sup>

Sabin feels that Act II is by far the solidest, musically speaking, although the duet for Desideria and Michele is almost too formally worked out in the traditional style to fit well with the scheme of the rest of the work. One of the most delightful things in Act II is the singing of Italian folksongs by three wedding guests.<sup>2</sup>

In Menotti's defense, Sargeant states, "Since he is far and away the most skillful craftsman among those who are at present devoting themselves to the writing of opera in English, it [The Saint . . .] has its moments of effective theatre." Sargeant agrees with Sabin that sometimes the secrets of Menotti's effectiveness are borrowed, but Menotti has done his borrowing wisely, and his work is a genuine opera, obviously written by a man who knows what

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

opera is. Virtues of Menotti's craftsmanship are (1) Use of a musical idiom that, though not strikingly original, is capable of expressing the emotions of his characters; (2) Knowledge of the human voice; (3) Ability to choose melodies that go nicely with words; and (4) A remarkable instinct for melodramatic effect.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, Zolostow declares that Menotti "is held back, as he has always been held back, by a strange inability to be lyrically inspired. He cannot rise to musical heights that equal his verbal flights. Yet The Saint of Bleecker Street lifts you completely out of your body as you watch it."<sup>2</sup>

Zolostow does give Menotti credit for his brilliance as an orchestrator and for his flair for writing music that underlines and heightens speech, but he says that Menotti "simply cannot make intense musical statements that sum up a character, a situation, a struggle of forces. It is not only that he is incapable of creating a big aria . . . , he is also not able to conjure up the motifs that the operatic composer must weave together into an emotionally beautiful pattern."<sup>3</sup>

One critic who reviewed the opera strictly from the dramatist's point of view said that Menotti's "sense of the

<sup>1</sup>Sargeant, "The Saint of Bleecker Street," p. 75.

<sup>2</sup>Zolostow, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

theatre purged the formalities out of his drama [opera] and left us with its humanity."<sup>1</sup>

The stage was raised on an incline, as in many European theatres. This gave Menotti's stage pictures "a completeness that is new to Broadway. . . . the settings are like the backgrounds to old religious paintings, and they serve to set off the figures of the actors like sculpture."<sup>2</sup>

Visually, the whole work is remarkable. For the singers are vital people with fresh personalities that glow with sincerity. And the choruses, composed of the Italian neighbors in Bleecker Street, are individuals uncorroded by sophistication or cynicism.

As stage director Mr. Menotti has handled them ingeniously, avoiding static groups and always laying the emphasis on the spontaneity of ordinary people taken out of themselves with religious wonder or mortal conflicts.

The music is Mr. Menotti's tool of expression. But The Saint of Bleecker Street is all theatre too.<sup>3</sup>

Chapter II, a compilation of the critical reviews of the opera, is followed by the director's approach to the opera.

<sup>1</sup>Brooks Atkinson, "A Powerful Work of the Theatre Returns Christianity to the Common People," New York Times, December 28, 1954, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



## CHAPTER III

### TECHNIQUES INVOLVED IN THE DIRECTION AND PRODUCTION OF THE OPERA

The investigator, being especially interested in the operas of Gian-Carlo Menotti, chose to study The Saint of Bleecker Street. In this study, the investigator gathered biographical material from periodical articles written about the composer, compiled a review of the published criticisms of the Broadway production, and studied the score and libretto for an analysis of the characters and the development of the prompt book, which includes ground plans, costume, property, and make-up schedules, and the blocking.

Chapter III contains a brief synopsis of the opera, an evaluation of the libretto, an analysis of the characters, a description of general rehearsal techniques to be used in preparation for a production of the opera, and a description of the ground plans for each scene.

#### Synopsis of the Opera

The Saint of Bleecker Street is about a young Italian girl, named Annina, who lives in Manhattan's Little Italy in a cold water flat with her brother, Michele. Annina's exemplary piety, rewarded early in the story by the appearance of

miraculous stigmata, causes her neighbors to regard her as a saint. Her one desire in life is to become a nun.

Michele, Annina's brother, is a rather belligerent and greatly mixed-up young man who furiously resents the church. He tries to thwart Annina at every turn in her efforts to become a nun. When Michele's mistress, Desideria, questions the purity of his feeling for his sister, Michele, drunk and in a rage, stabs her to death. Annina resolves to take the veil as she holds the dying Desideria in her arms.

Don Marco, the priest, arranges a meeting in a subway waiting station for Annina and her brother, a broken man and a fugitive from justice. Annina tells Michele that she is going to take the veil, for she can never help him and her "voices" tell her that she will soon die.

The brother and sister are again parted until the veiling ceremony in which Annina becomes "dead to the world," and The Bride of Christ. Michele returns in time to witness the conclusion of the ceremony and Annina's death.

#### Evaluation of the Libretto

The following evaluation of the libretto of The Saint of Bleecker Street by Casmus is an evaluation of the opera from the viewpoint of a dramatist.

#### Structure

According to Casmus, The Saint of Bleecker Street has both an Italian and an American nationalistic frame of

reference in subject matter, structure and the use of chorus. She points out that elements of the plot have been selected and employed in such a manner as to achieve a synthesis of Italian operatic emotional appeal with the swifter pace and more intimate detail of the American theatre.<sup>1</sup>

The subject matter reflects a dual nationalism in the choice of setting and characters, i.e., the plot concerns Italians in an American environment. Furthermore, the plot combines melodrama, which is characteristic of Italian preferences in subject matter, and realism, which is characteristic of American preferences in subject matter. "The fact that the subject is drawn from contemporary life is indicative of a strong tendency in the choice of subject matter in both American realism and Italian verismo."<sup>2</sup>

The structure of The Saint of Bleecker Street follows the pattern of traditional Italian number opera. Casmus believes that dramaturgically, the scene-by-scene, act-by-act structure of the plot leaves something to be desired. She believes that the plot is not strongly unified, principally because there is an overlapping of conflicts between characters.

The essential action grows out of the conflict between Annina and Michele, but the development of this main thread of

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<sup>1</sup>Mary Irene Casmus, "Gian-Carlo Menotti: His Dramatic Techniques: A Study Based on Works Written 1937-1954" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Dept. of Drama, Columbia University, 1962), p. 51.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

action is temporarily lost in the introduction of a secondary conflict, the conflict between Michele and Desideria.<sup>1</sup>

Desideria is not even introduced as a character until the closing moments of Act I-Scene 2, and her relationship to Michele is not firmly established until Act II is well under way. As events transpire, the conflict between Michele and Desideria is integral to the story; it implements and intensifies the main conflict. But the violence in which this conflict finally erupts emphasizes it out of proportion to its actual importance. As a result the structural divisions of the plot are not well marked. The exposition and rising action overlap from the end of Act I to the middle of Act II. One may easily confuse the climax of the secondary conflict, represented by the killing of Desideria at the end of Act II, with the real climax, which occurs at the end of Act III-Scene 1. The real climax, involving Annina's repudiation of Michele, is weaker in a dramatic sense than the earlier crisis, but it nevertheless constitutes the highest development of the essential action. The denouement, represented by the religious ceremony in Act III-Scene 2, is more clearly defined and progresses in a very effective manner. "One may conclude," says Casmus, "that while this libretto has an Italian and an

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<sup>1</sup>Casmus states that close analysis will reveal that in this opera Menotti has again employed the love triangle, but in a more complex manner. The entire action grows out of conflicts engendered in two linked love-triangles: the main triangle is made up of God, Annina, and Michele; the secondary triangle is made up of Annina, Michele, and Desideria.

American nationalistic frame of reference with respect to general structural characteristics, it does not meet the strictest structural standards within these frames of reference."<sup>1</sup>

### The Plot

The plot lacks continuity of action. That the action fails to advance steadily is partly due to the overlapping of conflicts, as previously indicated, and partly due to the inclusion of several static episodes. The first non-essential episode occurs near the beginning of Act I-Scene 2, following Assunta's question to Annina: "Tell me, did you ever get a glimpse of heaven?" The following eighteen lines add nothing in the way of either exposition, since it has already been established that Annina has visions, or development. The other non-essential episodes are somewhat more irrelevant than static. First there is the scene of the wedding celebration which opens Act II, in which there is much ado about two minor characters, and second, there is Maria Corona's inconsequential monologues at the opening of Act III-Scene 1. The above mentioned episodes are the most obvious instances of interruption. A static effect is also created in a few of the long solo passages of the principal characters, who frequently tend to dwell on their feelings at too great length.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Casius, op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

"Though it may fall short in other respects, the plot of The Saint of Bleecker Street is far from deficient in a sense of theatre," says Casmus. The plot exemplifies Menotti's astonishing ability to concentrate within a thin story a wide variety of theatrically effective contrasts and situations. Along with such attention-engaging counter-pulls as piety and sensual love, violence and conviviality, there are incorporated in The Saint a stigmata phenomenon, a gaudy procession, a tense brother-sister relationship, guilt, and a criminal hunt. "It is a tribute to Menotti's skill as a musical dramatist that he had combined all these elements with a believability rare in the musical theatre of our time."<sup>1</sup>

The preceding evaluation of the libretto of The Saint of Bleecker Street by Casmus is an evaluation of the opera from a dramatist's viewpoint. The composer states that a libretto, when read out of musical context, appears "rather brutal and unconvincing."<sup>2</sup> Menotti believes that it is the music that expresses a situation or describes a mood. "Opera is, after all, essentially music, and such is the ennobling or transfiguring power of music that we have numerous examples of what safely could be labeled awkward plays transformed into inspiring operas."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Gian-Carlo Menotti, "Notes on Opera as Basic Theatre," New York Times Magazine, January 2, 1955, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



We have, however, no single example of a successful opera whose main strength is in the libretto. I have often been accused of writing good libretti and mediocre music, but I maintain that my libretti become alive or illuminated only through my music. Let anyone read one of my texts divorced from its musical setting to discover the truth of what I say. My operas are either good or bad: but if their libretti seem alive or powerful in performance, then the music must share the distinction.<sup>1</sup>

### Treatment of the Chorus

The chorus in The Saint of Bleecker Street is composed of Annina's neighbors and other members of the Italian community and represents very important phases of the social environment. With the exception of Act III-Scene 1, the subway scene, it figures prominently in every scene from the beginning to the end of the opera, and functions in a manner entirely relevant to the development of the story. At times, the chorus as a group participates directly in the activity on the stage, but it is most effective when it contributes to the essential mood and atmosphere in the liturgical chants and hymns of Acts I and III and the festival wedding song of Act II. "Viewed as a whole, Menotti's treatment of the chorus is one of the most admirable features of this libretto."<sup>2</sup>

### Analysis of Characters

Before a director can cast a play, a complete character analysis must be made in relation to the director's overall impression of the meaning which is to be conveyed to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Casmus, op. cit., p. 53.

the audience.<sup>1</sup> The investigator, in this section of Chapter III, will present a physical description of each character, his relationship to other characters, and the way the investigator wishes the audience to feel toward each character.

### Annina

Annina, a young girl who lives in the Italian neighborhood on Bleecker Street with her brother, Michele, has only one desire, to take the veil and be the Bride of Christ. She is thought to be a saint by her neighbors. The only person who does not believe in her "voices" is Michele, who says that he will never let her take the veil. He thinks that she is physically ill and just imagining things.

As the opera opens, the neighbors are praying that they will again be blessed through Annina. They believe that she is a saint, because she "suffers the Passion of Our Lord" (the stigmata), has healed people, and has visions in which her "voices" tell her what to do. Once she saw "Saint Peter with the Keys of Heaven, Saint Michael with two young archangels, and the saints and the angels sing and dance all around the throne of Our Lord. The Holy Virgin appeared to her . . . , and once as she was praying, the Devil came and set her clothes on fire."

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<sup>1</sup>Wynna Lou Olmon, "A Producing Director's Study and Prompt Book of William Inge's 'Come Back Little Sheba'" (unpublished Master's thesis, College of Arts and Sciences, Texas Woman's University, 1959), p. 23.

When Annina makes her first appearance in Act I, she is described by Menotti as being very pale and bearing the marks of great suffering. Don Marco, the Priest, has already told the waiting neighbors that she is very ill.

Only minutes after Annina's entrance, she sings her most important musical material, an aria that is difficult both dramatically and musically. She must immediately plunge into one of the most intense moments of her role, a role that requires her to have a powerful soprano voice paired with a young, frail appearance. The range of the aria is d'-c'''; both pitches must be sung fortissimo. Both the intervals and the rhythm patterns are more difficult than the college voice student will encounter in most of her operatic arias. This aria is a vision that Annina is having of The Crucifixion, and requires that the singer be an accomplished interpreter.

In Act I-Scene 2 we see Annina as an ordinary girl helping her dearest friend, who was a school chum, dress a little neighborhood girl for a procession. In this scene we learn that Annina is dominated by her brother Michele, when she tells a neighbor that she cannot go to the procession because Michele will not let her. However, we learn that she is not as shrinking as we have just thought. When she is told that The Sons of San Gennaro will drag her away from Michele for the procession, she says that she is not afraid for herself and will wait for Michele, whom she is afraid will be harmed.

In the duet that Michele and Annina sing after his return home in Act I-Scene 2, Michele tries to convince Annina that she is imagining things. He reminds her that she was called "numbskull" by the other children in school because she could not learn. Earlier, in Act I-Scene 1, Michele told Don Marco that Annina was a sickly child who never grew, and had "a simple mind in a pain pierced body." Michele asks Annina why God should have chosen her of all people, since she is nothing special. Her answer, "Perhaps because I love Him," proves Annina to be sincere and child-like.

Annina reveals the potential strength of her character when she tells Michele that she will lead him away, instead of being led by him, far from all fear, far from the world to a "joy without wine, and peace without sleep. All roads lead back to their beginning. An illusion is their goal. Only the road that leads to God is forever straight."

Again she is childlike when Michele is overpowered by the young men who want her to take part in the procession and she is carried along "frightened and helpless."

At the wedding celebration in Act II, Annina seems to be a little shy. She is "almost hiding in a corner." Her wishes for the bride and groom, Carmela and Salvatore, are extremely warm. She asks Salvatore to be good to Carmela, who is gentle in her heart, so sweet and gay, and even a little silly at times.

At the point in Act II when Annina holds the dying Desideria in her arms, she decides that she can no longer wait to take the veil. She does not have a chance to tell Michele of her plan until she meets her fugitive brother in an arranged meeting in a subway station. She tells him that her "voices" tell her that she is going to die and that she is going to take the veil. It was for him alone that she stayed behind, did not take the veil sooner, but she must "hasten to her love" since she can no longer help him. She has made up her mind and not even he can change it.

In Act III Annina is no longer shy and retiring. Her determination to take the veil before she dies gives her the strength that finally elevates her to the dominant character in the opera. Her attention is so focused on what she is doing that she seems to be set apart from all the people who surround her.

Menotti has sharply contrasted the character of Annina, naive and childlike, to her surroundings. She appears to be a jewel in a tinsel setting. The sweetness of Annina must be pointed up in contrast to the hardness of the other characters in order to make her character more believable. She must have a radiance that will make her seem genuine instead of "an unctuous nuisance."<sup>1</sup> The audience must like her and believe that she is truly deserving of the blessings that she has received.

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<sup>1</sup>Sargeant, "The Saint of Bleecker Street," p. 75.

Menotti does not give much background of Annina and Michele. Their parents are never mentioned; one gets the feeling that they have had only each other for a long time. We know only that they are an Italian brother and sister living together in an Italian neighborhood in a cold-water flat.

#### Michele

Michele, who is loving and protective toward Annina, tries to save her from her illusions. He tries to persuade her that she is simply imagining things and that he will never consent to her taking the veil. He is a realist who says that people who create saints worship God out of defeat; "they look for wonders to forget their poverty; to redeem their failure."

The neighbors see Michele as a bully and a trouble maker. When he throws them out of the flat, telling them to leave his sister alone, they resent him for standing between them and Annina, because he "drowns their sun and bars the light from Heaven's gates." They are accustomed to hearing that Michele has been fighting, so they are not surprised when they find that he is causing the disturbance outside the banquet hall in Act II. He tells them that he knows that they hate him, and that since he was a child they have always hated him, "because I never asked for love, only understanding." He chides them for being ashamed of their descent and



adds that he is proud to be Italian, but wants to "belong to this new world."

Michele is lonely. He wants to be accepted but his bitterness keeps him from trusting people enough to form a close relationship. To Desideria, the person who is closest to him, he says that he wants to be alone and free. He professes not to care whether or not people like him. In Act II, in order to loosen Desideria's attachment to him, he tells her that he never asked her for her love. To clinch his point, he adds a little cruelty: "You offered it [love] to me and, at the time, no price was mentioned." When Desideria says that she would kill herself if she ever felt that he were ashamed of her, Michele shows that he might have some feeling for her when he says, "But I love you Desideria and am proud of it."

Much of Michele's wrath is directed at Don Marco, who in the end is the only person to whom Michele can turn for help.

The critics of The Saint of Bleecker Street seem to agree that the character of Michele is the weak link in the opera. "He cannot at all sustain the weight of meaning imposed by Menotti and emerges only as a kind of dramatic pretext. His rebellion seems gratuitous, without motive," says Hayes.<sup>1</sup> The investigator, in her approach to Michele,

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<sup>1</sup>Hayes, op. cit., p. 476.

feels that Menotti never meant him to be strong. It is characteristic for the men in Menotti's operas to be maimed or groping figures. For instance, Amahl in Amahl and the Night Visitors is a cripple, Toby in The Medium is blind, and Magda's husband in The Consul is constantly fleeing from the police. Michele, the investigator feels, must be seen as an immature young man who has been unable to adjust to the disappointments and frustrations of his life. He only appears to be selfish and unfeeling, for he is like a child who will pretend not to want a certain thing if he does not think that he can have it. Michele pretends not to want friendship or love, because he thinks that these things are beyond his grasp. He has not been able to trust people; therefore, he has developed an attitude that pushes people from him. The singer-actor who portrays Michele must be careful to use the few moments that Menotti gives him to develop the warm side of his nature. For instance, his reason for taking Desideria into the banquet hall in Act II must be that he wants to show her that he really cares, not that he wants to take her in just to show other people that he can get by with it. Michele's kindness toward Annina is the best way that the actor can show the suppressed side of his character.

Menotti never answers the question concerning Michele's feeling for his sister, but at least two characters indicate that it is possible that Michele has a perverse longing for his sister. Don Marco says in Act I-Scene 1 after all the

neighbors have left, "Ah, poor Michele, it is not I your rival, but God, himself. And what human love can compete with the love for God." Desideria is the other character who suspects that Michele loves Annina more than he could ever love another woman.

A striking physical appearance is essential for Michele since Maria Corona describes him as being handsome in Act III-Scene 1.

#### Desideria

Desideria, Michele's mistress, is indicated by Menotti to be a woman of loose moral character since he describes her as wearing a red dress with a carnation in her hair, an attire that is commonly associated with loose moral character on the stage.

Desideria, who like Michele is not accepted in the neighborhood, is the only neighbor not to be invited to the wedding. Desideria says that the neighbors call her a "slut" because she "sleeps" with Michele. Her mother has turned her out of the house, but Desideria does not give her mother's reason.

She loves Michele, but she feels that he is ashamed of her. Her purpose for coming to the restaurant in Act II is twofold; she wants Michele to prove that he loves her and she wants him to take her into the banquet room to prove that she is as good as any other woman in the neighborhood.

Desideria's aria in Act II is one of the high points musically of the opera. She tells Michele that love needs to be mirrored by love.

After Michele's failure to force an entrance for Desideria into the banquet room and his angry attack of the neighbors in general, he is comforted by Annina, who asks him to go home with her. This brings Desideria from a corner in a jealous rage with her most cutting weapon, a hint that Annina and Michele are unnaturally involved with each other. Enjoying the shock effect of this statement, Desideria keeps driving at the brother and sister without letting up. After all, she has already lost her temporary hold on Michele, so why not turn her loss into a victory in the eyes of others. To add to the drama of the scene she works herself into hysteria up to the point that Michele stabs her.

Sargeant says of Desideria: "She is the only major character capable of arousing any great sympathy. She is capable of normal passions and dies expressing them."<sup>1</sup>

#### Assunta

Assunta is a middle-aged woman who has six children and a drunken husband. Most of her life has been spent in hard work and she has the back pains to prove it. She occupies an important place in the neighborhood. In the opening of Act I, her neighbors all gather around her as she

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<sup>1</sup>Sargeant, "The Saint of Bleecker Street," p. 76.

leads them in chanting the Litany and waiting for Annina to appear. Again in Act III-Scene 2, she leads a group of women in prayer.

Assunta, one of Annina's close friends, believes that Annina is a saint, because she has seen her work miracles.

#### Carmela

Carmela, Annina's closest friend, also believes that Annina is a saint. For three years she could not walk before Annina healed her. The two girls were school chums and had always planned to take the veil together until Carmela fell in love with Salvatore.

Although Menotti makes no mention of Carmela's way of earning a living, she must have a good job of some sort since she is able to buy a beautiful wedding dress. The investigator pictures her in a secretarial job.

Annina describes Carmela as being gentle in her heart, sweet and gay, and even a little silly at times. Annina believes that Carmela will make Salvatore a good wife.

In a moving scene in Act III, Carmela gives Annina her wedding dress and veil to wear for the veiling ceremony.

#### Salvatore

Carmela describes Salvatore, her fiance, to Annina as being a nice boy. At the wedding celebration, she giggles and asks Annina if "he isn't funny looking."

Salvatore is one of the few neighbors who comes forward to rebuke Michele for his behavior in Act II. He is stationed at the door during the ceremony in Act III-Scene 2 to keep Michele from coming in and causing trouble. When Michele does come, Salvatore says, "If you go near her I'll kill you."

#### Maria Corona

Menotti describes Maria Corona as a pathetic middle-aged woman, shabbily dressed; who has a dumb, idiot son. For twenty-five years she has run a newspaper stand in the subway station where Annina meets Michele.

At first she does not believe that Annina has any special power, but has probably brought her son to her thinking "What do I have to lose?" As the waiting drags on, she crossly complains, "Who can promise that my child will be cured? One always hears about these miracles. Then--nothing happens."

In an argument with a young woman who wishes that Maria Corona would "shut her mouth," Maria Corona shows that she is spiteful, sarcastic and "common" by her barbed replies.

When Annina suffers the stigmata in Act I, Maria Corona pushes her dumb son through the crowd to touch her bleeding hands. After this scene, she is a devoted friend to Annina, for her son has begun to speak. She even promises that she will protect Annina with her own life against the gang that wants to kidnap Annina for the procession.



In Act III-Scene 1, Maria Corona does not seem to be effected by the pathos of Annina's situation, for she thoughtlessly discusses the newspaper reports of Michele's deed, and is obviously impressed by all the publicity. She is disappointed when Annina does not share her excitement.

In Act III-Scene 1, Menotti uses the monologues of Maria Corona to relieve the tension that builds between Annina and Michele. Her apathy points up the despair of the brother and sister.

#### Don Marco

Don Marco, the priest and a respected member of the neighborhood, at first seems to believe in Annina when he asks the neighbors to be gentle with her if she is again blessed with the stigmata. He promises to throw anybody out who tries to touch her wounds, but he does not succeed. When questioned by Michele about Annina's being a saint, he answers, "A priest is not a judge but only a guide. I do not say that I believe in this, but she believes and must be guided." Even though Don Marco does not make a strong stand concerning Annina's visions, he does exhibit boldness in his refusal to let Michele dominate others. For instance, when Michele, in Act I-Scene 1, tells everyone to leave, Don Marco stays in an effort to convince Michele that he is wrong. In Act II, Don Marco refuses to let Michele take Desideria into the banquet hall even if Michele strikes him, because he knows that Desideria would not be welcomed.

The investigator feels that Menotti does not intend for Don Marco to appear pious. He must be down to earth in order to minister to the needs of the people of his flock.

In the end, Don Marco is the only person that helps Michele. He arranges the meeting for him with Annina in the subway station.

### The Chorus

The chorus of The Saint of Bleecker Street, made up of neighbors and members of the Italian community, is important in developing the mood of the opera and the story. The majestic choral writing of the opera requires a large, well-trained group of singers. The investigator believes that a chorus of forty members, twenty females and twenty males, will be sufficient.

All small roles such as the Nun, the bartender, and the waiter will be played by members of the chorus. In assigning movement, the director will treat each chorus member as an individual by assigning him a number and by giving him a definite character for the production. Numbers one through twenty will be female chorus members and numbers twenty-one through forty will be male chorus members. Table 1 lists each chorus member by number and character.

TABLE 1

## CHORUS

Number	Voice	Character	Act	Scene
1	soprano	Young woman who quarrels with Maria Corona	I	1
2				
3		Member of group of women	I	2
4		Member of group of women	I	2
5		Member of group of women	I	2
6		Member of group of women	I	2
7		Member of group of women	I	2
8		Member of group of women	I	2
9		Concetina	I	2
10		Child	I	2
11		Child	I	2
12		Renata, girl at window	I	2
13		The Nun	III	2
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
20				
21				

TABLE I--Continued

Number	Voice	Character	Act	Scene
22	tenor	Young man	I	1
23				
24		Son of San Gennaro	I	2
25		Son of San Gennaro	I	2
26		Son of San Gennaro	I	2
27		Son of San Gennaro	I	2
28		Son of San Genaro	I	2
29	tenor	Young man who toasts the married couple	II	
30	bar.	Young man who toasts the married couple	II	
31	bar.	Bartender	II	
32		Waiter who brings cake	II	
33		Policeman	II	
34		Policeman	II	
35		Blind man	I	1
36				
37	bar.	Guest who comes from the banquet room for Carmela and Salvatore	II	
38		The Acolyte	III	2
39		Man who helps bring Annina in	I	1
40		Man who helps bring Annina in	I	1

### Rehearsal Techniques

The rehearsal schedule for The Saint of Bleecker Street will be planned with an opera workshop in mind. Since the prompt book was designed for a college opera workshop comparable to the workshop presently in use at Texas Woman's University, the general director will act as conductor, stage director, and business manager. Students will be appointed to assist with costuming, stage crews, properties, and publicity. Working closely with the general director will be the speech and drama department, which will provide lighting and construct the sets.

Before rehearsals begin the director will assemble workshop members to hear a recording of the opera. The presentation of the opera in its totality "gives the students a much needed perspective. For some, it may be their first opportunity to hear an opera."<sup>1</sup>

The rehearsal period will be divided into the following stages: (1) Musical rehearsals, (2) Blocking rehearsals, and (3) Musical and movement rehearsals.

For convenience, the entire score has been divided into small segments according to Table 2 for musical rehearsals. Musical rehearsals will begin with the reading of small segments of Act I-Scene 1 by principal characters separate from the chorus. After these segments are well read, the entire scene will be read by both principals and chorus.

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<sup>1</sup>Huber, op. cit., p. 29.

TABLE 2  
DIVISIONS OF THE SCORE FOR MUSICAL REHEARSALS

Act I-Scene 1	
Pages	Character Involved
1- 34	Assunta, Chorus, Carmela, Maria Corona, Don Marco
34- 48	Annina
48- 59	Chorus, Michele, Carmela
59- 68	Michele and Don Marco
Act I-Scene 2	
73- 81	Assunta, Carmela, Annina, Woman (#3), girl (#12), Concetina
81-101	Annina, Carmela, Assunta, Maria Corona
101-116	Annina, Michele
116-133	Annina, Michele, Chorus
Act II	
134-144	These pages are cut
145	Music only
146-149	Chorus, Michele
150-155	Annina, Carmela, Salvatore
156-182	Desideria, Michele, Chorus
182-187	Michele, Don Marco



TABLE 2--Continued

Act II	
187-189	Chorus, Annina, Salvatore, Michele
189-195	Michele
195-212	Don Marco, Annina, Michele, Desideria
Act III-Scene 1	
216-222	Annina, Maria Corona
225	Don Marco
226-237	Annina, Michele
237-239	Maria Corona
241-248	Annina, Michele
Act III-Scene 2	
258-266	Assunta, Carmela, Annina
267-275	Don Marco, Carmela, Annina
276-283	Assunta, Maria Corona, Salvatore, Don Marco
283-297	Chorus, Don Marco, Annina
297-307	Michele, Salvatore, Maria Corona, Carmela, Assunta, Chorus

Non-singing roles will be added at time of blocking.

Each scene will be studied in this manner until the entire opera can be sung smoothly with the score.

When the music is almost memorized, the blocking will be given by scenes with books in hand. It is at this time that memory work will be completed. In other words, the final touches must be put on musical memory work as the movement is memorized.

Although characterization will have been considered even in the beginning of the musical rehearsals, by the time the music is memorized and the movement learned, the singers should primarily be concerned with the characters that they are portraying.

#### Ground Plans

"The ground plan is a scale drawing of the plan of the actual setting in the stage it will occupy," says Galloway.<sup>1</sup> It is the view of the stage one would have if he were suspended directly above it. It shows all walls, openings, backings, platforms, steps, together with the top sides of the main pieces of furniture. The investigator has chosen a scale of one-fourth inch to a foot and a half. Convenient scales are one-eighth inch, three-sixteenths, or one-fourth inch to the foot. The investigator chose a different scale since it was necessary to fit a large area artistically into a small book size page.

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<sup>1</sup>Marian Galloway, The Director in the Theatre (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1963), p. 155.

The stage chosen, the stage in the main auditorium of Texas Woman's University, is forty-five feet along the front of the stage and twenty-two feet deep from the teaser to the big cyclorama.

The Saint of Bleecker Street calls for four sets. The same set is used in Act III-Scene 2 that is used in Act I-Scene 1.

Since the prompt book does not include elevations of the ground plans of the sets, following are descriptions of the sets and stage properties.

#### Act I-Scene 1 and Act III-Scene 2

The set for Act I-Scene 1 and Act III-Scene 2 should show the poverty and the loneliness of its inhabitants. The walls, painted a dull, pale yellow, should not be adorned with more than the picture of the Virgin above the table by Annina's door and perhaps a calendar or a torn travel poster above the bed. The woodwork around the doors and the window (UL) should be painted a dark ivory with smudge marks and pencil marks. The window, not curtained, should be covered by a dirty, torn shade.

Since the altar, the table by Annina's door, is so important to Annina, it should be adorned with a large, clean doily that drapes around the small table, candles, the picture of the Virgin that has obviously been bought in a ten-cent store, and a large family Bible.

The chair in center stage should be an old stuffed chair with worn arm rests and a dingy cover. It should be heavy enough to stop Annina's fall in Act I-Scene 1 without moving.

The iron bed should be a sturdy single bed capable of supporting several chorus members. It should be covered with a patchwork quilt and have a pillow with a dingy pillow-case.

The stove, topped with a battered tea kettle, should be an old four-burner gas stove that is missing a bottom drawer.

#### Act I-Scene 2

Act I-Scene 2 is an empty lot on Mulberry Street that is flanked by the backs of two tenement houses. The walls of these buildings should represent the brownstone buildings found in New York City. Since the backs of the buildings are shown, the two doors should have screens that stand open and only three steps leading to the ground without a porch.

The wire fence between the lot and the street upstage should sag in places and have a gate that is loose enough to hang to the ground about half open. The wire should be painted a rusty brown.

The street should be backed by a drop that shows the fronts of the buildings across the street. The procession, passersby, and street vendors will be seen passing in front of this drop.

The empty crates (DL) should be sturdy, old, and spattered with paint. The garbage cans should range from new to delapidated.

## Act II

The walls and woodwork for the restaurant in Act II should be painted a dusty rose with frescos above the bar, above the tables (DI), and above the couch (UL).

The cabinet behind the bar should have a shelf that runs the length of the bar and is one foot above it. This shelf should contain a variety of bottles and glasses that are attached to the shelf. The shelf and the bar should appear to be made of a dark wood. The bar stools, the revolving type with black covering, should be fixed to a board the length of the bar and attached to the bar for security.

The tables, C and DL, should be covered with red and white checked cloths and have a candle, a sugar shaker, salt and pepper shakers, and a menu. The chairs should be straight chairs with straw bottoms.

The upstage area of the stage should be raised six inches and set off from the front of the room by four pillars and a low ceiling. The pillars, one on each wall and two between the walls, should form three arches. Multi-colored chains should string from the ceiling above the arches to the wall above the bar and the wall above the tables (DL).

The door that leads to the banquet hall should be a large French door with white, transparent curtains. A sign with "Banquet Room" printed on it hangs above the door.

The large window UC should be curtained with the same material that covers the French doors.

The couch UL should be upholstered with a dark green material or brown leather.

### Act III-Scene 1

The ground plan for Act III-Scene 1 was designed from the painting The Subway by George Tooker.<sup>1</sup>

The walls should be painted ivory and spattered for a dingy effect.

The stairway leading to the street should be littered with papers and topped with a material that looks like snow.

The turnstile (RC) and the iron grill gate should be painted black and allow the audience to see through to the stairs that lead off R. Only the handrail of the stairs that lead off R should be seen. The backing behind the turnstile starts where the imaginary stairs begin.

The phone booths, left of the stairs, are openings in the wall with fake phone boxes nailed to the stage left sides of the booths.

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<sup>1</sup>The inspirations for the scenery used in the Broadway production of The Saint of Bleecker Street came from the work of George Tooker, a young Brooklyn painter who had lived for some years on Bleecker Street. His best known painting, The Subway, now hangs in the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City.



The counter that separates the kiosk from the waiting station should be three and one-half feet high and fifteen inches wide, and should be painted a dark brown. Shelves holding newspapers and magazines should line the walls of the kiosk. A small gas heater stands in the downstage end of the kiosk. Right of the kiosk is a bench that should be made of wood and painted dark brown to match the counter of the kiosk.

Chapter III, the director's approach to the opera, is followed by the prompt book.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PROMPT BOOK

#### Introduction

The written plan of a theatrical production is called the prompt book. It consists of the whole text of the play or the libretto of the opera, plus all of the director's notes regarding the entire production. Although for convenience one starts the prompt book as early as possible and tries to make the plan as complete as possible, it must never be thought of as unalterable. The plan must remain flexible to the last possible moment.<sup>1</sup>

In the prompt book for The Saint of Bleecker Street the investigator includes: (1) a list of characters and scenes as they would appear in the program; (2) ground plans; (3) property plot; (4) costume plot; (5) make-up schedule; and (6) the libretto, accompanied by corresponding pages which provide the description of action and the diagrams of action.

The description of action presents the verbal description of the action which corresponds by number to the visual picture of the diagrams. In the diagrams of action a floor

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<sup>1</sup>Galloway, op. cit., pp. 53-54.

plan with furniture placement is reproduced with each character's movement or action indicated by a line. At the end of each line is a number which corresponds with the same number in the script itself.

Following is a list of characters and the abbreviations which will be used in the diagrams.

Assunta . . . . .	A
Carmela . . . . .	C
Maria Corona . . . . .	MC
Her Dumb Son . . . . .	s
Don Marco . . . . .	DM
Annina . . . . .	Ann.
Michele . . . . .	M
Desideria . . . . .	D
Salvatore . . . . .	S
Concettina . . . . .	Con.
A Young Man . . . . .	22
An Old Woman . . . . .	
Bartender . . . . .	31
First Guest . . . . .	29
Second Guest . . . . .	30
A Nun . . . . .	13
A Young Priest . . . . .	

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# THE SAINT OF BLEECKER STREET

MUSICAL DRAMA

in

THREE ACTS

(Five Scenes)

*Words and Music by*

*Gian-Carlo Menotti*

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New York

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## CHARACTERS

*(in order of appearance)*

ASSUNTA . . . . . *MEZZO-SOPRANO*  
 CARMELA . . . . . *SOPRANO*  
 MARIA CORONA (a newspaper vendor) . . . . . *SOPRANO*  
 HER DUMB SON (about 16 years old)  
 DON MARCO (a priest) . . . . . *BASS*  
 ANNINA . . . . . *SOPRANO*  
 MICHELE . . . . . *TENOR*  
 DESIDERIA . . . . . *MEZZO-SOPRANO*  
 SALVATORE . . . . . *BARITONE*  
 CONCETTINA, A CHILD  
 A YOUNG MAN  
 AN OLD WOMAN  
 BARTENDER  
 FIRST GUEST  
 SECOND GUEST  
 A NUN  
 A YOUNG PRIEST  
 NEIGHBORS, FRIENDS, POLICEMEN, ETC.

---

Time — the present

Act I: Scene 1: A cold-water flat on Bleecker Street. Good Friday Afternoon.  
 Scene 2: A vacant lot on Mulberry Street. The following September.

Act II: An Italian Restaurant. The following May.

Act III: Scene 1: A Subway Station. A few months later.  
 Scene 2: The cold-water flat. A week later.

LEGEND:

1. Stove
2. Iron bed
3. Window
4. Stuffed chair
5. Entrance from hallway
6. Closet
7. Small altar
8. Entrance to Annina's room
9. Backing for hall entrance

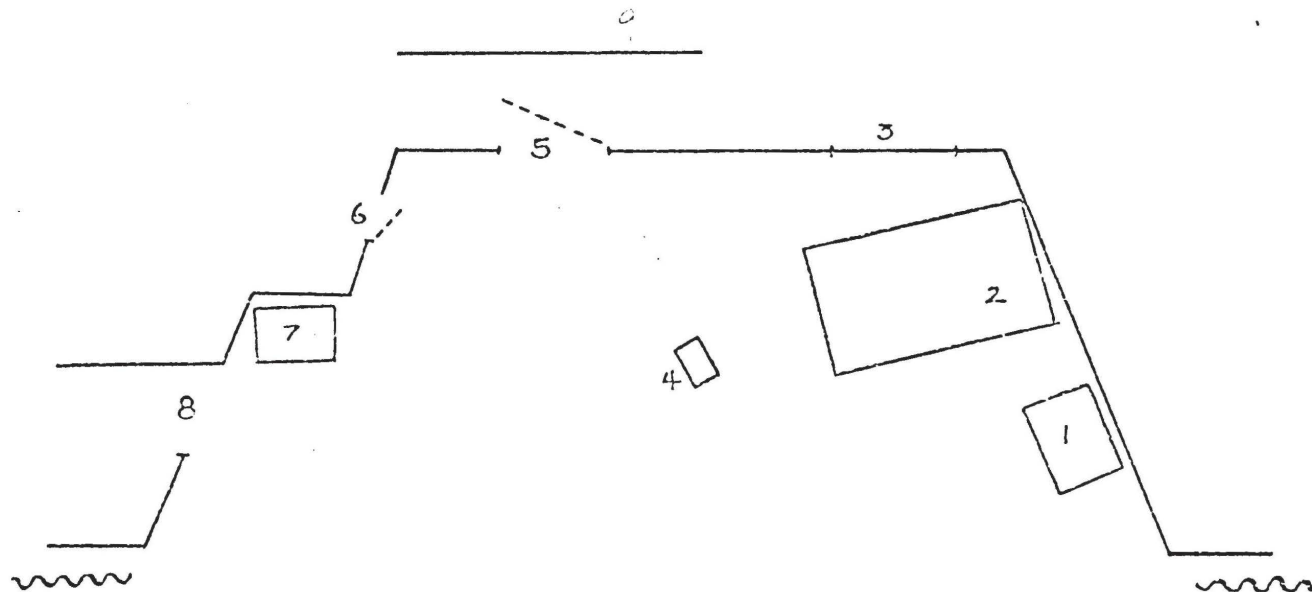


Fig. 1.--Ground Plan

Act I-Scene 1 and Act III-Scene 2

## LEGEND

1. Empty crates
2. Steps leading to stage left  
apartment house
3. Wire fence
4. Gate
5. Street
6. Background drop of apartment  
houses across the street
7. Steps leading to stage right  
apartment house
8. Window to young girl's apartment  
on second floor
9. Window to Assunta's apartment
10. Garbage cans
11. Backing for door
12. Backing for window
13. Backing for Window
14. Backing for door

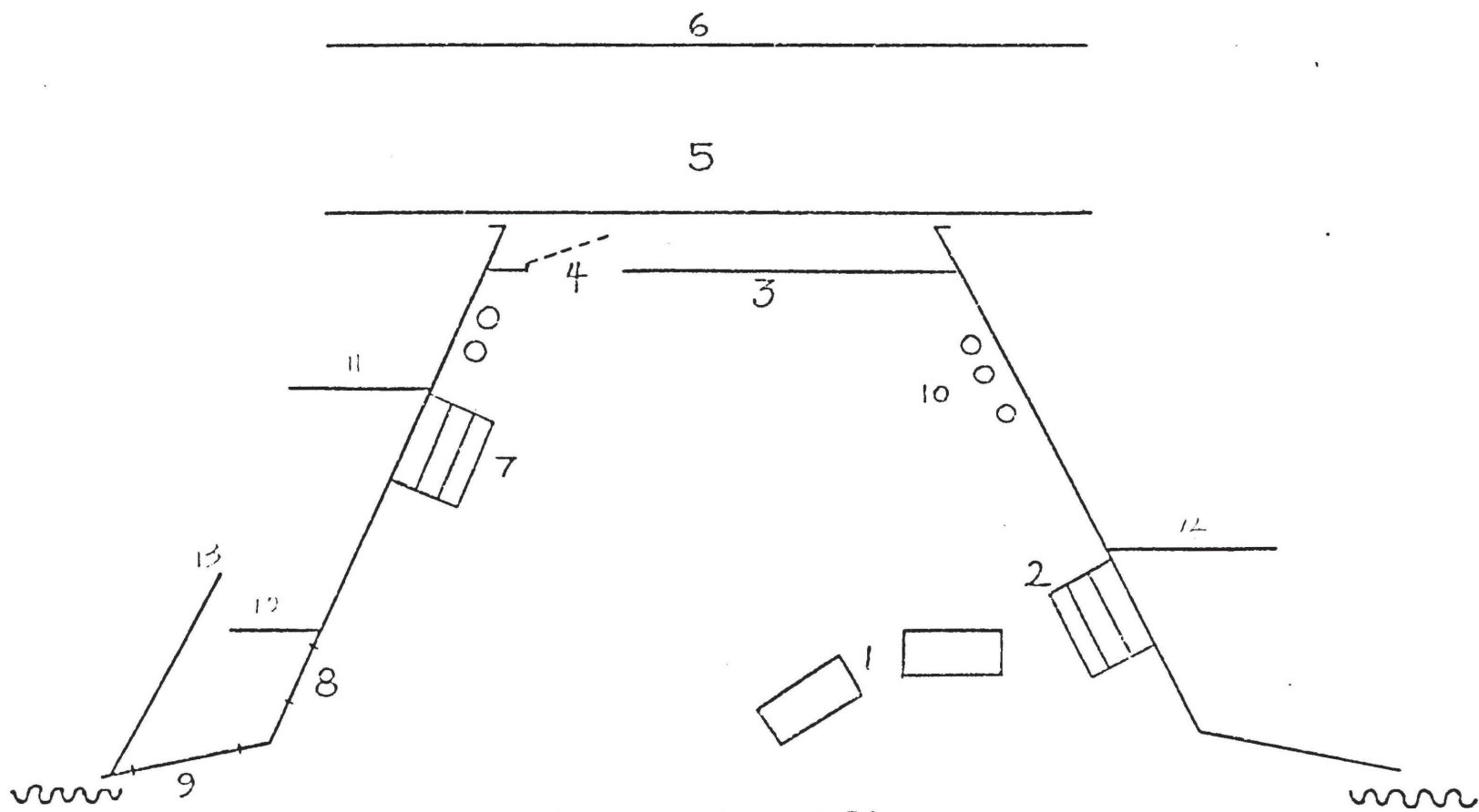


Fig. 2.--Ground Plan

Act I-Scene 2

LEGEND:

1. Table
2. Telephone booth
3. Entrance to kitchen
4. Couch
5. Entrance to street
6. Stairs leading up to street
7. Window
8. Juke box
9. Entrance to banquet hall
10. Bar stools
11. Bar
12. Counter to bar
13. Backing for door and window
14. Backing for door
15. Backing for door
16. Pillar

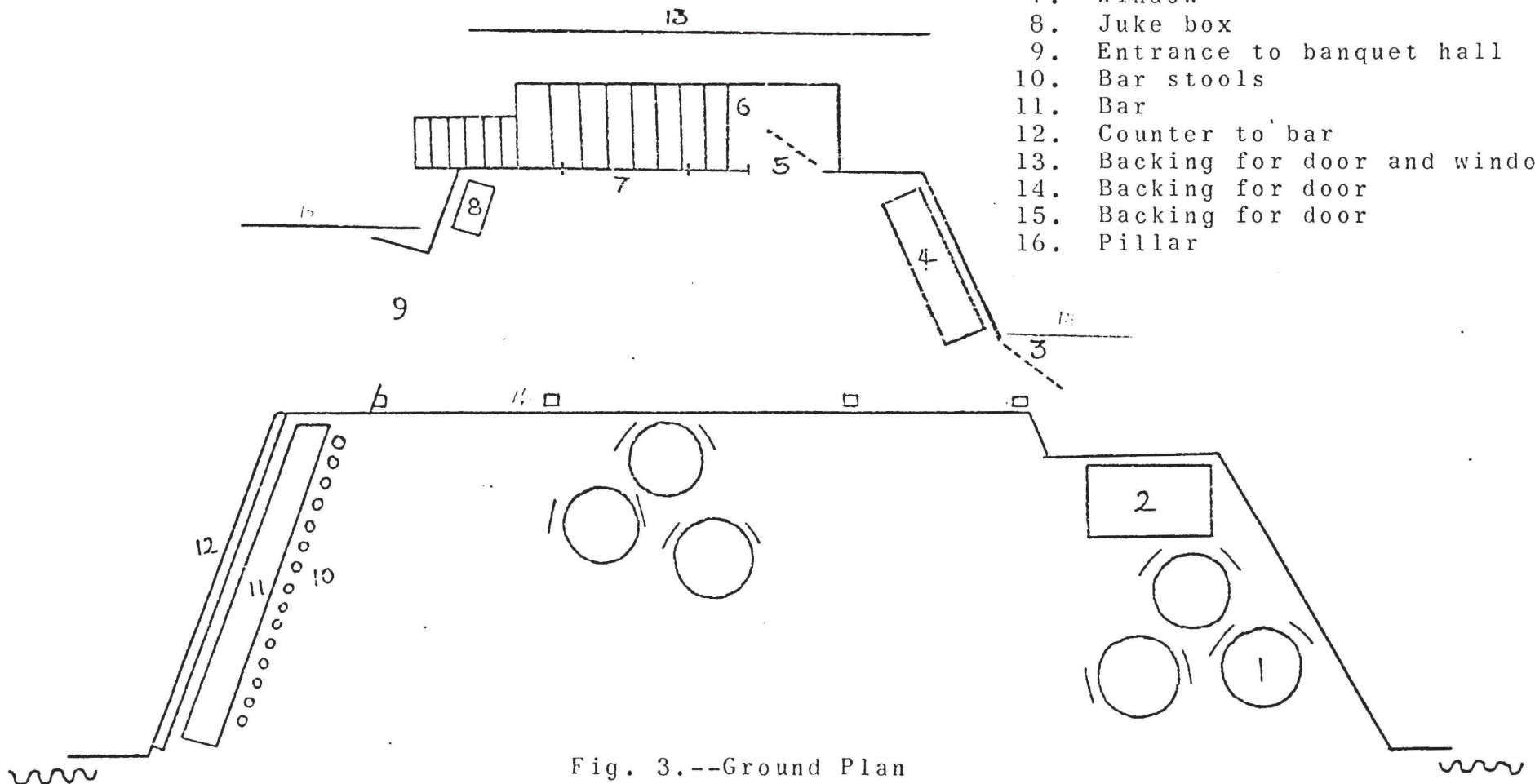


Fig. 3.--Ground Plan

Act II

LEGEND:

1. Stove
2. Chair
3. Counters in kiosk
4. Bench
5. Passageway
6. Telephone booths
7. Stairs to street
8. Gate
9. Turnstile
10. Entrance to imaginary stairs
11. Backing for stairs
12. Backing for gate and turnstile

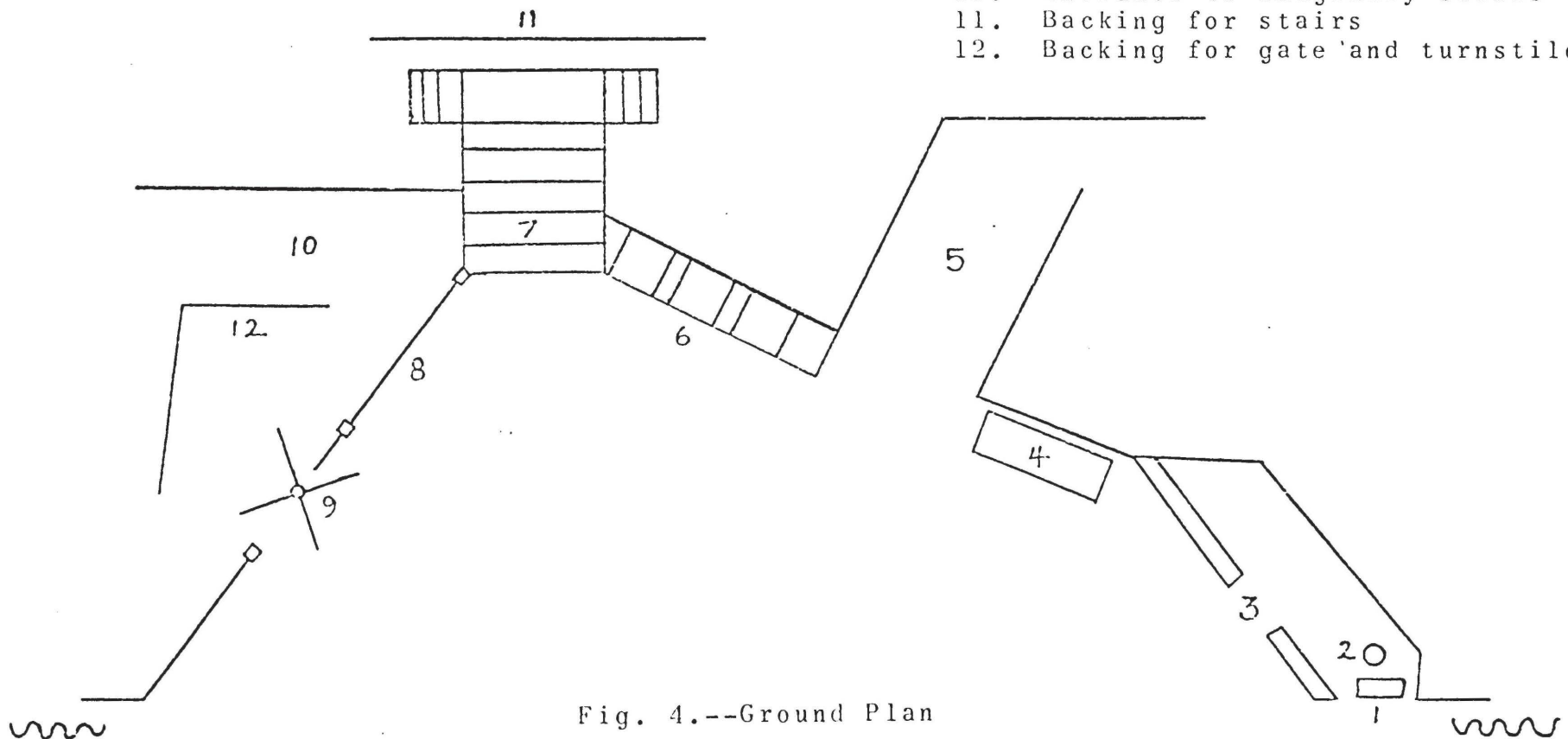


Fig. 4.--Ground Plan

Act III-Scene 1



TABLE 3

## PROPERTY PLOT

Set-up for Act I-Scene 1	
On Stage	Off Stage
1. Stove DL	
2. Iron Bed UL	
3. Small table RC of Annina's door	
4. Monochrome picture of Virgin on table by Annina's door	
5. Stuffed chair C	
6. Candles on table	
Set-up for Act I-Scene 2	
1. Crates near steps DL	1. For Annina and Carmela
2. Five garbage cans; two-UR and three-UL	a. Scissors
3. Rocking chair in Assunta's apartment DR	b. Needles
	c. Gold papier-maché
	d. Gold stars
	2. Instruments for band
	3. Baseball bat for men to hit Michele
	4. Rope to tie Michele
	5. Effigy of San Gennaro on rollers
	6. Paper trumpets
	7. Candies
	8. Candles
	9. Holy banners

TABLE 3--Continued

Set-up for Act II	
On Stage	Off Stage
1. Paper chains decorating the ceiling	1. Wine glasses
2. Elaborate bar DR	2. Colored water
a. Glasses	3. Large silver tray
b. Bottles	4. Huge wedding cake
c. Café expresso machine	
d. Knife	
3. Six small round tables	
a. Candle - 6	
b. Sugar shaker - 6	
c. Salt and pepper shakers - 6	
d. Menus - 6	
4. Twelve chairs	
5. Juke box UR	
6. Phone booth LC	
7. Couch UL	

Set-up for Act III-Scene 1	
1. Bench LC	1. Cigarettes and matches for Michele
2. Stove in kiosk	2. School books for school children
3. Newspapers in kiosk	
4. Magazines in kiosk	
5. Bundle of newspapers in kiosk	
6. Paper littering floor	

TABLE 3--Continued

On Stage	Off Stage
7. Coat and scarf for Maria Corona's son in kiosk	
8. Two chairs in kiosk	
Set-up for Act III-Scene 2	
1. Same as Act I-Scene 1 except:	1. Carmela's wedding dress
2. Chair L of stuffed chair	2. Letter for Don Marco
3. Screen DL by stove	3. Bridal veil
4. Candles for Don Marco on table by Annina's door	4. Candles for Annina
5. Matches on table	5. Candles for Chorus
	6. Wreath of blossoms (crown)
	7. Large black cloth 3' x 4½'
	8. Silver tray
	9. Scissors
	10. Small black veil
	11. Gold ring

TABLE 4  
COSTUME SCHEDULE

---



---

Act I-Scene 1	
Assunta	Print house dress
Chorus	Work clothes; house dresses
Maria Corona	House dress; old sweater
Dumb son	Overalls; faded flannel shirt
Carmela	Sweater and skirt; heels
Young woman	Tailored dress; heels
Don Marco	Priest's habit
Annina	Pale yellow, cotton dress; a light brown wig; flat shoes
Michele	Black slacks; sweat shirt; sneakers

---

Act I-Scene 2	
Annina	Print dress; flat shoes; wig
Carmela	Slacks; blouse; flat shoes
Concettina	Crude angel costume with wings
Assunta	Dark cotton dress; black shoes
Women	Loud, flowery print dresses
Girl (at the window)	Bath robe
Children	Angel costumes of cheap white material trimmed with gold and silver glitter
Maria Corona	House dress

TABLE 4--Continued


---



---

Act I-Scene 2	
Dumb son	Overalls; cotton shirt
Michele	Blue jeans; cotton, short-sleeved shirt
Chorus	Women: cotton dresses; no shoes Men: slacks; sport shirts
Gang of young men	Dark slacks; dark shirts
Desideria	Red dress; heels; carnation in hair

---

Act II	
Carmela	Bridal gown; veil; heels; bouquet of white roses
Salvatore	Black suit; white shirt; tie; black shoes; boutonniere
Chorus	Men: suits; dress shirts; ties Women: suits, inexpensive party dresses; heels; handbags
Assunta	Suit; hat; gloves; handbag; heels
Michele	Dark summer suit; white whirt; tie; black shoes
Annina	Pale blue, worn party dress; white gloves; heels; string of imitation pearls
Maria Corona	Dark dress; heels; handbag
Barman	Dark slacks; white shirt; white apron
Waiter	Dark slacks; white shirt; white apron

TABLE 4--Continued

Act II	
Desideria	Pink cocktail dress; flashy, gaudy jewelry; silver evening shoes; white purse
Don Marco	Priest's habit
Policemen	Blue uniforms
Act III-Scene 1	
Annina	Wool dress; shawl; old mittens
Maria Corona	Dark dress; sweater
Dumb son	Overalls; flannel shirt
Don Marco	Priest's habit
Michele	Blue jeans; dirty pullover sweater; dark plaid coat
Act III-Scene 2	
Annina	Dark dress; old shawl; flat shoes
Don Marco	Priest's habit
Young Priest	Priest's habit
Nun	Nun's habit
Carmela	House dress; flat shoes
Salvatore	Slacks; long-sleeved shirt
Assunta	House dress
Chorus	House dresses and work clothes
Michele	Same as Act III-Scene 1



TABLE 5  
MAKE-UP SCHEDULE

Character	Make-Up
Assunta	Straight female character
Maria Corona	Straight female character-messy hair
Dumb son	Straight male juvenile
Carmela	Straight female
Annina	Straight female-pale colouring, light brown wig
Michele	Straight male-dark colouring
Don Marco	Straight male-middle aged
Concettina	Straight female juvenile
Desideria	Straight female-somewhat overdone
Salvatore	Straight male
Barman	Straight male
Waiter	Straight male
Policeman	Straight male
Young Priest	Straight male

This basic make-up is the same throughout the play.

## THE SAINT OF BLEECKER STREET

By GIAN-CARLO MENOTTI

## ACT I

## Scene I

*(A cold-water flat in the tenements of Bleecker Street. Upstage, the entrance from the hallway. Stage right, a door leading to Annina's bedroom. Next to it a small heavily adorned altar displaying a monochrome picture of the Virgin. Stage left, a kitchen stove and an iron bed. As the curtain opens, a group of neighbors, some standing, some kneeling, are grouped around Assunta who is chanting the Litany. They are all facing the half-open door of Annina's room.)*

I	ASSUNTA
Rosa Mystica,	
	CHORUS
Ora pro nobis,	
	ASSUNTA
Turris davidica,	
	CHORUS
Ora pro nobis,	
	ASSUNTA
Turris eburnea,	
	CHORUS
Ora pro nobis,	
	ASSUNTA
Domus aurea,	
	CHORUS
Ora pro nobis,	
	ASSUNTA
Foederis arca,	
	CHORUS
Ora pro nobis,	
	ASSUNTA
Janua coeli,	
	CHORUS
Ora pro nobis,	
	ASSUNTA
Stella matutina,	
	CHORUS
Ora pro nobis,	
	ASSUNTA
Salus infirmorum,	

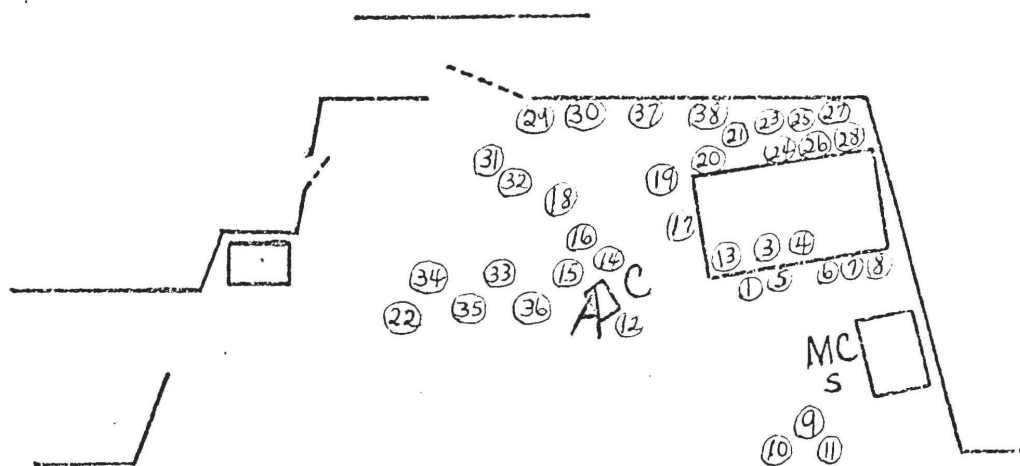
## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action

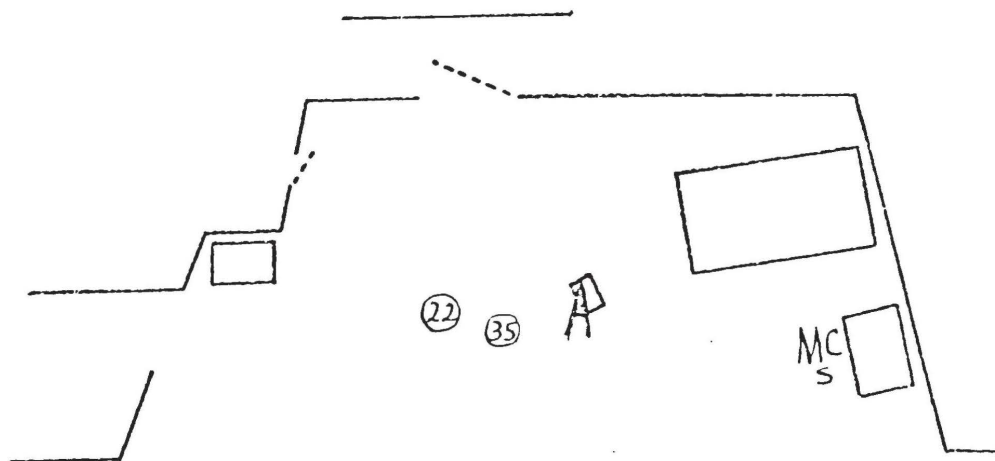
i. A sits in chair (C)

Chorus members ⑬, ③, and ④ are seated on the bed

Chorus members ⑫, ⑤, ⑨, ⑩, ⑪, ⑫, ⑬, ⑭, ⑮, and ⑯ are seated on the floor



Placement remains the same



CHORUS

Ora pro nobis.

ASSUNTA

Refugium peccato . .

1 *(A young man tiptoes to the bedroom door and peeks through.)*

YOUNG MAN

2 Sh!

CHORUS

What do you see?

Why don't they bring her out?

We've waited long enough.

YOUNG MAN

3 She moves, she weeps.

CHORUS

She moves, she weeps.

YOUNG MAN

They hold her down, they wipe her cheeks.

CHORUS

They wipe her cheeks.

YOUNG MAN

They have moved her to her chair.

Her eyes are glassy like the dead.

CHORUS

Watch out, watch out. They'll see you.

Run back.

Better close the door!

YOUNG MAN

She moans, she cries,

As if in great consuming pain.

4 I believe her visions have begun.

CHORUS

Her visions have begun.

Why don't they bring her out?

Oh, Saint Annina, daughter of Christ,

You bear His passion, you bear His light.

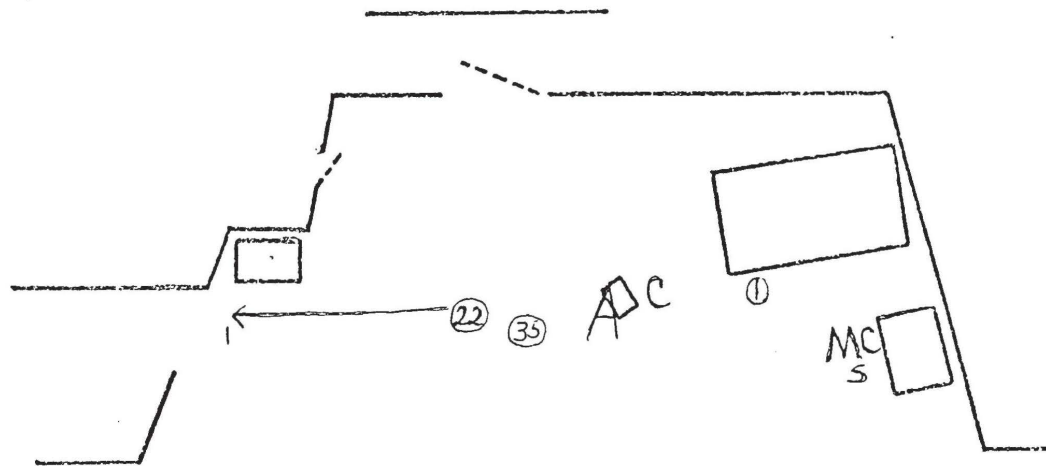
Come and bless us,

Come and heal us.

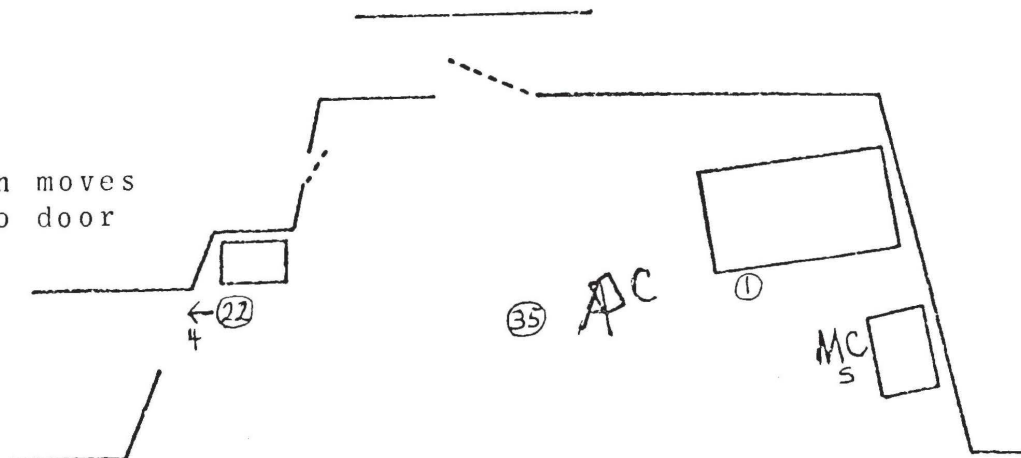
## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action

1. A young man (22) rises, tiptoes to the bedroom door, and peeks through
2. Young man turns to face A
3. Young man looks through door again



4. Young man moves closer to door



MARIA CORONA

*(A pathetic middle-aged woman, shabbily dressed. Her dumb, idiot son is holding onto her skirt as he does throughout the opera.)*

1 Well . . . I'm tired of waiting!  
I've been here since this morning.  
My knees hurt.

ASSUNTA

2 Don't be a fool.  
They'll bring her out any minute.

MARIA CORONA

3 My poor child has had nothing to eat all day.  
Besides, who can promise that my child will be cured?  
One always hears about these miracles.  
Then — nothing happens.

ASSUNTA

Shame on you!  
How do you expect your child to be cured if you have no faith?

CARMELA

4 Look at me! For three years I couldn't walk.

5

ASSUNTA *(pointing to an old man in the crowd)*

He was blind and she made him see again.

CARMELA

There's no doubt, she's a saint.  
Every Holy Friday she suffers the Passion of Our Lord.

ASSUNTA

And that is not all, that is not all.

CARMELA

Once she saw Saint Michael with two young archangels.  
Once she saw the saints and the angels sing and dance all around the throne of Our Lord.

ASSUNTA

Once she saw Saint Peter with the Keys of Heaven.  
Once the Holy Virgin appeared to her and said she must always pray to Her Son.

CARMELA

Once as she was praying, the Devil came and set her clothes on fire.

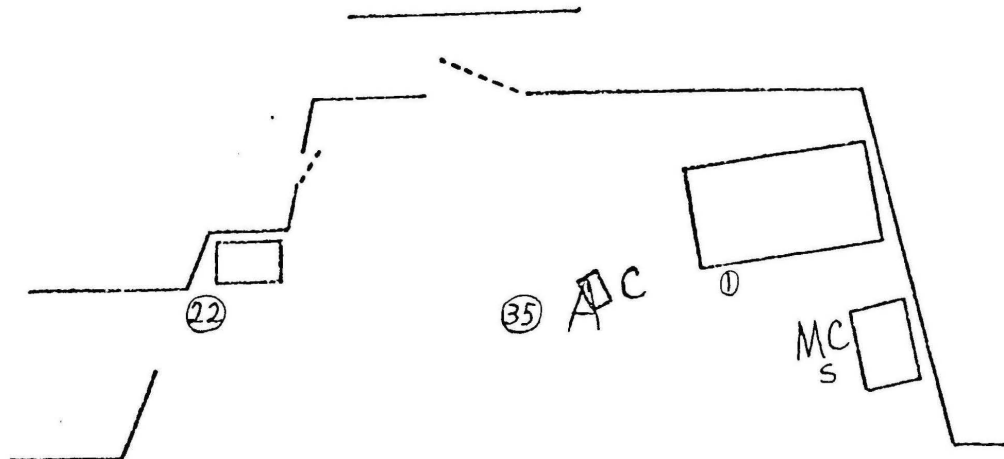
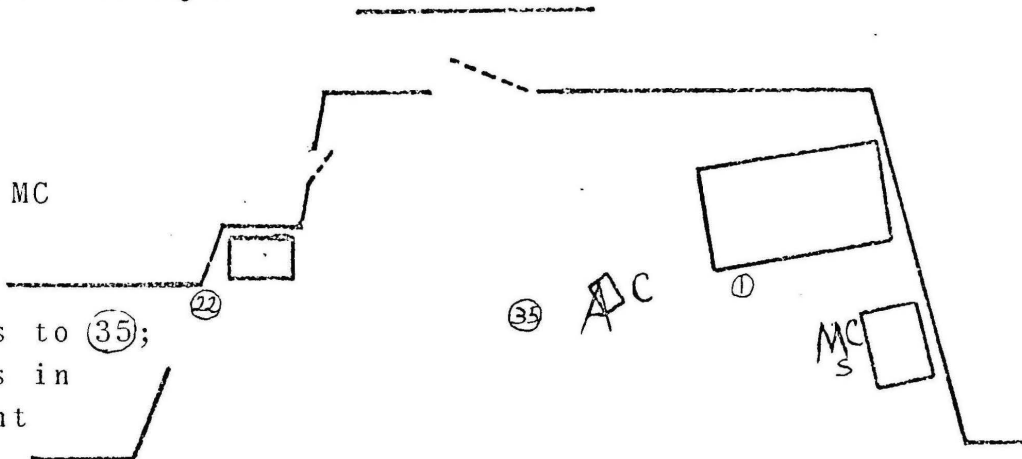
## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action

1. MC faces DL
2. A turns L to MC
3. MC turns R facing A

4. C faces MC

5. A points to (35);  
(35) nods in  
agreement





## ASSUNTA

Always where she goes, one can smell the sweetest scent of flowers.

## CARMELA AND ASSUNTA

Once her brother Michael cursed the Virgin Mary  
 And that very day someone saw that image there on the wall weep tears of blood.  
 She's a dove,  
 She's a burning flame,  
 She's a lily,  
 She's the cooling wave,  
 She's the chosen one.

## MARIA CORONA

Must my poor child die of hunger, then, while we wait here all day?  
 If she can work all these miracles, all right, let's see them.

## A YOUNG WOMAN

2 I'd like to tell you a thing or two.

## MARIA CORONA

You shut your mouth and mind your  
 business!

## YOUNG WOMAN

I'm getting sick of you! If you are  
 tired, all right, go home. Leave us  
 alone. Get out of here.

## MARIA CORONA

Is this your home, by any chance?

## YOUNG WOMAN

If you don't go, I'll throw you out.

## MARIA CORONA

3 Ah, you make me laugh.

*(The quarreling of the two women will grow in intensity until they almost come to blows.)*

## YOUNG WOMAN

And yappity, yappity, yappity yap!

## CHORUS

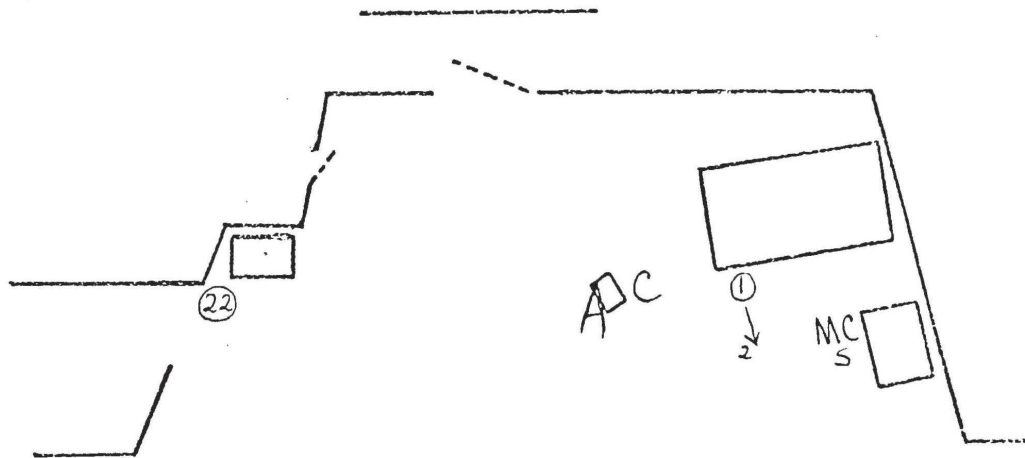
She soon will come.  
 Her eyes so wild, so pale her cheeks.  
 Look down, O Lord, upon Your child.  
 Consumed by love, she lies in wait.  
 Oh, blind her eyes with holy sight  
 And pierce her hands with sacred  
     wounds.  
 Oh, Saint Annina, daughter of Christ,  
 You bear His Passion,  
 You bear His light.  
 Come and bless us,  
 Come and heal us,  
 Come! Come!

# Description of Action

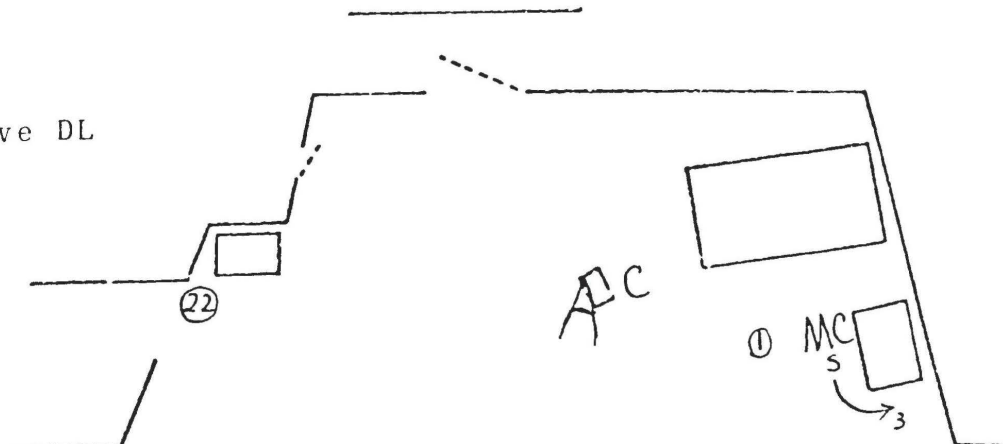
# Diagrams of Action

1. A points R to image above altar

2. ① moves R of MC



3. MC & s move DL



MARIA CORONA

Ah, you make me laugh.

YOUNG WOMAN

Why don't you let me say my prayer  
in peace?

MARIA CORONA

You pray all day because you're afraid  
of going to Hell.

YOUNG WOMAN

And you'll be there to let me in, you  
strumpet, you!

MARIA CORONA

Be careful what you say in front of  
my child.

YOUNG WOMAN (1)

I bet that you don't even know who's  
the father of your child!

MARIA CORONA

You dirty bitch! How dare you say  
such a thing. I bet there isn't a man  
on Bleecker Street who hasn't slept  
with you!

YOUNG WOMAN

2 Ah! You poisoned old snake. I'll fix  
you. If you don't leave, I'll wring  
your neck!

MARIA CORONA

Oh, let's see you try it!

3 (Don Marco suddenly appears on the threshold of the bedroom. At his appearance  
the crowd draws back. Some rise in respect — others turn away to hide their  
eagerness.)

DON MARCO

The vision has begun.

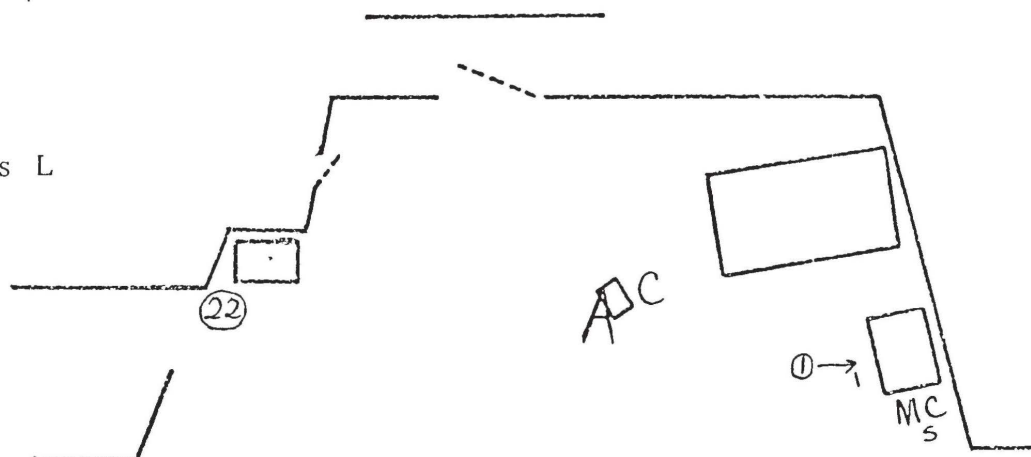
CHORUS

A sudden chill has filled the room.  
The light has changed, the clock is still.  
The sweetest perfume fills the air.  
I'm feeling ill, I'm going to faint.  
There! I hear some voices.  
Yes! Take care.  
Someone is coming.  
Yes! Take care.  
The door is opening.  
Oh God! I feel I'm going to faint.  
Come! Come!

## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action

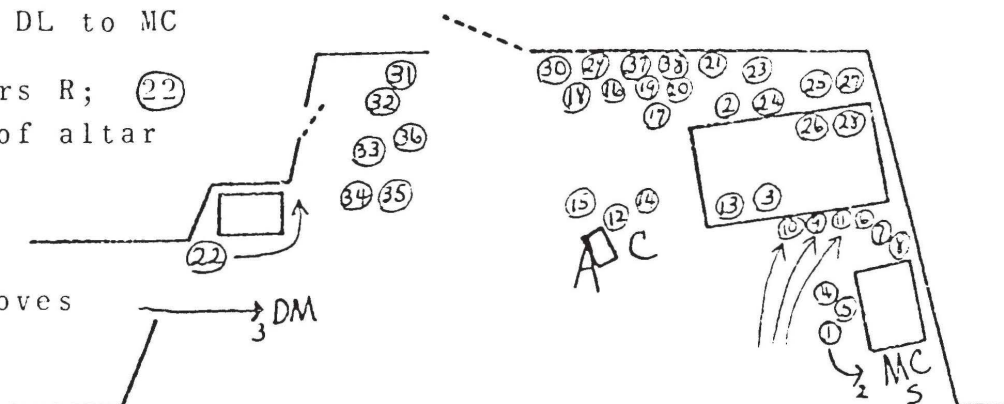
1. ① moves L



2. ① moves DL to MC

3. DM appears R; ②② moves L of altar

4. Chorus moves back



We shall carry Annina out.  
 But I warn you, you must behave.  
 She's very ill.  
 Should she once again be blessed with the stigmata, be gentle with her.  
 Remember how great her suffering must be.  
 If any one of you go near her and try to touch her bleeding wounds, I'll throw  
 all of you out of here.  
 Make room for her, and pray.

<sup>2</sup>  
 1 (*Don Marco disappears into the bedroom. Shortly after, he re-enters the room,  
 followed by two of the neighbors carrying the semi-conscious Annina, whose face  
 is very pale and bears the marks of great suffering.  
 Gently she is placed in a cushioned chair near the center of the stage. She remains  
 there, with her eyes closed in death-like stillness. Everyone kneels.*)

## CHORUS

Salve Virgo florens.  
 Mater illibata.  
 Regina clementiae.  
 Stellis coronata.  
 Super omnes angelos  
 Pura et immacolata.  
 Atque ad regis dexteram  
 Stans veste diamata  
 Per te Mater gratiae  
 Dulcis spes reorum  
 Fulgens stella maris. . . .  
 (*As if pierced by an arrow, Annina emits a stifled cry, her body suddenly convulsed  
 by pain.*)

## ANNINA

(*Still with eyes closed and a tormented expression on her face, as if fighting a  
 fearful force.*)

Oh, sweet Jesus, spare me this agony.  
 Too great a pain is this for one so weak.  
 Ah, — my aching heart, must you again withstand the trial?  
 (*opening her eyes*) Where am I?

Who are these people?  
 When have I seen this road before,  
 When this barren hill?  
 What is this drunken crowd waiting for?

Ah, dreadful presentiment!  
 3 (*She gets up as if in a trance and slowly moves through the kneeling neighbors.*)  
 Eager and loud they push and sway under the festival sun.

What do they want?

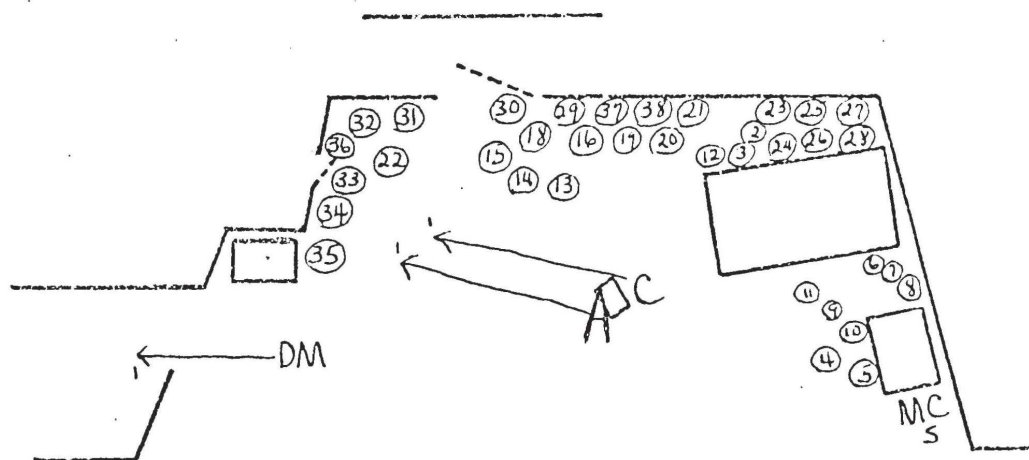
What are they waiting for?

4 (*She moves her arms as if fighting her way through a crowd.*)  
 I cannot see.

## Description of Action

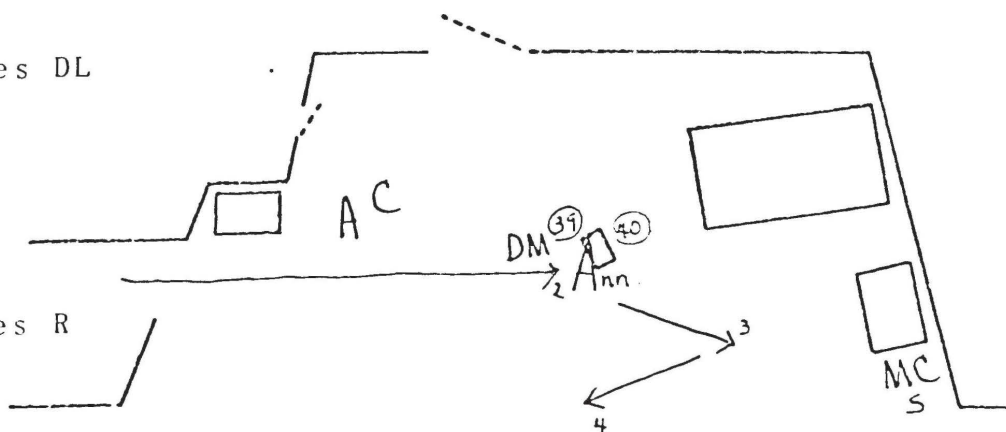
## Diagrams of Action

1. DM exits;  
Chorus moves again  
A and C move UR -



2. DM and (39) & (40) bring Ann. to C;  
Chorus kneels

3. Ann. moves DL



4. Ann. moves R

Eh! Don't push me.

Let me see.

1 Please make room for me.

2 Oh! Oh! I see now,

I see now!

Oh, blinding sight!

Oh, pain!

Oh, love!

*(Staring intently ahead)*

They come up the bending road in golden armor

The soldiers, and among them a purple cloak —

My Jesus!

How large a cross for one man to bear!

Dust in His mouth and salt of bitter tears.

His cheeks ribboned with blood

Shed by the sharp and cruel crown.

But His eyes!

Who ever saw in a man's eyes such patient love?

Ah! He falters.

They are on Him with whips.

He struggles on again.

3 *(Suddenly disturbed, her eyes search through the imaginary crowd.)*

Some one is weeping.

Where?

I see now — a group of wailing women standing behind the crowd.

Weakened by weeping, they sway like reeds as they slowly move.

Tall amongst them, Her eyes deepened by pain, the Holy Virgin stands.

Why, Mary, why did you come?

No cross can weigh nor nail can pierce as can a mother's sorrow.

Why, Mary, why did you come?

4 Oh women, take her home.

When our God will die, only her Son will bear the agony.

Oh, take her, take her home.

It is her very flesh that will be torn by spear and nail.

Oh, take her, take her home.

Oh women, take her home!

5 No hill was ever higher:

The whole world can see the Son of God,

Sweet Jesus, lying there.

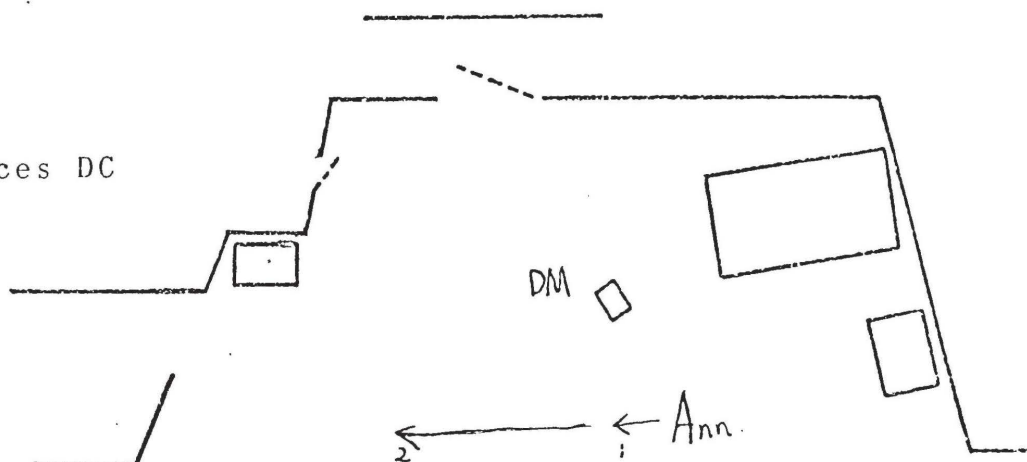


Description of ActionDiagrams of Action

1. Ann. moves R

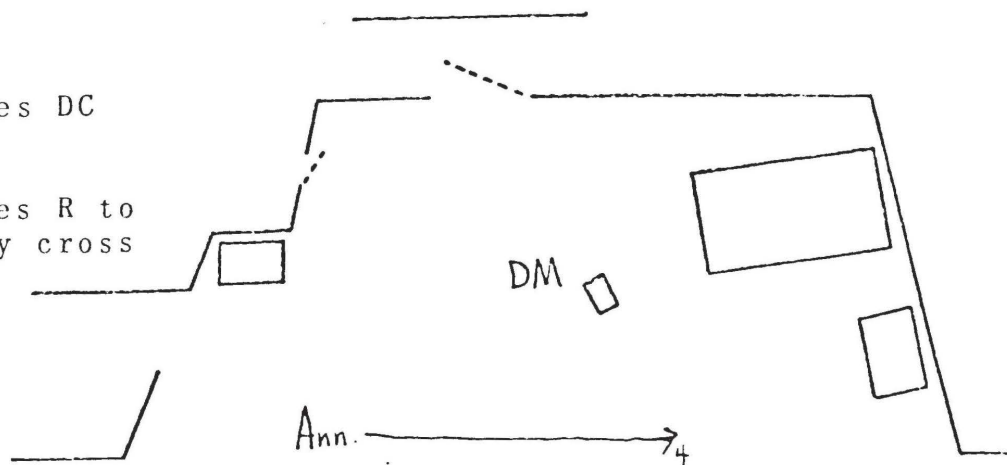
2. Ann. moves R and faces DR to imaginary cross

3. Ann. faces DC



4. Ann. moves DC

5. Ann. faces R to imaginary cross



His palm is now held open.  
 Those Hands that gave us all by us are to be pierced.  
 Soldier, soldier, have mercy on Him.  
 For He alone is your Savior.  
 1 The nail is held in place.  
 The huge hammer is raised.  
 Ah!

2 *(With a piercing cry she falls back on the pillows.)*

## CHORUS

Oh, how pale her cheeks!  
 Christ has died!  
*(Annina's limp hands slowly open, revealing the bleeding stigmata.)*  
 3 Look, the stigmata!  
 The miracle has happened.  
 The holy wounds are bleeding.  
 Let me touch her.

## DON MARCO

4 Be careful! Stand back!

## CHORUS

5 *(The neighbors crowd around Annina, trying hysterically to touch her, while Don Marco, Assunta, and Carmela vainly fight to keep back the crowd.)*

Eh! Don't push me.	Eh! Don't push me.
Get away.	Get away.
Let me touch her.	Let me touch her.
I'm a very sick woman,	I'm a very poor man
And my husband has no money	With a family of seven
And my children have no clothing.	And my wife is very ill.

## DON MARCO

6 You fools, stand back!  
 Don't you see you're hurting her?  
 7 *(Maria Corona pushes her dumb son through the struggling crowd. He approaches Annina and touches her bleeding hand.)*

## CHORUS

8 It is my turn now.  
 Bless me, bless me! It is my turn.  
 Let me touch her.  
 I was first to come here.

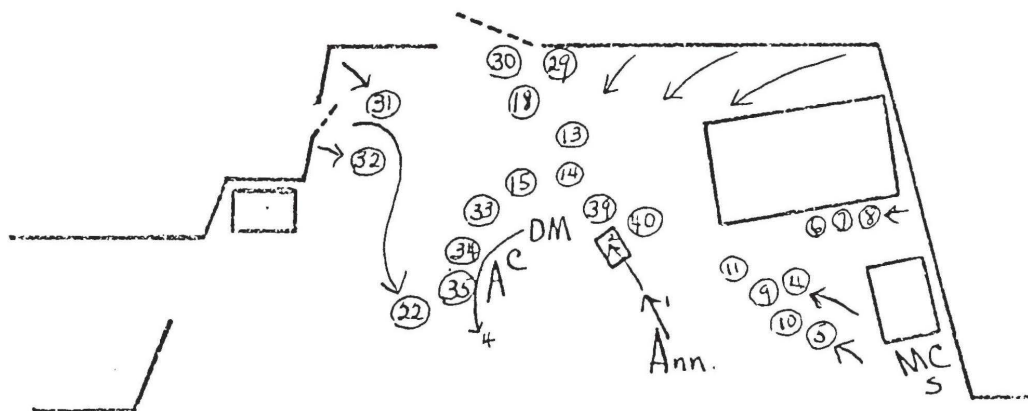
## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action

1. Ann. gradually backs up to chair

2. Ann. falls on chair

3. Chorus approaches Ann.



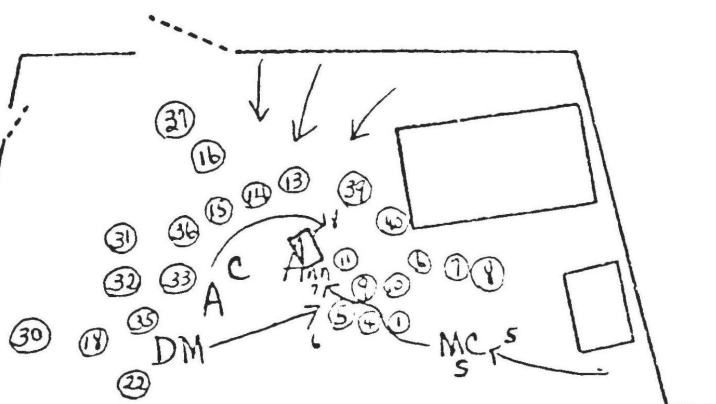
4. DM moves DR trying to block the crowd from Ann.

5. Chorus moves closer to Ann.

6. DM moves toward Ann. to push ④ & ⑤ away

7. MC & s move to Ann. as the crowd falls back

8. Crowd moves closer to Ann.; A moves UL of Ann.



DON MARCO

Stand back, you. You'll hurt her.

CHORUS

Bless me, Bless me!

*(Michele has suddenly appeared at the door which leads to the street.)*

MICHELE

1- Stop it! <sup>2</sup> Out of here, all of you!  
 What do you think this is . . . a market place?  
 Leave my sister alone!  
*(Intimidated, the crowd falls back.)*  
 (to Carmela) <sup>3</sup> How is she?

CARMELA

4 She's very ill. Be gentle with her.  
*(Michele approaches Annina and tenderly caresses her hair.)*

MICHELE

*(To the crowd)*  
 5 Clowns!  
 Leeches!  
 Fanatics!  
 Out of here, quick! Shall I call the police?  
 Out! Out!  
 6 *(With the help of Carmela, Michele carries Annina back into her room, while the neighbors slowly leave. Only Don Marco remains.)*

CHORUS

He drowns our sun.  
 Forgive him, O Lord!  
 He bars the light from Heaven's gates.  
 Have mercy on him!  
 He fears our Faith,  
 Forgive him, O Lord!  
 He fears to meet the eyes of God.  
 Have mercy on him!

7 *(Michele re-enters the room and hostilely faces Don Marco.)*

MICHELE

And you, priest, why don't you go?  
 How often must I tell you that you're not wanted here.

DON MARCO

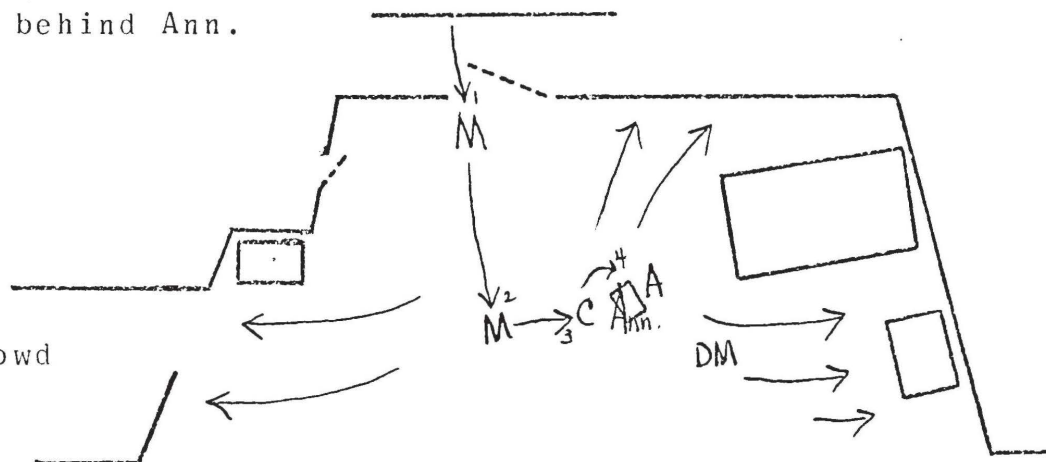
I only came when I was called. Your sister needed me.

## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action

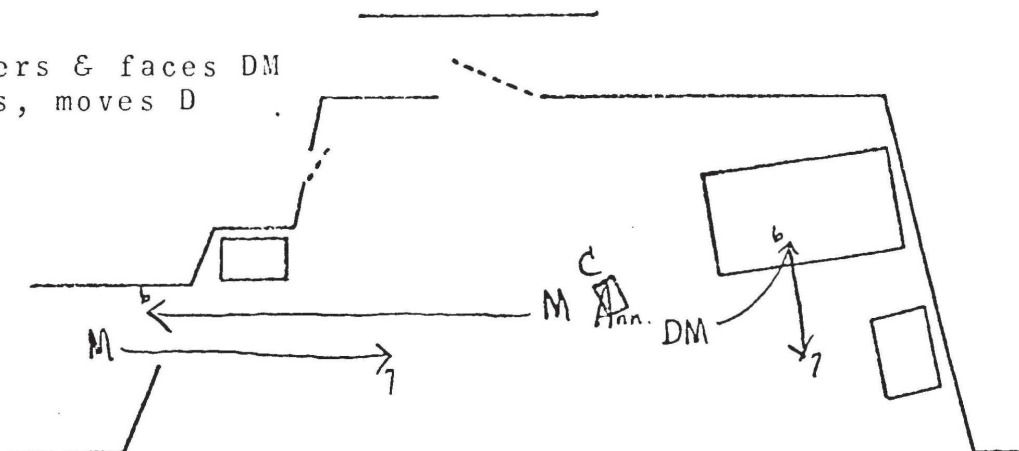
1. M enters UR; the crowd splits and falls back;
2. M moves DR
3. M moves to C
4. C moves behind Ann.

5. M to crowd



6. M & C carry Ann. to her room as the crowd leaves;  
DM sits on bed

7. M re-enters & faces DM  
DM stands, moves D



MICHELE

Doctors she needs, rather than priests and candles!  
 / If we were rich this wouldn't happen.  
 Rich people have no visions except in hospitals.

DON MARCO

And you, who love her so, — you are the one to doubt.

MICHELE

Too much I love her not to know her well.  
 A sickly child who never grew,  
 A simple mind in a pain-pierced body.

DON MARCO

Who knows where God will find His saints?

MICHELE

2 His saints?  
 Enough of superstition!  
 Who are these people who create your saints?  
 They worship God out of defeat.  
 They look for wonders to forget their poverty, to redeem their failure.  
 But I am not resigned, nor am I conquered yet.  
*(Suddenly confronting Don Marco)*

3 Tell me, O priest, do *you* believe in this?  
 Is this the work of God, or the delusions of a sick mind?

DON MARCO

A priest is not a judge but only a guide.  
 I do not say that I believe in this, but she believes and must be guided.

MICHELE

If one must guide her, then I shall be her guide, for I am her brother.

DON MARCO

So are we all.

MICHELE

4 I warn you, priest, keep away from us.  
 For I alone shall guide my sister, and I shall save her yet from your fanatic hunger.

DON MARCO

Ah, poor Michele, it is not I your rival, but God Himself,  
 And what human love can compete with the love for God?  
 How can one fight what cannot be measured?  
 Who can hold back the avalanche or quench the raging fire?  
 What God decrees we can only witness.  
 Who, by God's love is wounded and by its tide encircled,  
 Is then forever drawn into its tumultuous vortex.

5 *(Don Marco leaves and Michele slams the door after him.)*

CURTAIN

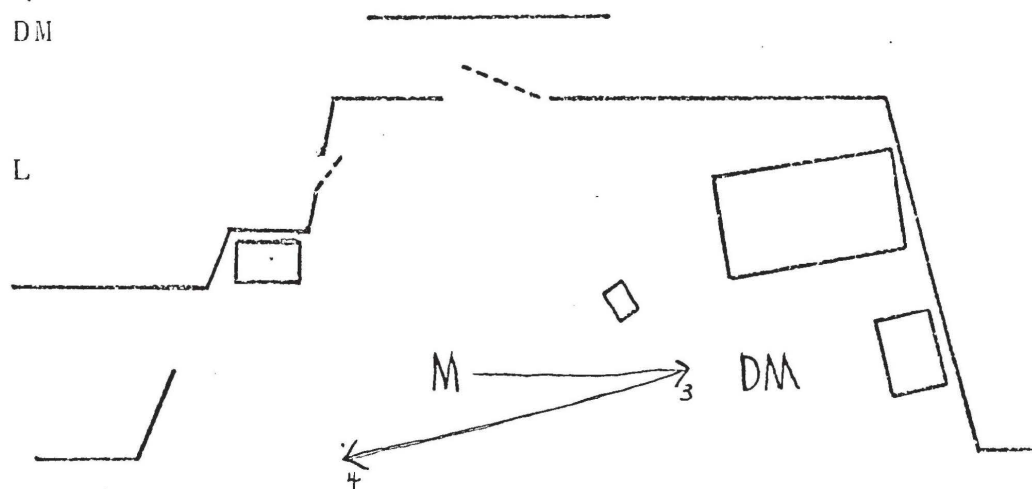
## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action

1. M turns his back to DM

2. M faces DM

3. M loves L

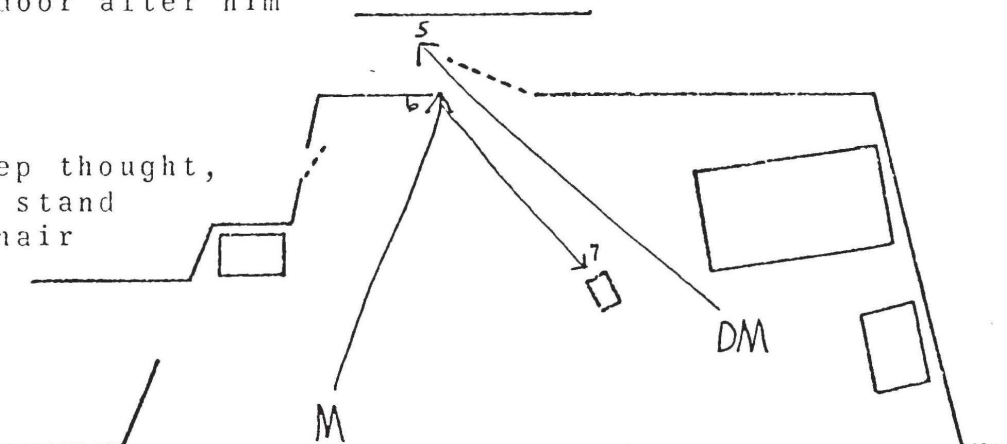


4. M angrily moves DR with his back to DM

5. DM exits UR

6. M slams door after him

7. M, in deep thought, moves to stand behind chair





## ACT I

## Scene II

*(An empty lot on Mulberry Street, flanked by tenement houses. The lot is enclosed by an old, wire fence with a gate leading to the street, which is festively decorated with arches of electric bulbs. All through this scene, passersby and street vendors will be seen in the background. Inside the lot, Annina and Carmela are sitting on empty crates near the steps leading to the door of the tenement house, stage left. Armed with scissors, needles and gold papier-maché, they are sewing stars on the white gown of Concettina, a pathetic, little girl about five years old, primitively dressed as an angel. Assunta is seen at one of the windows, rocking her baby to sleep. It is late afternoon.)*

CARMELA

Stand still, Concettina!

1. *(A group of women, dressed in loud, flowery prints enters from the back door of the other tenement house, stage right.)*

ASSUNTA

Canta ninna,  
Canta nanna al mio bambino,  
Che si possa  
Che si possa addormentar.  
Mamma deve  
Mamma deve scaldar la cena,  
Perché Babbo  
Perché Babbo rincaserà.  
Già si levan  
Già si levan le stelle in cielo,  
Già comincia  
Già comincia ad annottar.  
Canta ninna.  
Canta nanna al mio bambino,  
Che si possa  
Che si possa addormentar.

ONE WOMAN #3

2 *(screaming up to a window)*

Renata, Renata!

3 GIRL #12  
*(at the window)*

What's the matter with you?

ONE WOMAN #4

E spicciati dunque!

GIRL

Go ahead, I'm coming.

WOMAN #4

4 Good evening, Annina.

ANNINA

Good evening.

WOMAN

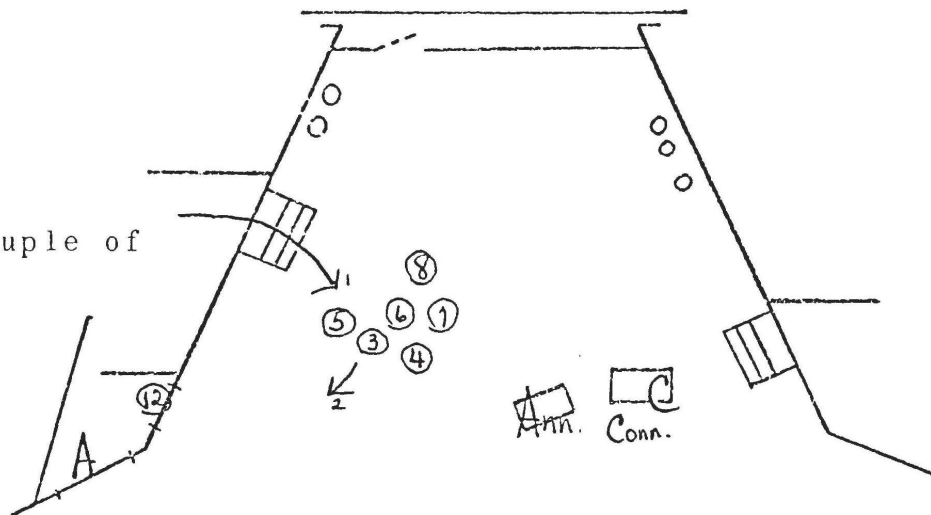
Aren't you going to the procession?

## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action

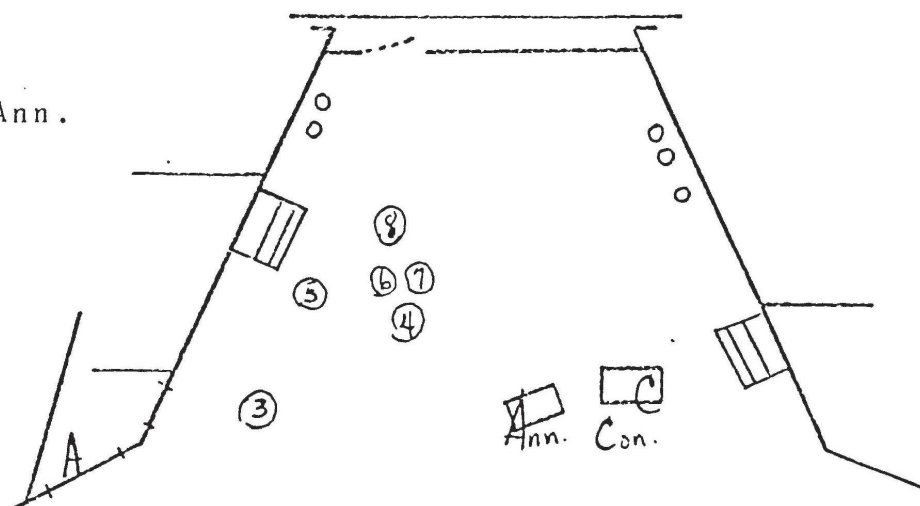
1. ③, ④, ⑤, ⑥, ⑦, ⑧ enter from R

2. ③ takes a couple of steps DR



3. ⑫ puts her head through window to reply

4. ④ addresses Ann.



ANNINA

1 Oh, no, I can't. My brother won't let me.

WOMAN

*(to her friends.)*

Isn't it a shame? He's a brute!

2 *(They go out into the street and disappear around the corner.)*

CARMELA

Stand still, Concettina. We're almost through.

ANNINA

Stand still. There are only two stars left.

3 *(A group of screaming children, dressed as angels, enter stage right. Assunta closes the window and disappears.)*

CHILDREN

Come on, Concettina. You're going to be late!

Come on, Concettina, hurry up!

4 *(They run in great confusion toward the street and disappear, while Concettina jumps up and down with impatience.)*

WOMAN'S VOICE

*(from far away)*

Concettina!

CONCETTINA

Eh, let me go . .

CARMELA

Be patient.

Stand still.

We only have one star left.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Concettina!

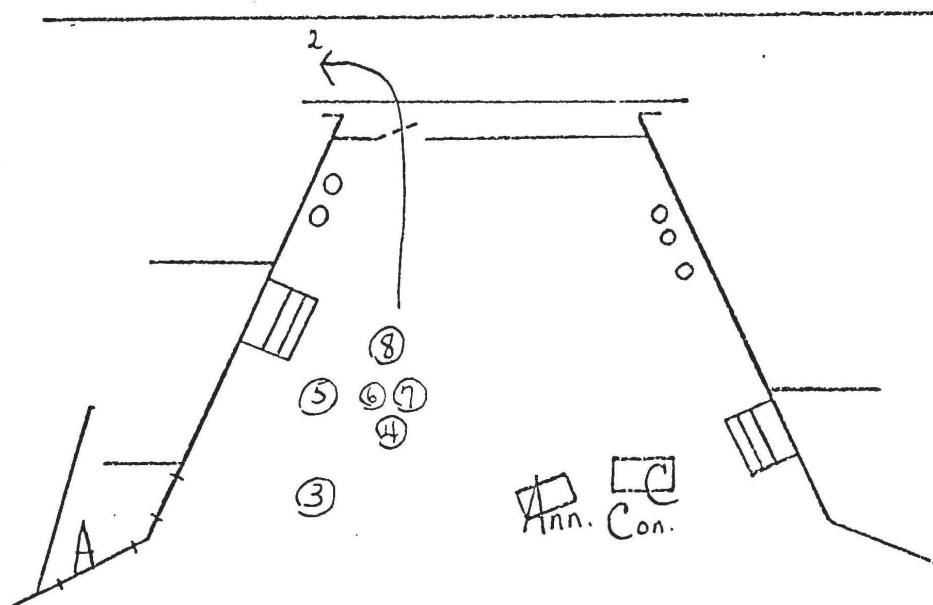
ANNINA

Then we shall fit the paper crown and you will be the prettiest of them all.

Description of ActionDiagrams of Action

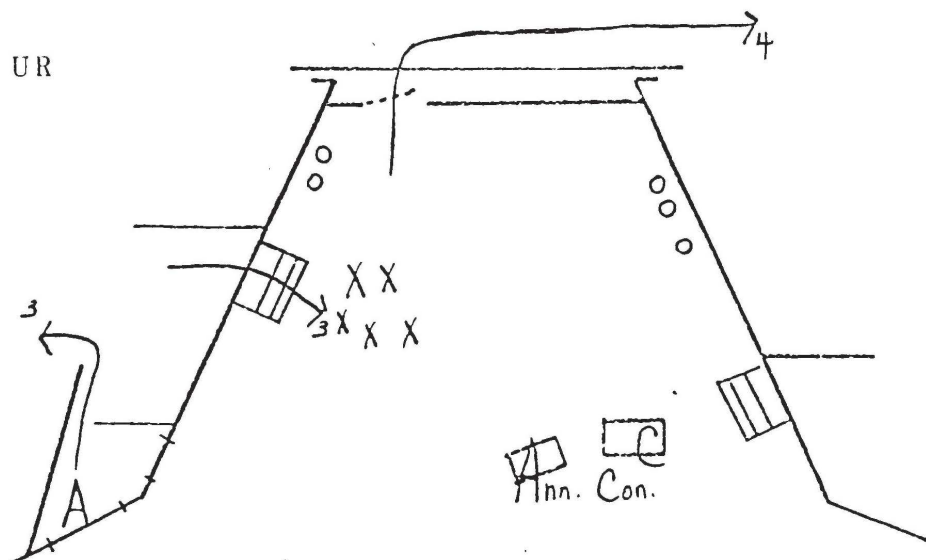
1. Ann. turns R to answer ④, then turns back to Con.

2. Women exit UR



3. Children enter from R

4. Children exit UR



CONCETTINA

Eh! Let me go . . .

ANNINA

All right, you can go now.

- 1 *(Finally freed, but still whining, Concettina runs off toward the street, her angel wings rather limp, and her gold crown askew.)*  
*(Annina and Carmela are left alone.)*

CARMELA

- 2 Annina, I've something to confess to you . . . and I feel so ashamed.

ANNINA

Why, Carmela, what can it be?

CARMELA

Do you remember when I promised that one day I'd take the veil with you?

ANNINA

Yes, and aren't you going to take the veil with me?

CARMELA

- 3 Oh, Annina, I'm afraid I'm going to break my promise.

ANNINA

But why? What has happened?

CARMELA (*shyly*)

- 4 This coming May I'm going to be married.  
 Oh, if you knew what it is to be in love!  
 First I fought it, then I prayed Holy Mary to make me forget him.  
 I thought of him even as I was praying.  
 It was awful . . . couldn't help it.  
 His name is Salvatore . . .  
 He's such a nice boy.  
 Last week he asked me to marry him (*bursting into tears*) and I'm afraid I said yes.

ANNINA

Oh, I am so glad for you!  
 Such happy news.  
 Silly girl, what are you crying for?

CARMELA

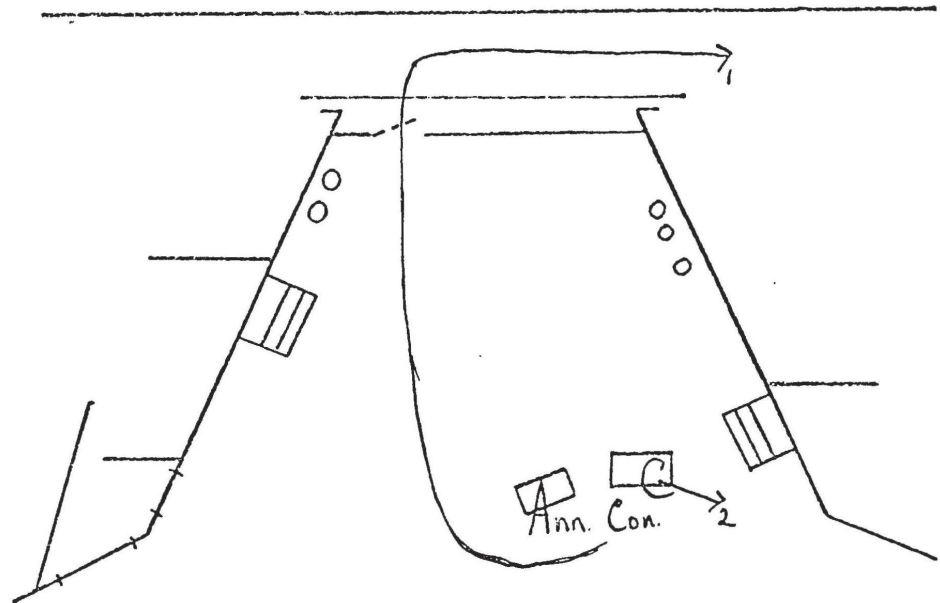
Won't God be angry with me?

ANNINA

But why should He?

Description of ActionDiagrams of Action

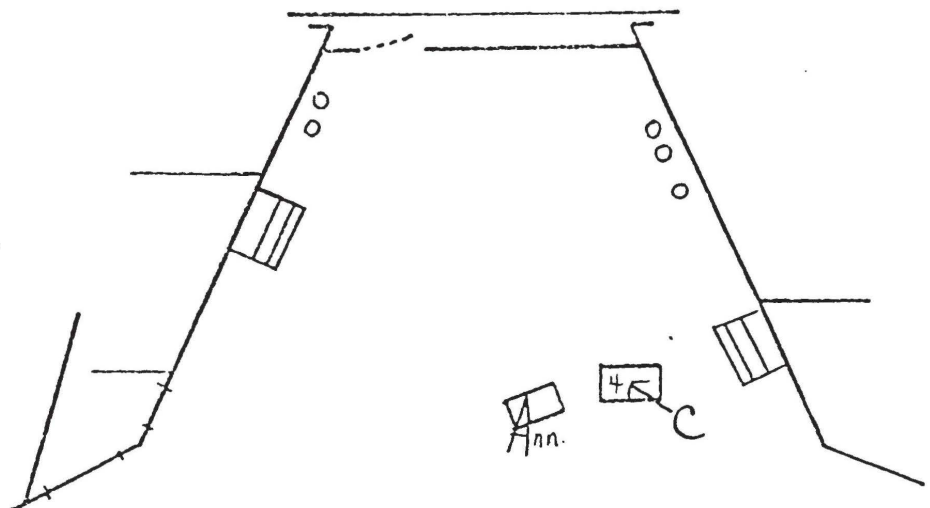
1. Con. crosses D of Ann. and exits UR



2. C rises

3. C faces Ann.

4. C sits



CARMELA

Because I broke my promise.

ANNINA

But your promise wasn't made to God, only to me.  
And I release you!

CARMELA

Oh, sweet Annina!  
Will you come to my wedding?

ANNINA

Yes, if you promise that you will come to mine.  
One day I, too, shall wear a white veil.  
God is waiting for His bride.

CARMELA

Then you think that I still have a chance to go to heaven?

ASSUNTA

1 (*Appears in the doorway and, on hearing Carmela's remarks, bursts out laughing.*)

2 Ah! Ah! Ah! Silly goose!

When you have six children and a drunken husband like I do, you'll be sure to go to heaven when you die!

(*Rubbing her back and moaning slightly with pain, she sits on the steps next to the two girls.*)

Oh, my back! 3  
Sometimes I wonder what heaven must be like!  
Shall I have a chance to sleep there?

ANNINA

Oh, poor Assunta!

ASSUNTA

Tell me, Annina, did you ever get a glimpse of heaven?

ANNINA

Oh, no! How could I?  
But once, in the deep of night, Michael, the Archangel, came to me.  
With a smile he said: "What is it you wish, my child?"  
"Angel fair, if only I could see the golden gates of Paradise."  
Oh, how swift was his flight,  
Oh, how soft were his wings.  
When I woke the blinding gates stood there.

CARMELA AND ASSUNTA

Oh, how swift was his flight,  
Oh, how soft were his wings.  
When she woke the gates of Paradise stood in front of her.



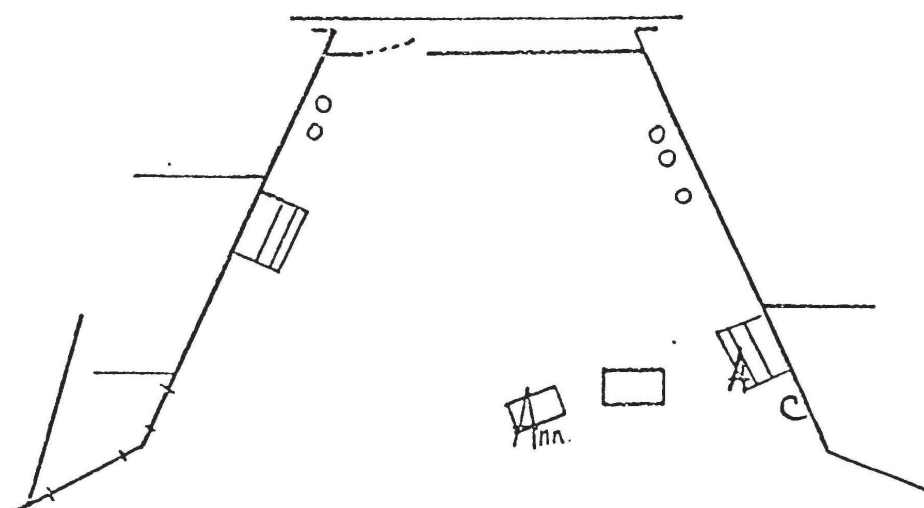
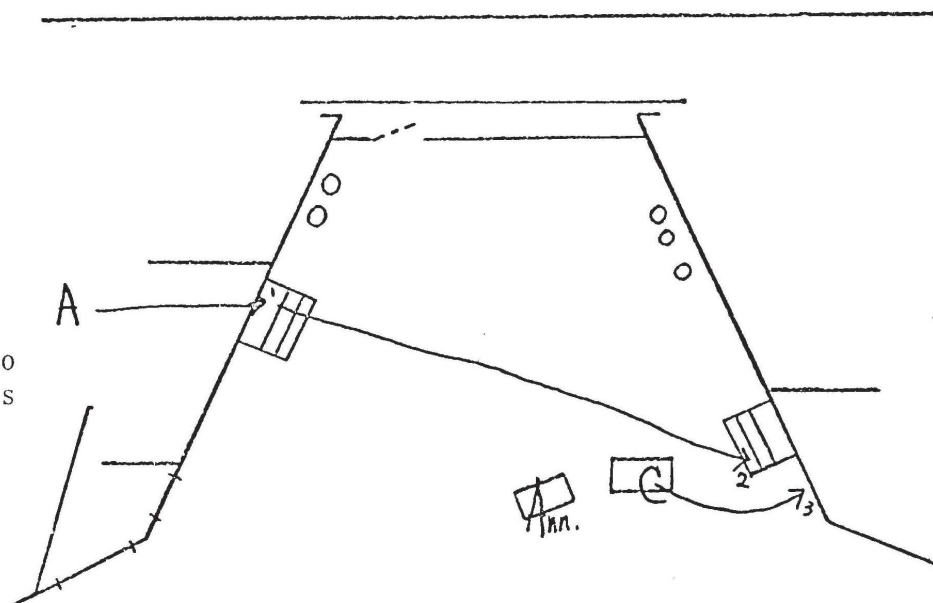
## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action

1. A appears R

2. A crosses L to steps and sits

3. C crosses L and leans against wall



## ANNINA

Standing by the gates, sweet, old Saint Peter welcomed me.  
 "When I die, if I'm received, what shall I find behind your golden gates?"  
 "You will eat golden bread  
 And wear sun-woven clothes.  
 You will sing the praise of Christ, our Lord."

## CARMELA AND ASSUNTA

We shall eat golden bread  
 And wear sun-woven clothes.  
 We shall sing the praise of Christ, our Lord, in eternity.

*(Maria Corona runs in from the street, dragging her dumb son after her.)*

## MARIA CORONA

1. Annina, Annina!  
 I ran all the way.  
 I thought I'd better warn you.  
 The Virgin Mary protect us all!  
 There is going to be trouble.  
 The Sons of San Gennaro are all excited because you won't take part in the procession.  
 They say they will not have the procession without their little Saint.  
 They say that if Michele doesn't let you come, they'll drag you away by force.

## ASSUNTA

2. Madonna Santa.  
 They must have all gone crazy.

## CARMELA

3. You'd better hide.  
 Don't let them find you.  
 I know those boys — roughnecks, hotheads, bullies and quick with knives.

## ANNINA

I'm not afraid.  
 I'm only afraid for him, for Michele.

## MARIA CORONA

Annina's right.  
 They all are after Michele.

## ANNINA

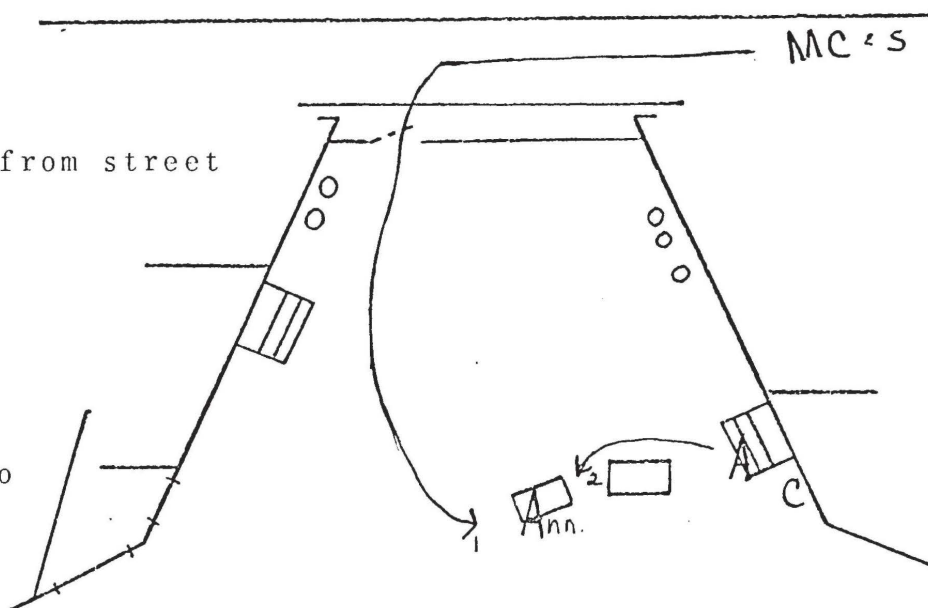
Where is he?  
 Why doesn't he come?  
 If they meet with him, they will hurt him.

## Description of Action

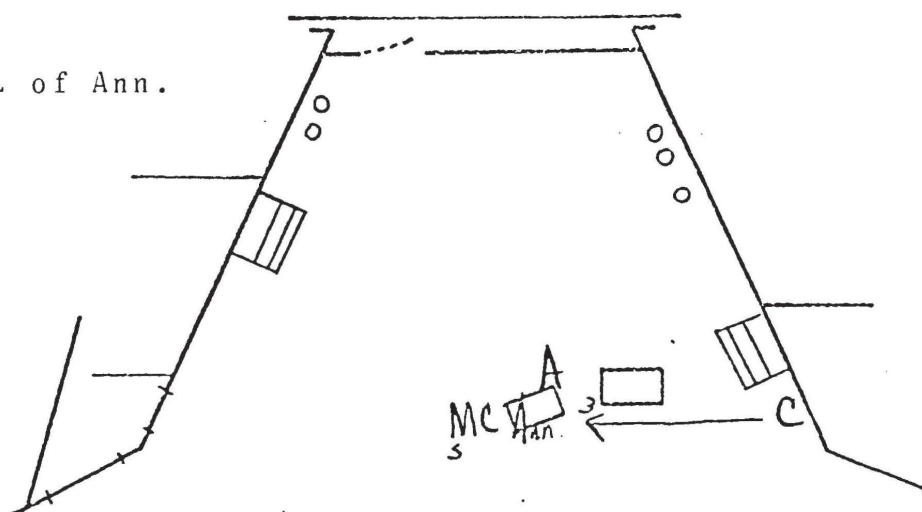
## Diagrams of Action

1. MC & s enter from street

2. A crosses R to stand behind Ann.



3. C crosses to L of Ann.



CARMELA

Listen, you had better stay right here.  
 Surely San Gennaro will protect him.  
 No one will touch *you* if you're near us.  
 But if they see you with him there will be trouble.  
 1 (*A group of noisy passersby are seen crossing the street.*)

MARIA CORONA

Someone should go and tell him to stay away from the procession.

ASSUNTA

Of all the days to happen!  
 Yes, you'd better stay right here.  
 Don't you dare go out alone.  
 If you are anxious for Michele, I'll do my best to find him.  
 2 (*She runs off*)

ANNINA

Saint Michael, protect him.

MARIA CORONA

3 Don't be afraid, Annina.  
 I'll defend you with my own life.  
 You know, Annina, at first I didn't believe in you.  
 But since the day you touched my son, he who hasn't spoken since he was born,  
 has begun to speak. (*turning to her boy*)  
 Show Annina.

ANNINA

Oh, please!

MARIA CORONA

Say: "Mamma." Su bello mio!  
 Come on, say: "Mamma."

BOY

(*almost in a grunt*) Mam . . . ma . . .

4 (*Michele appears from the street and enters the lot.*)

ANNINA

Michele, Michele!

MICHELE

(*to the women*) I told you to leave my sister alone.  
 Stop hanging out here.

ANNINA

5 Oh, dear Michele!  
 6 (*Carmela disappears into the house. Maria and her son hurry off down the street.*)

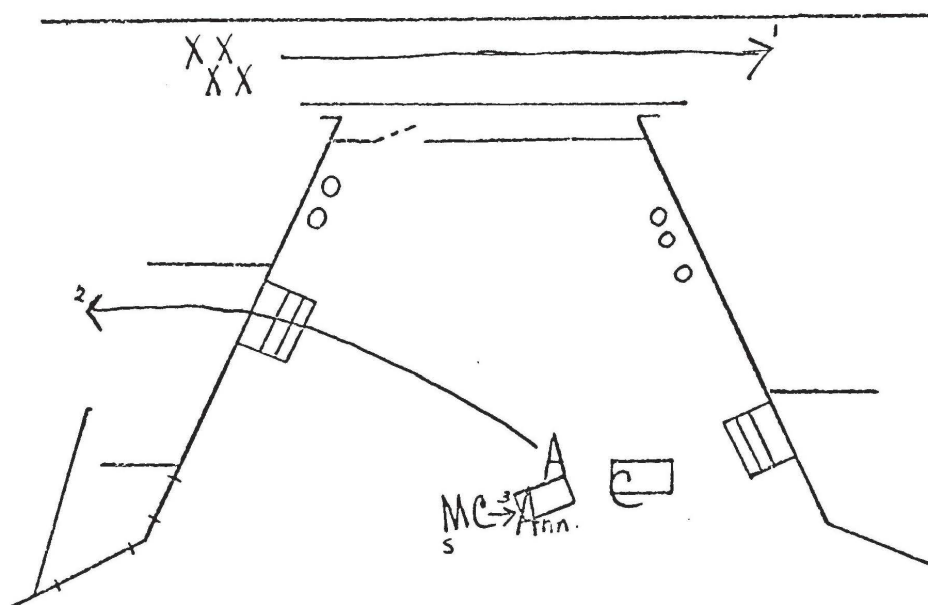
## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action

1. People cross street

2. A exits R

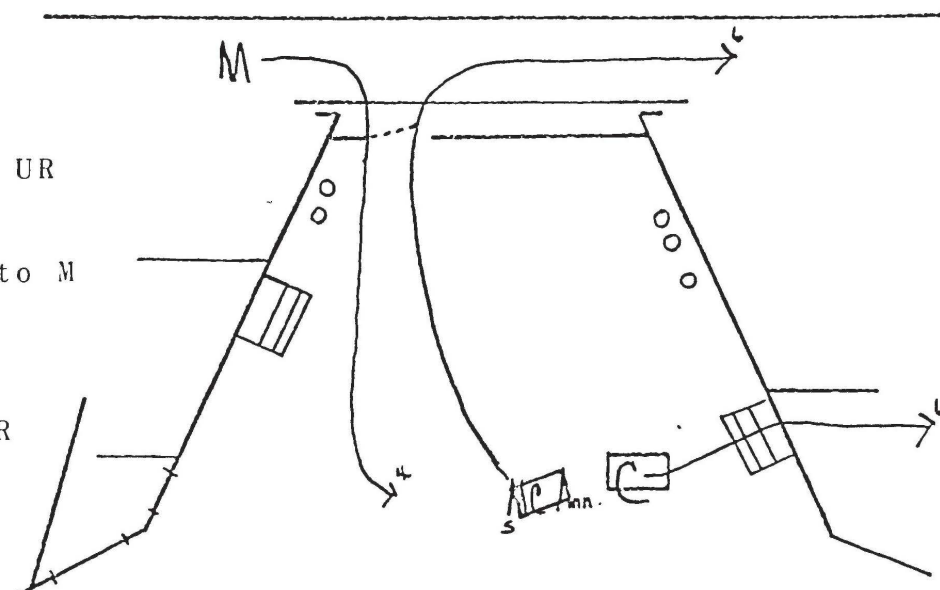
3. MC & s sit on  
crate next to  
Ann.



4. M enters from UR

5. Ann. turns R to M

6. C exits L  
MC & s exit UR



MICHELE  
| Annina, what has happened to you?  
Why do you tremble so?

ANNINA  
I am afraid

MICHELE  
What are you afraid of?

ANNINA  
Why do you make people hate you so?  
Some day they'll harm you.

MICHELE  
But try to understand me.  
It's for your own sake.

ANNINA  
I do not understand. I do not understand . . .

MICHELE  
Annina, you know how much I love you.

ANNINA  
Yes, I know.

MICHELE  
You know they all believe you are a saint.

ANNINA  
Yes, I know.

MICHELE  
Look me in the eyes.  
Do you believe yourself a saint?

ANNINA  
Oh no!  
I never said that!

MICHELE  
Why, then, do you let these people come to you, sick people, hoping to be cured?

ANNINA  
How can I help that?

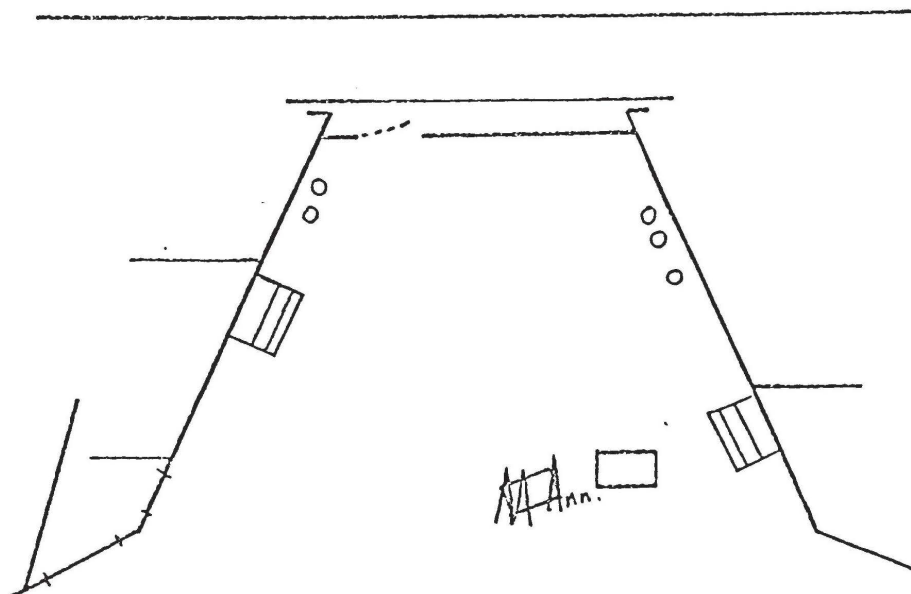
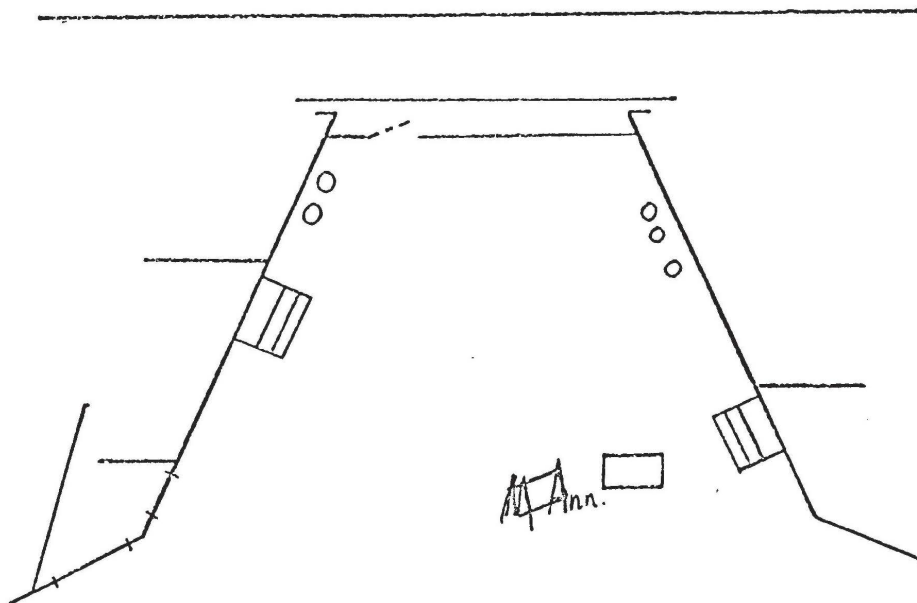
MICHELE  
Do you really believe that it is Jesus who appears to you?

ANNINA  
Yes, that I know.

MICHELE  
But you are ill and keep imagining things.

Description of ActionDiagrams of Action

1. M sits by Ann.





ANNINA

How can I imagine what is beyond imagining?

MICHELE

But that is foolish, senseless talk.

ANNINA

I do not ask to be believed,  
But I believe.

MICHELE

Listen, listen carefully.  
You say that in Paradise one eats golden bread.  
How can one "eat" gold?!

ANNINA

I don't know . .  
I don't claim to understand.

MICHELE

Don't you see how childish it is?

ANNINA

Stop tormenting me!

MICHELE

Do you remember, at school, how children made fun of you because you couldn't learn and how they used to call you "numbskull"?

ANNINA

Yes, I remember.

MICHELE

Why, then, should God have chosen you, of all people?

ANNINA

Perhaps because I love Him.

MICHELE

But you love God as if He were human.

ANNINA

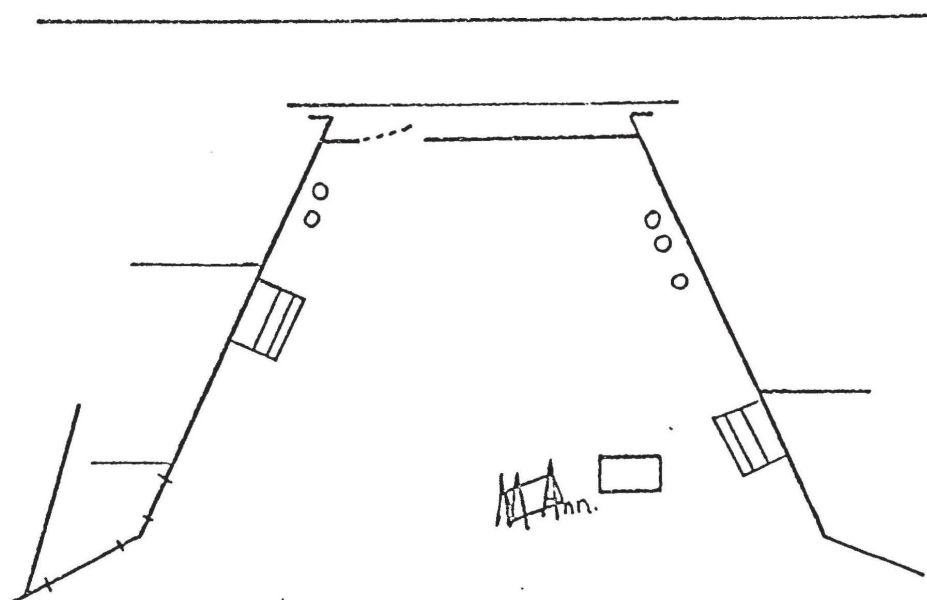
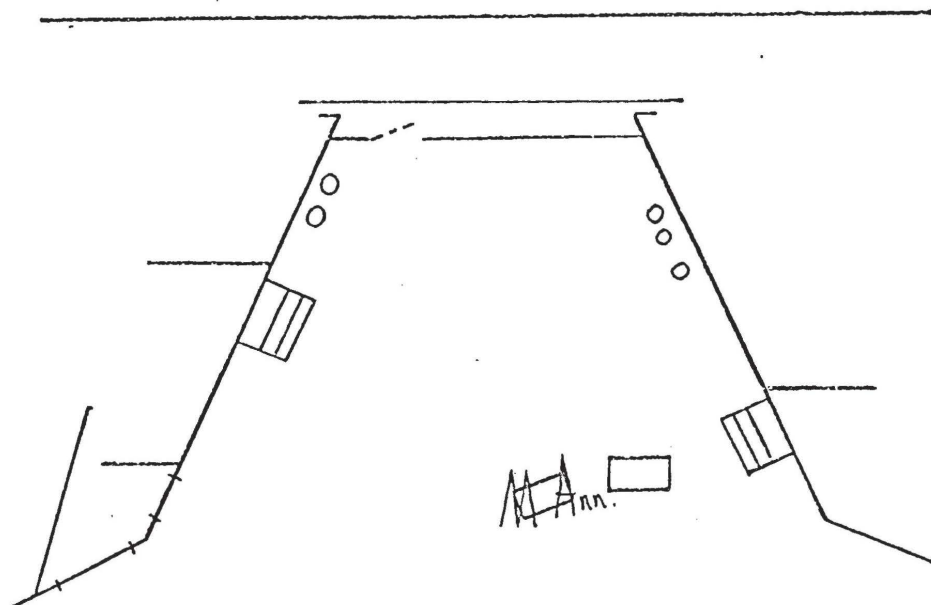
How else can I love Him since I am human?

MICHELE

But God is not a man.  
He's everything and nothing.

ANNINA

How can one desire everything?  
Can one love nothing?  
God I desire — and that I know —  
And yearn to be His bride.  
How long must I still wait for that joyous meeting?

Description of ActionDiagrams of Action

MICHELE

Never, never!  
You shall never take the veil.

ANNINA

God's will be done.

MICHELE

Sister, I shall hide you and take you away,  
Far from these people, far from this street.  
Here the blood is darkened by memories, and fears  
Medalled with idols, daggered by tears.  
Here the young are branded by a relentless past,  
Receive its secret signals,  
And bear the enslaving mark.

ANNINA

Brother, I shall lead you and show you the way,  
Far from all fears, far from the world.  
In the City of God, love is constant and deep,  
Joy without wine, and peace without sleep.

MICHELE

God cannot ever lose you, but you can be lost to me.

ANNINA

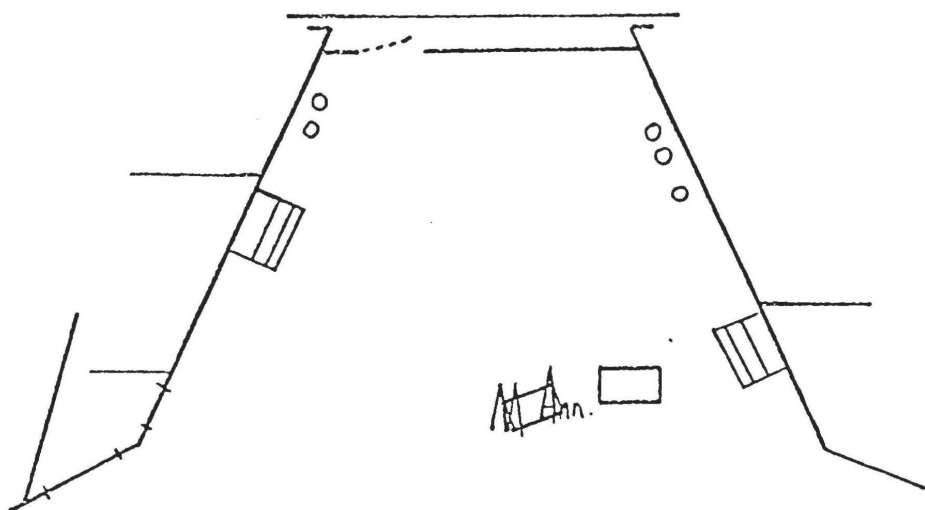
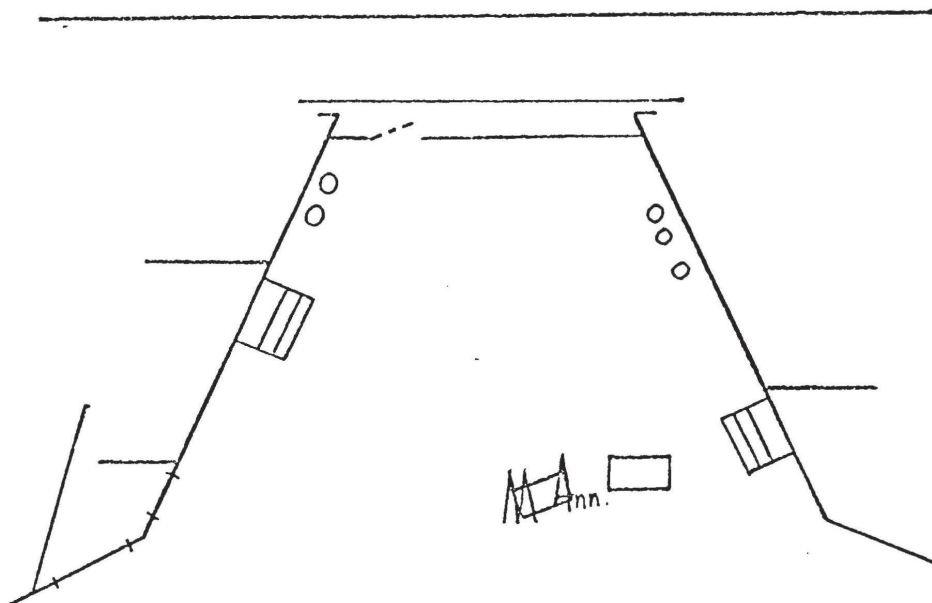
No one can ever be lost who wanders, searching for God.  
All roads lead back to their beginning.  
An illusion is their goal.  
Only the road that leads to God is forever straight.

MICHELE

Don't ever leave me.  
You are my horizon, my compass, my hope . . .  
White wall in dark street,  
Bell in dark sea,  
I could never live without you by my side.  
Beggar and stranger, lost in this land.

Description of Action

Diagram of Action



ANNINA

I shall pray the archangel who carries your name  
 With wings of rainbow and sword of flame.  
 He who fights the serpent, will stand by your side.  
 Let him be mentor, let him be guide.  
*(All the arches above the street suddenly light up.)*

ANNINA

The procession is coming.  
 Let's go inside, Michele.

MICHELE

Why? Why?  
 Whom are we hiding from?

ANNINA

You know that if they find me here  
 there will be trouble.

CHORUS (*off stage*)

Veglia su di noi  
 Santo del Sangue  
 Bel Santo d'argento.  
 San Gennaro, San Gennaro.  
 Veglia su di noi  
 Martire Santo  
 Astro Splendente.  
 Tu che proteggi la gente del mar  
 Guidaci in porto e non ci scordar.  
 San Gennaro, San Gennaro . . .

MICHELE

I'm not afraid of them.  
 Let them come.  
 Let them dare to touch you.  
 They'll soon find out who Michele is.  
 I'm not afraid of their saints!  
 I'm not afraid of their maledictions!

| *(A double row of barefoot women  
 slowly passes by, holding lighted candles.  
 They are followed by men holding holy  
 banners.)*

ANNINA

San Gennaro, protect us!

MICHELE

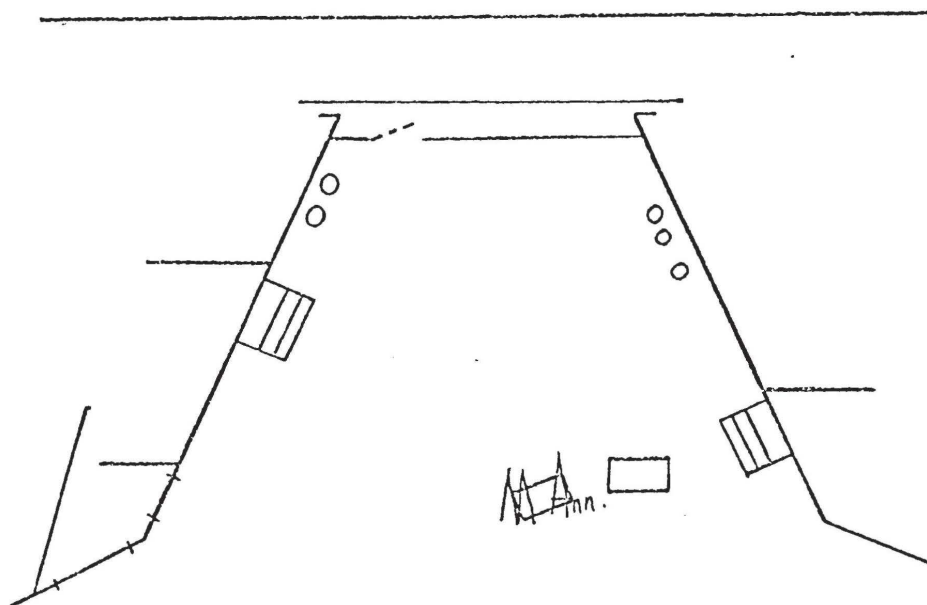
Alone against you all . . .

ANNINA

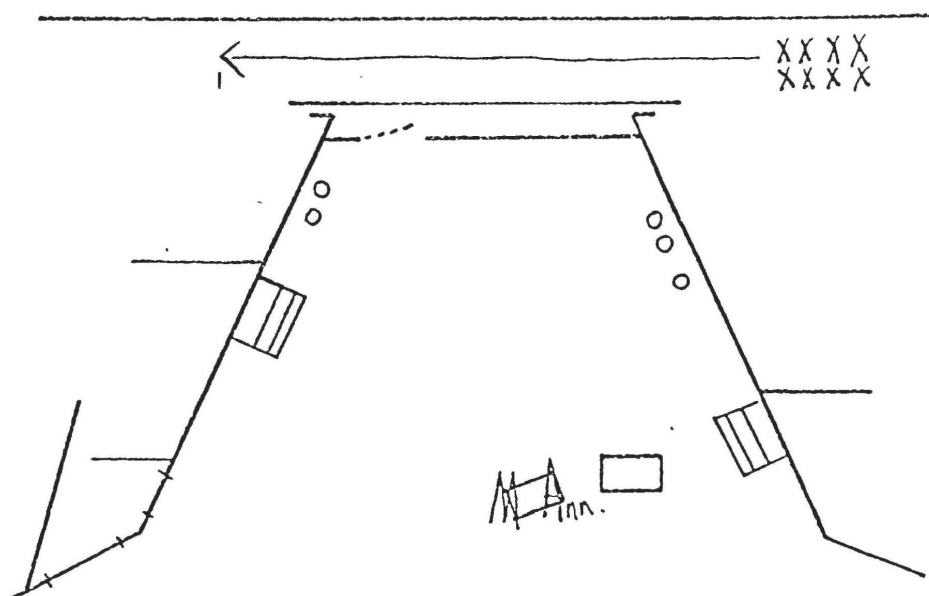
Holy Virgin, Mother of God,  
 Have pity on me,  
 Don't let anything happen to Michele,  
 Please, please.

## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action



1. Chorus crosses upstage



*(The chorus is followed by a band which suddenly bursts into a march. At the same time, a group of young men stealthily enters the lot. While one of them holds Annina back, the others spring on Michele and hit him over the head. Michele falls to the ground, but quickly gets back on his feet and struggles with his assailants.)*

## ANNINA

Don't hurt him!  
I'll come with you.  
Don't, don't . . .

- 3 *(Michele is overpowered, and tied to the fence by his wrists. He is left hanging there facing the audience. The young men then take hold of Annina, lift her to their shoulders and carry her outside, into the procession. The crowd cheers as she is slowly carried along, frightened and helpless.)*

## MICHELE

Annina, Annina!  
Don't let them take you away.  
Bandits! Fanatics! Enemies of God!

*(As Annina is carried off, a large, elaborate effigy of San Gennaro appears and slowly rolls by.*

*As the last of the procession disappears, a few strollers are seen following it blowing paper trumpets and eating candies.*

- 4 *Desideria, dressed in red with a carnation in her hair, appears in the doorway, stage right. She stands there for a few seconds looking at Michele, then*  
5 *stealthily approaches him and unbinds him. As he breaks into loud sobbing, she kneels next to him and passionately kisses him.)*

## CHORUS

Tu che tutto puoi.  
Facci la grazia  
Prega Gesù per noi.  
Santo del dolor.  
Martire santo  
Salga a te il canto del nostro cuor.  
Tieni lontano malanno e pianto.  
Veglia su di noi,  
San Gennaro.  
San Gennaro, San Gennaro.  
Veglia su di noi.  
San Gennaro, San Gennaro.

THE CURTAIN FALLS



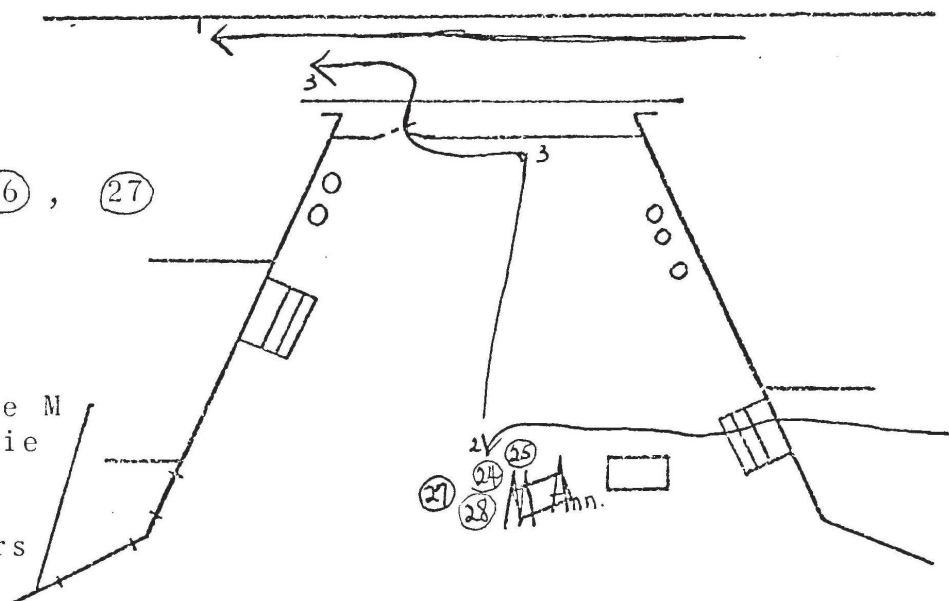
## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action

1. Band passes upstage

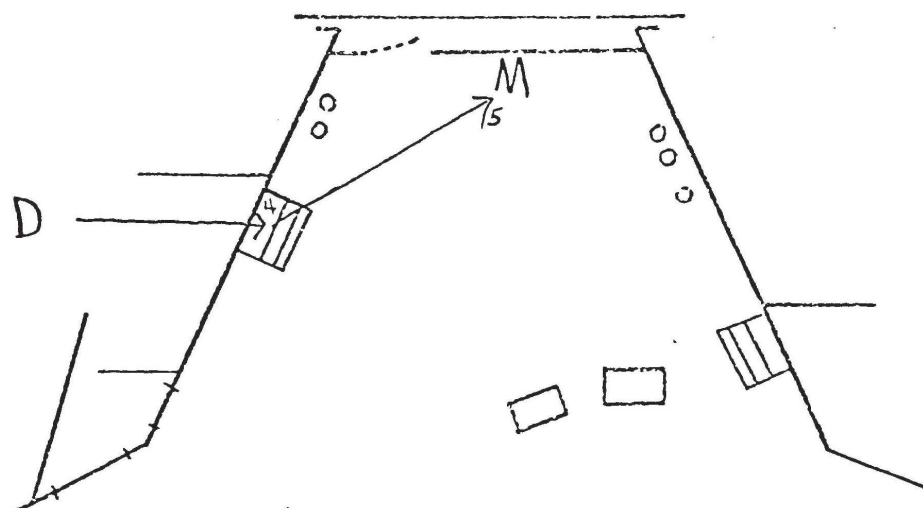
2. (24), (25), (26), (27)  
enter from L

3. Young men take M  
to fence to tie  
him and carry  
Ann. off on  
their shoulders



4. D enters R

5. D goes U to  
unbind M



## ACT II

*An Italian restaurant in the basement of a house on Bleecker Street. The ceiling is decorated with multi-colored paper chains and the walls are covered with frescoes depicting the Bay of Naples. Down stage right, an elaborate bar with a caffè espresso machine. Along the front of the stage, a few small tables with chairs. At the back of the restaurant, on a slight elevation, an empty area which evidently serves as the dance floor. In one corner of it stands a huge juke box. Within this area, stage right, a door with a sign "Banquet Room"; stage left, another door leading to the kitchen. At the back of the stage, a third door which serves as the main entrance and a large, curtained window through which one can see the steps leading up to the street.*

*Facing the audience in smiling stillness, Carmela, dressed as a bride, and Salvatore at her side, are having their photograph taken. They are surrounded by relatives and guests which include Annina, Michele, Assunta, Maria Corona and her son. The photograph having been taken, the group breaks up with shouts of laughter.*

OLD MAN

I blinked, I blinked!

ASSUNTA

You blinked, you blinked! Who cares to see your face anyway? *(laughter)*

YOUNG MAN

Eh, boys . . . Come on, let's dance.

*(A few couples dance. In spite of their protests, and among shouts of laughter, a very shy Carmela and a reluctant Salvatore are finally forced to dance together. One by one the other couples stop dancing and stand by to watch. The laughter and coarse jesting never ceases.)*

CHORUS

There never was such a pair.

Look at her hair,

Enough to make the neighbors die with envy.

Look at his cheeks.

Ah, what a sailor his father must have been,

To leave such blooms on those olive cheeks!

They already knew in their mothers' wombs

That they were meant to love each other.

Get going, get going!

There never was such a pair.

Look how he holds her; afraid of crushing her and, oh, so wanting to.

Look how she clings to him; not even daring to look at him,

Afraid to tempt his lips and, oh, so wanting to.

Get going, get going!

You rascal you, get going, get going!

That's the way!

(Curtain) crowd holds wine glasses  
*(Wine is brought in. Everyone cheers.)*

1. A young man, wine glass in hand, jumps on a chair and toasts the bride.)

YOUNG MAN

#29

Hai l'occhio nero nero della quaglia  
 La camminata della tortorella.  
 Chi ti porta a l'altare non si sbaglia  
 Ch'io non ho visto mai sposa più bella.

CHORUS

Ch'io non ho visto mai sposa più bella.

2. *(Another guest mounts a chair)*

ANOTHER YOUNG MAN

#30

Il giglio t'ha donato la bianchezza.  
 La rosa t'ha donato il suo colore.  
 Chi ti sposa, Carmela può ben dire  
 D'avere il paradiso e non morire.

CHORUS

D'avere il paradiso e non morire.

MICHELE *(also jumping on a chair)*

3. Sei tutta bianca come il gelsomino.  
 Hai l'occhio dolce il petto palombino.  
 Chi ti vede passar più non riposa  
 E non riposerà chi ti fa sposa.

4. *(A huge wedding cake is brought in from the kitchen amid cheers. The guests slowly walk into the "banquet room" where the wedding cake is being brought. Carmela and Salvatore remain behind the crowd, talking to some of the guests. Annina, almost hiding in a corner, front stage, looks tenderly at Carmela.)*

ANNINA

5. Carmela.

CARMELA

*(coming toward her)*

6. Oh, I'm so happy, Annina!  
 All that wine! It makes me giggle!  
 I don't know what I'm saying.

ANNINA

How lovely you look!  
 Just as I had imagined you!  
 Salvatore, you come here, too.

SALVATORE

Yes.

7. *(Carmela nestling in Salvatore's arms)*  
 Look what I am marrying!  
 Isn't he funny looking? *(she giggles)*



SALVATORE

Carmela, behave! Stop it, you silly girl!

ANNINA

You must not mind her.  
She doesn't mean it.  
She loves you very much, you know.

SALVATORE

I know, Annina, I know.

ANNINA

And you, Salvatore —

SALVATORE

Yes.

ANNINA

Will you make me a promise?

SALVATORE

Yes, Annina.

ANNINA

Be good to her, be kind.  
Of all my friends I love her most.  
So gentle is her heart, so sweet and gay,  
And, yes, . . . a little silly at times.  
Be good, be kind.  
We were to take the veil together,  
But here she is, all dressed in white,  
A different bride  
With a bright, red rose-bush in her heart  
And bright, black stars in her eyes.  
She'll make you a good wife, Salvatore, you'll see.  
Be good to her, be kind.

*(Hiding her tears, Carmela runs to Annina, who clasps her tenderly in her arms.)*

ONE OF THE GUESTS *(coming from the banquet room)*

2 Well, where is the happy couple?

SALVATORE

3 We're coming, we're coming.

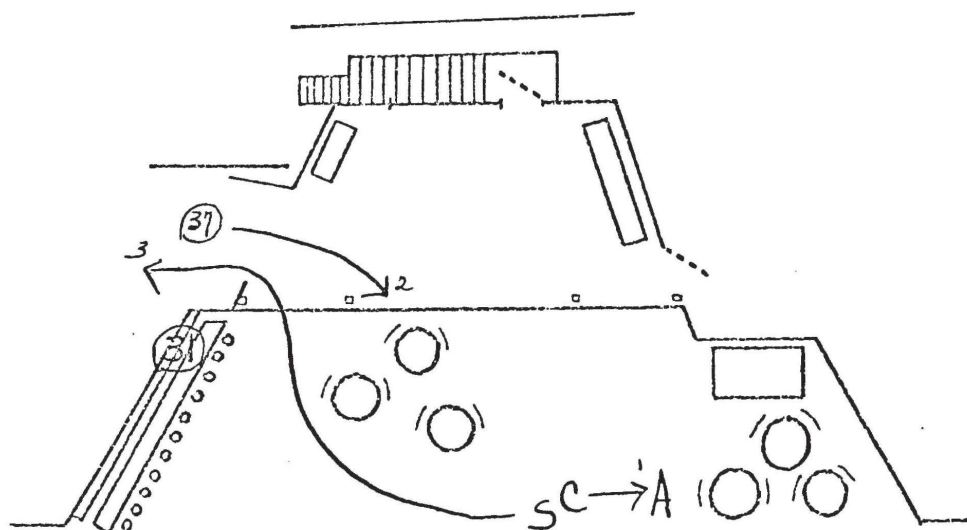
4  
5 *(They all leave except the barman. Sound of cheering from the banquet room. Desideria enters from the street entrance.)*

DESIDERIA

Where is Michele?

## Description of Action

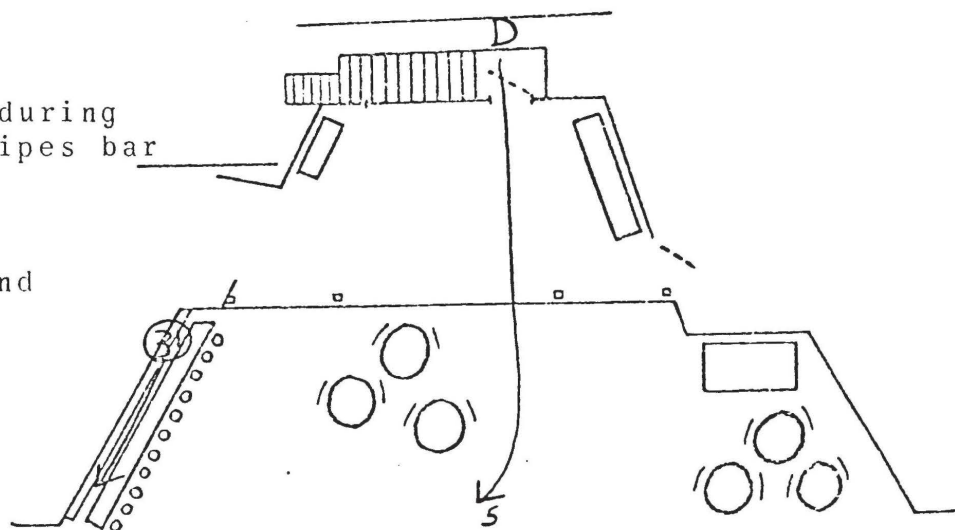
## Diagram of Action



1. C runs to Ann.
2. (37) comes from banquet room
3. S glances UR to (37) ; he leads C UR; Ann. follows

4. (31) moves DR during music as he wipes bar

5. D enters UL and walks DC





BARMAN

In there.

DESIDERIA

1. Call him out, I want to speak to him.

BARMAN

You're not going to cause any trouble, are you?

DESIDERIA

Why should I?

2

3.  
*(After the barman has left, Desideria goes over to the bar and pours herself a drink, then paces nervously up and down, stopping at intervals, as if trying to pull herself together.)*

4. *Michele comes in from the banquet room and, on seeing Desideria, stops short.)*

MICHELE

Desideria! What do you want in here?

DESIDERIA

*(Bitterly)*

5

What indeed!

More than the devil itself, one fears the uninvited guest.

MICHELE

Why did you come, then?

DESIDERIA

My mother has turned me out of the house.

My lover's door is locked

Because he's out singing at other girls' weddings.

MICHELE

6

Is this what you came here to tell me?

DESIDERIA

7

Michele, Michele, try to understand.

Of all the neighbors, I was the only one not to be invited.

They call me a slut because I sleep with you.

I am no longer asked to christenings and weddings.

But that doesn't keep you from going to them.



## Description of Action

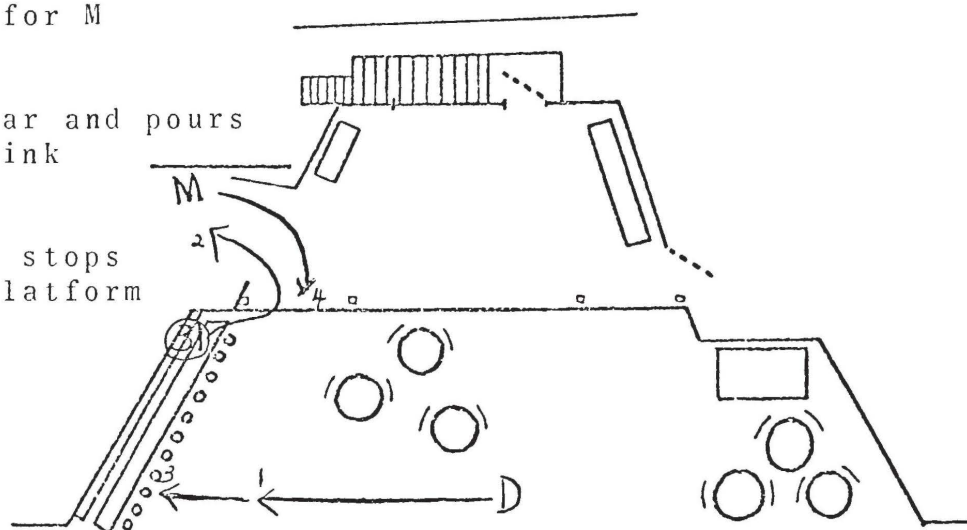
## Diagrams of Action

1. D moves R on music

2. (31) goes UR for M

3. D walks to bar and pours herself a drink

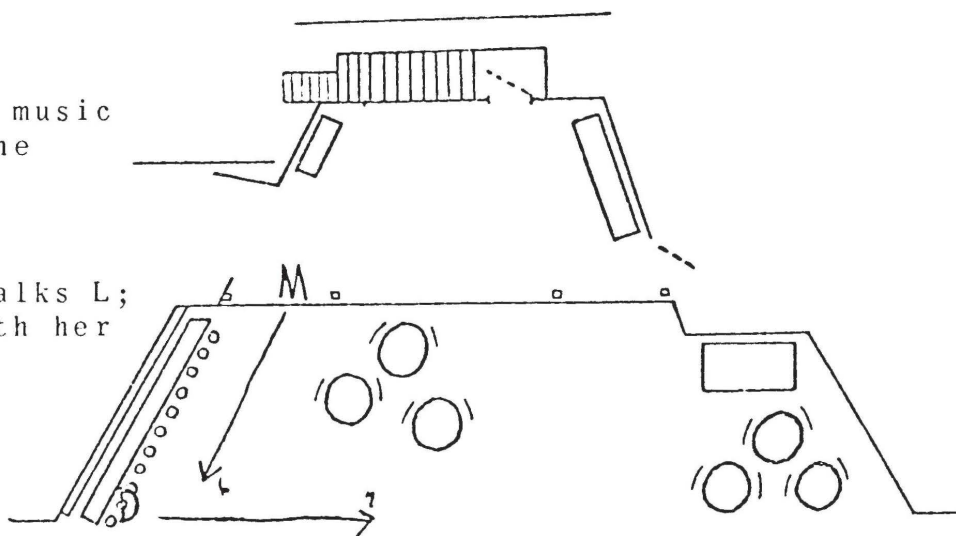
4. M enters and stops on edge of platform



5. D sits on barstool

6. M moves DL on music before his line

7. D rises and walks L; she stands with her back to M



MICHELE

1 No, Desideria, not that.  
 Don't you start trying to change me.  
 No one, not even you, can rule over my life.  
 I must be free.  
 Let people love or hate me as they like,  
 I shall not bargain for their choice.  
 I never asked you for your love.  
 You offered it to me  
 And, at the time, no price was mentioned.

DESIDERIA

2 How can you be so cruel, Michele.  
 Is it a ring I ask for?

MICHELE

I don't know.

DESIDERIA

Or a white veil I hope for?

MICHELE

Leave me alone.

DESIDERIA

All that I want is to be shown how much you love me.

MICHELE

Haven't I sworn my love to you?

DESIDERIA

Yes, you have

MICHELE

And have I been unfaithful?

DESIDERIA

No, not that.

MICHELE

What is it, then, that makes you doubt me?  
 What will convince you?

DESIDERIA

*(desperately)*

3 You're not ashamed to love me!

MICHELE

But, Desideria, why should I be?

DESIDERIA

*(defiantly)*

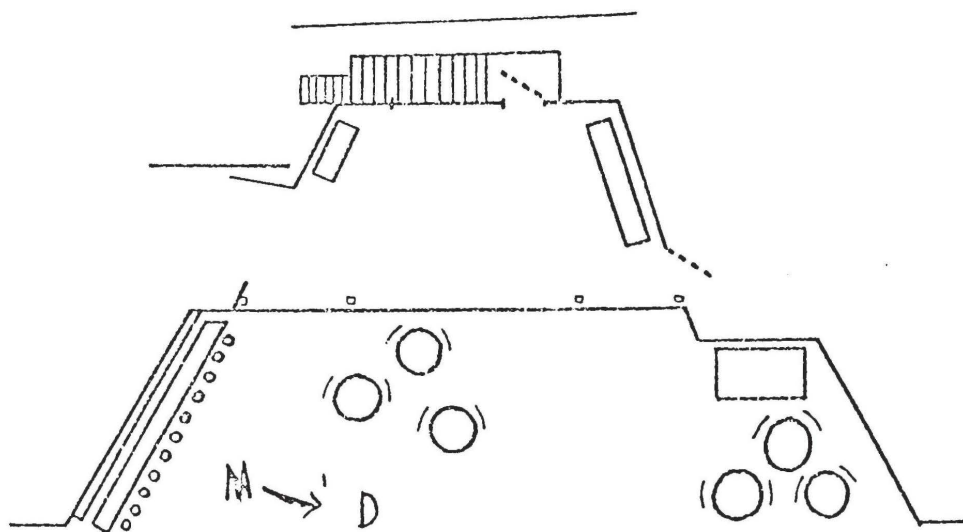
4 Then crown me with your pride  
 And bind me with your love.

## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action

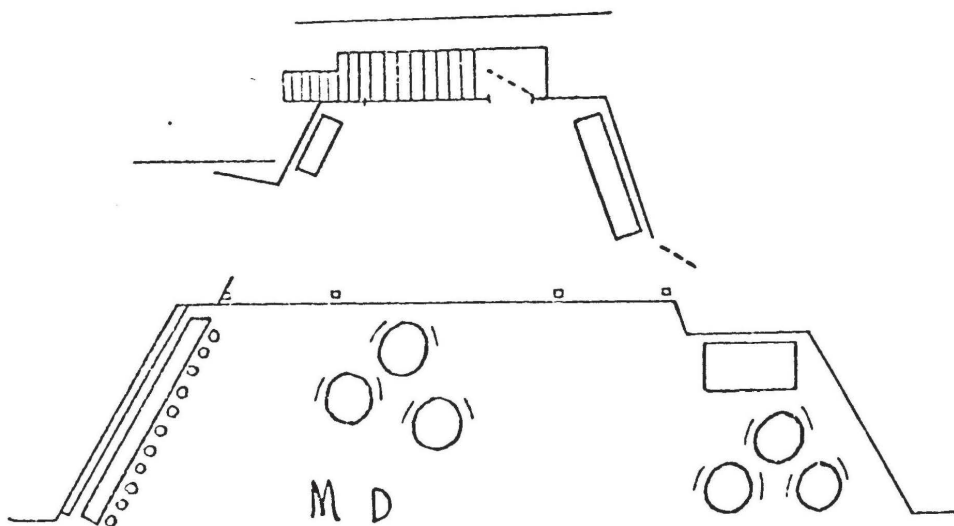
1. D' still faces DL; M moves a step closer and talks to her back

2. D faces C



3. D faces M

4. D faces DL



It is all I ask.

1. If I ever felt that you, too, were ashamed of me,  
I'd kill myself.

MICHELE

2 But I love you, Desideria,  
And am proud of it.

3  
(Desideria and Michele look helplessly at each other. Then Michele gets himself  
a glass and a bottle of wine, sits at one of the tables and starts drinking.)

CHORUS (off-stage)

Eh già che i giovinotti  
Voglion stare attorno a te;  
La luna splende di notte,  
Ma tu mia bella splendi notte e giorno.  
Oh! (shouts of laughter) 4

DESIDERIA

If what you say is really true,  
Then will you do something for me?

MICHELE (nervously)

What?

DESIDERIA

(pointing to the banquet room)

Will you take me in there with you?

MICHELE

That I cannot do.

DESIDERIA

Why?

MICHELE

You know why.  
Think of Annina . . .  
Carmela is her best friend.

DESIDERIA

5 (She springs toward him)

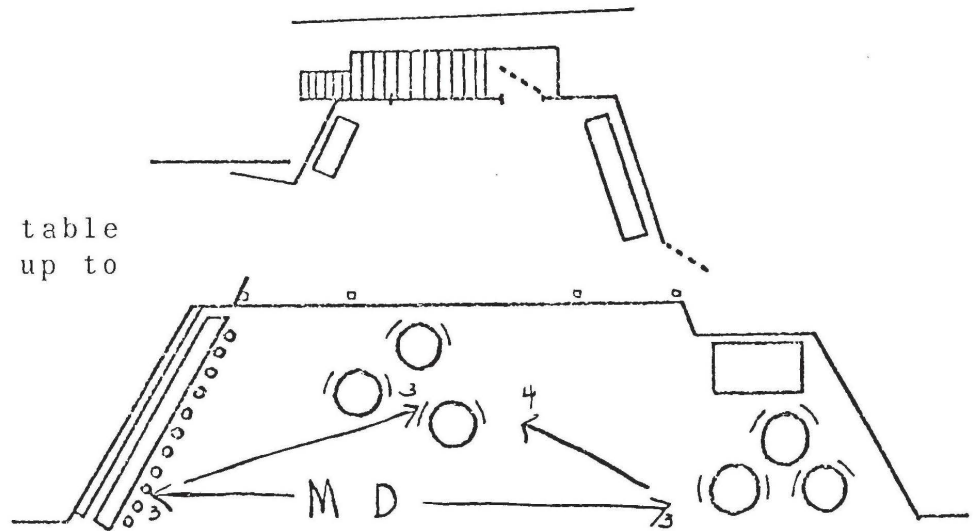
Annina, Annina — always Annina!  
I knew it, I knew it!  
What does she ever do for you,  
Except light candles for your soul?  
But you are bewitched by her.  
You're ruining your life because of her.  
Why don't you leave her alone?  
She doesn't love you the way you think.  
She pities you,  
And you'll never change her.

## Description of Action

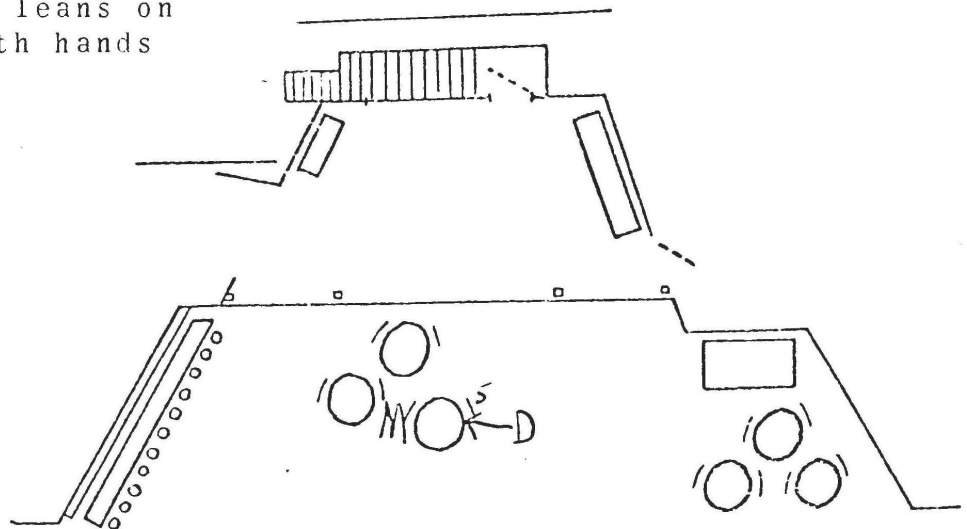
## Diagrams of Action

1. D faces M on music before her line
2. M touches D's arm
3. M moves R to bar, buys a bottle from 3l ,  
and sits at table; D moves LC

4. D moves C to table  
as she looks up to  
banquet hall



5. D moves R and leans on  
table with both hands



Never, never!

1 She's like a blinded moth  
Beating her wings against a lighted window.  
Infinite space is all around her,  
But of the starry night she only sees one little, flaming square.  
Why don't you let her go her way?  
Why don't you live with me?  
You need me and you know it.  
You need me as much as I need you.  
I have but one love,  
And my love is not a blind dream.  
My love blooms with the earth.

MICHELE  
(with exasperation)

What more do you want from me?  
There is nothing I can do about  
Annina.  
She's a sick girl. She needs me.  
She's my sister, after all.

CHORUS (offstage)

E vola e vola il vento.  
Io mi stringo appresso te.  
Il vento porta la pioggia  
Ma tu Carmela fai la pioggia e il sole.  
Oh!  
(shouts and laughter)

DESIDERIA

2 But she doesn't want to be your sister.  
She wants to be everybody's sister.

MICHELE

(angry and defenseless)

3 Stop talking about Annina!  
She has nothing to do with us.

DESIDERIA

(with cruel persistence)

Well, then, will you take me in with you?  
Answer me.

(after a silence)

4 Ah, Michele, don't you know that love can turn to hate  
At the sound of one word,  
If the word is said too late.  
Love can never heal its wounds  
Unless the cry is answered,  
Unless the scar is seen.  
All the tears one weeps alone  
Do not unlock the pounding gates of the heart.  
Like stars they fall in deathly stillness  
But leave a poisoned trail.  
Only he, whose tears are mirrored,  
Can bear the secret pain of living.

## Description of Action

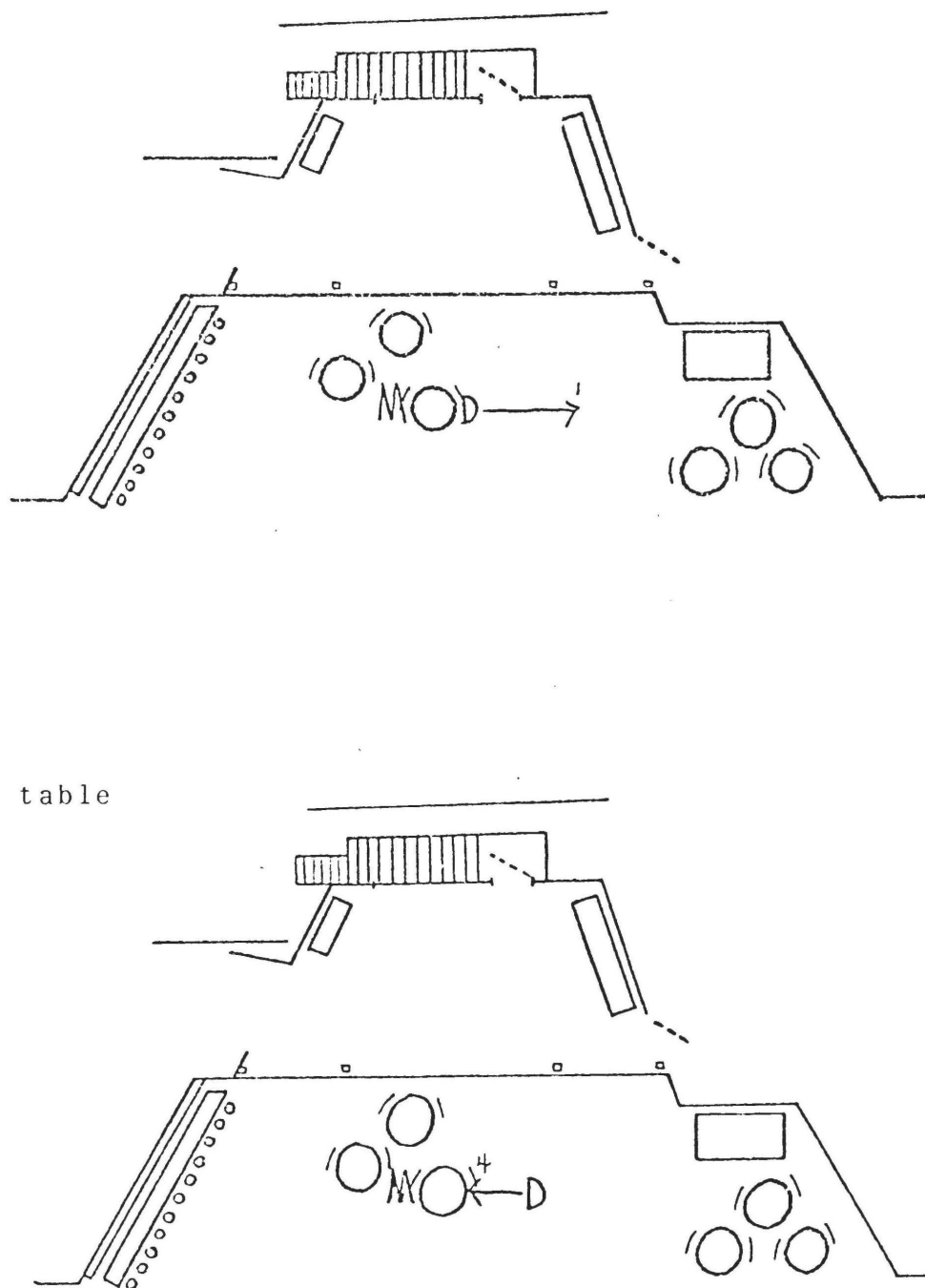
## Diagrams of Action

1. D turns L and takes a few steps

2. D turns to M

3. M stands

4. D walks R to table





Those of us, who find our love on earth,  
 Must celebrate our fleeting triumph.  
 Who welcomes love in silence  
 Or hides it like a crime,  
 Shall soon run to the wastelands  
 To escape its blinding vengeance.  
 Ah, Michele, don't forget  
 That love is a pitiless hunter when allied with death.

MICHELE

1 You will regret it  
 But if that is what you want, let's go in.  
 I'm not afraid of them.

2 *(He takes Desideria by the hand and leads her toward the banquet room, but at that same moment Don Marco appears at the door and bars the way.)*

DON MARCO

Desideria, who brought you here?

MICHELE

I did.

DON MARCO

You're not going to take her in there, are you?

MICHELE

What business is it of yours, Don Marco?

DON MARCO

I beg you, Michele, don't antagonize them again,  
 Not today . . . for your own sake.

MICHELE

*(ironically)*

I like that! For my own sake!

DON MARCO

Don't do it, Michele.  
 Take my advice.  
 Don't take her in.

MICHELE

I did not ask for your advice.  
 She's far above any woman who's in there.

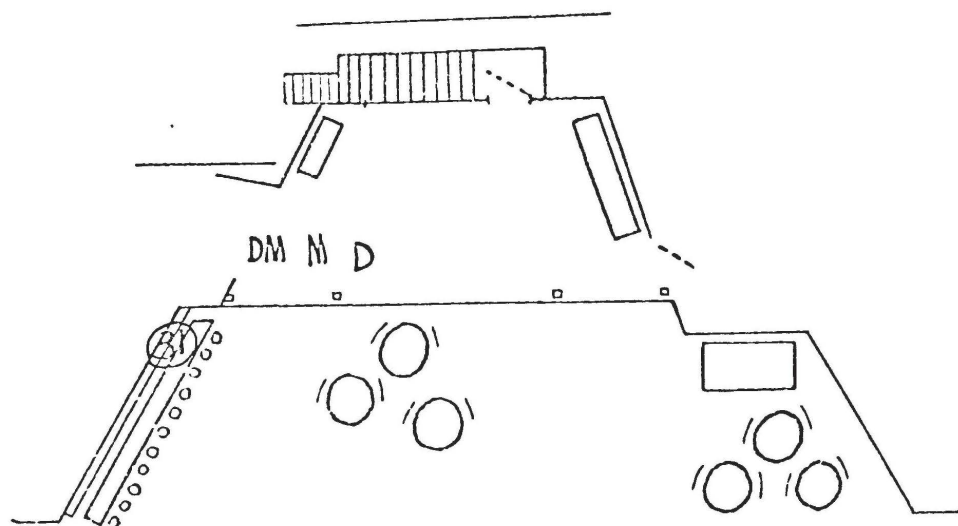
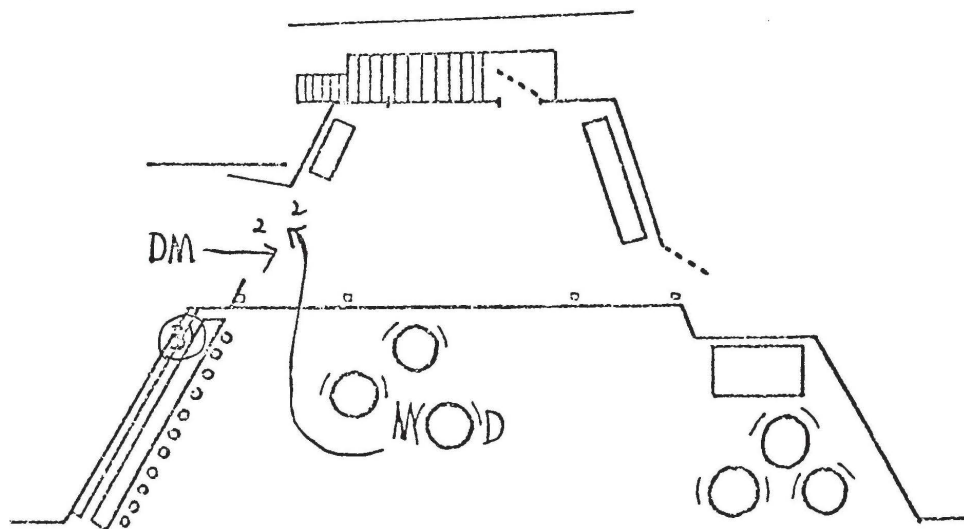
DON MARCO

That may be so.  
 I do not pass judgment on her.  
 But I know that she will not be welcomed there.

## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action

1. M stands facing D
2. M takes D by the hand and leads her UR to banquet hall



MICHELE

I don't care. Let me pass.

DON MARCO

I beg you, think it over . . .  
For Annina's sake.

MICHELE

Don't you dare, priest, stand in my way.  
Your holy frock doesn't frighten me.  
Ah, I warn you, get out of my way.  
If you think I can be tamed by your magic signs,  
You'll soon find out who Michele is!

*(He raises his fist at Don Marco, but he is held back by Annina who has rushed out of the banquet room followed by the guests.)*

CHORUS

- 2 Eh! What is the matter?  
Who's having a fight?  
It is Michele. Desideria is with him, the little slut!  
He's after Don Marco again.  
One could have guessed it.

ANNINA

What is wrong, Michele?  
What have they done to you?

SALVATORE

- 3 It is always you, Michele, who causes trouble.  
Why don't you leave us in peace?  
Even this day you had to spoil.

- 4 *(Michele, who has pushed Annina away from him, pours himself a glass of wine, then defiantly faces the hostile crowd.)*

MICHELE

I know that you all hate me.  
For you I always was the rebel and the cursed one.  
Since I was a child you've always hated me,  
Because I never asked for love, only understanding.  
But that you couldn't give me  
Because your love is wild and strong, but blind.

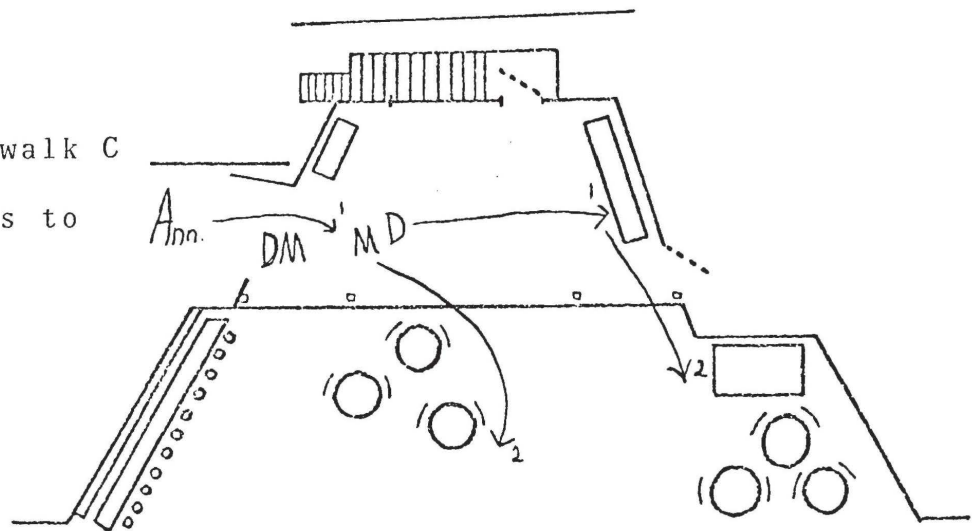
- 5 What right have you to judge me?  
Look at yourselves!  
Although you made this land your home,  
You live like strangers.  
You are ashamed to say: "I was Italian";  
And for such little gain  
You sold your noble, ancient dreams.

## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action

1. Ann. rushes out of banquet room to stop M; D moves L

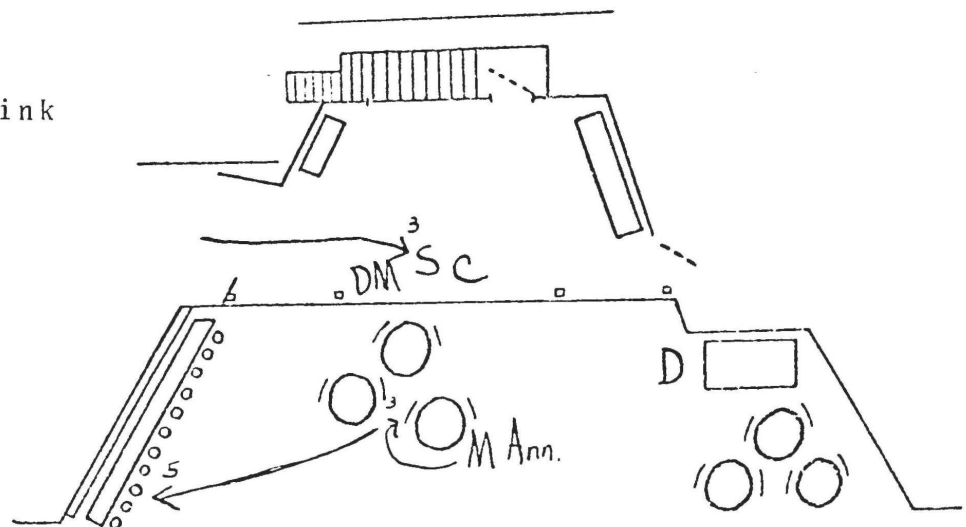
2. Ann. and M walk C to table;  
D also moves to LC



3. C and S join DM as M reaches for bottle and glass

4. M pours a drink

5. M moves R



I cannot smile at your contentment,  
 Nor share your little island of defeat.  
 I do want to belong, belong to this new world.  
 I don't want to be told: "You foreigner, go back where you have come from!  
 You foreigner, go back to your old home."  
 My home . . . Where is my home?  
 They tell me that the Italian shore blooms like a garden.  
 They tell me that nowhere the sea's so blue,  
 That towns are built of stones older than sorrow,  
 Where men still live and die,  
 Yes, very poor, but proud.  
 Perhaps if I could see just once that sad, sweet country,  
 I would be proud to say: "I am Italian,"  
 1 And would forget your eyes . . .

2 *(throwing the wine in their faces)*  
 Take your wine.

3 *(He collapses on a chair by a table and buries his head in his arms.*

*Some of the guests file out of the restaurant, looking disdainfully at Michele as they pass him.)*

DON MARCO

You are wrong, Michele.  
 They are good people.  
 You're a bitter man, Michele,  
 And a bitter man is a false judge.

ANNINA

*(sorrowfully to Carmela, lost and trembling in Salvatore's arms.)*

I'm sorry, Carmela, I'm so ashamed.  
 Forgive him. It must be the wine.  
 Take her away, Salvatore, go on.  
 We must not spoil your day.

4 *(Led by Don Marco, the bridal couple leaves, followed by relatives. As they mount the steps outside, leading onto the street, some of the guests who have been following, cheer lustily and throw rice at them.*

*Only a few guests are now left in the room.*

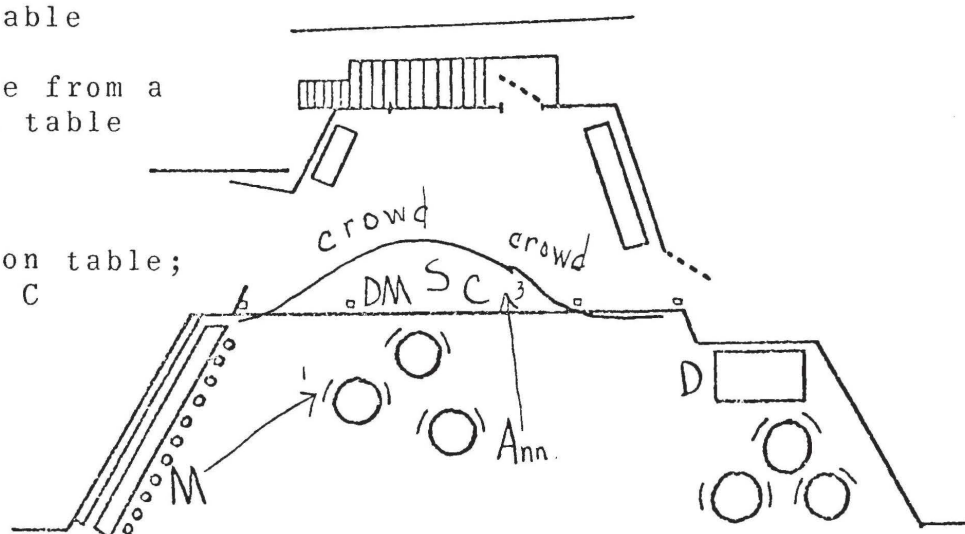
5 *Annina approaches Michele and, for a moment, stands by him without moving.)*

ANNINA

*(timidly caressing Michele's head)*  
 Michele . . .

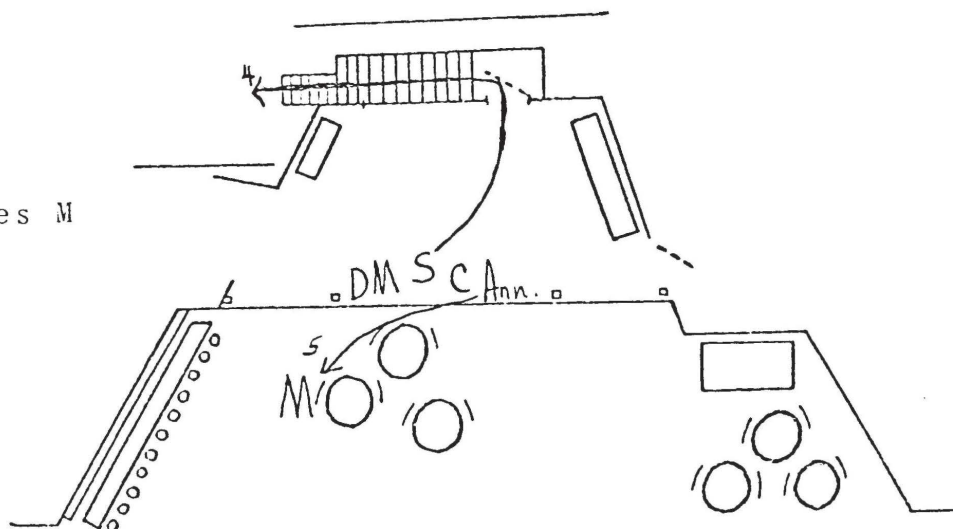
Description of ActionDiagrams of Action

1. M moves to table
2. M throws wine from a glass on the table
3. M collapses on table;  
A moves U to C



4. DM leads C and S UL to exit;  
most of the crowd follows

5. Ann. approaches M



MICHELE

*(gratefully looks up at her)*

Forgive me, Annina.

ANNINA

Let's go home, Michele.

Come on, I'll help you.

DESIDERIA

1 *(who has been watching the entire scene from a corner of the room, suddenly comes forward)*

Yes, Michele, go home, go . . . go . . .

Both of you had better hide yourselves.

It is all clear to me now,

The reason why you will not marry me.

It is not I who should be ashamed,

Because my love is brighter than the sun,

But you . . . but you . . . you . . .

Let everyone hear this.

It is not with me that you're in love,

*(pointing at Annina)*

It is with her, it is with her.

MICHELE

2 *(Michele looks stunned, as if he had been struck. Then freeing himself from Annina, he slowly moves toward Desideria.)*

What did you say?

DESIDERIA

*(as if possessed)*

Yes, it is true . . . and she knows it.

MICHELE

3 It is a lie, it is a lie!

ANNINA

*(pulling him back)*

4 Come, Michele, leave her alone.

DESIDERIA

5 Oh, the little saint, stealing her brother's heart.

MICHELE

6 You bitch! *(advancing menacingly toward Desideria.)* Shut up! Don't dare say anything about my sister. You streetwalker! You liar!

DESIDERIA

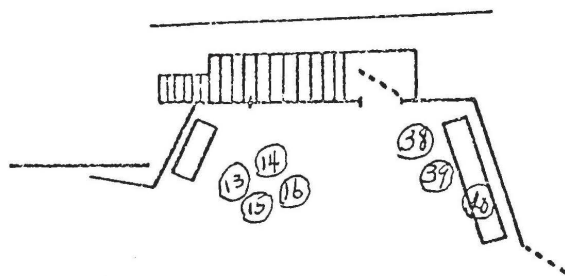
You are afraid to hear the truth!



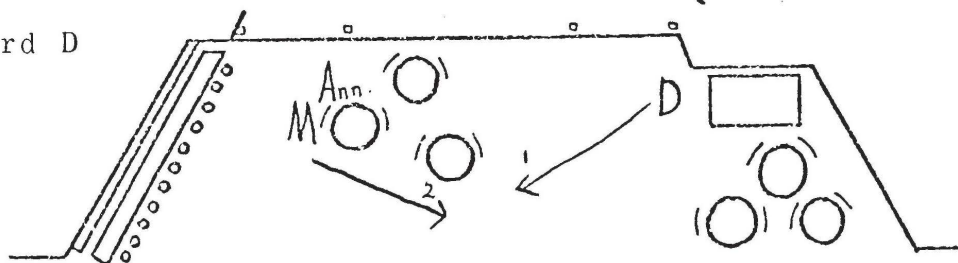
## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action

1. D walks C

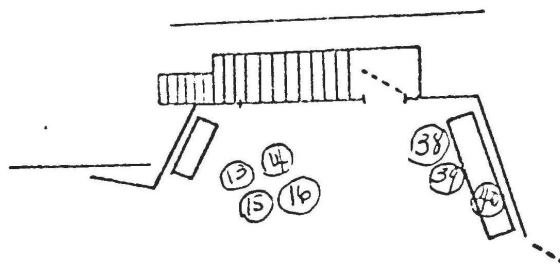


2. M walks toward D



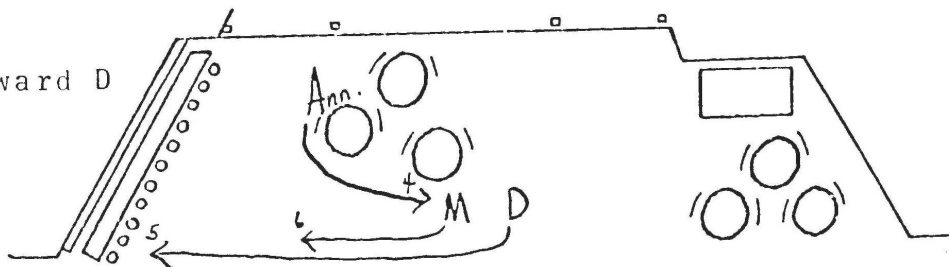
3. M takes D by the arm

4. Ann. follows M



5. D walks R to bar

6. M advances toward D



1. Take it back! MICHELE  
 Never! DESIDERIA  
 Take it back! MICHELE  
 Never! DESIDERIA  
 MICHELE  
*(Desideria laughs hysterically as Michele shakes her by the shoulders)*  
 Don't joke with me!
2. Leave her alone, Michele. CHORUS  
 Don't bother with her.
3. Come home, Michele, you're drunk! ANNINA  
 Please stop him! MICHELE  
 Ah, Desideria, deny what you said. DESIDERIA  
 It's true, it's true! ANNINA  
 Michele, Michele!  
 Let's go, Michele, leave her alone. MICHELE  
 I warn you, Desideria,  
 You'll pay for your lies! DESIDERIA  
 Admit it, admit it! ANNINA  
 You must not listen to her, Michele. MICHELE  
 Ah, for your own sake,  
 Take back your words. DESIDERIA  
*(more and more defiantly and hysterically)*  
 You love her, you love her! MICHELE  
*(slowly cornering Desideria against the bar)*  
 Take it back! DESIDERIA  
 You love her!

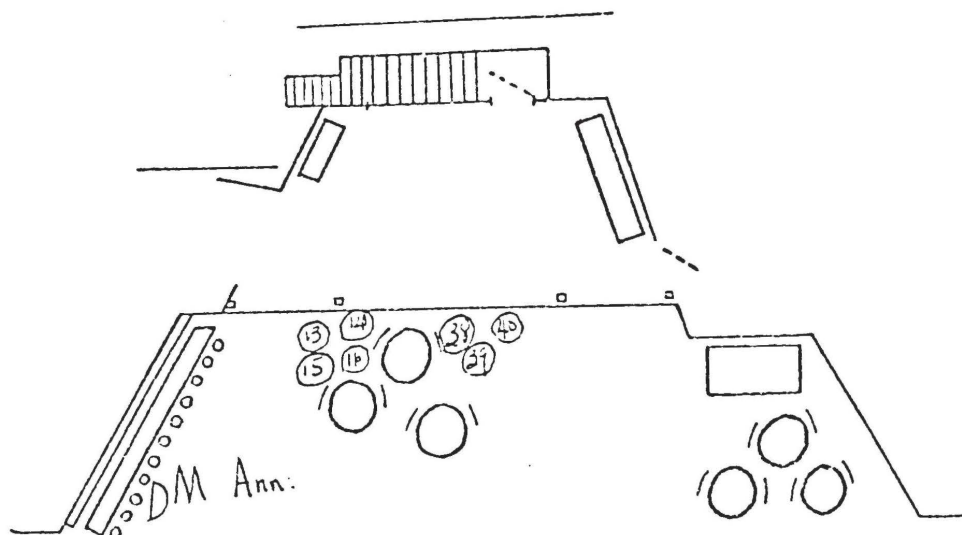
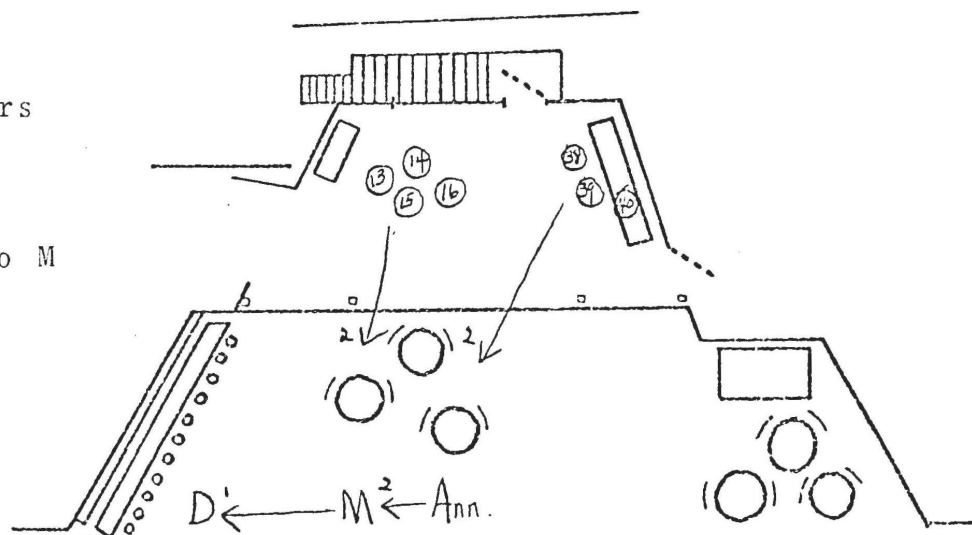
## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action

1. M walks to D and shakes her as he holds one arm behind her back

2. Chorus members move to C

3. Ann. walks to M



MICHELE

Take it back, I said!

DESIDERIA

It's true. You love her.

MICHELE

Shut up!

DESIDERIA

You love her, you love her!

MICHELE

Shut up!

DESIDERIA

You love her, love her . . .

*(Michele, his body pressed against hers,<sup>1</sup> suddenly seizes a knife from the bar and stabs Desideria in the back. Everyone stands frozen-still.*

*Having pushed Michele away from her,<sup>2</sup> Desideria takes a few steps forward, then stands still again, her eyes wide open as if she were searching for something. She advances another step, trying with one arm to reach the wound in her back.)*  
*(Desideria suddenly collapses. A few women scream.)*

ANNINA

3 *(running to her side)*

Desideria, Desideria!

Oh my God, my God!

4 *(The barman runs to a telephone booth to call the police.)*

DESIDERIA

Annina, I'm dying . . .

*(Michele, as if suddenly waking from a dream,<sup>5</sup> runs out of the restaurant, knocking a table down as he does so.*

*After he leaves, the few remaining guests stand against the exit door, and watch the following scene from there.*

*The stairway outside slowly becomes crowded with people, peering through the door and the windows.)*

DESIDERIA

Forgive me, Annina. Help me,  
I'm dying.

ANNINA *(holding Desideria in her arms)*

No, don't say that.

It isn't true, Desideria,

It isn't true!

DESIDERIA

I'm afraid.

Annina, help me . . .

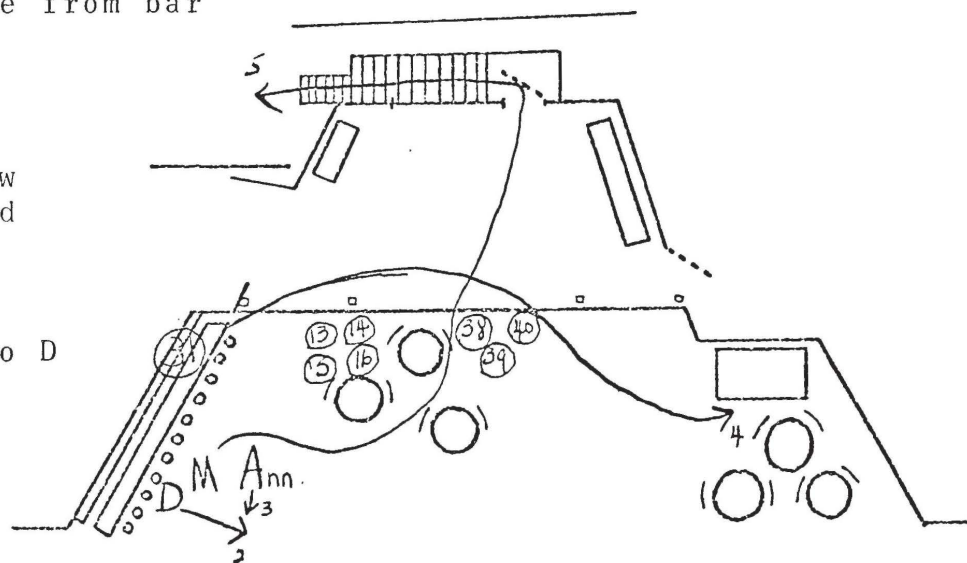
## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action

1. M takes knife from bar and stabs D

2. D takes a few steps forward

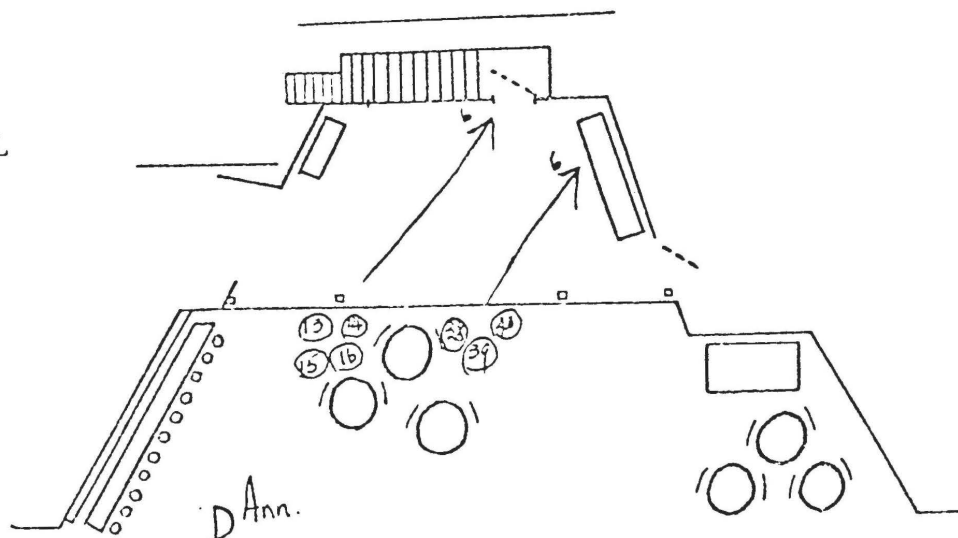
3. Ann. moves to D



4. (31) crosses L to telephone booth

5. M runs across C and UL to exit

6. Guests move UL



ANNINA

Don't be afraid, Desideria, don't be afraid.  
Pray with me.

DESIDERIA

Yes, yes.

ANNINA

O, merciful God,

DESIDERIA

O, merciful God . . .

ANNINA

Have pity on me

DESIDERIA

Have pity on me . . .

ANNINA

For I have suffered much.

DESIDERIA

*(suddenly clutching at Annina, terror in her voice)*

Annina, Annina! I am afraid I'm dying . .

Help me, help me!

I'm afraid . . .

Annina, save me . . .

*(She slowly calms down, while Annina caresses her cheeks.)*

ANNINA

Lead me, O Lord,

DESIDERIA

Lead me, O Lord . . .

ANNINA

To Your joyful Kingdom,

DESIDERIA

Joyful . . . Kingdom . . .

ANNINA

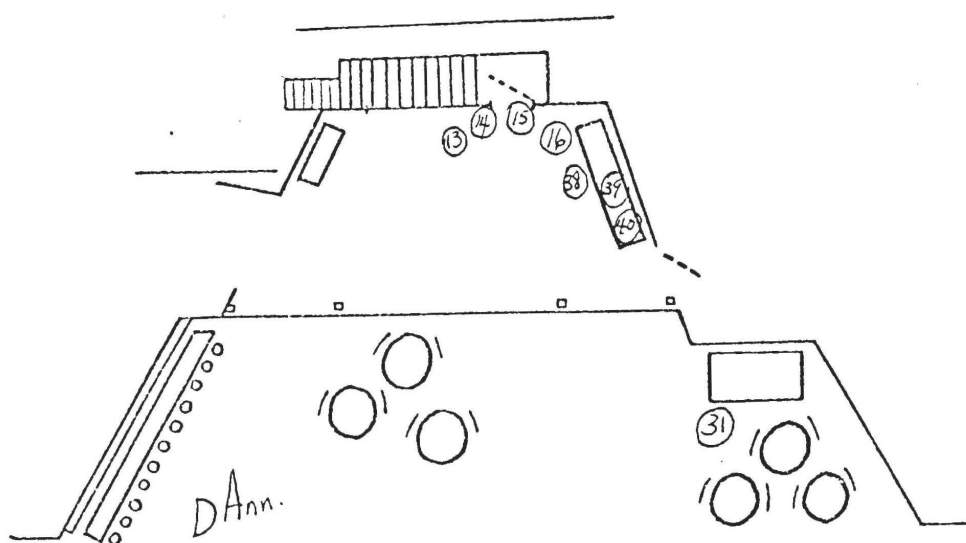
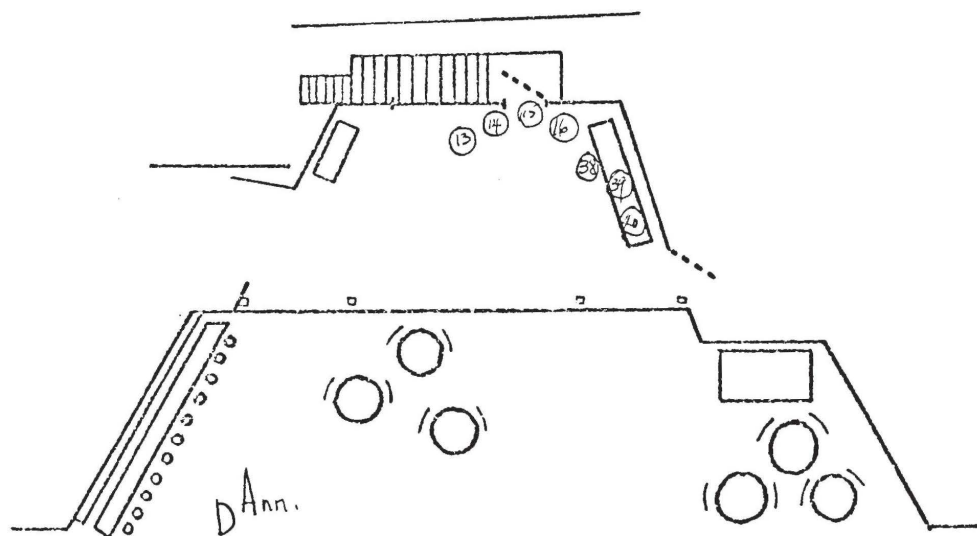
Where I may find my peace

DESIDERIA

Find . . . my peace . .

ANNINA

In Your infinite love . . .

Description of ActionDiagrams of Action



## DESIDERIA

Love . . . love (*in a murmur*) love . .

(*Desideria dies.*)

## ANNINA

Oh, my God, I can no longer wait!

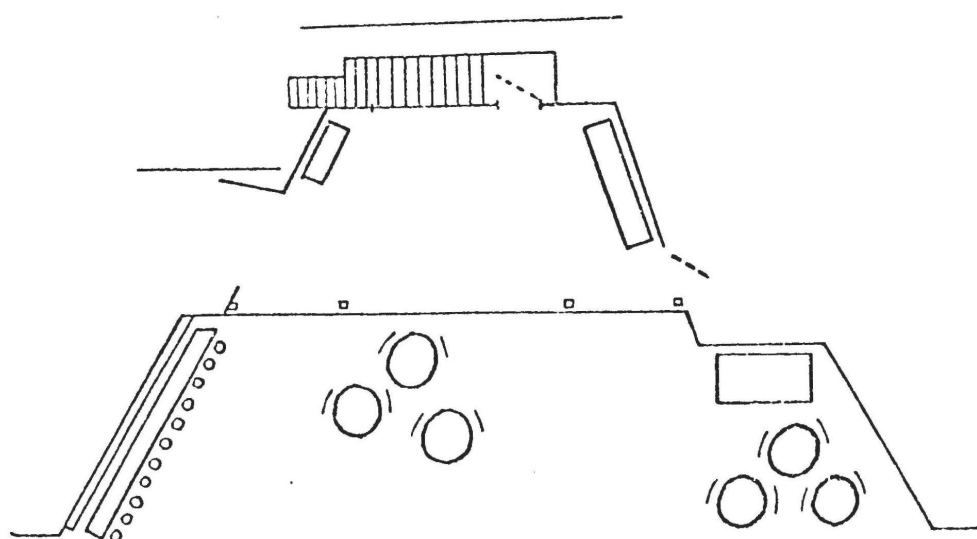
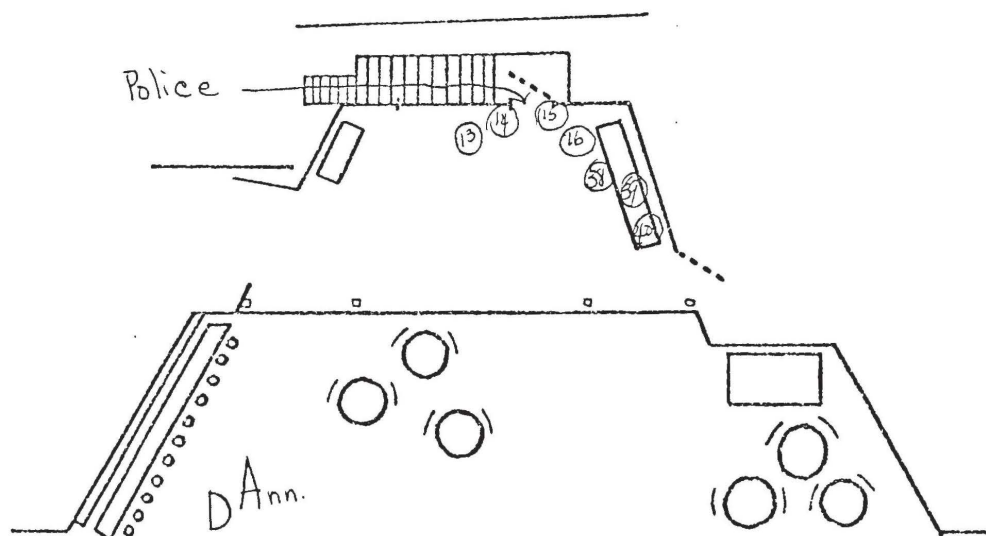
(*Clutching Desideria's body in her arms, Annina bursts into tears.*

*The distant wail of sirens is heard. One sees the policemen outside trying to make their way down the crowded stairway. The curtain falls.)*

## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action

## 1. Policemen come down stairway



## Scene I

*(A vast dimly lit, deserted passageway in a subway station. Upstage, a stairway leading to the street. Stage left, a newspaper kiosk, the interior of which is open to the audience. Stage right, an iron railing with a high, spoked turnstile which marks the exit from the subway station proper; behind the railing, a stairway leading up from the train level below. It is early morning. Blown by the wind, snow is piling high on the steps leading up to the barely visible street. The damp walls and the floor, littered with discarded newspapers, heighten the desolate atmosphere. Only the interior of the kiosk, warmed by an oil stove and lit by a little, electric lamp is faintly cheerful. At rare intervals throughout the scene (specifically after the rumble of passing trains heard below) a few, chilled passengers will be seen emerging from the stairwell leading up from the station, coming through the turnstile, and disappearing up the stairway leading to the street. As the curtain rises, Annina, wrapped in a shawl, is standing near the street exit, nervously waiting for someone. Maria Corona, while keeping an anxious eye on Annina, bundles up her son and sends him off with the morning papers under his arms.)*

*The increasing rumble of a passing train is heard below. The noise of the train quickly dies away.)*

MARIA CORONA <sup>2</sup>*(going toward Annina)*

Stop worrying, Annina.

He's sure to come.

Don Marco won't betray him

Because Michele asked for his help at the confessional.

It is still early.

3 Come and sit inside.

Oh, poor, little angel,

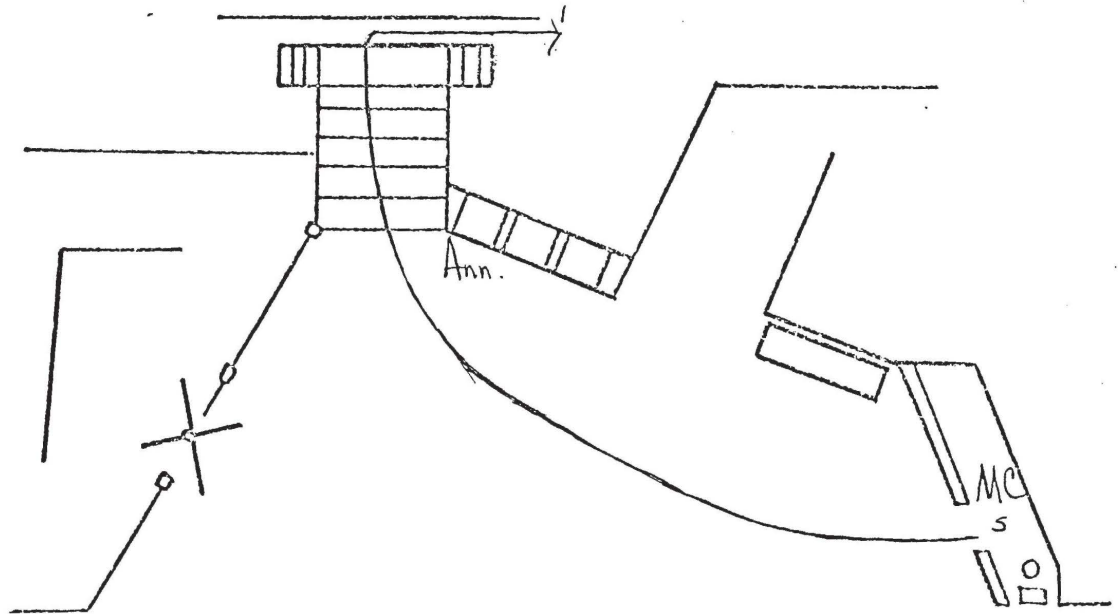
Come here and sit next to me.

ANNINA

What time is it?

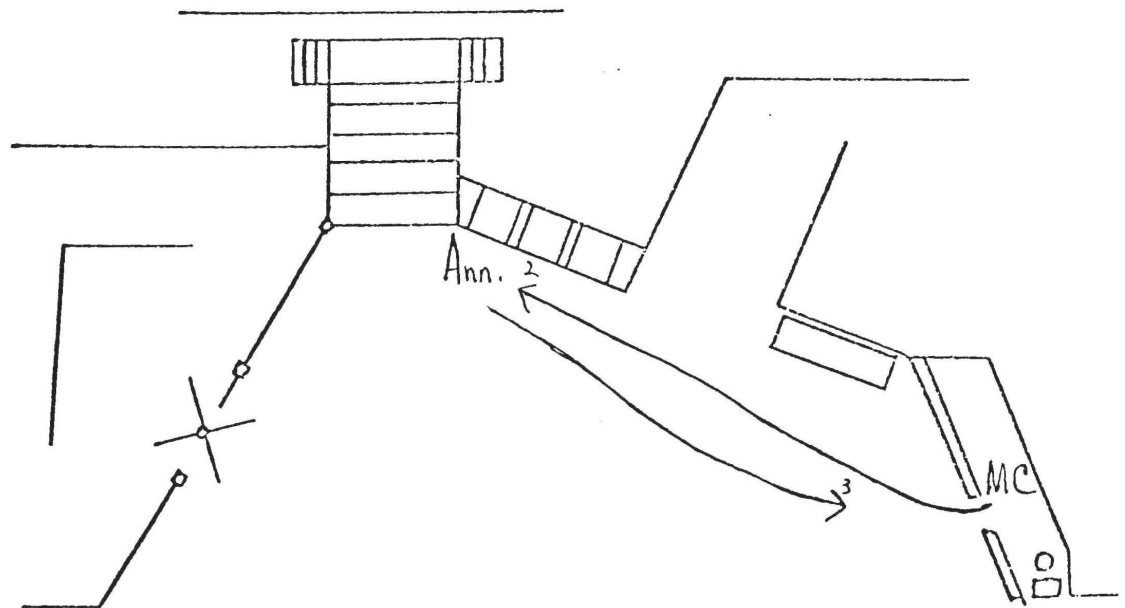
Description of ActionDiagrams of Action

1. MC's son exits UC with newspapers



2. MC walks UC to Ann.

3. MC and Ann. walk DL toward kiosk



MARIA CORONA

It isn't quite seven yet. The day is just beginning.

ANNINA

It's damp down here.

MARIA CORONA

| *(leading Annina inside the kiosk)*

Come inside.

It's nice and warm in here. <sup>2</sup> *(they sit by the stove)*

Isn't this cheerful?

This is my home.

Oh, poor angel, you look so tired.

MARIA CORONA

*(showing Annina an old newspaper)*

Did you ever see Michele's picture in the Italian papers?

Right on the front page,

As big as life!

Oh, what a good-looking boy he is.

I kept them all.

Listen to this: "Un impressionante tragedia ha avuto luogo ier sera . . ."

ANNINA

No, please. Don't read it.

Don't let me hear it.

MARIA CORONA

*(disappointed)*

And to think that all my life I wanted to get my picture in the papers.

For twenty-five years I've been selling this trash

And not once have I been mentioned in it.

Some people have all the luck.

*(pulling some old newspaper clippings out of a drawer)*

You remember the time Marinella stabbed her sister-in-law twenty times with a Rusty kitchen knife. (Her name was Clara.)

The poor girl bled for seven days and almost lost her life.

But all the reporters took Marinella's photograph in a bathing suit,

All bathed in tears.

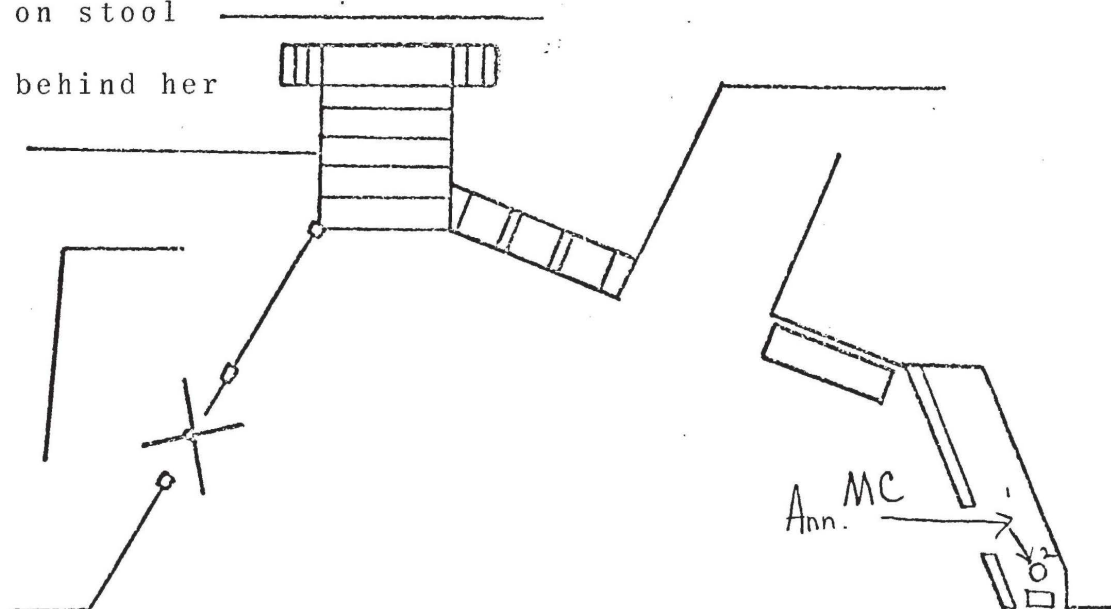
And can you imagine what they printed under it all:

## Description of Action

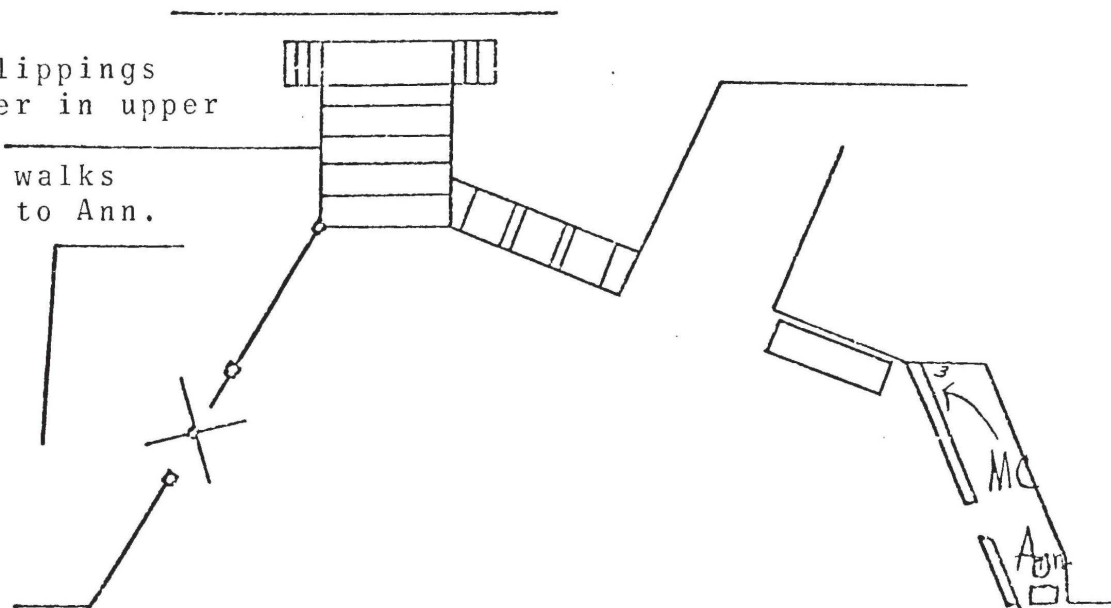
## Diagrams of Action

1. MC leads Ann. into kiosk

2. Ann. sits on stool  
by stove;  
MC stands behind her



3. MC gets clippings  
from drawer in upper  
corner of  
kiosk and walks  
back down to Ann.



(*melodramatically*) "Protagonista d'un dramma di gelosia."

But I am old and ugly and no one takes my picture.  
I guess I'll have to kill somebody to have my picture taken.

(*The rumble of a train is heard again. Annina, exhausted from her long wait, dozes off, her head leaning against Maria Corona's shoulder.*)

1 Don Marco comes down the street stairway.  
After looking around him,<sup>2</sup> he goes back and redescends, immediately followed by Michele.)

DON MARCO

There she is. Be careful, Michele, try not to upset her.  
Remember, she's a very sick girl.  
May God forgive you. May God forgive us all.

3 (*Don Marco quickly remounts the steps and disappears.*)

4 Evidently in great anguish and unable to control himself, Michele leans against the wall, covering his face with his hands.)

MARIA CORONA

(*tapping her on the shoulder*)

I think he's here, Annina.

ANNINA

Where?

(*running to him*)

5 Michele, Michele!

MICHELE

Annina, Annina, my Annina.

(*They clasp each other in an intense embrace.*)

ANNINA

How are you, Michele?  
Where are you hiding?

MICHELE

Everywhere.

6 (*Annina leads Michele to a little, wooden bench outside the kiosk.*)

MICHELE

There will be no more peace for me.

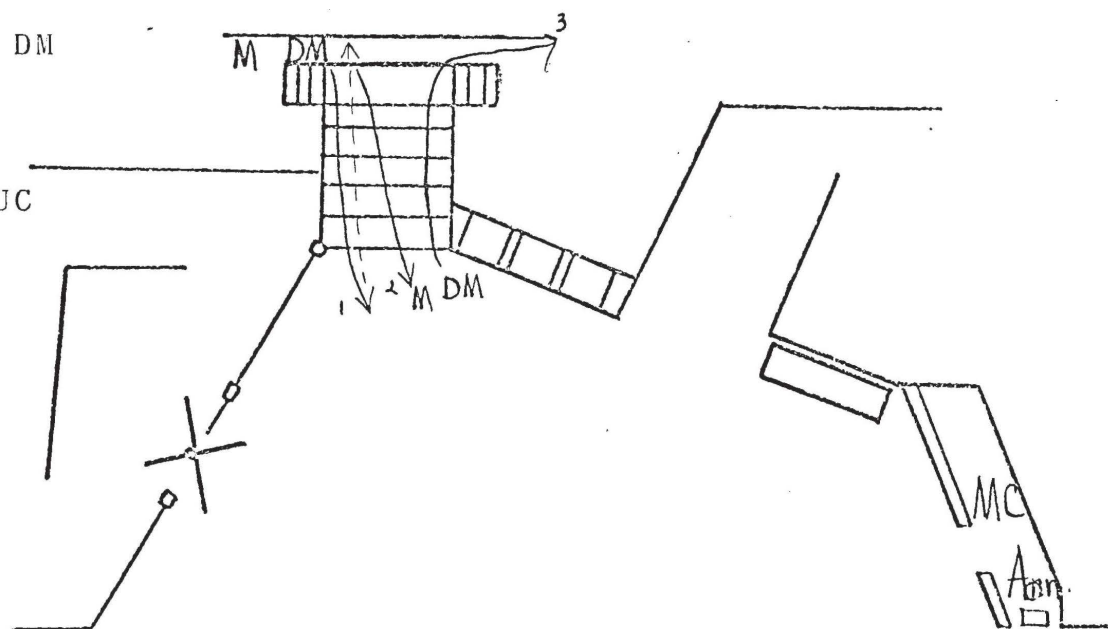


## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action

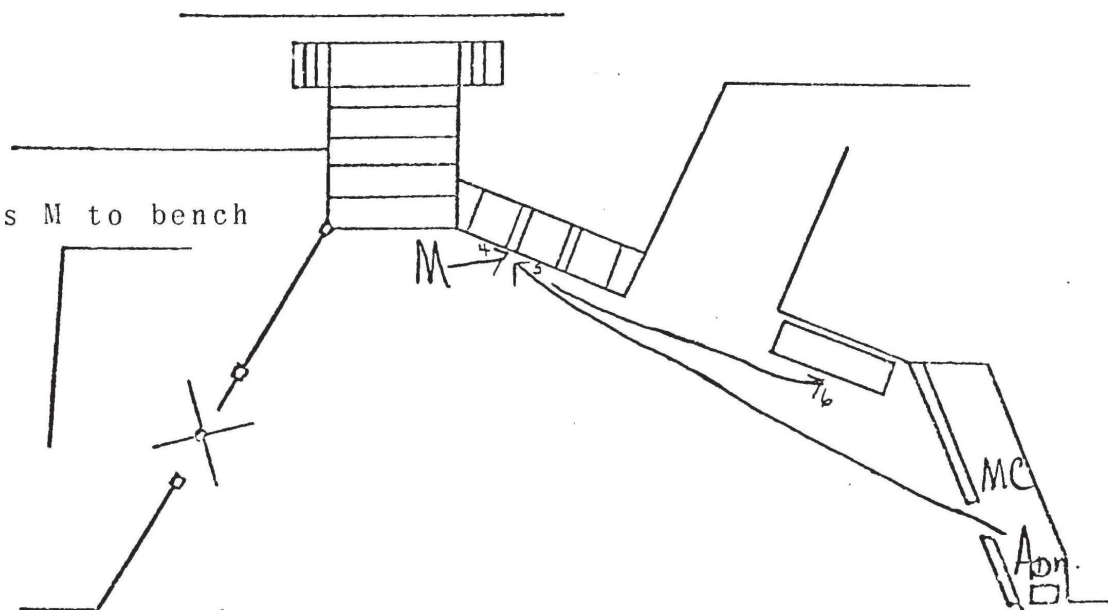
1. DM enters UC, looks around, goes back, and redescends
2. M follows DM

3. DM exits UC



4. M leans against wall
5. Ann. runs UC to M

6. Ann. leads M to bench



ANNINA

Give yourself up, Michele.  
You must accept your punishment.

MICHELE

Never.  
Don't ask me to do that.  
Even if God Himself be against me, I'll fight on to the end.  
*(with sudden hopelessness)*  
Where are my hopes and my dreams?  
Within a single hour, all was lost, all was gone.  
In that one glass of bitter wine, my whole life was drowned.

ANNINA

Ah, poor Michele, where will you go?

MICHELE AND ANNINA

My }  
Your } night will have no darkness,  
No compass } my flight  
                  } your

MICHELE

Only you are left to me, Annina . . .  
You, my sister . . . you, my gentle light.  
I must fight on for you.

ANNINA

1 Oh, my God, please help me to find the strength to tell him.

MICHELE

What must you tell me?  
What is it, Annina?

ANNINA

2 I'm ill, Michele, very ill.

MICHELE

I know. I must take care of you.

ANNINA

I'm going to die, Michele.  
I'm going to die very soon.

MICHELE

Who told you?

ANNINA

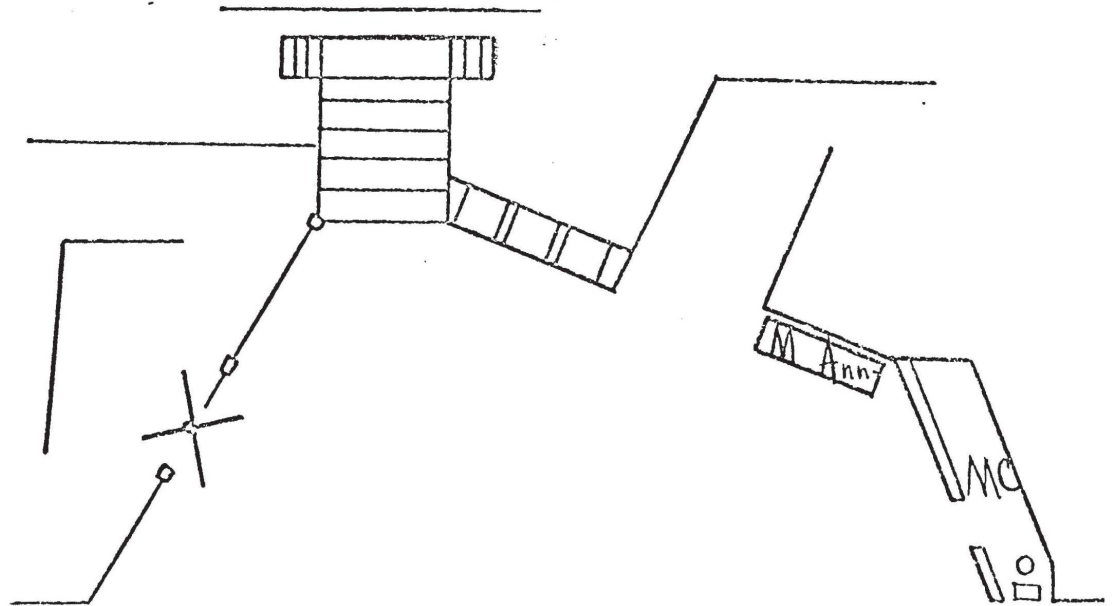
My voices have told me and my voices never lie.

MICHELE

You're wrong, Annina, your voices lie.  
They are themselves your illness.  
Forget them, forget them!

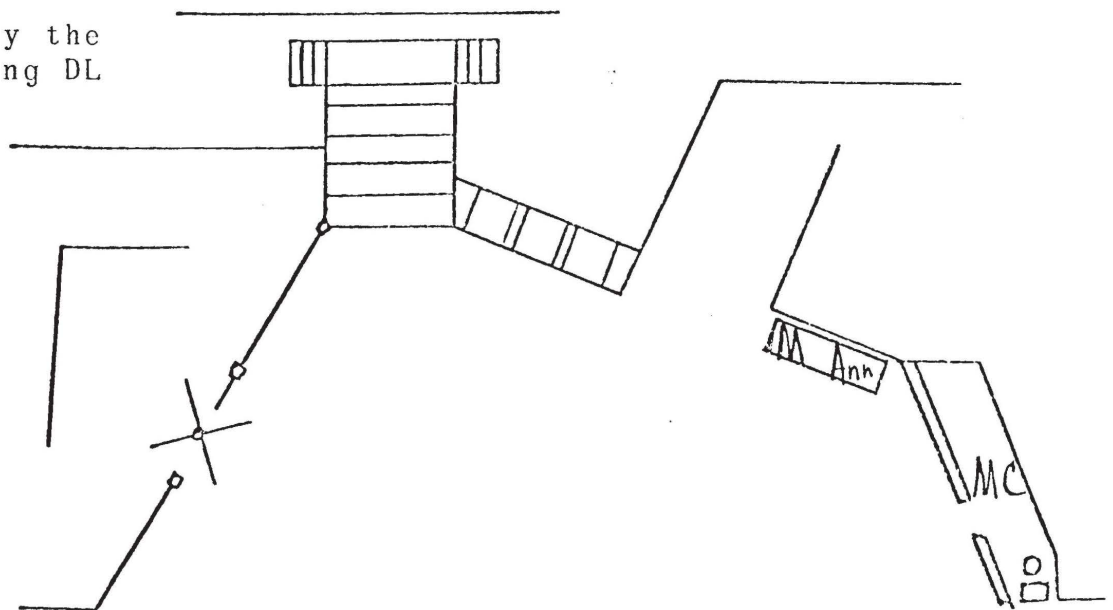
## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action



1. Ann turns DL
2. Ann. turns to M

3. MC sits by the fire facing DL



## ANNINA

Don't try to stop me, Michele.  
 Tell me goodbye, Michele.  
 I'm going to take the veil.

## MICHELE

1 No, no! I'll never consent to that.  
 How can you even think of it!  
 Is this what you came to tell me?  
 How can you be so cruel,  
 Now that I need you most.  
 No, no! You cannot do that to me.  
 I won't let you.  
 What good are you to the world, if you can let down your own brother as he  
 cries for help.

*(Feeling himself watched by a couple of passengers walking down the platform,  
 2 Michele walks to a dark corner, and nervously lights a cigarette.)*

## MARIA CORONA

3 *(Scanning a magazine of horoscopes, inside the kiosk.)*

Weeping, these, for him, are days of weeping.  
 It is all predicted clearly in his sky.  
 Venus has moved into the sunhouse of Capricorn.  
 Ah, me,  
 For any man born in July!  
 Tears, and a journey very far,  
 This is predicted in the sign of Cancer.  
 All in the stars,  
 The stars, the stars.

4 *(A group of noisy school children run up from the train stairway and disappears  
 into the street.)*

5 *(Annina walks up to Michele)*

## ANNINA

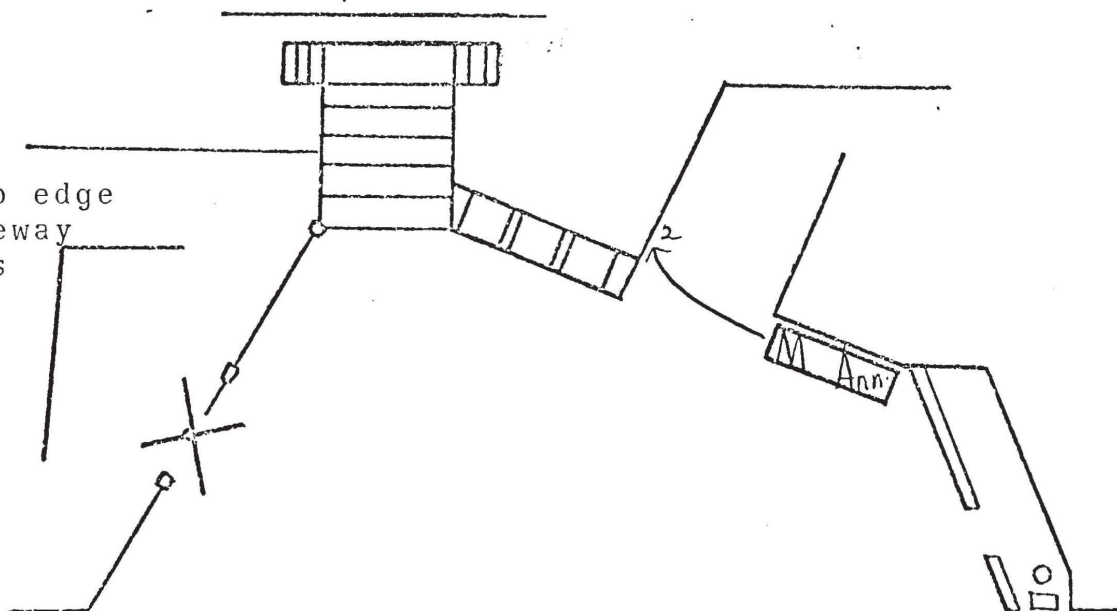
Everything has changed and nothing changes.  
 I still must go my way and our paths can never meet.  
 You know how dear you are to me.  
 For you alone I stayed behind.  
 Now let me hasten to my Love.

## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action

1. M stands

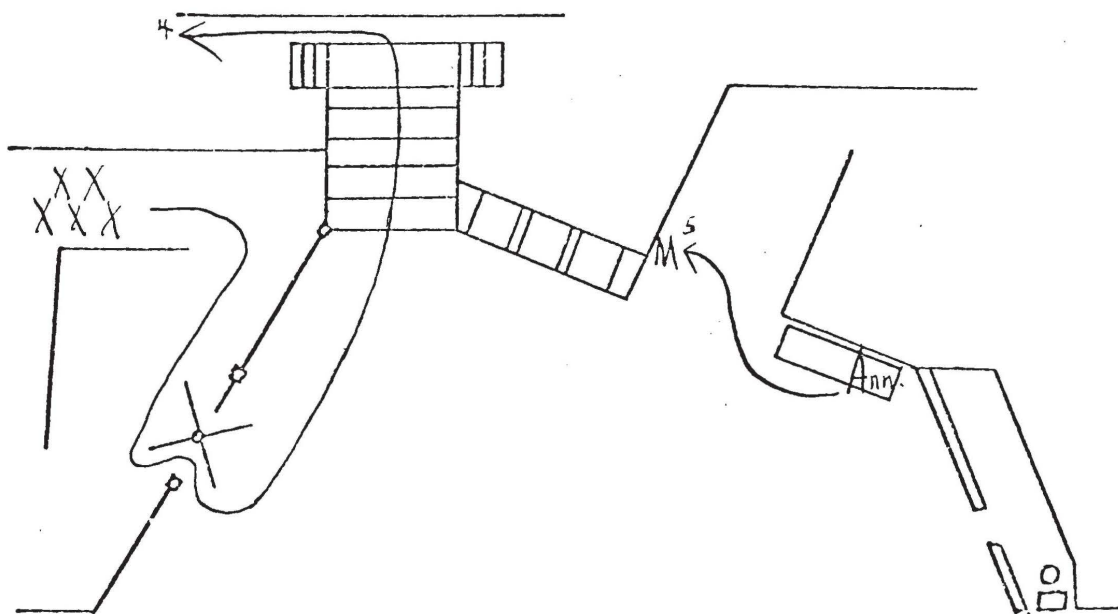
2. M walks to edge  
of passageway  
and lights  
cigarette



3. MC still sits at stove facing audience

4. Children enter R and exit UC

5. Ann. walks  
up to M



MICHELE

Only you are left to me, Annina,  
You, my sister,  
You, my gentle, guiding light.  
Nothing is lost if you remain.

ANNINA

Ah, Michele, don't you understand?  
I can no longer help you.

MICHELE

Why do you say that, Annina?  
You don't believe what Desideria said?

ANNINA

| Oh, no, not that.

MICHELE

Why, then, do you say you cannot help me anymore?

ANNINA

Oh, yes, I can pray for you.

MICHELE

It's more than your prayers I need.

ANNINA

His voice keeps calling me.

MICHELE

It is my voice you hear.

ANNINA

How can one resist the voice of God?

MICHELE

Aren't we all God's sons?

ANNINA

Only by serving Him.  
I can hope to save you, Michele.

MICHELE

Mustn't we all be saved?  
Is it in God's name that you forsake your brother?

ANNINA

My everlasting wish is now my last desire.

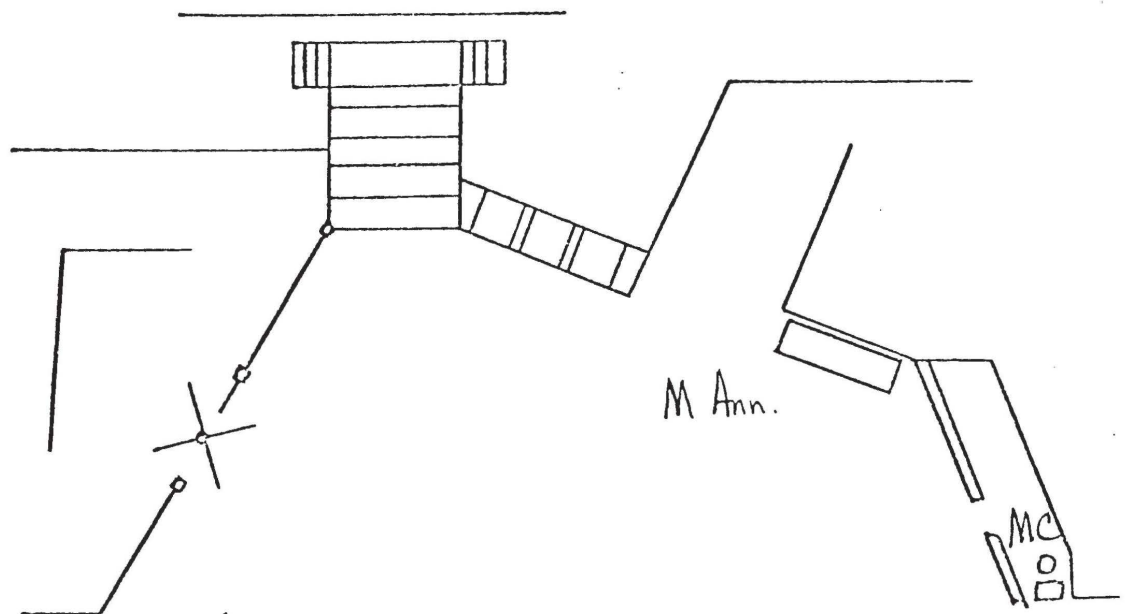
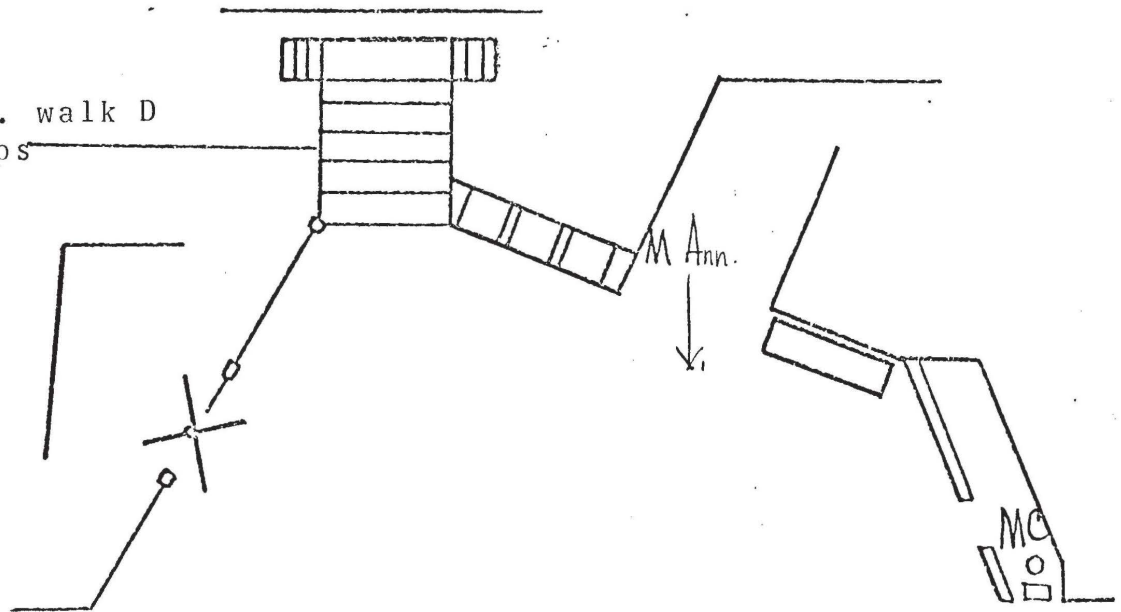
MICHELE

Oh, Annina, just wait a little longer.  
Wait, wait.  
I beg you.  
You're still so young.

## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action

1. M and Ann. walk D  
a few steps





ANNINA

It's no use, Michele.

I've made up my mind and not even you can change it.

MICHELE

*(desperately)* Oh, please, Annina.

Do not abandon me.

ANNINA

This is goodbye, Michele.

MICHELE

No!

ANNINA

Goodbye forever.

MICHELE

| Go, then, your way, but you will carry with you my guilt  
And be followed forever by my curse!

ANNINA

2 No, Michele, don't leave me like that.  
Michele, Michele!

3 *(Michele runs up the steps. Annina tries desperately to restrain him, but he pushes her away and disappears. Annina collapses, sobbing at the bottom of the stairway, comforted by Maria Corona.)*

CURTAIN

## Description of Action

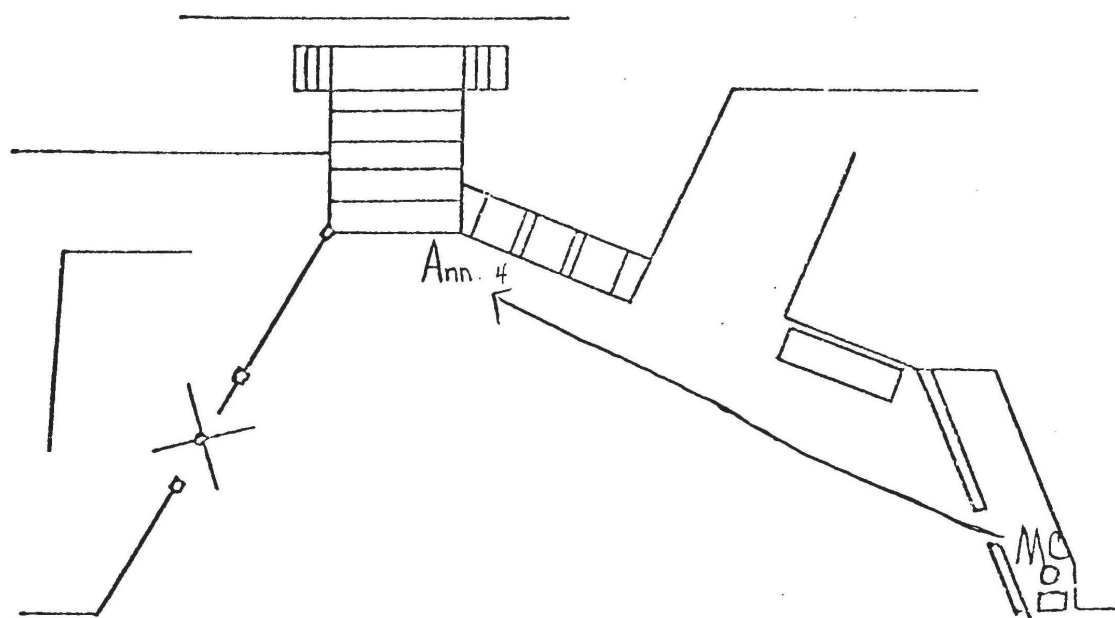
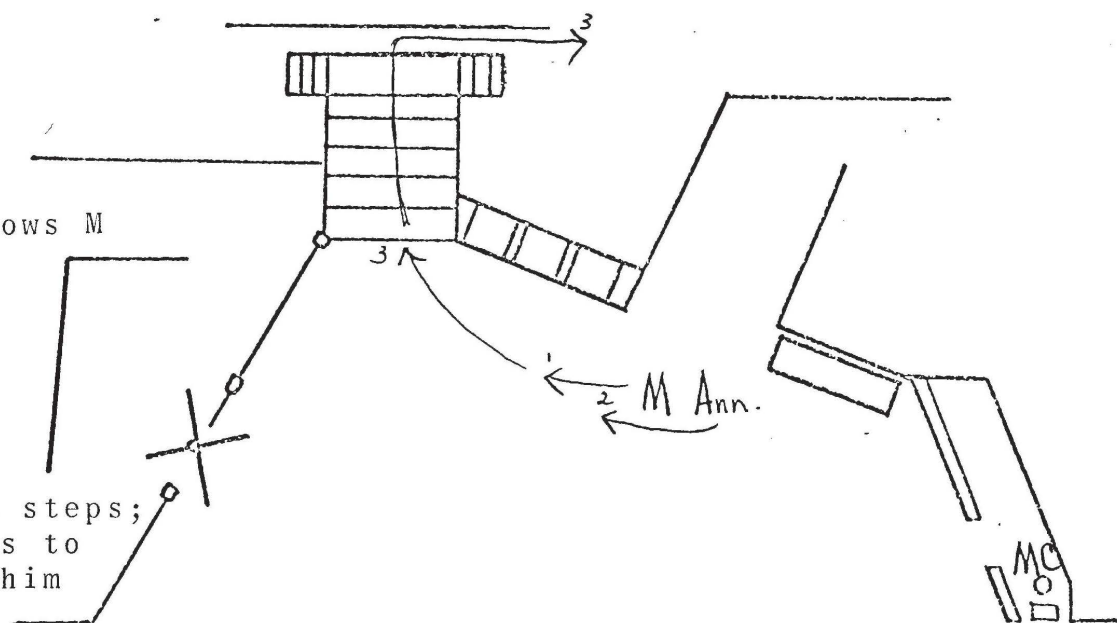
## Diagrams of Action

1. M angrily turns R

2. Ann. follows M

3. M runs up steps;  
Ann. tries to  
restrain him

4. MC crosses UC to comfort Ann.



#13

*(Annina's room, late afternoon. Annina, wrapped in an old shawl, lies back in her armchair, her eyes closed, her face extremely pale. A nun is sitting next to her. Don Marco is standing by the front door, as if anxiously waiting for someone. Carmela, who evidently had been crying, is sitting in a corner of the room, being comforted by Salvatore. In another corner of the room, a small group of women, among them Maria Corona with her son and Assunta, are kneeling in prayer.)*

## ASSUNTA

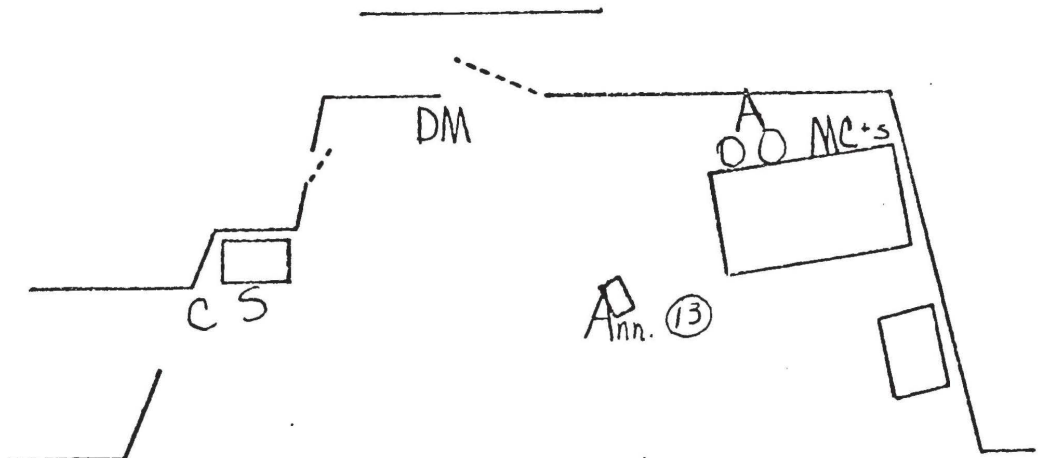
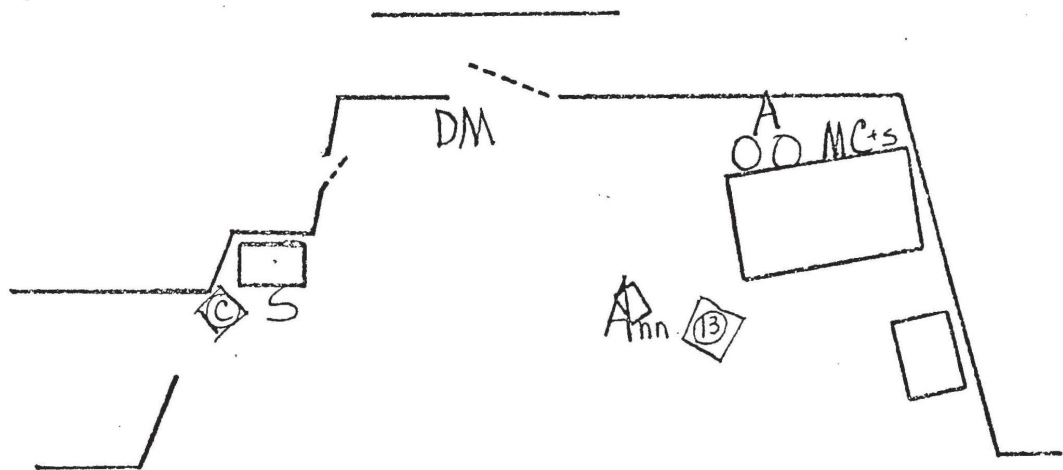
Agnus Dei,  
Qui tollis peccata mundi.  
Agnus Dei,  
Qui tollis peccata mundi.  
Agnus Dei,  
Qui tollis peccata mundi.  
Christe audinos,  
Christe exaudinos.

## CHORUS

Pace nobis Domine.  
Exaudinos Domine.  
Miserere nobis.  
Christe audinos,  
Christ exaudinos.

Description of ActionDiagrams of Action

2 chairs have been added to the room



## ASSUNTA AND CHORUS

Amen.

*(Annina opens her eyes.)*

ANNINA

Carmela?

CARMELA

Yes, Annina.

| *(The nun silently tiptoes away, giving up her chair to Carmela.)*

ANNINA

Any news?

CARMELA

Not yet.

We are all waiting and praying for you.

ANNINA

*(almost crying)* And still my voices have told me,  
My voices have told me . . . *(she closes her eyes, as if lost in a dream.)*

CARMELA

2 What, Annina?

ANNINA

*(She opens her eyes.)*

That I would take the veil today.

CARMELA

3 I'm sure you will, Annina.

How could the church refuse what God desires?

ANNINA

Oh, I'm so afraid, Carmela, that I won't live until tonight.

CARMELA

Why do you say that?

You heard what the doctor said, that your heart is much stronger today.

ANNINA

What little strength I have, sweet, patient Death has kindly lent me.

*(She leans back, her eyes closed.  
Suddenly with great anxiety.)*

Carmela, Carmela!

CARMELA

What is it, Annina?

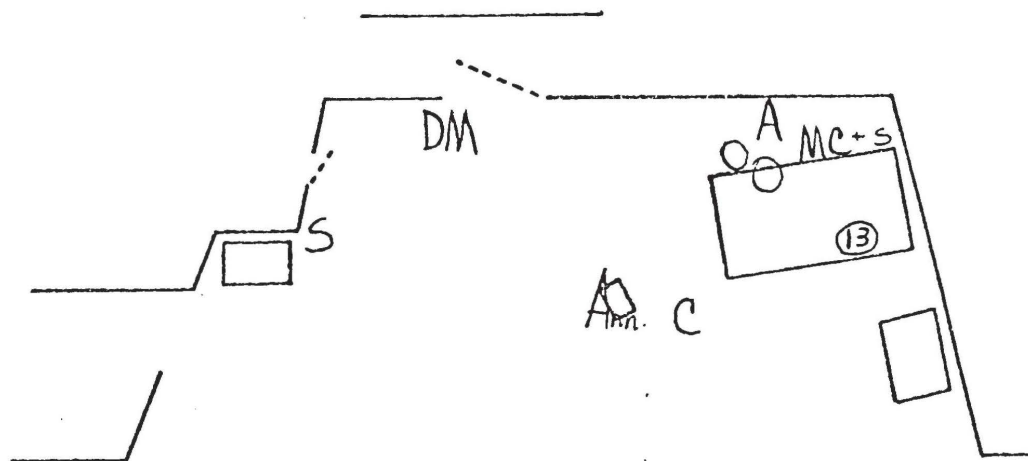
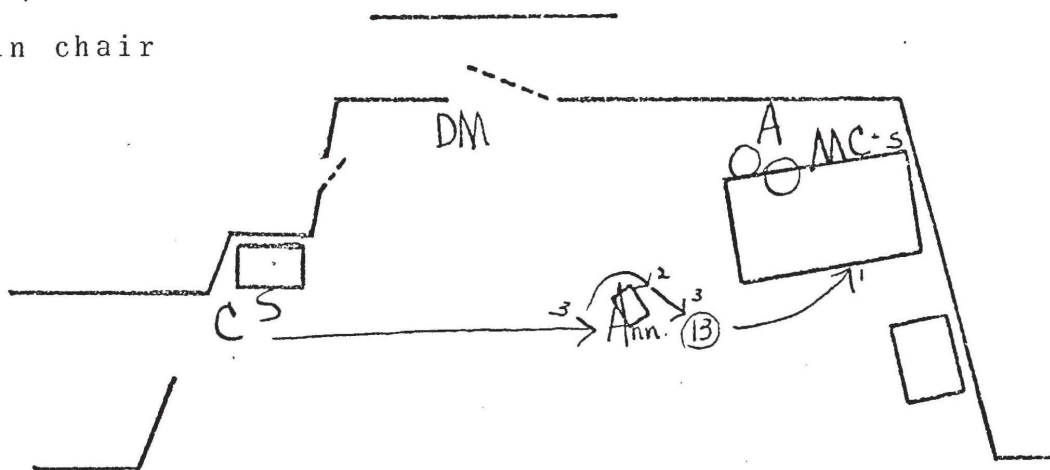
## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action

1. 13 moves to sit on bed;  
C crosses L to stand by Ann.

2. C crosses behind Ann

3. C sits in chair



ANNINA

Oh, here you are.  
I was just thinking.  
If the permission comes today, I have no white dress to wear.

CARMELA

Don't worry about that, silly girl.  
I have a surprise for you.  
Close your eyes.

ANNINA

A surprise, a surprise . . .

1 *(Carmela goes to a closet where her wedding dress is hanging, takes it out and brings it over to Annina.)*

CARMELA

You can look now.

ANNINA

Oh, your wedding dress.  
How well I remember it.  
There is no gown in the whole world I'd rather wear today.  
Thank you.  
Leave it near me where I can look at it.

2 *(Carmela lays the dress on the chair next to Annina.)*

3 *A young priest rushes in the front door, with a letter which he hands to Don Marco. The women surround him in great excitement. Don Marco looks at the letter, then approaches Annina.)*

DON MARCO

4 Annina, Annina, prepare yourself for a great joy.  
The Church has granted you your wish.

CARMELA

*(embracing her.)* I'm so glad for you.  
My Annina!

ANNINA

Ah, I knew.  
My voices have told me that I shall die tonight . . .  
But I shall die a bride.

CARMELA

Jesus will not forsake His joyful bride.

ANNINA

*(She leans back in her chair, breathing heavily, one hand over her heart.)*  
I must rest awhile.  
Get ready, Don Marco.  
I'll soon be all right.



## Description of Action

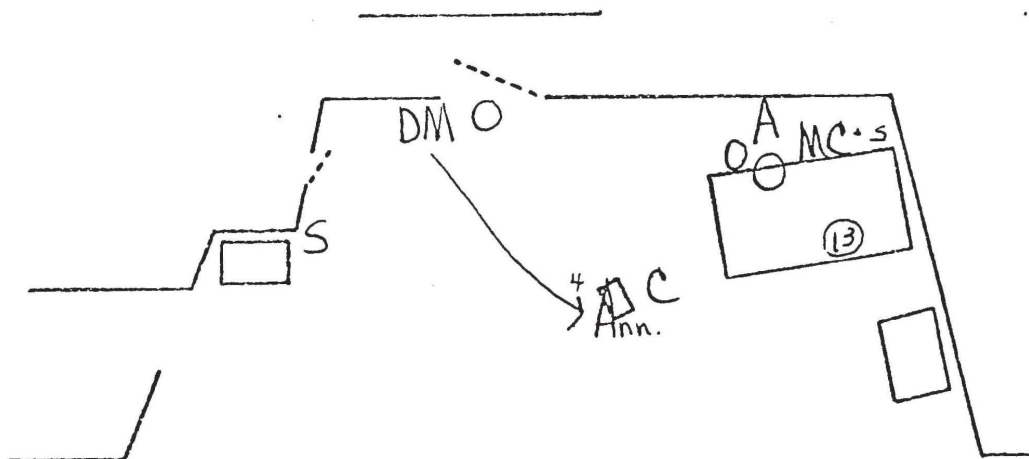
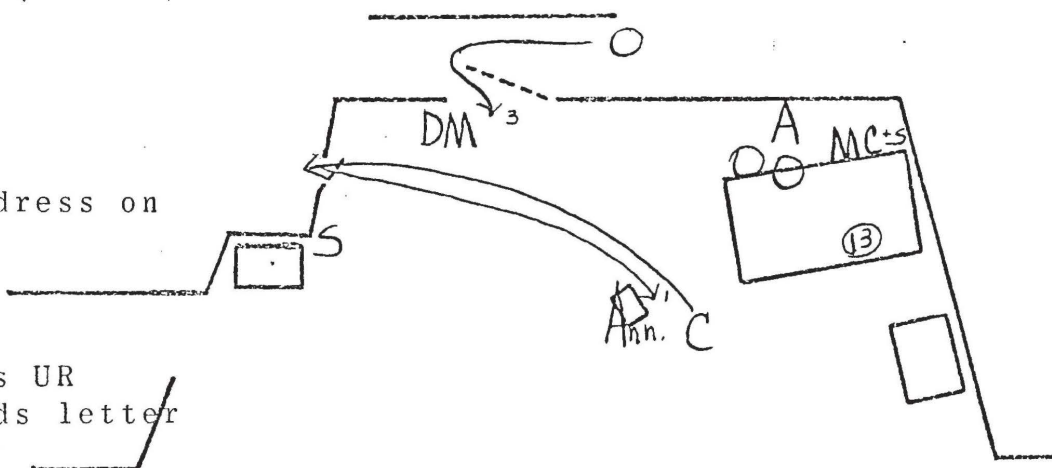
## Diagrams of Action

1. C crosses UR to closet for her wedding dress

2. C lays dress on chair

3. O enters UR and hands letter to DM

4. DM walks C to Ann.



DON MARCO

Yes, rest awhile.

ANNINA

Carmela, leave me alone for a moment.  
I want to pray.

CARMELA

Yes, Annina.

1 (*Don Marco motions to the women to leave the room.*)

Keep them out for awhile.

2 (*The women crowd outside the door, which is guarded by Carmela. Don Marco kneels in front of the little altar.*)

ANNINA

Oh, my Love, at last the hour has come.  
Help me now to bear so great a joy.  
Hold back, O Death, for still a little while,  
Then kindly come and make the night eternal for His eternal love.  
Sustain me, O God.

(*with sudden anxiety*) Carmela, where is the bridal veil?

Where is my crown?

4 (*Carmela comes over to her.*)

CARMELA

Everything is ready.  
We are waiting for you.

(*putting one arm around her shoulders*)

Come on. Try to get up.  
I'm praying for you.

ANNINA

Yes, Carmela, pray for me.  
I'm afraid, Carmela.  
I may faint for joy.  
Feel how weak and wild is my heart.  
I have so little strength left.

(*with great intensity*) Hold back, O Death, for still a little while,

Then come at last and make the night eternal for His eternal love.

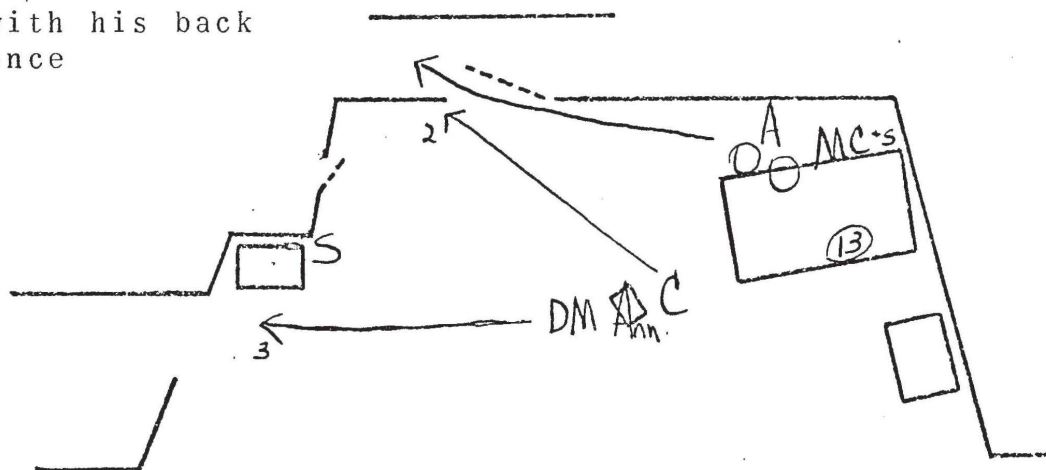
5 (*Annina gets up, and after a moment of hesitation, leaning on Carmela's arm, she walks slowly into her room. The nun follows them, carrying the white dress.*)

6 (*During the following scene Don Marco, helped by the young priest, clothes himself in preparation for the ceremony. In the meantime, neighbors crowd into the room, most of the women carrying lighted candles.*)

## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action

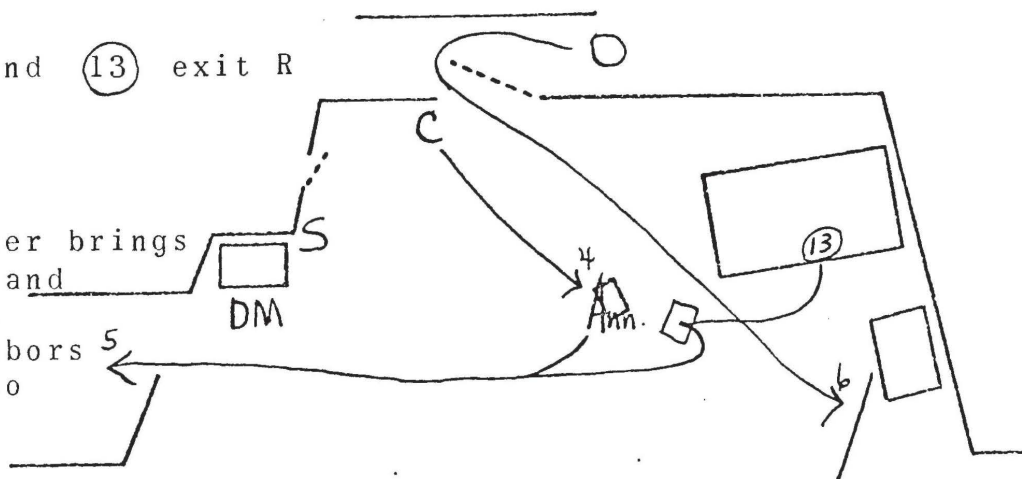
1. DM motions to women UL to leave
2. C follows and stands by door
3. DM crosses to altar and kneels with his back to audience



4. C walks C to Ann.

5. C, Ann. and (13) exit R

6. DM's helper brings a screen and places it DL; neighbors crowd into room



ASSUNTA

Maria, Salvatore!  
Do you know that Michele was seen not far from here?  
I'm afraid that he heard that Annina was dying,  
And wants to stop her from taking the veil.

MARIA CORONA

Oh, poor girl.

ASSUNTA

He doesn't care if she lives or she dies.  
All that he cares is to drag her to hell right after him.

MARIA, ASSUNTA, SALVATORE

Just think, what that poor girl had to suffer because of Michele.  
He is the one who broke her heart.

DON MARCO

/ What about Michele?

ASSUNTA

He has been seen near the house, Don Marco.

DON MARCO

*(after a moment of indecision)*

Salvatore.

SALVATORE

Yes, Padre.

DON MARCO

You stand by the door.  
Should he come up, try to keep him out.

SALVATORE

Shouldn't we call the police?

DON MARCO

No, not yet.  
We must think of her now.

2 *(Helped by the young priest, he places many candles by the little altar, then lights them.)*

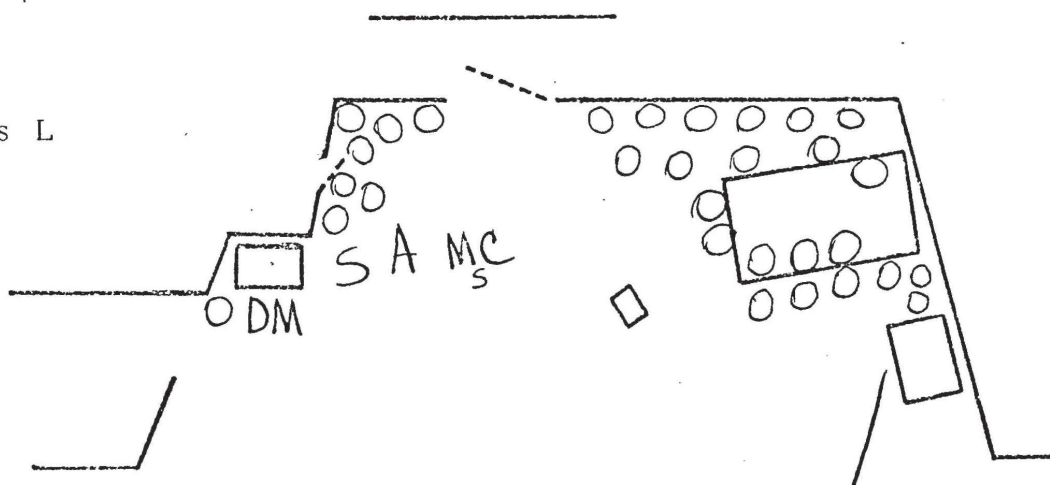
ASSUNTA

He went up to my husband and asked about Annina.  
My poor husband kept talking and talking  
And hoping that someone there would go call the police.

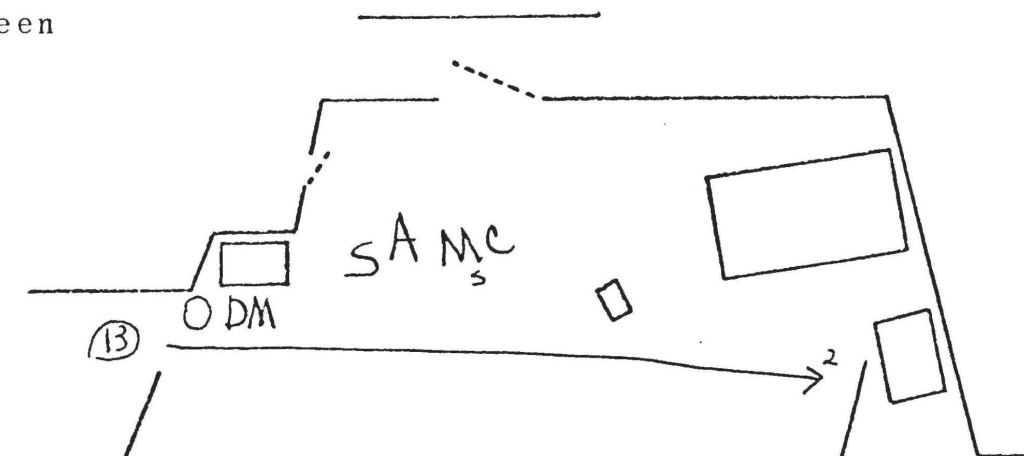
## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action

1. DM faces L



2. (13) re-enters and crosses  
L to screen



MARIA, SALVATORE

Oh, poor girl!

MARIA

It is because of his sins that she's dying.

ASSUNTA

He is the cross she has to bear until  
the end.| *(Salvatore goes to stand guard at the front door.)*

CARMELA

Annina is ready.

DON MARCO

Let us begin.

2 *(Dressed as a bride, her loose hair covered by a white veil, Annina appears in the doorway of her room. Holding a candle, she stands smiling but apprehensive. The nun slowly walks over to her.)* 3

CHORUS

Gloria tibi Domine  
In saeculum et in saeculum saeculi.  
Ubi caritas et amor  
Deus ibi est.  
Alleluia.4 *(Annina bows to the nun, kisses her hand, and is led across the stage to a screen which has been placed in a corner of the room. She steps behind the screen, still visible to the audience.)*

DON MARCO

*(praying from the ceremonial table)*Quae est ista quae ascendit de deserto,  
Deliciis affluens, innixa super dilectuum suum?  
Tota pulchra es amica mea suavis et decora; veni de Libano;  
Sponsa mea; veni de Libano, veni coronaberis.

CHORUS

Kyrie eleison, Kyrie, Kyrie.  
Christe eleison, Christe eleison.  
Allelulia, Alleluia, Alleluia . .5 *(Annina knocks twice against the screen. It is opened by the nun who takes the candle from her and hands it to someone nearby.)*

DON MARCO

What do you ask, my daughter?

## Description of Action

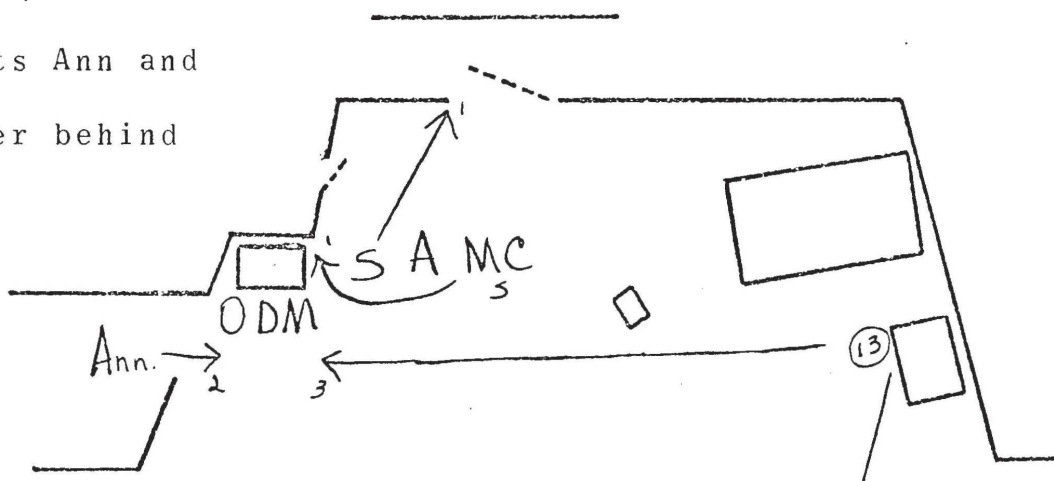
## Diagrams of Action

1. S crosses U to guard door; A and MC turn R

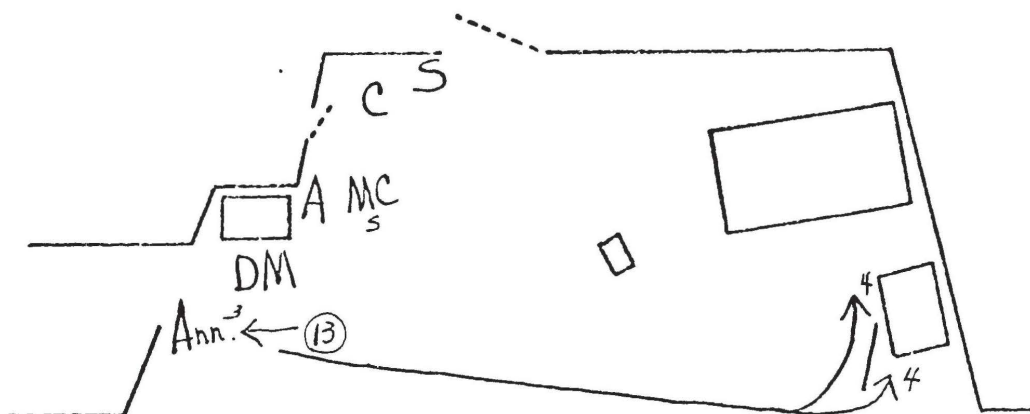
2. Ann. enters R; C follows and joins S

3. (13) meets Ann and

4. leads her behind screen



5. DM stands facing screen





ANNINA

*(still standing by the screen)*

The Mercy of God and the holy habit of religion.

DON MARCO

Do you ask this of your own free will?

ANNINA

It is my will and my desire.

DON MARCO

Do you renounce Satan?

ANNINA

Yes, I do.

DON MARCO

And all his works and all his pomps?

ANNINA

Yes, I do.

DON MARCO

Confirm, O God, what You have wrought in her.

Enter, therefore the temple of the Lord, that you may become one day partaker of His Glory.

1 *(The nun leads Annina to the center of the room and has her kneel; then removes the wreath of blossoms.)*

CHORUS

Veni, sponsa Christi, accipe coronam quam tibi Dominus preparabit in aeternum.

*(Annina prostrates herself on the bare floor. Her extended arms form a cross.*

2 *The nun covers her with a black cloth.)*

DON MARCO

You are now dead unto the world.

Until now you have been known to the world as Annina.

Henceforth and forever you shall be called Sister Angela.

Having thus renounced the kingdom of the world

And all the grandeur of this earth,

Arise, my child, and be reborn in Christ, our Lord.

CHORUS

Ecce quam bonum et quam jucundum,

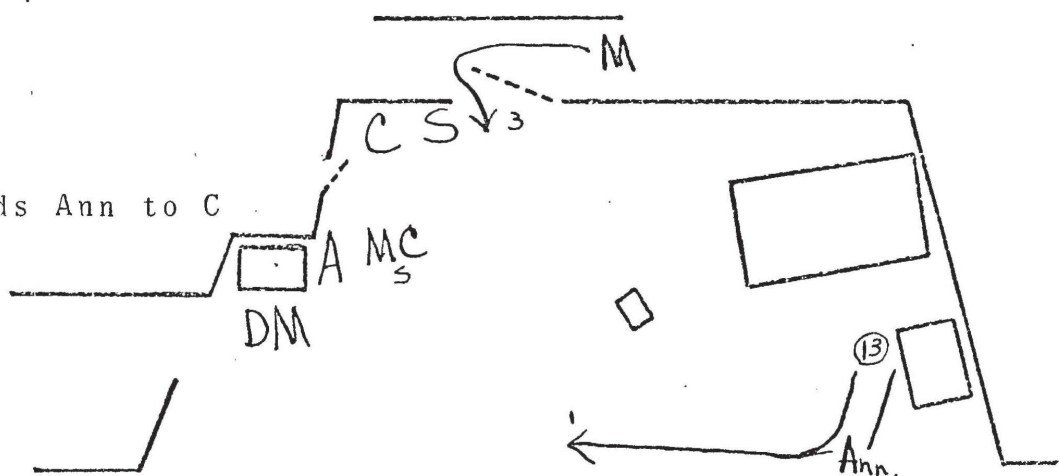
Habitare fratres in unum.

*(The nun approaches Annina, removes the black cloth and helps her to her knees. At this very moment Michele bursts into the room, but is immediately grabbed and restrained by Salvatore and another man. Everybody turns toward Michele except Annina who, completely transfixed, keeps staring at the holy image on the altar.)*

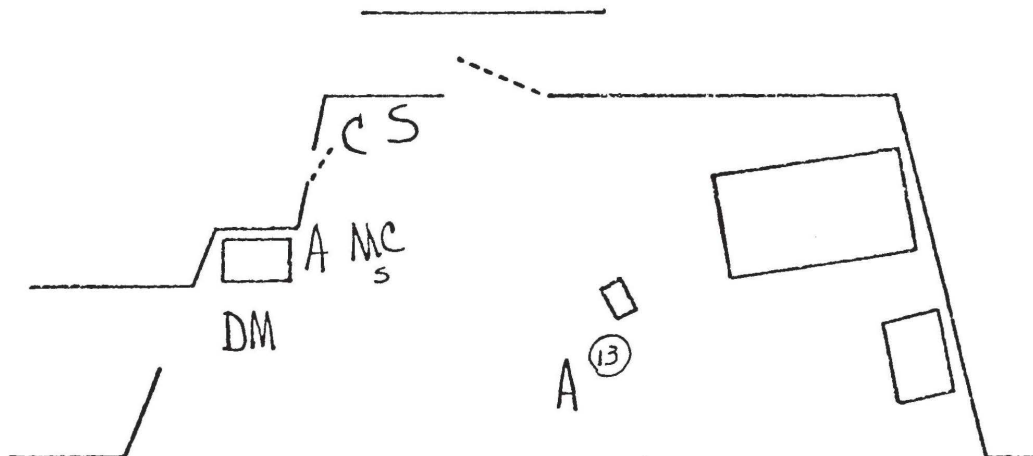
## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action

1. 13 leads Ann to C



2. 13 hands wreath to someone nearby and is handed the black cloth by another chorus member



MICHELE

Annina, Annina!

SALVATORE

*(in a whisper)*

If you go near her I'll kill you.

MICHELE

Listen, Annina! Listen to me!

Why leave the world already so bereft of love?

Consider, Annina, you're still in time.

Why seek for God's face in a clouded mirror

When you can find it burning in your brother's heart!

Look at me, Annina! Come to your senses!

It is there where human misery is greatest that God shines most.

I need you, Annina, my sister.

I need all the love you can give.

*(There is a long, tense silence. But Annina still remains motionless, as if nothing had happened and time had not passed.)*

DON MARCO

You are too late, Michele.

She can no longer hear you.

Let her leave the world in peace.

*(Don Marco signals to his acolyte to resume the ceremony. He then approaches Annina, followed by the acolyte, who carries a pair of scissors on a silver tray. In the meantime the nun removes the white veil from Annina.)*

DON MARCO

By this simple rite

May people know that you have

Renounced all worldly vanities.

CARMELA, MARIA CORONA, ASSUNTA

Surge amica mea columba mea et veni.

Jam enim hiems transiit imber abiit et  
recessit.*(Don Marco cuts Annina's hair and places it on the tray.**Michele, who has been watching in silence, suddenly breaks into loud weeping.)*

CARMELA, MARIA CORONA, ASSUNTA

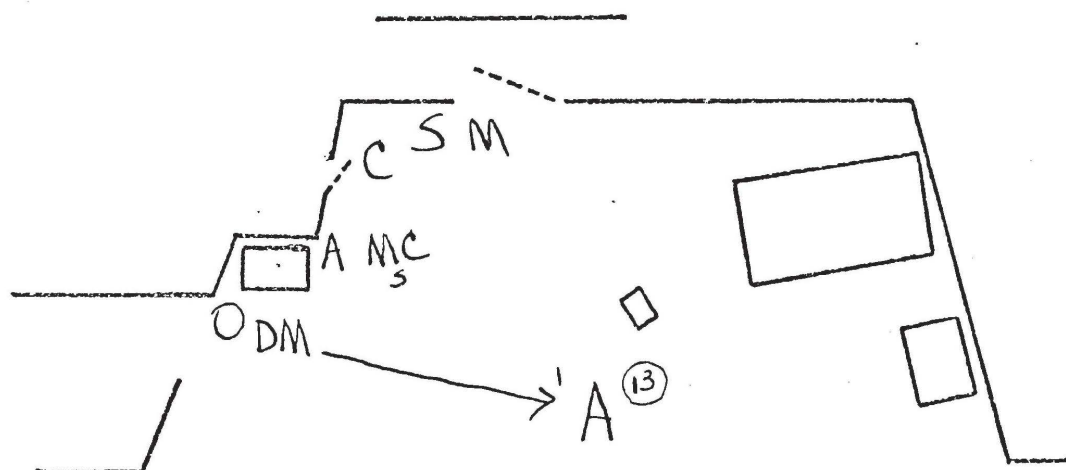
Veni columba mea.

Flores apparuerunt in terra nostra.

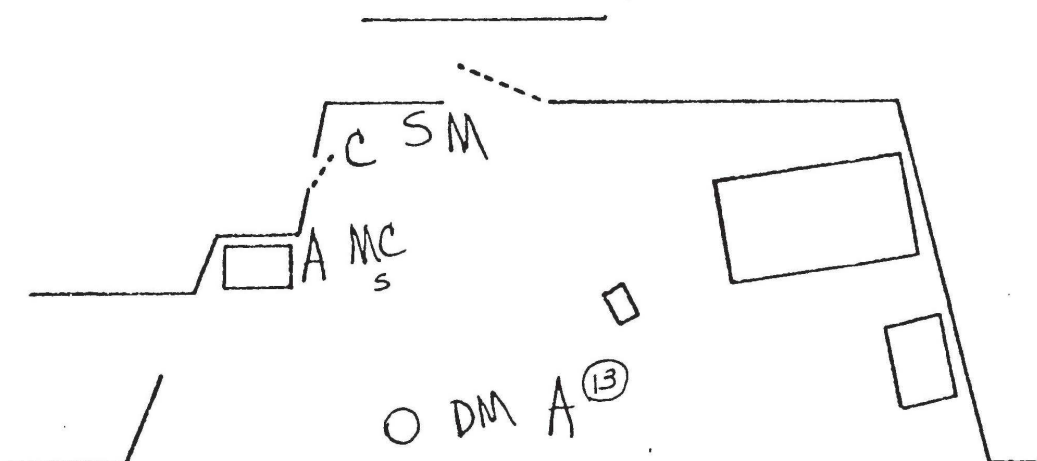
*(Michele, having gained control of himself, stands staring at the remainder of the ceremony, stunned and incredulous.)*

## Description of Action

## Diagrams of Action



1. DM and O approach Ann.



DON MARCO

*(as the nun covers Annina's head with  
a black veil)*

Be now clothed with the veil of  
modesty,

And may you walk in the way of  
humility and truth.

*(holding a ring in his hands)*

Receive now, the ring of faith,  
That you may be called the bride of  
Christ.

CARMELA, MARIA CORONA, ASSUNTA

Tempus putationes advenit  
Vox turturis audita est in terra nostra.

CHORUS

Surge amica mea  
Surge columba mea  
Veni, veni amica mea

*(Everyone kneels except Michele. Annina, at the end of her strength, sways  
slightly, as if making a desperate effort to move, but unable to do so.)*

CARMELA

*(anxiously)*

Go on, Annina.

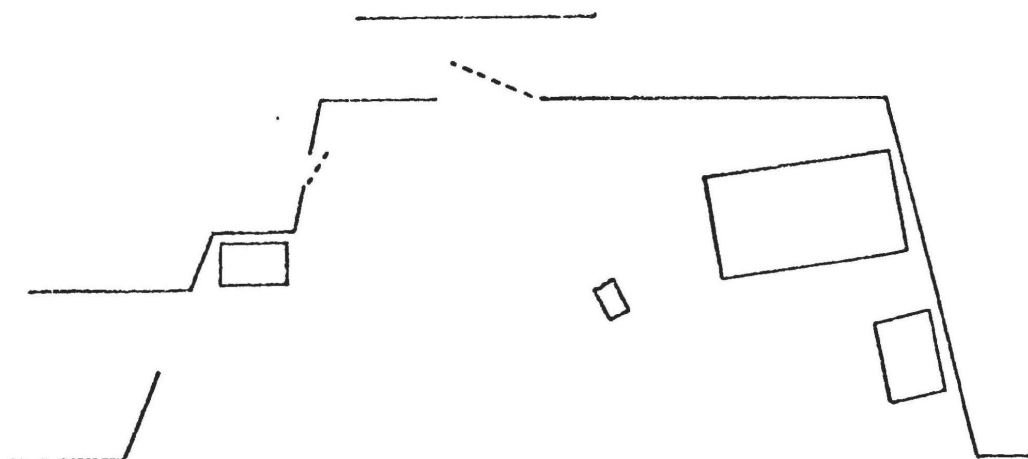
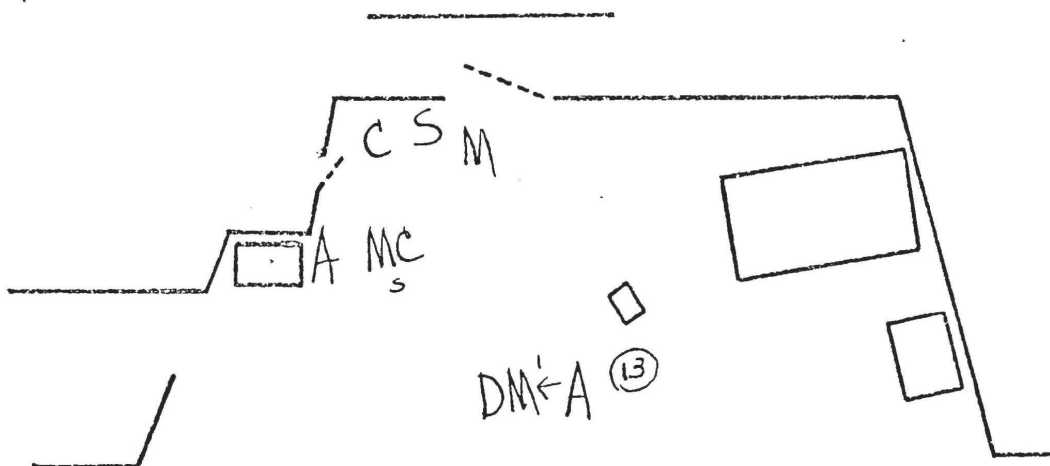
*(Annina, very slowly, with apparent effort takes a few steps toward Don Marco. Then she suddenly sinks to the floor. Carmela, who has been anxiously watching her, quickly catches her as she collapses and kneels down holding Annina in her arms. No one moves except Don Marco who bends over Annina, lifts her lifeless arm and places the gold ring on her finger.)*

THE END

# Description of Action

# Diagrams of Action

1. Ann. moves toward DM



## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### FOR FURTHER STUDY

##### Summary

The purpose of this study was to develop a prompt book of Gian-Carlos Menotti's The Saint of Bleecker Street that could be used in a staging situation.

Chapter I, a biography of Gian-Carlo Menotti, includes a brief description of the composer's musical compositions. Since no biography of Menotti was found to have been published, this biography and Corrie's biography in her study of the composer's operas will furnish a source for further studies.

The review of the criticisms of the opera's Broadway production, Chapter II, discusses: (1) the reasons for the opera's limited success on Broadway, (2) the theme, (3) the characterizations, (4) the plot, (4) the music, and (5) the staging.

Chapter III, the director's approach to the opera, provides: (1) a brief synopsis of the opera, (2) an evaluation of the libretto, (3) an analysis of the characters, (4) a discussion of the general rehearsal techniques to be



used in preparation for a production of the opera, and (5) a description of the ground plans for each scene.

Chapter IV, the prompt book, consists of: (1) a list of characters and scenes, (2) the ground plans, (3) the property plot, (4) the costume plot, (5) the make-up schedule, and (6) the libretto and corresponding pages which provide a description of the action and the diagrams of the action.

### Conclusions

The critics generally agree that The Saint of Bleecker Street is flawed by ambiguous characterizations, but they disagree on the value of Menotti's music and his dramatic inventions. Although the critics do not consider this opera to be as nearly perfect as The Medium or The Consul, it is Menotti's favorite of all his operas. It won the Drama Critic's Circle Award as the best musical play of 1954 and The Pulitzer Prize of 1955.

Although the libretto does contain weaknesses such as irrelevant material, too lengthy arias, and weak characterizations, the opera can still be a successful presentation and a learning experience for college singers. Since it requires a large chorus and a large cast, the opera will provide a chance for many singers to participate. The roles are difficult enough both musically and dramatically to broaden the experience of the singers.

The Saint of Bleecker Street was studied for an opera workshop in which one person would serve as musical director, stage director, and business manager. Although some productions can be prepared by only one director, it is recommended that for this opera the responsibilities be divided among people who specialize in each of the three areas. The musical director would coach the singers in their roles, train the chorus, and conduct the performance. The stage director would be responsible for the set, the costumes, the properties, the lighting, and the action. The musical director and the stage director would work in close harmony and would have reached an agreement concerning all phases of the production before rehearsals begin. The business manager would be in charge of other duties such as publicity.

#### Recommendations for Further Study

The following recommendations are made for further study:

1. A thorough biography of Gian-Carlo Menotti.
2. Studies of operas similar to this study accompanied by actual productions of the operas as a part of the opera workshop program at Texas Woman's University.

## APPENDIX

"My Conception of Hell," by Gian-Carlo Menotti<sup>1</sup>

"Hell begins on the day when God grants us a clear vision of all that we might have achieved, of all the gifts which we have wasted, of all that we might have done which we did not do.

The poet shall forever scream the poems which he never wrote; the painter will be forever obsessed by visions of the pictures which he did not paint; the musician will strive in vain to remember the sounds which he failed to set down on paper.

There are few artists whom I can imagine resting in heavenly peace: Leonardo, Michelangelo, Goethe, and a few minor artists who have merited that peace. But, for the weak, the lazy, the damned--their torture shall be the more horrible in proportion to the greatness of the genius they have wasted.

For me the conception of hell lies in two words:  
Too Late."

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<sup>1</sup>Saturday Review of Literature, XXXIII (April 22, 1950), 29.

## Menotti Discusses Opera as Basic Theatre

In an article for The New York Times Magazine<sup>1</sup> Gian-Carlo Menotti gives his views on opera as basic theatre:

To criticize a theatre piece as too theatrical is as senseless as to criticize a piece of music for being too musical. There is only one kind of bad theatre: When the author's imagination steps outside the very area of illusion he has created. But as long as the dramatist creates within that area, almost no action on the stage is too violent or implausible. As a matter of fact, the skill of the dramatist is almost measurable by his ability to make even the most daring and unpredictable seem inevitable. After all, what could be more theatrical than the last entrance of Oedipus on the death of Hamlet or the insanity of Oswald in Ghosts.

The important thing is that behind these apparent excesses of action, the author is able to maintain that significant symbolism which is the very essence of dramatic illusion. In the words of Goethe: "When all is said and done, nothing suits the theatre except what also makes a symbolic appeal to the eyes. A significant action suggesting a more significant one." Modern dramatists are much too timid about "theatre," and such timidity is fatal to an opera composer, for music intensifies feeling so quickly that, unless a situation is symbolically strong enough to bear this intensity, it becomes ludicrous by contrast.

Nothing in the theatre can be as exciting as the amazing quickness with which music can express a situation or describe a mood. Whereas, in the prose theatre, it often requires many words to establish a single effect, in an opera one note on the horn will illuminate the audience. It is this very power of music to express feeling so much more quickly than

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<sup>1</sup>New York Times Magazine, January 2, 1955, p. 11.

words which makes libretti, when read out of musical context, appear rather brutal and unconvincing.

Opera is the very basis of theatre. In all civilizations, people sang their dramas before they spoke them. I am convinced that the prose theatre is an offspring of these earlier musicodramatic forms and not vice versa. The need for music accompanying dramatic action is still so strongly felt that in our most popular dramatic form, the cinema, background music is used to underline even the most prosaic and realistic situations.

It is unfair to accuse opera of being an old-fashioned and ungainly dramatic form. Actually, what people put forth as examples is largely the output of the nineteenth century. Considering the length of time that has gone by since then, it is quite amazing what life there still is in those old pieces. How many plays of that same period have survived this test as well? Wouldn't most of us prefer hearing a Verdi opera to sitting through a Victor Hugo play?

I may even venture to say that many of the so-called "great plays" of this century will be forgotten when dear old Traviata is still holding the boards. All of this cannot be explained away simply by condemning as foolish or gullible millions of music lovers.

There is no such thing as a good or bad libretto per se. A good libretto is nothing but one which inspires a composer to write good music.

Goetterdaemmerung would have been a bad libretto indeed for Puccini, and I can imagine nothing more disastrous than Wagner's deciding to set Madame Butterfly to music.

Too many people think that only exotic subjects from the past are suitable for opera. That is nothing but a romantic inheritance from the last century. Just as modern poets have been moved to examine and interpret the uniquely contemporary life, there is no reason why the composer should not do the same.

That is not to say that modern opera must have a contemporary subject. As Lorca, Eliot or Dylan Thomas have found inspiration in sources as varied as folklore, remote historical events or newspaper headlines, so should the composer permit himself that same freedom.

Although the accusation that opera is unrealistic is an indiscriminate one, I have been assailed with it too often not to wish to dispose of it now. If by realistic people mean a literal duplication of life, what art can be called truly realistic? Literal photographic techniques are, as far as I am concerned, the very negation of art.

But it is curious how most people, once they accept the conventional limitations of an art form, are unconscious of its unrealistic pattern. I have been asked again and again why characters should sing instead of talk. Why, then, should they dance instead of speak? Or why, as in a Shakespearean play, should people express themselves in pentameter instead of ordinary speech?

Even the cinema, which is generally upheld as the very essence of realistic art, has imposed upon an audience unaware of it the most extraordinarily unrealistic conventions. Huge faces, fifty times the size of normal ones, are flashed at us without alarming us in the slightest. Hundred-piece orchestras, supposedly hidden behind the sofa, spin out sugary melodies while Van Johnson kisses Jennifer Jones in the living room, and in the flick of an eyelash we are transported, without the slightest explanation, from Ma's kitchen to the very top of K-2.

One may ask why, if opera is a valid and vital form, it hasn't stimulated more successful contemporary contributions to the theatre. Most modern composers blame their failures on the libretti, but I am afraid that the fault more often lies with the music. Opera is, after all, essentially music, and such is the ennobling or transfiguring power of music that we have numerous examples of what safely could be labeled awkward plays transformed into inspiring operas.

We have, however, no single example of a successful opera whose main strength is in the libretto. I have often been accused of writing good libretti and mediocre music, but I maintain that my libretti become alive or illuminated only through my music. Let anyone read one of my texts divorced from its musical setting to discover the truth of what I say. My operas are either good or bad: but if their libretti seem alive or powerful in performance, then they must share the distinction.

One of the reasons for the failure of so much contemporary opera is that its music lacks immediacy of communication. Theatre music must make its point and communicate its emotion at the same moment the action develops. It cannot wait to be understood until after the curtain comes down. Mozart understood this, and there is a noticeable difference in immediacy between some of his symphonic or chamber music styles on the one hand and his operatic style on the other. Many contemporary composers seem to fear clarity and directness, perhaps because they are afraid of becoming obvious. To quote Goethe again: "We must not disdain

what is immediately visible and sensuous. Otherwise we shall be sailing without ballast."

A great deal of nonsense has been said and written about opera in English and many are the people who still believe that most foreign languages are better suited to music than English is. But I maintain that every language is, potentially, equally musical, and it is up to the composer to absorb and illuminate this language in his music.

The marriage of words and music should be a symbolic relationship, that is, one of interdependence and mutual nourishment. Obviously, each language creates its own kind of inseparable musical setting. To people who maintain that Italian is an ideal language for opera, let them hear Godtterdaemmerung sung in Italina, as is customary in Italy.

Great English composers have proven in the past (Purcell, for example, or the English madrigalists) how singable English can be. (This even though George Bernard Shaw stated rather sadly that the English have an unrequited love for music.) And there is no doubt that the Negro today has set the American vernacular with an irresistible charm. What other language could convey such melancholy ecstasy as the Negro spiritual?

This brings us to the problem of translation. Should an opera be translated? There is no doubt that many musical values are lost no matter how good the translation may be. It was very shocking for me to hear The Consul translated even into Italian, which is my native language. Nevertheless, I insist that an opera must be dramatically understandable to its audience, and if some musical subtleties are lost in translation, there is still much more that has been gained, dramatically.

Although purists writhe in horror at the mere mention of translating operatic masterpieces into foreign languages, is it not quite significant that in so far as I know, no great operatic composer has ever objected to his operas being translated into other languages? And very often, as in the case of Debussy and Strauss, they have themselves contributed to the translation. Poetry, too, is essentially untranslatable, but, as in Shakespeare, for example, the singularity and universality of his genius have survived even the most approximate translation.



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