

3a. Production Design and Visual/Aural Outline

A. Director's Vision

- a. I identify *Our Town* as a memory play—given that the term “memory play” did not yet exist when *Our Town* premiered, I suppose the play is technically a proto memory play. The events of the play seem filtered through the Stage Manager’s memory and further, the Stage Manager has the power to interrupt scenes as narrator while also interacting with the characters himself.
- b. To that end, I would like to explore humanizing the Stage Manager under the notion that the play is from the Stage Manager’s memory. While the typical matter-of-fact personality of past depictions of the Stage Manager serve the play well, I feel that this interpretation disconnects the Stage Manager from the play on a human level. The Stage Manager is not just an expert on Grover’s Corners and the lives of its citizens nor is he simply a repository of history. The Stage Manager was there. He remembers everything like it happened yesterday.
- c. I am also interested in exploring the metatheatrical nature of this play and how the play itself is a theatrical device in its plot. This may perhaps arise as intensely as Brecht’s *verfremdungseffekt*, or perhaps not. Reminding the audience that *Our Town* is a play proves jarring given how emotionally riveting its action becomes.

B. Scenic

- a. In *Our Town*’s second stage direction in Act 1, Wilder explicitly calls for “no scenery.” That direction should be honored as literally and fully as possible. The most furniture that Wilder allows is chairs, tables, and ladders, as those are written into the stage directions as well. However, if

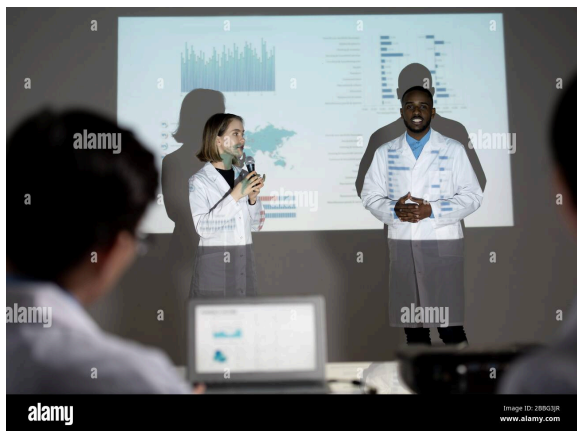
there are ways to avoid using furniture at all, I encourage that option. Scenery should be as minimal as possible.

- b. In *Our Town's* third stage direction in Act 1, Wilder notes that the audience should see “an empty stage in half-light.” Making the stage look as empty as possible and as much as a theatre stage as possible (e.g. exposed upstage theatre wall, etc.) will add to the metatheatricality of this production.
- c. Additionally, in *Our Town's* first stage direction in Act 1, Wilder adds that there is “no curtain,” perhaps so audiences can see the empty stage. I would be interested to explore how this play exists in curtainless theatre spaces, such as black boxes and theatres-in-the-round. A space that exposes the elements of the theatre (such as the lights) will further add to the metatheatricality of this production.



C. Lighting/Projection

- a. A memory play typical contains “dim lighting,” which could mean a multitude of things. I think it could even mean complete absence of light, as I explain in “*Our Town* as Memory” (item 2h).
- b. I am also drawn to the idea of projection—as if *Our Town* is a presentation that the Stage Manager has stood up in front of the board and delivered. Perhaps the use of overhead light projector to depict images of the town (to avoid using scenery itself) as a way of suggesting where we are. This might also prove handy during the actual presentation Professor Willard and Mr. Webb deliver in Act 1.
- c. Additionally, tying the projection design to the text itself—and metatheatrically so—tickles my fancy. Seeing the pages of the *Our Town* script projected against actors would literally envelop and wrap the metatheatrical nature of the text around the characters. Seeing the pages of the script also serves as a notable reminder to the audience that what they are seeing is actually a play.





D. Costuming

- a. I think a period neutral look would serve the play well. While retaining the text and its period setting, having characters look like the people out in the audience would enhance the play's universality. The audience can relate to these people without looking at them and wondering “what in the world are they wearing?”
- b. For example, George could sport a contemporary MLB baseball jersey—maybe even a cap. There’s bound to be some baseball fans like George in the audience, right?



- c. Emily on the other hand could ditch the frilly dress and don pants—perhaps some jeans or leggings. Jeggings? Maybe!



E. Sound

- a. Diegetic
 - i. The script calls for specific sounds at times (a rooster crowing, milk bottles clinking). Because some of these sounds come from imaginary props, like the milk bottles, I would be interested in exploring the use of foley artists in this production.
- b. Non-Diegetic
 - i. In preserving Wilder’s vision for his play, I feel that non-diegetic sounds would distract from the complex simplicity of the production and I do not envision any non-diegetic noises that can serve the play meaningfully and truthfully.

F. Music

- a. The script calls for the use of organ interludes as well as choral hymns. If possible, a live organist (as opposed to pre-recorded tracks) would be

wonderful, even if it is just an organ patch on a keyboard. A music director likely would have to help rehearse and time the choral numbers, as some are linked to the timing of dialogue and vice versa.

G. Inspiring Artists and Art

- a. As seen in my Circles of Place (item 2f), I drew inspiration from a variety of sources. Chief among these are the paintings of Norman Rockwell (1894-1978) as well as illustrations on New Hampshire postcards. In the case of Norman Rockwell, his iconic depictions of the United States and “Americana” seemed like a strong basis for initially visualizing this play and its early twentieth century setting. In the case of New Hampshire postcards, appealing to the colonial style architecture of New England served my research well in imagining Grover’s Corners as a real place.
- b. Of course, with a period neutral look, the vintage affectations of Norman Rockwell and old postcards are less consequential. They do, however, offer a jumping point—a starting place for where to begin appreciating this play.
- c. I believe looking at *Our Town* and its many settings as art rather than as a real, physical place will help deepen the abstraction of place ingrained in the play.
- d. I also am aware of the play’s use as a theatrical device within the play itself. For that, I looked at published covers of the play script and how each cover focuses on a different element or symbol within the play. The play itself can represent the play.