READERS THEATRE IN PERFORMANCE:
THE ANALYSIS AND COMPILATION OF PERIOD
LITERATURE FOR A MODERN RENAISSANCE FAIRE

THESIS

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By

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The thrust of this study was twofold: to research and compile a script of English Medieval and Renaissance literature and to direct a group performance of the script in the oral interpretation mode at Scarborough Faire in Waxahachie, Texas.

The study sought to show that a Readers Theatre script compiled of literature from the oral tradition of England was a suitable art form for a twentieth-century audience and that Readers Theatre benefited participants in the Scarborough Faire workshop program.

This study concluded that the performed script appealed to a modern audience and that workshop training was enhanced by Readers Theatre in rehearsal and performance.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope of the Study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of the Literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| II.      | 24   |
| SELECTION AND ANALYSIS OF THE LITERATURE | |
| Selection and Analysis | |
| Critical and Historical Investigation | |

| III.     | 58   |
| PRODUCTION CONCEPT AND THE SCRIPT | |

| IV.      | 81   |
| EVALUATION OF THE PERFORMED SCRIPT AND WORKSHOP FORMAT | |

| APPENDIX A | 96 |
| APPENDIX B | 97 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 98 |

iii
CHAPTER I

Introduction

The art of oral interpretation continues to be an integral part of man's social and educational development. English Renaissance schools stressed reading in the Greek and Latin classics aloud. Peasants participated in storytelling in homes, taverns and inns, pageants and festivals (Bahn and Bahn). Although historical records of the Pre-Elizabethan performing arts are scant, can a historically accurate performance of literature be revived today?

The necessary vehicle for answering such a question already enjoys a great deal of popularity in the United States. The modern day Renaissance fair is such a vehicle. This kind of fair creates the illusion of an English village in the 1530's and offers an unusual form of entertainment for all who enter its gates. Southern Living describes the Texas Renaissance Faire in Magnolia as representative of fairs across the country.

Visiting the festival grounds at Magnolia now is like stepping back in time to somewhere between the 14th and 16th centuries. When you park your car and stroll down a grassy path over a hillside,
suddenly you find yourself in a different world ("King George" 13).  
The present day Renaissance fair patterns itself after religious festivals, harvest festivals and spring festivals which occurred in villages across England throughout the Medieval period and into the Renaissance period (Mantzius). Scarborough Faire in Waxahachie, Texas, a sister fair to the Texas Renaissance Faire, endeavors to achieve authenticity by constructing an imaginary replica of rural England in the 1530's. Trained, costumed performers and craftspeople strive to maintain this aura throughout the day. Not only do entertainers perform on various stages, but costumed townspeople interact with the visitors in such a way as to give them the feeling of being transported to another time period. This interplay may involve curiosity over the visitor's wrist "time piece" or magic box that captures souls (a camera), through which the performer establishes the mood of the day.  
Fairgoers find a myriad of things to do. Acting troupes, magicians, jugglers and minstrels are scheduled on various stages during the day. Beggars have a competition in the mud pit, and noble knights joust on horseback. Food booths offer "Faire fare," and craft booths line the byways. The visitor also finds games such as archery and "Drench a Wench" in which to participate.
Much planning and work goes into preparing for this fair. The workshop program, which runs for seven consecutive weekends prior to the opening of the fair, is of primary interest to this study. Auditions are held early in the year and are open to all area residents. Those who are selected receive training by experts in acting, singing, costuming, and dancing. In exchange for their training, the workshop participants perform every Saturday and Sunday during the run of the fair. Each performer plays a specific role as one of the townspeople of Scarborough. They are taught how to develop a street character, build their own costumes, and speak the vernacular in the dialect of their particular class in British society. They are also given opportunities during the workshop to be involved in an acting troupe, a madrigal singing group, or a dance group. The training prepares performers to avoid anachronistic behavior, to interact with fairgoers, and to stay in character at all times.

A number of the entertainers at Scarborough Faire are professionals who travel from fair to fair. Actors, magicians, jugglers, musicians, and puppeteers ply their trade much in the same way that a travelling performer did in the 1500's, subsisting primarily on gratuities received from the audience. The disadvantage in allowing these individuals to perform apart from the Scarborough Faire
workshop is that they often choose not to use authentic materials in their performance. They often make references to 20th century situations for humor, which is not in keeping with the Faire's objective to avoid anachronistic behavior. Humor inherent in period literature should be capable of entertaining an audience today. Any references to modern day themes lessen the visitor's overall experience. Current dramatic performances at the Faire could strengthen their authenticity by taking advantage of the literary sources available from that era.

The researcher was motivated to compile a script of authentic literature and perform it in the oral interpretation mode during the course of the fair. This project attempted to entertain, instruct, and provide a training situation for the workshop participants. The audience should then be captivated by the literature of the period, a result which would fulfill the original intent of the fair.

Statement of the Problem

The thrust of this study was twofold: to research and compile a script of English Medieval and Renaissance literature and to direct a group performance of the script in the oral interpretation style practiced during the Renaissance. This performance was designed for
Scarborough Faire in Waxahachie, Texas, with performers from the training workshop. Answers were sought to the following questions.

1) Can a Readers Theatre script compiled of literature from the oral traditions of the England be a suitable art form to a 20th-century audience?

2) How can a Readers Theatre presentation of period literature benefit participants in the Scarborough Faire workshop program?

Significance of the Study

Literature has always served two purposes: to teach or to entertain. Literature that does both was particularly useful to this study. The goal of this writer was to select literature which will enhance the life experience of the readers: those who perform and those in the audience. The literature chosen was to be pleasurable as well as enlightening. Wallace Bacon discusses the two purposes of literature in *The Art of Interpretation*:

> There are people who think that poetry that only entertains is not very important, not really worth the consideration of mature minds. But all history is against them. Readers have always enjoyed what has given pleasure, whether or not it seems in any particular way
useful. They have usually, on the other hand, rejected as literature what has been too narrowly didactic (8-9).

The performance of this script can potentially benefit the discipline, the literature, the audience, and the interpreter.

The discipline benefits from an analysis of the literature and from exposure to new audiences. Written analysis of literature is considered acceptable research because it can be published in a written form. In fact, research in any field that is documented in writing is considered a legitimate study. This poses a singular problem to the student of literary communication whose discipline demands analysis through the oral mode. Judith Espinola addresses the unique form of publication that occurs in performance in her article. "Oral Interpretation Performance: An Act of Publication." She explains:

To perform (or re-create or recite) a work of literature, the interpreter, engaging in a specialized form of exegesis, must first dissect, weigh, consider, and scrutinize its materials and structure. This analysis is accomplished during both silent and oral activation of the recorded, verbal substance of the text (Espinola 92).
Literary analysis occurs in performance and selection. This process reveals insights into the literature that written analysis is incapable of uncovering. Espinola summarizes the value of analysis through performance. As a scholar, the oral interpreter is, in short, a literary critic who engages in assessments which are less judgmental than they are analytical, who uses critical approaches which are practical, and who demonstrates a vision of the literary work through performance. The method of scholarship demands in considering a specific literary text that the interpreter translate the results of inquiry into concrete and experimental enactment of embodiment, and in so doing demonstrate knowledge and the values most central to his or her literary theory (Espinola 95).

The value of performance of literature for the sake of analysis is apparent. The Speech Communication Association's Mass Communication Division declares that the time has come for a fresh look at other forms of publication.

The unique nature of communication disciplines and the development of new media in which publication may take place necessitates a reassessment of the forms of acceptable
academic publication. Print no longer need be the only acceptable medium or even the medium of choice for scholarly publication in our discipline (Espinola 95).

A second reason for performance at Scarborough Faire was to make the public aware of oral interpretation as a vital art form today. An art form develops credibility as public interest grows. Many people still lack exposure to oral interpretation today. In 1951, Readers Theatre made a reappearance professionally in the United States. Brooks, Bahn and Okey explain that impetus for acceptance of this art form came from Paul Gregory's production of Don Juan in Hell with Charles Laughton, Charles Boyer, Sir Cedrick Hardwicke, and Agnes Moorehead. Other successful productions followed it: John Brown's Body, The World of Carl Sandburg, Brecht on Brecht, and Dear Liar. New York theatres continue to offer such productions. Readers Theatre obtains critical acclaim from this exposure, drawing support from the Interpretation Division of the Speech Communication Association of America. From the 1950's to the 1970's the number of courses offered in schools expanded greatly (Brooks, et. al. 33). Public performance, especially professional, is a positive influence on the discipline. A Renaissance Faire is one setting in which this communicative art may be favorably exposed to society.
As stated earlier, the literature receives the kind of analysis that is accomplished only through oral presentation. There are other benefits derived from the presentation of literature from a specific historical period. The proposed performance was designed to revive ancient literature that is otherwise relegated to dusty shelves in a library and opened only by the specialist. At Scarborough Faire, this literature was presented in surroundings that attempt to duplicate a society typical of the age in which the literature was written. Charlotte Lee explains how interpretation revives one art (the literature) through another:

As a musician translates the written notes into sound and thus conveys the achievement of the composer to the listener, so the interpreter brings to life the printed symbols which have preserved the ideas and experiences of mankind for centuries. Interpretation is thus an art of recreation (vii).

Oral presentation may be the best way to re-vitalize and understand any ancient literature. Agnes Black states: In every great literary composition there is a hidden life, a spiritual meaning, the interpretation of which is of supreme importance. To express this hidden life, this spiritual
meaning vocally, dramatic power through imagination uses language more vitally, 'at a higher power and tension' than ordinary speech (30).

This statement supports the concept that most great literature is best experienced through oral comprehension. Much of the literature from the Medieval and early Renaissance periods is based on oral tradition (Bahn 62). Oral presentation revives prose and poetry from these time periods in the manner in which they originated.

A day at the fair can enrich the visitor's life. Period literature that is brought to life through performance can expand the fairgoer's ability to accept other cultures. Robert Beloof reasons that there is value in reconstructing attitudes and lifestyles of the past. In doing so, the reader or listener can see that people in all ages share the same desires, fears, and dreams. Beloof amplifies this by saying:

It is not simply that thus we feel ourselves a part of a human community that goes back to the cave dwellers, though that recognition is an exciting and important feeling. It is that we learn from each of these highly refined recitations of human behavior. We come to know, we discover potential in ourselves and in humanity that a lifetime
in one man's necessarily restricted experience could not begin to reveal to him (179).

Brooks, Bahn, and Okey point out that prose, poetry, or drama provide personal involvement for the reader. This involvement goes beyond mere knowledge of an event. Empathy occurs when the intellect and emotions are stimulated (Brooks, et. al. 45). The audience member can learn to better accept others through empathy.

Involvement in Readers Theatre is a pleasurable experience, too. Oscar Brockett informs the student of theatre that audiences expect to be entertained, stimulated by new thoughts or both (Brockett 17-18). Thus, the audience member can go away from Readers Theatre in a Renaissance Fair educated and entertained.

The readers benefit from performance as much as the audience and the literature. Like the audience, they develop a deeper understanding of self by exploring the literature and the culture of another era. Personal growth occurs as the interpreter makes a disciplined, conscientious effort toward analysis and preparation for performance. As Charlotte Lee puts it, "interpretation is built on scholarship, technical know-how, sensitivity, and the desire to share. It demands total synthesis" (Lee vii).

A secondary advantage inherent in oral performance is the improvement the interpreter gains in tone and
pronunciation. Beloof suggests that not only is this true, but an "irremediable loss" may occur if the full comprehension gained by reading aloud is ignored (4).

The apprentice at Scarborough Faire learns how to act through the workshop. By participating in Readers Theatre, he or she can enlarge that ability to include the subtleties of interpretation. The material learned in the Readers Theatre can give the apprentice resources to draw on when participating with visitors at the fair. Vocabulary of the period is added, dialect is given opportunity to develop within a structured format, and comprehension of what he or she as a town member feels and experiences is magnified.

Everyone should benefit from the performance of Readers Theatre in a Renaissance fair. The interpreter and the audience member can be enlightened and entertained by the experience. The discipline is exposed to society in a positive way and can be reinforced as a meaningful act. The literature benefits from analysis which is central to the purpose of the discipline. Society can benefit from the cultural interchange and understanding of the past through the oral traditions of its people. Wallace Bacon put it succinctly:

... in the final analysis, there is no conflict between pleasure and profit as the ends of literature, for the acquisition
of experience through reading may be useful because it is pleasurable, and pleasurable because it is useful. Insight combines pleasure and profit (9).

Scope of the Study

The cultural background of the English people during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance was established by a study of the customs at that time. Specifically, the lifestyle of the peasantry and travelling entertainer was distinguished. Understanding the nobility was less important, except where their attitudes toward the minstrel and actors affected their behavior.

The selection of the literature was based on the orality of the piece. Literature selected from the late Medieval Period through the early Renaissance was thought appropriate. Tales, poetry, and songs or ballads are passed down from generation to generation, by word of mouth, crossing eras. Literature by known authors was considered, but the literature selected has no known source.

Methodology

The selection of the literature, evaluation of the script and establishment of the parameters for interpretation in Renaissance was accomplished through an analytical/critical approach. A historical investigation
was the first step in selecting the literature. A survey of the time and place in which the literature originated helped to determine its meaning. Research into various performing styles used in the Renaissance was important for the purpose of presenting the literature as accurately as possible.

The next step was to review oral interpretation texts and establish criteria for selection of the literature. After a study of various experts in the field of oral interpretation, a set of criteria was formulated which combined the experts suggestions and the requirements determined by the author. Requirements chosen by the author were based on the specific audience and setting of Scarborough Faire. The literature needed to have characteristics exemplified by the following set of criteria:

1. Be authentic to the Renaissance period
2. Exhibit a style developed through oral delivery
3. Be humorous in tone
4. Be simple in plot structure
5. Be brief
6. Contain universal themes
7. Be individual in approach
8. Suggest images in the listener's mind
9. Focus on compelling characters
10. Involve action and conflict
After these criteria were applied and the literature was selected, the script was compiled. In the script, a variety of literary forms are tied together by a common theme. Humorous, light stories and tales with a moral were among the choices. One or more ballads and songs were used to unify the prose.

The third step was to analyze the chosen pieces of literature for meaning and accurate interpretation. A list of four pairs of criteria was arranged:

1. Tone and Theme
2. Climax and Anti-climax
3. Repetition and Rhythm
4. Word Meanings and Syntax

The fourth step entailed performing the literature and evaluating the suitability of the project. Criteria were selected by a review of questions posed by Coger and White in *Readers Theatre Handbook*, Long, Hudson, and Jeffrey in *Group Performance of Literature*, Ted Colson of North Texas State University, and questions considered applicable by the critic.

A few terms and concepts relevant to Scarborough Faire require clarification. A participant or performer is anyone who is enrolled in the Scarborough Faire workshop program. On the first day of the workshop, individuals were selected from among the participants to be readers.
for this study. Unless otherwise specified, the participants, performers or readers written about in succeeding chapters will always be interpreters involved in Readers Theatre and not those involved in other aspects of the fair. Because the interpreters had their "street characters" (representing townspeople of Scarborough), they appeared in costume when performing the script. However, their costumes were not necessarily related to the roles they portrayed in the script. They were merely dressed as townspeople would dress in Renaissance. As far as the audience was concerned, the costumed performers were townspeople from the 1530's in England.

Review of Literature

**Historical Background**

*Southern Living* explains the development of the modern Renaissance Faire in a 1978 article entitled, "King George of Texas" (13:13). *Southern Living* also reviews the Texas Renaissance Faire in Magnolia in a 1979 issue (14:13). These articles describe the same kind of fair found in Waxahachie, Texas, where the performance takes place. It describes how a fair is conducted and what the goals are for the entertainers and craftspeople.

History books which reveal the customs and events of the Medieval and Renaissance Periods are necessary to this review. *The Elizabethans*, by Allardyce Nicoll, covers
the customs and daily life of the people in their own words. This volume reveals English thought on Theatre, the Church, the Plague, Rogues, and Nobility. E. M. Nugent edited a collection of writings from the period entitled *The Thought and Culture of the English Renaissance: An Anthology of Early Tudor Prose*. This book provides insight into the philosophical, religious, and social attitudes of the upper classes. *Fools and Folly During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, by Barbara Swain, gives interesting information about the part fools played in society at that time. Actors often donned fools' garb to get into the Court's favor.

Oscar Brockett gives an overview of the theatre from historical and developmental perspectives in *The Theatre: An Introduction*. Chapters six and seven trace the development of the performing arts through the Medieval and Renaissance Periods. *The Concise History of Theatre*, by Phyllis Hartnoll, is a simple and accurate account of stages of theatrical development. Allardyce Nicoll delves into the era in a few chapters of *The Development of the Theatre*.

Karl Mantzuis' book, *A History of Theatrical Art*, tells about the part festivals played in the lives of people during those times. People from all classes participated in ceremonies together. *The Theatre in the Middle Ages* by William Tydeman describes the narration of stories while
being mimed. In his two volume history, *Medieval Stage*, E. K. Chambers provides comprehensive research into peasant folk-drama and the minstrel.

Two other books are consulted in this research based on the history of the theatre. *Ancient and Medieval Theatre, A Historiographical Handbook*, by Ronald Vince details the methods of research that are necessary to study that period. Very few accurate records exist of the theatre at that time. Richard Southern, in *The Seven Ages of Theatre*, divides the development of theatre into ages rather than time periods. Southern describes the types of theatre that developed in the Western and Eastern hemispheres during each age.

The history of oral interpretation is central to the study. Bahn and Bahn's *The History of Oral Interpretation* is a key text. They devote an entire chapter to the Medieval and the Renaissance Ages. Oral interpretation moved from the church into all levels of society. Diane Bornstein discusses the use of oral interpretation in the daily life of the nobility in "Performing Oral Discourse as a Form of Sociability During the Renaissance" (21). Bornstein explains that nobility were taught in their courtesy books how to relate stories and witticisms.

**Development of the Script**

The selection of literature for the script requires
techniques of analysis. *The Performing Voice in Literature* by Robert Beloof scrutinizes the critical analysis of literature. Tone and language, mood, irony, time, and figurative speech are some of the aspects he discusses. *The Communicative Act of Oral Interpretation* by Brooks, Bahn, and Okey also offers keys to the intent of the literature.


A number of texts contain literature from the Medieval period. *The Story of Minstrels*, by Edmondstoune Duncan gives a complete record of popular songs and ballads in England from 1013 A.D. to the 1600's. He also devotes an introductory chapter to a detailed history of the minstrel in England. William Chappell in *Old English Popular Music*, details a multitude of songs, ballads, and dance tunes;
their musical scores; and the background of each. Peter Kennedy compiles a large volume of songs entitled *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland*. This collection is difficult to date, but may include authentic songs for performance. *Cecil Sharp's Collection of English Folk Songs*, edited by Maud Karpeles, contains many humorous and bawdy songs that work well in performance.

*The Ballad Book*, edited by William Allingham, contains a complete collection of Robin Hood ballads. Apparently, the legend of Robin Hood was first told in song. In *Ancient Songs and Ballads*, edited by Joseph Ritson, songs are listed under the name of the king of England who reigned when they were sung. *Ancient Poems, Ballads and Songs of the Peasantry of England*, edited by James Dixon, contains a collection of ballads and poetry still circulated among the lower class today.


Modern collections of folk stories in England, such as Sidney Addy's *Folktales and Superstitions* and Thomas
Parkinson's *Yorkshire Legends and Traditions*, offer stories which may be traced to an earlier time. *A Hundred Merry Tales*, edited by P. M. Zall, contains a number of short, witty tales from that period. This book would not have been found if it had not been referred to in Addy's modern collection. Williams Matthews has a collection of short stories, allegories, and romances in his book *Later Medieval English Prose*. Henry Morley has drawn together a collection in Middle English of Reynard the Fox stories and *Gesta Romanorum*. These stories have their beginning in the early Middle Ages, and many of them are quite long. In his book, *The Lost Literature of England*, Richard Wilson discusses the difficulty of finding short, narrative pieces such as a minstrel would have told.

**Performers and Performance**

Many oral interpretation texts offer guidelines to prepare for the performance. Charlotte Lee's *Oral Interpretation* covers all aspects of oral interpretation from character analysis to performance. *The Art of Interpretation* by Wallace A. Bacon is a primer on the principles of interpretation through its different internal aspects--the use of emotion, differences from acting, and oral interpretation as an "art of communication." *The Sound, Sense, and Performance of Literature* by Don Geiger
defines interpretation by its internal and external aspects.


A number of articles have been written on the use of criticism in evaluating the performance. Jerry Young develops actual critique sheets in his article, "Evaluating A Readers Theatre Production" (34), published in the *Speech Teacher*. Beverly Whitaker Long, an experienced teacher and author in the field of oral interpretation, lists criteria for the performed text in her article, "Evaluating Performed Literature" (267).

**Plan of Reporting**

Chapter Two of the thesis will present the historical background of oral interpretation and the performing arts in the Medieval and the Renaissance periods. Criteria were selected and applied to the selection of literature for the script.

Chapter Three will present the production concept and the completed script.
Chapter Four will formulate conclusive statements on the suitability of the presentation. Criteria were arranged to analyze the script, the interpreters and the workshop format.
CHAPTER II

SELECTION AND ANALYSIS OF THE LITERATURE

Guidelines must be followed in preparing any performance of literature. Various leaders in the field of oral interpretation have set down literary requirements which are applicable to solo and group performances. These guidelines were surveyed for two purposes: to devise a set of criteria for selecting literature for Readers Theatre and to devise criteria for analyzing the chosen selections.

Charlotte Lee suggests three "Touchstones" for selecting literature in Oral Interpretation. They are Universality, Individuality, and Suggestion (Lee 8). A text has universal characteristics when "the idea expressed is potentially interesting to all people because it touches on a common experience" (Lee 8). She defines individuality as "the writer's fresh approach to a universal subject" (Lee 9). This is found in the author's word choice, images, and method of organization (Lee 9). Suggestion occurs when "... the author has chosen references and words which allow the reader to enrich the subject matter from his own background" (Lee 9). Lee explains that all three touchstones may not be equally represented in every
selection, but the absence of one will weaken a selection too much to interest and move the audience (9).

In *Readers Theatre Handbook*, Leslie Irene Coger and Melvin White broaden these three touchstones with basic qualities that encompass group performance. They are "evocative power, compelling characters, action, enriched language, and wholeness" (Coger and White 33). These characteristics restate, in a sense, Lee's "touchstones," but identify those specific qualities pertinent to Readers Theatre. "Literature with strong evocative power, tending or serving to evoke imagery, to make the reader feel/ empathize with its story, characters, and messages is ideal for Readers Theatre" (Coger and White 34). Compelling characters interest the audience, "either for their good qualities, their attitude toward life and the work, the understanding they provide for life, or the sheer fun they offer" (Coger and White 35). Often suggested instead of literal, the second quality, action, "... must be clear and vital enough for the audience to visualize it in a succession of mental images" (Coger and White 36). Coger continues describing ideals for Readers Theatre in her explanation of enriched language. "... it should also be written in language rich in evocative overtones, in language with a poetic cast—hence, in language that benefits from being heard" (Coger and White 37). Finally, "... the finished script must possess a wholeness; that
is, it must have a beginning, a middle, and an end" (Coger and White 39-40).

Brooks, Bahn, and Okey in their book, *The Communicative Act of Oral Interpretation*, list specific "Clues" to analyzing literature. They give the title, theme, meanings of words, symbolism, attitude, and critical and historical investigation as useful literary aspects to study (Brooks et. al. 158). Of these, the theme, meanings of words, attitude, and critical and historical investigation have a bearing on the selections made for this particular script.

The meanings of words have particular relevance in understanding Medieval and Renaissance literature. According to Brooks, Bahn, and Okey, there may be three different meanings involved--what the author intends, what the interpreter understands, and what the audience perceives.

While all three--the author, the oral interpreter and the listener--have the same word, or group of letters in mind, and while the interpreter and the listener are attempting to arrive at the author's context of a word, there are some differences which exist due to the variety of experiences and associations each has had (Brooks et. al. 159).
Brooks, Bahn, and Okey assign a particular responsibility to the interpreter: "Your task as an oral interpreter is to assist your listener in attaching to the words of literature those meanings which you believe appropriate to the intended literary experience" (160).

Understanding the attitude of each piece of literature was important because the compiled script needed to be unified. The theme of each selection must work well with the other selections for there to be a wholeness. The author may develop the attitude or viewpoint by his word choice, figures of speech, linguistic structure, rhythm, tempo and repetition (Brooks et. al. 163).

Critical and historical investigation is the final "clue" given in this list. The presentation of literature from the Sixteenth Century demands a study of the performing arts at that time. Different types of literature must be examined for their compatibility one with another. Accuracy of presentation is important, but the style of writing must be comprehensible to a Twentieth Century audience. An overview of the time period will be dealt with in the second half of this chapter.

Brooks, Bahn, and Okey also define various "tools" of literature used by the author to enhance and clarify meaning. The tools which are most appropriate to the chosen script are: repetition, climax, and anti-climax (Brooks et. al. 171). Climax is important in every traditional story for
the building process and the sense of completion which occur. Anti-climax is useful when a humorous effect is desired (Brooks et al. 180).

In *The Performing Voice in Literature*, Robert Beloof discusses the analysis of literature extensively. Using "tone" as an umbrella term, he delves into syntax, irony, and ambiguity. Time, rhythm, and the narrator are other aspects of analysis. A discussion of time and the narrator will be covered in Chapter Three in relation to the production concept.

Beloof tells the student that tone is essential to understanding the written word. Tone is similar in meaning to "attitude" as defined by Brooks, Bahn, and Okey. Beloof defines tone "as the total impression and meaning of a desired communication" (144). Syntax (word order) colors the overall tone, along with denotative and connotative meanings of the words. The dramatic environment also adds to the contextual meaning (Beloof 145).

Irony is another aspect of tone. Beloof identifies all irony with a "sense of discrepancy" (152). Satire is a special kind of irony. "Satire usually concerns itself with exposing the social and characteristic vices and foibles of mankind" (Beloof 155). Irony and satire occur in all the selections used in this particular script.

Ambiguity touches on tone as well. Beloof states that "Ambiguity is, in all its developments, a duality or
plurality of perception" (Beloof 156). "Paradox is a particular kind of ambiguity presenting two apparently impossibly conflicting possibilities which are yet somehow resolved" (Beloof 157).

Recognizing the rhythm in a text aids the interpreter in phrasing. Even in prose, a rise and fall of stress and slack syllables can be identified. Context changes the stress, and time stress occurs in English more often than syllable stress (Beloof 387). "English tends to yield its stress to dramatic (contextual) considerations, and that the final stressing of a phrase tends to represent a compromise between the (lexical) syllable stress and the dramatic (or contextual) stress" (Beloof 389).

The nature of performing Readers Theatre in public requires that the audience and the setting take priority when one selects the literature. The interest of the performers follow the audience. This can affect the quality of the literature chosen. Coger and White, in Readers Theatre Handbook, state that "Readers Theatre is not a critical analysis of a text but an aesthetic experience" (13). Critical analysis is necessary, but the performance of the literature is the goal. They take the stance that Readers Theatre has dramatic qualities that reading-hour programs do not always have (Coger and White 12).
In selecting material for Readers Theatre, one should consider the audience for which the performance is to be given, the place and the time allotted, as well as the interests of the performers (Coger and White 33).

Interaction between readers and unity among the selections are essential in a compiled script. Long, Hudson, and Jeffrey narrow the components of a compiled script into six major questions.

1. Does the script possess unity? do the various elements harmonize?

2. Does the script contain contrast -- in tone, length or style?

3. Is its focus clear?

4. Are transitional materials, if used, congruent with the literature and the production concept?

5. Are the materials arranged to form a whole, with a beginning, middle and end?

6. Is the compilation faithful to each of the individual literary texts (Long et. al. 25)?

Coger and White also offer a checklist for compiled scripts. In addition to the ones already listed, they have three questions emphasizing the dramatic qualities of the script.

1. Does the script have a dramatic framework, or is it merely a collection of materials?
2. Does it have interaction among the characters or between characters and the audience?

3. Does the script have a sense of progression, of "going someplace?" Does it lead to a point of awareness, an insight (Coger 98)?

These questions were considered in the initial compilation. They also played a part in the final evaluation of the success of the production.

Three other criteria are essential in the selection of literature for a modern Renaissance fair. The setting and the audience dictate that the stories be light in tone, easy to follow, and brief. Short, funny stories are more desirable than serious religious drama or long, involved romantic tales because of the setting in which the performances take place. Many activities occur simultaneously at Scarborough Faire. People are hawking for food and craft booths near the performance area. Other performers, such as musicians, may be within hearing distance. Patrons may have their minds on getting to another performance after this one. These distractions require that the stories have a single plot, and be brief, and to the point, with humor to suit the festive occasion. The use of period literature already has one barrier—the language. Enough concentration is required to grasp the meaning without adding subplots or the seriousness of a morality or a miracle play.
After close scrutiny of the various elements covered by the above authors and a look at the setting and the audience, a ten-facet list of criteria is arranged for the selection of suitable texts for a Readers Theatre event at Scarborough Faire. These criteria are:

1. Be authentic to the Renaissance period
2. Exhibit a style developed through oral delivery
3. Be humorous in tone
4. Be simple in plot structure
5. Be brief
6. Contain universal themes
7. Be individual in approach
8. Suggest images in the listener's mind
9. Focus on compelling characters
10. Involve action and conflict

Additional literary characteristics are set up to analyze the literature after it is chosen. Each story or song must be compatible in tone (attitude) and theme. The climax and anti-climax are identified in all the stories, and the ballads, at least added interest through the use of repetition and rhythm. The meanings of words and the syntax need to be clear to the performers. These criteria are listed in pairs for convenient perusal.

1. Tone and Theme
2. Climax and Anti-climax
3. Repetition and Rhythm
4. Word Meanings and Syntax

Each story and song was analyzed, with special attention given to those aspects of the criteria for selection which are most applicable to the story being discussed. The list of characteristics important for interpretation of the literature, listed above are included in the review of each story as it goes through the selection process.

SELECTION AND ANALYSIS

Oral style and period authenticity are the first two criteria for selecting these stories. These stories and songs were handed down by word of mouth until they were finally printed. All of these works are anonymous, leading one to believe that they were told at one time by travelling minstrels. It is not surprising therefore, to discover "The Man Who Cried Beal" is the same story found in a later French farce published as Pierre Patelin (Hartnoll 119).

Four of the stories in the script are from a collection called A Hundred Merry Tales, originally published in the 1500's. The editor wrote:

The jestbooks are not "literary. . . . The jestbooks are more concerned with what is said than how it is said, and generally make their point simply, succinctly and with as much zest
as the jests will bear. . . . Because jests are meant to be said as well as read, their style is conversationally dramatic, vernacular vs. literary, and sometimes seemingly taken down from actual speech" (Zall 1-2).

These "jests" seem to fall into the definition of fabliaux. The fabliaux were told by minstrels to the peasant folk and sometimes to the nobility. M. H. Abrams defines the fabliaux in *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. The medieval fabliaux was a short comic or satiric tale in verse dealing realistically with middle-class or lower class characters and delighting in the ribald and the obscene: its favorite theme is the cuckholding of a stupid husband. The fabliaux flourished in France in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and became popular in England during the fourteenth century" (Abrams 59).

The two songs that are told as stories are taken from *Ancient Poems, Ballads and Songs* by J. H. Dixon. These songs were taken down from old manuscripts and by oral transcription from twentieth century country people in England. Because of the themes of these particular songs, the researcher deemed them to be based on songs from the Middle Ages, if not specifically from that era. Since it
is very difficult to find collections from that era, most of the songs in print were composed in the Elizabethan Period or later. Written by the nobility, they dealt with themes of adventure and lost love. One collection, *Ancient Songs and Ballads* by Ritson, has a few songs from Henry VIII's reign, but they are long and considered to be too literary.

The story of the "Hanging Tree" is the oldest of the stories in the script. It comes from the *Gesta Romanorum*, which were told very early in the Middle Ages—12th to 13th centuries. The collection is found in *Medieval Tales* by Henry Morley.

One other song is used as an introduction to the tales. "The Tree in the Wood" is sung at the first of the performance as a means of drawing a crowd to the stage. This song comes from *Cecil Sharp's Collection of English Folksongs*, edited by Maud Karpeles, and has a strong relationship to other songs from the Sixteenth Century, although it was written in the Seventeenth Century.

All of the stories are selected for their humor, simplicity, and brevity. None of the stories are malicious, but merely poke fun at universal subject matter which would be tragic if considered seriously. The type of humor will be identified, along with the remaining criteria, as each story is discussed separately in the next few pages.
"Old Wichet and His Wife"

The first selection, Old Wichet and His Wife," is a song about an age-old, universal theme: adultery. The subject is told humorously. The song possesses individuality in its plot. On each verse, Old Wichet discovers different belongings of the three men. When he confronts his wife, he accepts her outrageous explanations. The listener is never told that there are three men in the house until the very last verse.

Suggestion, as well as an individual approach to a universal problem, is apparent. The listener can imagine the stable with the three horses or the kitchen with the three swords. A ludicrous image comes to mind when the wife replies that the horses are milking cows and the swords are roasting spits. The conclusion is left up to the listener.

The humor of this selection involves irony. Irony evinces itself in the fact that Wichet never realizes that his wife is cheating on him. Although the story is in ballad form, it deals with a favorite theme of the fabliaux—a man who is cuckolded by his wife. The theme is a satirical approach to a common situation.

Humor colors the tone and theme of the selection. The ironic tone of "Old Wichet and His Wife" grows when the wife gives Wichet a ready answer each time he finds something belonging to the men. In the fourth verse, when
she tells him the boots are pudding-bags, he says, "Pudding-bags with spurs on! The like was never known!"
The purpose of the story is to illustrate how easy it is for a wife to fool a husband. This is reinforced when the chorus repeats, "Old Wichet a cuckold went out, and a cuckold he came home!"

The "sheer fun" of these two characters make them compelling. The audience can laugh at Old Wichet because he is such a fool. In fact, he is so blind that the audience is able to feel superior. This sense of superiority adds to the pleasure the audience experiences. The action in this story, imagined by the audience, is both mental and physical. Since Wichet goes into a different part of the house on each verse, it is wiser to let the audience visualize what is happening than to try to stage it.

Climax and anti-climax are also on the list of criteria for analysis. "Old Wichet" builds to the final verse as each item he finds leads up to three men in bed. Even though Wichet sees the men in bed, there is no resolution as to his reaction to it. He remains befuddled throughout. The last verse serves as a climactic point, but doesn't leave the listener with a conclusion.

Repetition has always been a tool of songs and ballads. "Old Wichet and His Wife" repeats phrases, rhymes, and the structure of each verse. Wichet starts
each verse with "O, I went into the ________, and there
I saw ________, by one, by two and by three. O! I
called to my loving wife, Anon, kind sir! quoth she . . . ."
and so on. Each verse follows the same pattern.

The meter is varied, written to fit into 4/4 time for
music. It combines iambic pentameter with a pyrrhic form
(two light syllables in a row). All the lines rhyme at
the end. Assonanace is used in the line "Ods bods! Well
done! Milking cows with saddles on! Assonance also
occurs in the refrain. "Old Wichet a cuckold went out,
and a cuckold he came home!"

Last on the list for analysis are word meanings and
syntax. It is not necessary for the audience to under-
stand every word, so long as the oral reader understands.
The meaning should be apparent in the context of the
sentence, particularly if the reader uses proper vocal
inflection. Neither will the syntax trouble an audience,
if the reader is not confused by it.

Though "Wichet" is accepted as a proper noun,
"cuckold" is another matter. The interpreters have to
understand that a cuckold is a man fooled by an adulterous
wife. It is assumed that the audience detects the meaning
by the end of the song. "Mantua" is defined in Webster's
New World Dictionary as a loose mantle or cloak worn by
women. The syntax in this selection is easy to follow.
"Two Gentlemen of Acquaintance"

This story also deals with adultery in a humorous way. The enriched language suggests the imaginative reality of what is being told. Told in a straightforward manner, the action takes place in the mind of the audience.

Selected for its humor, "Two Gentlemen of Acquaintance" has an ironical ending. Two men have slept with the same woman in the same night. One loses his ring in the bed and the other one finds it. A dispute arises over the ownership of the ring and a third party is called upon to settle the matter. They decide to ask the next man who comes along, "showing him the whole matter." As it turns out, he is her husband. The husband tells them that the man who owns the sheets should have the ring. They reply, "... you shall have the ring."

Climax and anti-climax are clear in this story. The climactic point comes midway when the two men conflict over the ownership of the ring. The anti-climax and the punchline come when the husband of the woman is met and gives the answer to their argument.

Although not written in verse, this story contains a rhythmic pattern. Beloof illustrates in his text how this pattern can be identified. Noting the slack and stressed syllables can be helpful in interpretation. His symbols for slack (X) and stress (') are marked here on a few
Two gentlemen of acquaintance were appointed to lie with a gentlewoman in one night, the one not knowing of the other, at divers time.

As already stated, the syntax is not changed in the original stories. Here are a few examples of the archaic syntax found in this story.

"... in the bed there he fortuned to find ..."

"... sped his business ..."

"... denied it him ..."

No archaic words are used in this story, making it easy to understand.

"The Jealous Man"

The next story, "The Jealous Man," also presents the universal theme of cuckoldry. Humorous in tone, the story has a satirical twist to the ending. A husband dreams that the devil appears to him, offering a very unlikely answer to the problem of keeping his wife true to him.

The climax comes when the man dreams that the devil tells him to wear a certain ring to prevent his wife from being with another man. The anti-climax gives an ironic twist when the man awakes to find his finger in his wife's "arse."
Word meanings are clear in this story, but the syntax is archaic throughout. The opening sentence is a good example of the language.

"A man that was right jealous on his wife dreamed on a night as he lay abed with her and slept . . . ."

"The Hanging Tree"

The classic, universal "man-woman" conflict appears in this selection. At the beginning, a husband is lamenting the fact that all three of his wives have hanged themselves on a tree in his yard. A humorous slant occurs when a friend calls it good fortune and asks for two or three sprigs of the tree to give to his neighbors. An ironic change comes about when the once grief-stricken husband sees a market for such a tree and begins to make a profit. This is an individual approach to an age-old theme.

The story builds to a climax when the man is told by his friend that sprigs from his tree will allow each man to "indulge" his spouse. The anti-climax reveals that the owner of the tree is making a profit from selling cuttings from this tree.

"The Man Who Cried Beal"

A universal theme is present in this tale: never trust anyone when money is involved--particularly the law.
The narration in "The Man Who Cried Beal" sets up what is about to happen very well. The listener knows from the beginning that the debtor has no money because he spends it as soon as he gets it. He is smart enough to go to a barrister for help when he is called into court. Yet as soon as the barrister frees him of his debt, it is not surprising to find the debtor playing the same trick on the barrister. This story makes certain that the theme of the tale is understood by stating a "moral" at the end.

Humorous in tone, the tale satirizes the law profession. The lawyer helps a debtor get out of his debt by dishonest means. The debtor turns around and plays the same trick on the lawyer when he tries to get his fees.

Mental conflict and action characterize this story. The lawyer and the debtor are compelling as vehicles for a lesson about dishonesty. Although both are tricksters, the reader admires and likes them for their audacity.

Word meanings are clear in this selection; however, the syntax complicates an otherwise simple storyline. Here are examples of unfamiliar word order:

"There was a man on a time . . ."

" . . . whatsoever be said unto thee . . ."

" . . . he persuaded the Justice to cast the merchant in his own action."
"Of the Fool That Thought Himself Dead"

"Of the Fool That Thought Himself Dead" presents psychological action and physical action. The emphasis is on the psychological action in which a group of friends join together to make their slightly dull, but normally jolly friend believe he is dying. His progression from good health to his deathbed is quick and effective. The fool is compelling as a clearcut, naive character who draws sympathy as well as laughter from the audience.

The irony exists in the fact that he could be convinced by his friends that he is dying. In the end, he still thinks he is dead when he sits up in the bier to retort to a tavern maid's rude comment.

This story climaxes at his supposed "death." The anti-climax maximizes the humor of the situation when he retorts to the tavern maid's insults. The moral statement given in the narration at the end of the story reinforces the theme.

Word meanings, which may or may not still be in use, need to be clarified. "Jocund" means "merry," "ague" is a chill or malarial fever (Webster's New World Dictionary), "bier" is a framework for carrying a corpse, and "sapience" means wisdom. All these unfamiliar words must be defined for the readers.

Syntax is reasonably straightforward in this selection. However, like the following example, the story contains a
few archaic expressions.

"... he fared with himself as though he would give up the ghost ...

"The Old Farmers Wife"

This selection relates the universal situation of a hen-pecked husband and a shrewish wife. In this song, Satan takes the farmer's wife to hell—to the great joy of her husband. However, she is so ferocious that Satan brings her back to the farmer. This imaginative scene is individual in its depiction of a typical man-woman conflict. The theme is humorous, satirizing the shrewish wife.

"The Old Farmers Wife" is full of physical action. Satan lugs the wife to hell, the wife beats up the imps and Satan, and he lugs her back to her husband. The farmer, the wife, and Satan are compelling characters that the audience can recognize and enjoy.

This song is actually a well-structured story. The introduction, "There was an old farmer in Sussex did dwell. And he had a bad wife as many knew well," immediately establishes the characters of the shrewish wife and hen-pecked old farmer. The climax occurs when she knocks Satan against the wall. The anti-climax serves as a conclusion when Satan gives her back to the old
farmer and says, "I've been a tormentor the whole of my life, But I ne'er was tormented so as with your wife."

"The Old Farmers Wife," written for singing, makes use of repetition and rhythm. The meter matches 3/4 time in musical notation. The tune whistled in between couplets is the only repeated line, although each verse follows the same pattern. Every two lines rhyme with each other, with a different rhyme than the couplet preceding it. Each line is primarily tetrameter (four feet) with a dactylic stress pattern (heavy accent followed by two light accent).

Consonance is used only four times. Two words appear in a line, sporadically spaced. The first couplet uses "wife and "well." The fifth couplet uses "pedlars pack." The eighth couplet rhymes "beat" and "brains." The tenth couplet matches "bundled" and "back."

The word "pattens" may require definition. Pattens are shoes with thick wooden soles (Webster's New World Dictionary). Other words and phrases that are typical of that period are taught in the dialect portion of the workshop.

A review of these seven tales reveals their appropriateness for compilation as a Readers Theatre script. the tone of every selection is light and satirical. The primary purpose of these songs and jests
is to entertain, although at least two of them have a lesson to teach. Humor, interesting characters, and an active plot are found in each. A number of them offer a unique way of presenting age-old themes. Finally, they are authentic works from Medieval and early Renaissance periods, and they suit the oral mode of delivery popular during those times.

CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION

Dramatic performances in the late Medieval to early Renaissance period fall into two broad categories: religious and secular. A survey of both styles is necessary for the researcher to compile the appropriate script. In spite of the many volumes written about the Middle Ages, few records exist of the literature and the performing styles. Ronald Vince tells the reader in Ancient and Medieval Theatre, A Historiographical Handbook that:

It was to take many years of painstaking investigation of exceedingly fragmentary evidence even to begin the reconstruction of the ephemeral, occasional, textless entertainments that made up a large part of the medieval theatre (89).

The type of public performance that historians know the most about is liturgical drama. Paradoxically, the Roman
Catholic Church banned theatrical performances early in the Middle Ages, and then later revived it. Phyllis Hartnoll records in *The Concise History of Theatre*: 

The first liturgical plays were written for performance by priests and choirboys in a church. As more incidents were added, laymen were allowed to appear, though not as yet any women (40).

As the drama grew more elaborate, it moved from the inside of the church into the streets. This led to the development of huge set stages with "mansions" for each scene. Eventually plays were performed on two-story pageant wagons that moved through-out the town to perform at different locations. The production of these plays was taken over by the secular authorities and the trade guilds (Hartnoll 40-44).

Plays remained religious in nature. Mystery plays were performed sequentially; a different part of the story was depicted on a different pageant wagon. Mystery plays usually dealt with the life, death, and resurrection of Christ and with Old Testament themes. Miracle plays dramatized the lives and works of the saints or martyrs (Brockett 116). Morality plays, such as *Everyman*, personified abstract concepts like vice and virtue.

Miracle, morality, and mystery plays were not chosen for this Readers Theatre script. They are too didactic
and too long to hold the attention of a modern "fair" crowd. Comedy does intersperse the mystery plays, such as the *Second Shepherd's Play*, from the Wakefield Cycle. The play is comic and easy to follow, yet it requires complete staging and singing, and is representational in approach (Brockett 112-116). This does not easily fit into the Readers Theatre concept of the presentational rather than the representational mode. The goal of this performance is to present oral literature as it was performed by the common man or travelling professional.

Hartnoll explains that while liturgical plays were growing in popularity and drawing theatrical talent from large cities, secular drama was continuing:

To this tradition belong the Mayday games and the Mumming plays in rural England, the soties or "tomfooleries" which began with the French Feast of Fools, the farces of the student companies . . . . the rough-and-tumble plays given in the open air on temporary stages in marketplaces in the Low Countries (Hartnoll 49-50).

The Mummers' play is a folk drama which has remained a tradition in certain communities up to the Twentieth Century. E. K. Chambers' book, *The Medieval Stage*, gives a marvelously detailed account of this and other aspects of folk-drama. The Mummers' Play has its roots in sword
dancing. It may be divided into three parts:

... the Presentation, the Drama, the Quete.

In the first somebody speaks a prologue, claiming a welcome from the spectators, and then the leading characters are in turn introduced. The second consists of a fight followed by the intervention of a doctor to revive the slain. In the third some supernumerary characters enter, and there is a collection (Chambers 1: 211).

Chambers shows that the Mummers' play was an outgrowth of mock sacrifice and other relics of extinct pagan ritual. They are properly called folk-drama, because they are derived, with the minimum of literary intervention, from the dramatic tendencies latent in folk-festivals of a very primitive type (Chambers 1: 218).

In some ways, the Mummers' Play seems to be an appropriate form of performance for Readers Theatre. It is authentic to the period and performed by villagers at festivals. However, the plays consist primarily of action and very little dialogue. The play does not suit the style of performance envisioned by the director.

Another possible form of entertainment occurs in the Feast of Fools. Chambers again gives an exemplary description of this form. The Feast of Fools took place
in the church among the clergy in the form of a festival, which began on Innocents' Day and continued through Epiphany. Sub-deacons celebrated electing a new leader by wearing masks and mocking religious rituals and people. They also went out into the streets using foul language and telling indecent jokes. Although the Roman Catholic Church banned the festival, these bourgeois and peasant vicars were a rowdy, uneducated lot, and the feast continued into the sixteenth century (Chambers 1: 317-325). The Feast of Fools was not a performance for the benefit of an audience, but served as a release from a structured environment for the participants. No scripts are known to exist, but what appears to be an excuse for revelry does not impress the researcher as a legitimate form of entertainment appropriate to the Readers Theatre concept or for twentieth century audiences.

In Phyllis Hartnoll's list of various forms of drama, the farce is also included. The farce and the interlude developed in the same way and were often the same thing. Farces were performed by students in universities and by bands of travelling actors. The interlude came into popularity in the early 1500's. In The Seven Ages of Theatre, Richard Southern highlights the background of the interlude. While the elaborate cycle plays were going, the one-man entertainer, the minstrel, began to join with
others as a group to perform very short plays with a theme and small casts:

. . . no more spectators than gather for supper; for greater emphasis on intimate dialogue; compact plots or even no more than a whimsical idea; considerable development in human characterization. And a great many of these performances take place now indoors. It is into this phase of the development of the theatre that what is called the English Interlude comes (Southern 125).

Interludes were performed primarily by professional troupes which, like the early minstrel, began to find protection under the Tudor kings. Henry the VIII had numerous minstrels and actors in his service. When not required to perform for the king, they continued to be popular among the bourgeois and the village folk (Chambers 1: 183-186). The fictional date of Scarborough Faire is 1533. King Henry VIII is ruling England and has just married Ann Boleyn. The time is right for the interlude and it is possible that professional actors are in Scarborough for the fair. The subject matter of the farce or the interlude is appropriate because it is light and humorous. Still, the interlude has moved indoors and away from street theatre. The performance of an interlude requires an intimate setting because the language must be
closely followed in order to be comprehended. While hawkers are selling wares nearby and people are moving about, an interlude would be difficult to follow.

By the 1530's the professional minstrel had become a member of a troupe. The villagers also performed at special times throughout the year. A look at the background of the minstrel is necessary to develop an authentic reenactment of the performing arts from that time.

The minstrel was a multi-talented individual. Brooks, Bahn, and Okey state:

In Anglo-Saxon England the reciter was well known . . . This minstrel entertained in the great hall of the castle after the sometimes boisterous crowd had eaten, the tables had been removed, and a degree of peace had been established. He told stories of adventure, romance, wonder, war and the supernatural (Brooks et. al. 9).

Nicoll traces the many talents of the minstrel to the Roman mime:

... there seems plentiful proof for the presence during the so-called Dark and Middle Ages of men who, calling themselves histriones, mimi, jongleurs, and ministri or ministralli, inherited some at least of the traditions of the Roman mime, and who passed
these traditions on, now in a debased form freely mingled with acrobatics and dancing, now in the ever-popular puppet show, and now in a form of more literary proportions, destined ultimately to flourish once again as the interlude (Nicoll 62).

The physical skills of the minstrel do not benefit the compilation of a Readers Theatre script. Facts explaining the oral talents are of more interest. Chambers tells the reader in the The Medieval Stage that two major categories of minstrels existed, the trobaire and the jongleur. The trobaire were nobility who had the ability to write songs and stories. They performed for the court. The jongleur was less educated, perhaps could not read, and performed for the common people. The jongleur was more likely to tell fabliaux than romantic adventures (Chambers 1: 65-67).

Minstrels accompanied themselves on a harp or some other type of instrument. Where the music ends in a performance and the storytelling begins is hard to discern. Bahn and Bahn, in A History of Oral Interpretation, conclude that the minstrel did not use that one method, but used song, chant, recitative, or recitation, depending on his material, audience, setting, and ability (62).

The fabliaux grew very popular in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in England. Many were translated
from the French. At first, the fabliaux were in verse, but as they developed into prose, playing the harp and chanting ceased. Ordinary speech took over (Bahn 67-69).

After the invention of the printing press, minstrelsy became less popular. The upper classes began reading and telling stories as a family activity. The minstrels moved down the "social scale," and "were thrown upon the simple villagers who were as keen as ever to hear stories in their homes, in taverns, and at fairs" (Bahn 72-73).

Chambers records that minstrelsy in its medieval form changed completely in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (l: 68). Yet, Edmondstoune Duncan, in The Story of Minstrelsy, describes the continued existence of minstrels in the Sixteenth Century.

Quite apart from the minstrels in regular employment, such as might be expected to take part in ordinary entertainments, a large number of men abounded in the time of Henry VIII, who sought their living by stories, rhymes, and moral speeches, either for singing or recitation, delivered in the taverns and places of popular resort (Duncan 135).

Research supports the idea that storytelling and minstrelsy continued in villages in the 1500's. The performers were travelling joglars or local villagers
gathered together to perform for a festival or special occasion. Two other areas of concern remain: how elaborate were sets and costumes, and did women perform?

Of necessity, the minstrel, or joglar, was limited in what he could carry as he traveled in all kinds of weather from town to town. Also, one does not expect a peasant who merely wishes to relate a story or a ballad to friends to involve himself in any expenses. Karl Mantzius describes their efforts as lacking in elaborate trappings, even after the minstrels had formed into bands.

About the scenic arrangement for the secular repertoire we know next to nothing. This is owing, for one thing, to its simplicity; it had no conspicuous features which called for descriptions, such as give us an idea of the stage on which ecclesiastical dramas were performed. The short, gay farces did not require any decorations, complicated scenery, mechanical contrivances, or magnificent display. All they required was, that the words could be heard and the movements seen; so they could be performed anywhere; in a hall, on a platform, in the open air, in a marketplace, or in a street (Mantzius 177).

Thus far, oral interpretation, particularly in the form of
storytelling, seems to be a very suitable style of delivery for the setting, the environment, and the audience of Scarborough Faire. (This is in the case of the tales only, since it has already been noted that minstrels are also acrobats and jugglers, a very spectacle-oriented style of performance.)

The participation of women today onstage in a modern fair is appropriate. To exclude them is to ignore a wealth of talent. Their participation is justified by the fact that women did perform in Medieval times in secular areas. Richard Southern records:

Though it is common knowledge that women's parts in the Elizabethan public playhouse were played by boys . . . yet these were specialized theatres. The common players, whose early beginning is such a mystery, did in fact sometimes have women in their companies, and such women were alluded to as actors (Southern 111-112).

In *Ancient Songs and Ballads*, Ritson mentions a female tumbler who appears at the knighting of Edward I's son, an occasion for the attendance of a multitude of minstrels. "The woman . . . adorned like a minstrel, sitting on a great horse trapped as minstrels then used, who rode round about the tables, shewing pastime . . ." (Ritson ix).
Thus, minstrels existed in the sixteenth century in England who had relinquished the need for instrumental accompaniment. They told and enacted tales in a natural voice. They performed alone and in groups, included some women among their numbers and kept their presentations simple and unhampered by sets and scenery. They told tales of romance and adventure, but a form that remained popular among the lower classes was the short, bawdy fabliaux. This researcher finds a Readers Theatre of Renaissance literature, centered around the popular fabliaux, to be the most appropriate form of entertainment for a contemporary audience in an environment such as Scarborough Faire. It seems to be the form which is most authentic to the folk setting and the historical period.
CHAPTER III

PRODUCTION CONCEPT AND THE SCRIPT

The production concept should begin to take shape, even before the compiled script is complete. Kleinau and McHughes explain: "The specific angle of vision you take toward your text at the time of creating the script is your production concept" (40). Long, Hudson, and Jeffrey define the purpose of a production concept:

A production concept establishes a casual relationship between what you take a piece of literature to mean and how it is actualized . . . . it is the articulation of your intent (19).

Long, Hudson, and Jeffrey suggest four questions that are answered to some degree when the production concept is developed. They are:

(1) What discoveries or decisions have you made about the literature on literal, thematic, structural and metaphysical levels?
(2) What is its essence?
(3) Which of the discoveries do you want to translate into your production?
(4) What is the effect you desire from your production?

The goal of the proposed production was to present oral literature from the English Middle Ages and the Renaissance in an impromptu style for Scarborough Faire in Waxahachie, Texas. The stories and songs chosen are light and humorous in theme. They are short and often end with a punchline. They are composed in such a way as to give a variety of ways to adapt them for performance. They can be performed by one reader or by many, by designating a narrator and characters. The readers performed the tales as storytellers in the style of the sixteenth century minstrel.

The storytellers were the villagers at Scarborough Faire. They gather together because of the fair, each desiring to tell a tale or to take part in one. The cast consisted of six to eight interpreters. In order to give the impression of an unrehearsed event, the performance began with three villagers casually singing a song.

The remainder of the cast were nearby listening. Each performer joined the song on a designated verse until everyone was performing.

To maintain the sense of a unplanned effort, each performer contributed a story or played one of the characters in a story. Transitional material was developed through improvisational interaction among the
separate "street characters" used by the performers during the rehearsal period. Each reader acted as an audience member when he or she was not performing. Some of them sat in the stage area, and some sat in the audience.

All of the stories are written in the third person except for one that is told in the first person. Each third person narrator is omniscient. Three of these stories were divided into parts. The narrator told the story and all dialogue lines were given to a separate performer. "Two Gentlemen of Acquaintance" was divided between two narrators. Each narrator took the viewpoint of one of the men in the story.

Structural time versus fictive time affects the degree of movement used. All time and action is condensed in the narration. Narration is chronological in all of the stories, but structural time is shorter than fictive time. What takes a few days or several hours in the story must, of necessity, take only a few minutes to relate. In this production, most action occurred during dialogue exchange between characters. Action was minimal during the narration. Pantomime is used at times to suggest the action described by the narrator when no dialogue is spoken.

The script was unified by the theme and style of presentation. Each story had its own climax. Beginning and ending with a song gave a sense of completeness.
THE TALEBEARERS CAST

Listed by character name in alphabetical order

Angelique Brown Gregg .................. Laura Swank
Bland Flander, Sheriff of Scarborough ........ Berthold Pfeiffer
Captain Tremadog Flint .................... Ted Stroud
Cedwick Hardwood, Constable of Scarborough ................... Ed Freiheit
Lady Lucinda .................................. Kathe Mosely
Madame Zola .................................. Julie Lapington
Nan Fox .................................. Jackie Matlock
Signus Ravenshield ....................... Dean Asher
Tyb Tyndale .................................. Delanna Reed
Zorina, Queen of the Gypsies .............. Dawn Vandermuelen
THE TALEBEARERS

(The first three singers take their places and begin "The Tree in the Wood" in the Appendix A. for the music.)

In the Merryshire wood there growed a tree
And a very fine tree was he.
And the tree growed in the Merryshire wood,
in the Merryshire wood, in the Merryshire wood,
And the tree growed in the Merryshire wood.
And on that tree there growed a branch,
And a very fine branch was he,
And the branch growed on the tree,
and the tree growed in the Merryshire wood.
And the tree growed in the Merryshire wood.
Singer 3: And on that branch there was a nest,
And a very fine nest was he.
All: And the nest sat on the branch,
And the branch growed on the tree,
And the tree growed in the Merryshire wood,
in the Merryshire wood, in the Merryshire wood,
And the tree growed in the Merryshire wood.
Singer 4: And in that nest there was an egg,
All: And a very fine egg was he.
And the egg sat in the nest and the nest sat on
the branch, and the branch growed on the tree,
And the tree growed in the Merryshire wood,
etcetera.

Singer 5: And in that egg there was a bird,
All: And a very fine bird was he,
And the bird sat in the egg, and the egg sat in
the nest,
And the nest sat on the branch and the branch
growed on the tree,
And the tree growed in the Merryshire wood,
etcetera.

Singer 6: And on that bird there was a feather,
All: And a very fine feather was he,
And the feather growed on the bird, and the bird
sat in the egg, and the egg sat in the nest and
the nest sat on the branch, and the branch
growed on the tree.
And the tree growed in the Merryshire wood,
etcetera.

Singer 7: And on that feather there was a bed,
All: And a very fine bed was he.
And the bed sat on the feather, and the feather
growed on the bird, and the bird sat in the egg
and the egg sat in the nest and the nest sat on
the branch, and the branch growed on the tree,
And the tree growed in the Merryshire wood, etcetera.

Singer 8: And on that bed there lay a maid, And a very fine maid was she! And the maid lay on the bed, and the bed sat on the feather, and the feather growed on the bird, and the bird sat in the egg, and the egg sat in the nest, and the nest sat on the branch, and the branch growed on the tree, And the tree growed in the Merryshire wood, etcetera.

Singer 9: And on that maid there lay a man. And a very fine man was he! And the man lay on the maid, and the maid lay on the bed, and the bed sat on the feather, and the feather growed on the bird, and the bird sat in the egg, and the egg sat in the nest, and the nest sat on the branch, and the branch growed on the tree, And the tree growed in the Merryshire wood, In the Merryshire wood, in the Merryshire wood, And the tree growed in the Merryshire wood.

Bland: I have another song!

Cedwick: Bland, you cannot carry a tune in a bucket! Sing it not!
All: Aye, sing it not, Bland!

Bland: Very well, tis a story, so I shall tell it.

Zorina: A story, let me tell a story!

Signus: I have a tale, let me tell mine!

Angel: Let me tell a story!

Bland: Nay! I am Sheriff of Scarborough, I shall tell my story first. You all can help me on the refrain. Know ye, the "Old Wichet and His wife?"

All: Aye!

Bland: Good. Nan Fox, you may play my wife. Let us begin.

O! I went into the stable, and there for to see.
And there I saw three horses stand, by one, by two, And by three; O! I called to my loving wife,

Nan: Anon, kind sir!

Bland: quoth she: O! What do these three horses here, without the leave of me?

Nan: Why, you old fool! blind fool! Can't you very well see,

These are three milking cows my mother sent to me?

Bland: Ods bods! well done! milking cows with saddles on!

The like was never known!

All: (except Wichet) Old Wichet a cuckold went out, and a cuckold he came home!

Bland: O! I went into the kitchen, and there for to see,
And there I saw three swords hang, by one, by two, and by three: O! I called to my loving wife.

Nan: Anon, kind sir!

Bland: quoth she: O! what do these three swords do here, without the leave of me?

Nan: Why you old fool! blind fool! Can't you very well see.

These are three roasting spits, my mother sent to me?

Bland: Ods bods! well done! roasting spits with scabbards on!

The like was never known!

All: Old Wichet a cuckold went out, and a cuckold he came home!

Bland: O! I went into the parlour, and there for to see,

And there I saw three cloaks hang, by one, by two, and by three: O! I called to my loving wife.

Nan: Anon, kind sir!

Bland: quoth she: O! what do these three cloaks do here, without the leave of me?

Nan: Why you old fool! blind fool! Can't you very well see these are three mantuas my mother sent to me?

Bland: Ods bods! well done! mantuas with capes on?

The like was never known!
All: Old Wichet a cuckold went out, and a cuckold he came home!

Bland: O! I went into the pantry, and there for to see.
And there I saw three pair of boots, by one, by two and by three: O! I called to my loving wife.

Nan: Anon, kind sir!

Bland: quoth she: O! what do these three pair of boots here, without the leave of me?

Nan: Why you old fool! blind fool! Can't you very well see?
These are three pudding-bags my mother sent to me?

Bland: Ods bods! well done! pudding-bags with spurs on!
The like was never known!

All: Old Wichet a cuckold went out, and a cuckold he came home!

Bland: O! I went into the dairy, and there for to see, And there I saw three hats hang, by one, by two, and by three: O! I called to my loving wife.

Nan: Anon, kind sir!

Bland: quoth she: Pray what do these three hats here, without the leave of me?

Nan: Why you old fool! blind fool! Can't you very well see,
These are three skimming-dishes my mother sent to me?

Bland: Ods bods! well done! skimming-dishes with hatbands on! The like was never known!

All: Old Wichet a cuckold went out, and a cuckold he came home!

Bland: O! I went into the chamber, and there for to see,
And there I saw three men in bed, by one, by two, and by three: O! I called to my loving wife.

Nan: Anon, kind sir!

Bland: quoth she: O! what do these three men here, without the leave of me?

Nan: Why you old fool! blind fool! can't you very well see.
These are three milking-maids my mother sent to me?

Bland: Ods bods! well done! milking-maids with beards on! The like was never known!

All: Old Wichet a cuckold went out, and a cuckold he came home!

Flint: If it be cuckolds fooled by their wives that ye would hear of, my friend and I have another tale
for ye! Signus, assist me in telling "Two Gentlemen of Acquaintance!"

Two gentlemen of acquaintance were appointed to lie with a gentlewoman in one night.

Signus: the one not knowing of the other, at divers times.

Flint: The first at his hour appointed came, and in the bed there he fortuned to lose a ring.

Signus: The second gentleman

Flint: when he was gone,

Signus: came and fortuned to find the same ring, and when he had sped his business, departed.

Flint: And two or three days after, the first gentleman -- seeing his ring on the other's finger -- challenged it of him.

Signus: And he denied it him and had him tell where he had lost it.

Flint: And he said in such-a-gentlewoman's bed.

Signus: Then quoth the other: "And there found I it."

Flint: And the one said he would have it.

Signus: The other said he should not.

Flint: Then they agreed to be judged by the next man that they met.

Signus: And it fortuned them to meet with the husband of the said gentlewoman, and desired him of his
best judgement -- showing him all the whole matter.

Flint: Then quoth the husband: "By my judgement, he that owned the sheets should have the ring."

Signus: Then quoth they:

Flint: you shall have the ring!

Zorina: I know of a man so afraid of being made a cuckold that he did dream of an answer to his problem.

Flint: Ah, Zorina, tell us his answer!

Zorina: ("The Jealous Man"), A man that was right jealous on his wife dreamed on a night as he lay abed with her and slept, that the devil appeared unto him and said: "Wouldst thou not be glad that I should put thee in surety of thy wife?"

"Yes," said he.

"Hold," said the devil, "as long as thou hast this ring upon thy finger no man shall make thee cuckold."

The man was glad thereof, and when he awaked he found his finger in his wife's arse.

Tyb: Zorina! Thou art so bad!

Zorina: I know, I know. Tis the cleanest story I know!

Cedwick: Is there no justice for a man with an adulterous wife?
Listen to my tale. ("The Hanging Tree")

It is told that a certain man one day burst into tears; and calling his son and his neighbors around him, said. "Alas! alas! I have now growing in my garden a most fatal tree, on which my first poor wife hung herself, then my second, and after that my third. have I not therefore cause for wretchedness?"

"Truly," said a friend, "I marvel that you should weep at such unusual good fortune! Give me, I pray you, two or three sprigs of that gentle tree, which I will divide with my neighbors, and thereby enable every man to indulge his spouse."

The first man complied with his friend's request; and ever after found this tree the most productive part of his estate.

I have a tale of a man with a very small vocabulary. "The Man Who Cried Beal" Help me with this tale. Let me see. Bland Flander, our worthy sheriff, you would make a good debtor . . .

Aye, a part I know well!

And you, Captain Flint, would make an excellent barrister. Cedwick, you may play the Justice.

We need a merchant.
Signus: May I play the part of the merchant?
Nan: Aye, you can do that part well.
Signus: What are the lines?
Cedwick: There are no lines.
Nan: Are we met? Let us begin.

There was a man on a time which took as much ware of a merchant as drew to fifty pound, and riotously played and spent the same away within short space. So when the day of payment came he had neither money nor ware to pay, wherefore he was arrested and must come before the Justice. When he saw there was none other remedy but that he should be constrained either to pay the debt or else to go to prison -- wherefore he went to a subtle man of law and showed to him his case and desired him of counsel and help.

Flint: What wilt thou give me if I rid thee of this debt?
Bland: By my faith.
Nan: said the debtor.
Bland: five marks -- and lo, here it is ready. As soon as I am quit, ye shall have it.
Flint: Good enough.
Nan: quoth the man of law.
Flint: but thou must be ruled by my counsel, and thus do: when thou comest before the Justice,
whosoever be said unto thee, look that thou answer to nothing, but cry "bea" still, and let me alone with the rest.

Bland: Content.

Nan: quoth he. So, when they were come before the Justice, he said to the debtor:

Cedwick: Doest thou owe this merchant this sum of money or no?

Bland: Bea!

Cedwick: What! beast,

Nan: quoth the Justice,

Cedwick: answer to thy plaint or else thou wilt be condemned.

Bland: Bea!

Nan: quoth he again. Then his man of law stood forth and said.

Flint: Sir, this man is but an idiot. Who would believe that this merchant, which is both wise and subtle, would trust this idiot, that can speak never a ready word, with forty pennyworth of ware?

Nan: And so with such reasons he persuaded the Justice to cast the merchant in this own action. So when the sentence was given, the man of law drew the debtor aside and said:

Flint: Lo, how sayest thou now? Have not I done well
for thee? Thou are clear quit of the debt that was demanded of thee. Wherefore, give me my money and God be with thee.

Bland: Bea!
Flint: What!
Nan: quoth the man of law.
Flint: Thou needest not to cry "bea" no longer. Thy matter is dispatched. All is at a point -- there resteth nothing but to give me my wages that thou promised.

Bland: Bea!
Nan: quoth he again.
Flint: I say.
Nan: quoth the man of law.
Flint: cry "bea" no longer now, but give me my money.
Bland: Bea!
Nan: quoth he. Thus the man of law, neither for fair nor foul, could get any other thing of his client but "Bea!" Wherefore, all angrily he departed and went his way. By this tale ye may perceive that they which be the inventors and devisers of fraud and decit been oftentimes thereby deceived themselves.

Bland: And he that hath hid a snare to attrap others with, hath himself been taken therein.
Flint: If it be fools ye speak of, I can tell you a
story of a man who made the greatest ass of himself that I have yet to see. Here, lend me your talents in presenting this tale.

(Here the group whispers together in a huddle. They perform "The Fool That Thought Himself Dead")

Cedwick: What! I am no fool!

(Group whispers more, then parts to tell the story.)

Flint: There was a fellow dwelling at Florence which was not very wise nor all afool, but merry and jocund. A sort of young men and women, for to laugh and pastime, appointed together to make him believe that he was sick. So, when they were agreed how they would do, one of them met him in the morning as he came out of his house and bade him:

Zorina: Good morrow.

Cedwick: Good morrow.

Zorina: Art thou not ill at ease?

Cedwick: No.

Flint: quoth the fool,

Cedwick: I ail nothing. I thank God.

Zorina: By my faith, ye have a sickly, pale color.

Flint: quoth the other, and went her way. Anon after another of them met him and asked him,

Nan: Has thou not any ague? Your face and color showeth that ye be very sick.
Flint: Then the fool began a little to doubt whether he were sick or no, for he half believed that they said truth. When he had gone a little farther, the third friend met him and said:

Bland: Jesu! Man, what do you out of your bed? Ye look as if ye would not live an hour to an end.

Flint: Now he doubted greatly and thought verily in his mind that he had had some sharp ague -- wherefore he stood still and would go no further. And as he stood, the fourth man came and said:

Signus: Jesu! Man what dost thou here and art so sick? Get thee home to thy bed, for I perceive thou canst not live an hour to an end.

Flint: Then the fool's heart began to faint.

Cedwick: Prithee, dear friend, wouldst thou help me home? I fear I am too weak to carry myself hence.

Signus: Yes, I will do as much for thee as for mine own brother.

Flint: So home he brought him and laid him in his bed. And then he fained with himself as though he would give up the ghost. Forthwith came the other fellows and said he had done well to lay him in his bed. Anon after, came one which took on herself to be a physician.
Lucinda: Dear fellow, I am a physician. Permit me to examine thee.

Flint: She, touching his pulse, said:

Lucinda: The malady is so vehement that he cannot live an hour.

Flint: So they, standing about the bed, said one to another,

Zorina: Now he goeth his way, for his speech and sight fail him.

Bland: By and by he will yield up the ghost.

Nan: Let us close his eyes and lay his hands across, and carry him forth to be buried.

Flint: And they said, lamenting one to another:

Signus: O! What a loss have we of this good fellow, our friend!

Flint: The fool lay still, as one that were dead -- yea, and thought in his mind that he was dead indeed. So they laid him on a bier and carried him through the city. And when anybody asked them what they carried, they said the corpse of their old friend, Cedwick. And ever as they went, people drew about them. Among the press, there was a taverner's maid, the which when she heard that it was the corpse of Cedwick, she said to them:

Angel: O! What a vile beastly knave, and what a strong
thief is dead!  By the mass, he was well worthy

to have been hanged long ago.

Flint: When the fool heard those words, he put out his
head and said:

Cedwick: I wis, guinea hen, if I were alive now as I am
dead I would prove thee a false liar to thy
face.

Flint: They that carried him began to laugh to heartily
that they set down the bier and went their way.

Cedwick: By this tale ye may see what the persuasion of
many doth. Certainly he is very wise that is
not inclined to folly, if he be steered thereunto
by a multitude.

Flint: Yet sapience is found in a few persons, and they
be usually old sober men.

Zorina: A right merry tale! let us do one more story.
"The Old Farmer's Wife."

Signus: Yes, that is a good one.

Zorina: Signus, you may be the old farmer. And
Angelique can be the wife. Captain Flint, you
would make a good Satan.

Flint: Yes, I like that part.

Zorina: And the rest of you can be imps.

Zola: Let us put this to a tune ... the "Lilli
Burlero!"

Zorina: Aye, tis good. Let us try it once.
There was an old farmer in Sussex did dwell.

All: (Sing tune with La, la. See Appendix B.)
La la la la la, La la la la, La la la la la la la la,
Zorina: Then Satan came to the old man at the plough.
Flint: One of your family I must have now.
All: La la la la la, La la la la, La la la la la la la la.
Flint: It is not your eldest son that I crave,
But it is your old wife, and she I will have.
All: La la la la la, La la la la, La la la la la la la la.
Signus: O, welcome! good Satan, with all my heart.
I hope you and she will never more part.
All: La la la la la, La la la la, La la la la la la la la.
Zorina: Now Satan has got the old wife on his back,
And he lugged her along, like a pedlar's pack.
All: La la la la la, La la la la, La la la la la la la la.
Zorina: He trudged away till they came to his hall-gate,
Says he.
Flint: Here! Take in an old Sussex chap's mate!
All: La la la la la, La la la la, La la la la la la la la.
Zorina: O! Then she did kick the young imps about.
Nan: Says one to the other.
Bland: Let's try turn her out!
All: La la la la, La la la la, La la la la la la la la la
Zorina: She spied thirteen imps all dancing in chains,
Angel: She up with her pattens, and beat out their brains.
All: La la la la, La la la la, La la la la la la la
Zorina: She knocked the old Satan against the wall.
Cedwick: Let's try turn her out, or she'll murder us all.
All: La la la la, La la la la, La la la la la la la
Zorina: Now he's bundled her up on his back amain.
And to her old husband he took her again.
All: La la la la, La la la la, La la la la la la la
Flint: I have been a tormentor the whole of my life.
But I ne'er was tormented so as with your wife!
All: La la la la, La la la la, La la la la la la
CHAPTER IV

EVALUATION OF THE PERFORMED SCRIPT AND WORKSHOP FORMAT

Three aspects of the completed production required evaluation: the performed script, the interpreters, and the use of Readers Theatre as a pedagogical tool in a workshop format. A number of questions are posed by different authors in the field of interpretation for the purpose of evaluating the results of performed literature. A list of appropriate questions were drawn from various sources which can be applied to any Readers Theatre performance. A second list was compiled by the author to determine the success of Readers Theatre in the Scarborough Faire workshop program.

In Chapter II, six questions were quoted from Long, Hudson, and Jeffrey's *Group Performance of Literature* for the purpose of analysing the compiled script. Three questions were also quoted from Coger and White's *Readers Theatre Handbook*. Together, these questions covered all aspects of a compiled script necessary for the evaluation in this thesis. The evaluation form used by Ted Colson, professor of Oral Interpretation at North Texas State University, provided several helpful questions for dealing with the performers' interpretation skills.
Beverly Whitaker Long gives a model to identify the topoi in the selections. This model would allow a critic to evaluate a performance on the basis of the certainties, probabilities, and possibilities of interpretation within the literature. Distortions occur when an interpretation is not based on any information in the selection or about the selection (Long 272). A question was composed by the author based on Long's evaluations, along with other questions, to complete the evaluations covered in this chapter.

Evaluation of the Script

1. Does the script possess unity? Do the various elements harmonize to give a sense of completeness?
2. Does it contain contrast—in tone, length, or style?
3. Are transitional materials congruent with the literature and the production concept?
4. Is the compilation faithful to each of the individual literary texts?
5. Does the script have interaction among the characters or between the characters and the audience?
6. Does the script have a dramatic framework (a beginning, middle, and end), or is the script merely a collection of materials?
7. Does the script have a sense of progression, of "going someplace?" Is its focus clear?
Evaluation of the Interpreters

1. Are individual voices clear, precise, distinct, and articulate, with proper volume, projection, pitch, rate, quality, and variety?
2. Do individuals show adequate attention to phrasing, pausing, and rhythm?
3. Do individuals give the appropriate degree of suggestion to characterization?
4. Do individuals show proper image responsiveness, emotional intensity, spontaneity, and naturalness?
5. Are the visual elements, such as kinesic responses, postural behavior, and proxemic relationships, suited to the material and production?
6. Does the director's interpretation of the literature remain within the realm of certainty, possibility, and probability, or does distortion occur?
7. Does the blocking smoothly and effectively place performers in natural, unobstructed positions?

Readers Theatre as a Teaching Tool

1. Does oral interpretation of period literature increase the participants' knowledge of the Sixteenth Century?
2. Does the authentic language of the script expand the participants' vocabulary for the purpose of developing their street characters?
3. Does offering a Readers Theatre performance enhance the opportunities for performers to utilize their talents during the course of the fair?

4. Is a Readers Theatre script composed of period literature an effective form of entertainment in a modern Renaissance Fair?

The Script

The Talebearers script is unified in several ways. Primarily, the humor of the selections unifies the script, which induces light-hearted mood throughout. Several stories exhibit the same theme, and all the stories use the same style of delivery. The stories are arranged in such a way as to provide balance and an even distribution throughout.

The compilation contains a strong degree of contrast. Stories vary in length and in number of readers needed. Some stories are told by one performer, who is responsible for characterizing more than one person within the selection. Other tales are narrated and have a performer for each character. The songs, one of which is sung, add variety in performance and structural style. A lack of contrast in tone is a weakness. Because the performance time is short, the attitudinal sameness of the stories does not grow dull. However, one or two adventure
stories, such as Robin Hood tales, would increase the variety.

The format demands a loose transitional structure. The production concept centers around an impromptu gathering of storytellers sharing familiar stories with each other. Therefore, the improvisational approach seemed to be the most effective way to introduce each story.

The compilation is faithful to each individual literary text. Even speaking the verses in the songs, instead of singing them, is appropriate to the way in which minstrels performed historically. Dividing the stories into spoken lines for the narrator and the individual characters is the only way in which the stories are changed. Except for this modern technique, they remain intact.

The script calls for a great degree of interaction among the characters and between the characters and the audience. The narration is always directed to the audience and occasionally asks the readers depicting the characters to exchange looks with the audience so as to include them in the joke. Characters engage in dialogue in most of the stories. A combination of onstage focus and offstage focus was employed in order to highlight the presentational mode of delivery.

The last two questions evaluating the performed text
are not easily answered. Does the script have a dramatic frame (a beginning, middle, and end) or is the script merely a collection of materials? First, the script is a collection of materials with a theme to connect them in a meaningful manner. The script is dramatic, but it does not follow a traditional dramatic framework with a distinct beginning, middle, and end, nor does the script present a single set of delineated characters involved in a single plot; each individual story has its own dramatic structure. The stories could be told in a different order, however, since they are supposedly presented whenever they are remembered. The beginning is obvious, and the concluding song involving all the readers provides a definite sense of closure or a note of finality. One possible drawback is that the ending is not obvious unless the performer narrating the last tale remembers to tell the audience that it is the last story. It is important, therefore, that this line be included as an integral part of the impromptu-like dialogue. Theoretically, the stories could go on and on until no one can think of another one to tell. This happens in real life, but in a performance context, the audience needs to sense where the script is going.

This observation leads into the last question. Does the script have a sense of progression, of "going someplace?" Is its focus clear? Although there is a sense of progression
in the script, it might be more suitable to choose and arrange stories that build to a high point--such might occur when each person tries to outdo another with a better joke or a more elaborate story. The stories seem to build to "Of the Fool That Thought Himself Dead." It was at this point that the audience always clapped and showed their greatest appreciation. Whether or not the last story serves as a denouement or is a surprise to an audience that expects to leave, is difficult to determine. Originally, "The Man Who Cried Beal" was positioned after "Of the Fool That Thought Himself Dead." When told in that order, the audience seemed ready to leave after "Of the Fool That Thought Himself Dead." Placing "The Man Who Cried Beal" before "Of the Fool That Thought Himself Dead" better balances the script. In doing so, the audience appeared more comfortable with the arrangement. When re-ordered, "The Old Farmers Wife" did provide an appropriate denouement and ending.

The script has a sense of completion and wholeness because it begins and ends with a song. The purpose of the loose arrangement of stories was to allow audience members to come and go with a minimum of distraction. The storytelling focus is made clear by the explanatory transitional material. Although the overall script does not have a definite beginning, middle, and end, each story does. With this in mind, the author must say that the
script has dramatic qualities, building to a climactic story. The script may seem to be flawed if one views it from the perspective of an audience that expects to see a play. However, if one is willing to participate in sharing a series of stories, then one would be delighted to see the continuity that exists in the style and theme of the stories presented.

The Interpreters

Regardless of how deeply an interpreter has delved into the meaning of the literature, technique is required to convey that understanding to the audience. Elements such as pause, rate, pitch, and variety can appear more natural when the performer is cognizant of the tone and theme of a piece of literature. Sometimes these things must be taught. However, other aspects of delivery do not necessarily arise out of the literary analysis. Physical attributes such as clear articulation, projection, and pitch come from conscious effort until experience takes control. All the interpreters in The Talebearers had effective delivery. Very few weaknesses prevailed.

Probably the greatest problem occurred in overcoming the level of noise in the performance area. At first, two or three of the performers exhibited a consistent lack of volume. However, weekends of performance gave ample
opportunity for improvement. All of them did improve their projection before many weekends passed. Overall, articulation was clear and precise, although there were places where two readers in particular tended to drop their volume and enunciate less clearly. Usually this happened at the end of a sentence. Both performers were made aware of this weakness, and they attempted to correct it. However, improvement was not consistent in every performance.

Attention to phrasing, pause and rhythm was appropriate. One reader, otherwise outstanding, always had difficulty emphasizing the last line of "The Hanging Tree." He rushed through the sentence without giving it a sense of finality. The audience seemed unsure that the story was over. The reader was coached on this matter, and some improvement was later evident. Since the audience still seemed to respond at the end, the problem may be with the structure of the story itself.

The interpreters always gave the appropriate degree of suggestion to their characterizations. They maintained a separation between who they were (or actually who their street characters were) and the character they were presenting in the story. The right amount of change occurred vocally and physically to designate the characters they portrayed.
During the first two weekends, the individuals did not always exhibit the necessary energy level for spontaneity, naturalness and emotional intensity. However, once complete familiarity with the material and the mode of delivery was established, there was no more obvious lack in these areas. Visual elements also were appropriate. The director allowed the performers to suggest performance ideas of their own. If they had difficulty in rehearsal and in the early performances and physicalization, suggestions were given. Occasionally during the course of the fair, the performers added new movements which kept the performance fresh and interesting. Growth occurred throughout the seven week run of the fair.

In this production, all of the director's interpretations were based on certainties and probabilities. None of the stories and songs had a hidden second meaning which could be misconstrued. This made the interpretation uncomplicated so far as the content is concerned.

Rehearsals were held in a high school classroom. Exact blocking was difficult to determine until rehearsal was held onstage. Unfortunately, the opening day of Scarborough Faire was the first opportunity to perform the complete script onstage. Some unsatisfactory aspects were apparent in the blocking which had to be corrected later.
Early in performance, problems appeared in the blocking "Of the Fool That Thought Himself Dead." The stage was much smaller than the rehearsal area, so that the planned movement and the large number of performers onstage gave an overcrowded effect. After seeing the performance "on location" the director corrected the problems, and the blocking eventually appeared to be natural and smooth.

Readers Theatre as a Teaching Tool

Evaluating the effectiveness of this script in the workshop program left the author with mixed views. To be sure, Readers Theatre works as a good teaching tool, but the workshop program itself is a format which does not lend itself to sufficient rehearsal of Readers Theatre. In order to discuss this further, the four questions suggested at the first of this chapter are addressed.

The art of oral interpretation is known to improve any student's understanding of literature. In the specific context of interpreting literature from the sixteenth century, participants gain a perspective of that time period that other aspects of the workshop cannot offer. The Scarborough Faire workshop provides classes in history and customs, costuming, and dialect. A study of literature through performance gave participants a structured form in which to apply what they had learned in
other areas of the workshop. The literature is composed by the people who lived in the sixteenth century. This gave the performer insight into how people really thought, felt, and spoke about certain subjects. A study of customs and history gave a general understanding, but literature gave specific knowledge.

During the workshop, character development is the most difficult goal to attain. Shortly after the workshop begins, the participants are asked to speak in dialect, using period language appropriate to their characters' station in life, and to behave as their characters' would behave. The stories in The Talebearers script are oral in origin, and suitable to the spoken mode. The terminology and vocabulary in these stories added to and reinforced what the participants were taught in dialect class. The structured form of performed literature again gave the performers an opportunity to grow accustomed to speech patterns of the day. This knowledge crossed over into the spoken dialect of their street characters.

The workshop program offers many opportunities for involvement. Events are planned which are scheduled every day the fair is open: The living chess match, King Henry VIII's banquet, singing and dancing at the pubs, the parade, and the opening and closing ceremonies at the front gate. Dancers learn folk dances or court dances, and singers are part of the madrigal performances.
However, those people who want to hone their performing skills in acting have few opportunities outside of improvisation with the patrons that come through the gate. This Readers Theatre performance gave interested persons an opportunity to expand their talents and have a specific audience for their performance. Most activities provided fewer opportunities for the average participants to contribute their talents to the oral aspect of performance. In other events, the dialogue was given to key people employed for that purpose. The chess match, for example, gave men an opportunity to learn combat techniques, but did not give training in how to deliver a line. This readers Theatre script gave each performer in the cast an opportunity to perform.

Many of the professional entertainers at Scarborough Faire rely upon spectacle for entertainment value. Juggling, acrobatics, and magic tricks can be found in every act at the fair. Musicians and belly dancers also abound. Those acts, which combine humorous dialogue with juggling or magic, constantly refer to twentieth century concepts and events, an anachronism which should be avoided. This Readers Theatre script showed that performers need not rely upon twentieth century ideas to entertain an audience.

A compilation of period literature worked well as an entertainment form at Scarborough Faire. Due to the
difficulty of the language, in spite of a somewhat superficial theme, the performance appealed only to those people willing to give it close attention. Those patrons who were easily distracted, who needed constant movement, or who simply could not understand the language, did not stay. Perhaps this should have been expected, since Readers Theatre tends to appeal to an educated audience. It is ironic that the fabliaux in the sixteenth century was simple enough in theme to appeal to the unlettered peasant, yet in the twentieth century, the language alone requires a specific, educated audience. The director believes the archaic language of the script helps provide the audience with the sense of being in a different time period. This is the goal of the management of Scarborough Faire.

Finally, a few comments regarding the workshop program itself seem appropriate. The workshop was held from 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. every Saturday for seven weeks prior to the opening of Scarborough Faire. The last two weekends, dress rehearsals were held on the fairgrounds on Saturday and Sunday. Unfortunately, so much time was given to classes in history, costumes, dialect, and improvisation, that the participants had little remaining time for specific rehearsals. Readers Theatre demands much rehearsal time. Often, because performers in the cast were also rehearsing other specific events, rehearsal
time was no longer than an hour to an hour and a half.

The last weekend major events, which involved all the performers, were rehearsed for the first time. The opening and closing of the fair and a parade that occurred every day, costume approval, and numerous last minute announcements left no time for rehearsal of the Readers Theatre script. This meant that the first complete run-through of the script happened opening weekend in performance. Future workshops organized by Scarborough Faire need to consider requiring additional rehearsal time during the week for Readers Theatre and other dramatic activities.

Although difficulties presented themselves in rehearsal scheduling, the performance of period literature was suitable for a 20th century audience. Readers Theatre expanded the offerings of the workshop program to the benefit of the participants. The performances added to the variety of events which patrons could enjoy at Scarborough Faire. The director benefited from a unique opportunity to see amateurs excel in a medium new to them. The large number of performances was advantageous to the performer and the director, since much more artistic growth occurred than normally can be achieved in an academic setting. The artistic directors for Scarborough Faire were also exceedingly pleased and hope to continue this kind of performance in future years to come.
APPENDIX A

The Tree in the Wood

A

Sung by John Vincent (72) at Priddy, Somerset, 21 December 1905

1. In the Merry-shire woods there grew a tree And a
   very fine tree was he, And the
   tree grew in the Merry-shire wood, In the
   Merry-shire wood, In the Merry-shire wood, And the
   tree grew in the Merry-shire wood.

(a)
   In 2nd and subsequent stanzas.

   be, And the limb grew on the tree, And the
   tree grew in the
   or:
   be, And the limb grew on the tree, And the

*The passage between asterisks is repeated in subsequent stanzas as often as is required.
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