AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE THEATRE AT TSA LA GI

THESIS

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By

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This study is an examination of the theatre project at Tsa La Gi, a Cherokee cultural center in Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

The thesis is organized into three areas: the drama, the theatre design, and the production techniques. Chapter I reports the process of the formulation of Trail of Tears and analyzes its success. Chapter II describes and interprets the process of the design of the physical theatre. Chapter III reports the techniques used in play production at Tsa La Gi and interprets their effects. Chapter IV presents conclusions about the success of the theatre project.

This report accepts evidence that the theatre project at Tsa La Gi is a highly successful one, both economically and artistically.
PREFACE

_Tsa La Gi_ is a Cherokee cultural center located in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. When the center is completed, it will contain a Cherokee village, an archives, a museum, and an outdoor amphitheatre, all delineating and preserving the history of the Cherokees. To date, only the village and the theatre have been completed.

The theatre at _Tsa La Gi_ opened on June 27, 1969, with the production of Kermit Hunter's _Trail of Tears_. The Cherokee National Historical Society had commissioned this work especially for _Tsa La Gi_, and the theatre had been designed with Hunter's work in mind.

This thesis examines _Trail of Tears_ in relation to Cherokee history and as an example of outdoor historical drama; the design of the theatre at _Tsa La Gi_; and the techniques used to produce the play during three seasons.

The primary sources of information are interviews and correspondence with Colonel Martin A. Hagerstrand, Executive Vice President of the Board of Directors for the Cherokee National Historical Society; Kermit Hunter; W. W. Keeler, Principal Chief of the Cherokees and Chairman of the Board of Directors; Charles Chief Boyd, who designed the theatre; David Weiss, who designed and directed the first production of _Trail of Tears_; and many other participants in the
project. Among these participants for three years was the author of this thesis. Secondary sources will include George McCalmon and Christian Moe, *Creating Historical Drama* (Carbondale, 1965); Richard Southern, *The Open Stage* (London, 1953); Sheldon Cheney, *The Open-Air Theatre* (New York, 1918); William Free and Charles Lower, *History Into Drama: A Source Book on Symphonic Drama* (New York, 1963); Paul Green, *Drama and the Weather* (New York, 1958); Robert Gard, *Grassroots Theatre* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1955); Samuel Seldon, *Producing America's Outdoor Drama* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1954); and articles published by the Cherokee National Historical Society and in the newspapers of Oklahoma.

Educational and economic benefits aside, and these have been substantial, Tsa La Gi seeks to recreate the noble past of the Cherokee Nation and thereby to awaken new interest and pride in a heritage of a civilization that outdates the coming of Europeans to the New World. This thesis is meant to assist in that purpose.
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CHAPTER I

WRITING TRAIL OF TEARS

As every schoolboy learns, the theatre began outdoors. Its most successful periods have thrived in the open air. Only after indoor theatres became predominant was the idea of performing dramas outside thought of as unusual. In the United States, most of these "new" theatrical ventures were productions of pageants and dramas presenting the history of an idea, a region, or its people. Such a play is Kermit Hunter's Trail of Tears, the full text of which is included in the Appendix.

The Development of the Play

Trail of Tears was commissioned by the Cherokee National Historical Society in 1961, and written by Dr. Hunter, who is Dean of the Meadows School of the Arts at Southern Methodist University, between 1961 and 1969. Prior to this, he had received international recognition for outdoor historical plays such as Horn in the West and Honey in the Rock, and had presented a portion of the story of the Cherokee people in his first outdoor drama, Unto These Hills. This drama, written as a thesis project when he was a graduate student at the University of North Carolina, is a play about the history of the Cherokees until the time of their removal
into Oklahoma, and is performed in Cherokee, North Carolina. Since Trail of Tears continues the history of the Cherokees from their removal into Oklahoma until the time of Oklahoma statehood, the two plays are often referred to as sister dramas.

In an interview on March 16, 1972, Dr. Hunter stated that in the conception stage of Trail of Tears, he set out to write a play which would perpetuate the history and conditions of the Cherokees in Oklahoma and also increase tourism in Cherokee County, Oklahoma (4). Dr. Hunter described the theme he attempted to develop as one which "expresses the spirit, meaning, and heart of the Cherokee people insofar as possible," while at the same time entertaining the audience.

To accomplish these two goals, Dr. Hunter utilized certain specific techniques in the writing of the play. The spirit of the Cherokees was captured by broadness of scope; that is, the play starts very broad and keeps narrowing until it focuses solely on Sarah, the fictional niece of Stand Watie, a leader of the Cherokees. Rather than being developed as an individual person, however, Sarah symbolizes the Cherokees as a people. At the climax of the play, symbolizing the Cherokee people, she achieves the victory through Oklahoma statehood. A moment of relief then is effected by a scene showing the 1907 celebration of this
event. Finally, a Phoenix dance symbolizes the rebirth and rededication of the Cherokee Nation.

An additional technique was used by Dr. Hunter to make the history dramatically effective. He "accordionized" the history by focusing the action of the play on the large decisions or occurrences, and covering the historical time in between such moments with narration. He thereby eliminates the staging of long periods unnecessary for the story.

Often, the passage of time is symbolized by a person crossing the stage while a narrator tells what happens during those years or months. Stand Watie's cross from Act II, scene ix to scene x, for example, symbolizes a passing of about two months. Another example is in Act I, scenes iii and iv, when the passage of two years is shown by the entrance of Sequoyah, while Ross remains stationary, and the narration describes the passage of time. The most poetic example of this particular technique, however, is in Act II, scene xiii and xiv. A cross by Sarah from upstage left to downstage center accompanied by her voice as narration, and the adjustment of her costume, symbolizes the passage of forty-two years.

As noted earlier, Sarah is a fictional character. According to Dr. Hunter, Sarah was invented so that history would not have to be sacrificed for dramatic effect. All the historical figures in the play are portrayed accurately, and Sarah is the one character that can be maneuvered in any
way necessary to achieve a poetic or dramatic effect. Hunter proposes that the best kind of play in an historical setting is one in which the central figures are fictional because the idea of the creation of a play deals with fiction.

Hunter describes *Trail of Tears* as "an epic" because almost every encounter between or among characters is a clash either between two opposing factions of the Cherokees or between the Cherokees and the white man. Every scene revolves around one of these two conflicts.

In reply to a question about the accomplishment of his goals, Hunter stated that a play never looks as good to the writer in performance as it does when he is writing it, because when he is writing, he sees the play ideally. Hunter believes, however, that *Trail of Tears* satisfactorily captures the spirit of the Cherokees and also entertains the audience. Nevertheless, the play is still far from the peak of excellence which was his aim.

Concerning the location of the theatre itself, Hunter believes that *Trail of Tears* would be hurt by moving it to another outdoor theatre because being performed on the spot where the history actually happened enhances the audience's experience.

The Folklore Underlying the Play

The proper experiencing of *Trail of Tears* depends to a great extent upon knowledge of the folklore shown in the
play. Two figures in particular who seem to express Cherokee folklore are the Death Dancer and the Phoenix Bird. As his name reveals, the Death Dancer symbolizes the Cherokee concept of death. Throughout the play, the Death Dancer tells much about how the Cherokees feel about death. The audience is shown that, to the Cherokee, death is a dark but colorful figure resting in the shadows, sometimes startling, sometimes quiet, but always graceful, soft, and protective of his victims. Awesome but never cruel, his coming may be sorrowful, but at the same time it is often anticipated and welcomed by his victims. He is never hated, but seen more as a thing of beauty. Though very strong, he is gentle and godlike. None of the characters in the play except his victims see him, and they do so only at the very moment of dying.

Almost every human group has some figure or character which is a symbol of death. Shown in Trail of Tears dressed in a black and red feather cape, a brown and black feather headdress, and carrying dried gourds which make the sound of the "death rattle," the Death Dancer is a dramatic representation of the figure through which the Cherokee symbolizes death.

Interviews with many Cherokee Indians (1) indicated that modern day Cherokees do not visualize death as a dancer. They do see him dressed in black and red, however, and his
characterization in the play accurately describes their attitudes toward death.

The Death Dancer, though accurate, is used by the author to point up the Cherokee feelings about death. As a result, the causes and effects in the play, and the characters, are more believable.

The Death Dancer is probably the most necessary of the elements of Cherokee folklore in *Trail of Tears*. Although the play could exist without the Death Dancer, it would not be nearly so concise. He is a unifying force in the play which gives meaning to the reactions of the characters. Because the audience is shown so poetically what the feelings of the Cherokees are concerning death, the need of the audience for further explanation regarding character reactions is diminished greatly. Without him, the play would have to be longer and much of its poetry and realism would be lost.

A second folk character of the Cherokees is the Phoenix Bird. Seen only in the last scene of the play, he is described by the narrator as symbolizing the rebirth of the Cherokee people. The ancient Cherokee tradition was that there was

... a fabulous bird, brightly colored, sacred to the sun. The bird made a nest of twigs, then set the nest on fire and died by burning itself alive. From its body came forth another bird, replacing the body of its father. Gathering strength, it rose and flew, taking the ashes and the nest to a secret place and hiding them forever (5, Act II, scene xiv).

In his symbolic dance, the Phoenix Bird represents the
Cherokees as a nation unto themselves. The young Phoenix, who is formed from his father's ashes, is the Cherokee in union with the white man through Oklahoma statehood.

The Phoenix Dance is included for dramatic reasons. Though it is possible that at one time the Phoenix Bird was an actual figure in Cherokee folklore, the dance of the Phoenix Bird is a fabrication of the author to point up the idea of rebirth of the Cherokee people as brother to the white man.

In view of all this, it may seem superficial to discuss the Phoenix Dance separate from the Phoenix Bird. Yet what he symbolizes can exist without the dance, which even though unnecessary for explaining the optimism of the Cherokees, helps resolve the conflicts in the play. The dance is a symbol of the reward of the Cherokee for their optimism.

With regard to the Phoenix Bird the word "phoenix" means "rebirth" in Cherokee. The reaction gathered from interviews about the legend of the Phoenix was contradictory. Slightly more than half of the Cherokees interviewed stated that there was no such legend in Cherokee folklore and the remainder said that the Phoenix Bird was a true figure in Cherokee legend. Hunter believes both the Phoenix Bird and its dance are a dramatic fabrication. Any resemblance to Cherokee legend is coincidental (4).

Yet, the Phoenix Bird is a necessary element of folklore in *Trail of Tears*, because he gives a reason for the optimism
of the Cherokee people. As a result of the Phoenix Bird, the characters in the play are optimistic of a better day to come, no matter how hard the present circumstances. Since he is mentioned very early in the play and is presented in the last scene of the play, the Phoenix Bird is a unifying force in *Trail of Tears*.

Besides these two characters, there are two dances which seem to represent the folklore of the Cherokee people. The first is the Corn Dance, introduced by Sequoyah, who says, "Now is the time of the green corn. Let our young people dance for joy as the rich earth nourishes the young corn (5, Act I, scene ii)." The Corn Dance, as seen in *Trail of Tears* is a ritualistic dance of the Cherokee celebrating harvest time. It was an annual event.

The Corn Dance was an actual celebration among the Cherokees. Although the dance is choreographed and dramatized so as to add to the pageantry of the drama, many North American Indian tribes, particularly those which depended on farming for their sustenance, had similar celebrations at harvest time. Despite the dance's folklore qualities, therefore, it cannot be called a purely Cherokee tradition. The Corn Dance, although used dramatically as a transitional device, is an historical event which shows actual causes and effects from Cherokee history; for example, dependence on the earth, and celebration and thanks paid to the earth.
The second ritualistic dance is the Victory Dance, which, as its name implies, is a celebration of one victory and a prayer for continued victories. Unlike the Corn Dance, the Victory Dance was not a regular occurrence. It took place only after great victories. In Trail of Tears, the Victory Dance occurs in 1846 because John Ross, principal chief of the Cherokees and leader of the Eastern Faction, and Stand Watie, leader of the Western Faction, were rivals and had promised President Polk to work together in harmony for the peace and progress of the Cherokee people. This was a great victory for the Cherokees because it ended more than a decade of civil unrest within the Cherokee Nation. The narration asserts this is the first time the dance had been performed since 1814, when the Cherokees helped defeat the British (5, Act I, scene vi).

In the Victory Dance, which was used not only by the Cherokee but also by the Seminole, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Creek, the price of victory is symbolized through the Death Dancer, who tries to break the dance up, and almost succeeds several times, but finally fails. Through this act, the audience is shown that the Cherokees see themselves as being a proud and brave people. The dance also shows a respect for tradition within the five tribes through the ancestral costumes of the tribal leaders.

The Victory Dance is another historical celebration that was not a purely Cherokee tradition. The other civilized
tribes participated in the tradition. Moreover, as in the other dances in the play, choreography and dramatization sacrifice accuracy for dramatic effect. The dramatic effect achieved by the Victory Dance is one of pageantry. The audience is meant to be awed by the elaborate costumes, the broad scope of the scene itself, the precision of the choreography, the beauty of the lighting, and the dramatic music. This dance provides a release from the mounting suspense, as well as an explanation for past action, rather than giving a cause for action that will occur in the future. More specifically, the dramatic purpose of the Victory Dance is to point up the pride and the optimism of the Cherokees. Since these two qualities are prominent in the Cherokee heritage, the display of them also is prominent and vast; hence the elaborateness previously described. Aside from such effects, the dance informs the audience about the history of the Cherokees.

The elements from Cherokee folklore used primarily for historical accuracy are the Corn Dance and the Victory Dance. Although both are dramatized and presented in a way that is probably widely divergent from the way they were actually performed at the time, the basis for both dances is accurate. If neither is necessary to the progression of the plot, both are acceptable because they add color to the play and are successful transitional devices. Both dances also increase the audience's knowledge of Cherokee history.
Other dances which could be called "traditional" or "ritualistic" are the Ribbon Dance, the Civil War scene, and the 1907 Celebration Dance, but these do not depict folklore of the Cherokees. The Civil War and the Celebration Dance are simply dramatic interpretations of specific events; the Ribbon Dance, if a ritual at all, is one taken from the white man.

One phrase which could be interpreted as a Cherokee proverb also appears in the play. That phrase, quoted a number of times by Sequoyah, the great Cherokee leader and philosopher; Jesse, a Cherokee statesman; and his son, Dennis, is, "Stand attired in the morning red: Your pathway lies at the treetops" (5, Act I, scene i). This sentence perhaps sums up better than any other the bitterness of the Cherokees against the white man for always driving them westward.

The phrase is actually Cherokee in origin. In present usage, it refers only to westward horizons as a term denoting progress. In the play, however, it denotes the pushing of the Cherokees continually westward by the white man. The phrase also explains two facts of the play: the Cherokees' disinclination to trust the white man and the lack of serious resistance against the removal from the traditional homeland. That is, in spite of the fact that the Cherokees have been pushed westward by the whites, it is somehow the will of the
Great Spirit, for the West is where the Cherokee will achieve greatness.

Thus, two characters, three dances, and one phrase in *Trail of Tears* seem to represent parts of the folklore of the Cherokee people.

The Dramatic Event

According to Francis Hodge (3, pp. 16-61), every play is a dramatic event consisting of given circumstances, dialogue, dramatic action, characters, and idea of the play. The given circumstances of any play include the environmental facts, previous actions, and the polar attitudes of the principal characters in the play which have some bearing on why the story happens as it does. *Trail of Tears* takes place in and near Tahlequah, Oklahoma, between 1839 and 1907. The economy of the people is agricultural, and in the beginning, directly off the trail, the people rely almost totally on the whites for sustenance. Gradually they build their own economy, however, and become almost totally self-reliant. Yet throughout the play, the average Cherokee is poor.

The political environment in the play involves a power struggle. The players represent the vanquished in a land cession. For this reason, the Cherokees must always answer to the white government, even though they have a government of their own. From the outside, they face a government which has in the past shown little respect for their race or
culture; from the inside, their own government is split into two rival factions.

Despite the political unrest, the society of the Cherokees in *Trail of Tears* is close-knit. The play does not show the Cherokee society as classless, but there seem to be only two classes, and these are not dependent on monetary considerations. The two classes seem to be those of the educated leader and the uneducated common man, each of whom is dependent on the other.

Moreover, the Cherokees are shown to be very religious. The times at which the two factions are most united are those involving prayer to the Great Spirit. The Cherokees are Christians with high moral values, except when considering the governmental split.

The previous action of the play is that the Cherokees have been pushed out of their traditional homeland in the southern Allegheny Mountains. They were continually harassed by the white man until finally they began to believe that removal was inevitable. In 1835, approximately one-fourth of the Cherokee Nation signed a treaty selling their Georgia lands to white settlers and moved west. These were known as the Western Band or the Ridge Party. Three years later, in 1838, the remaining three-fourths were driven out of their homeland to join the Western Band in Oklahoma. This is the note of division and unrest on which the play begins.
The two principal characters around whom the play revolves are John Ross and Stand Watie. To describe their attitude is to tell the story of the play. Stand Watie, in the beginning of the play, is a proud man who will not admit that he is wrong. He says he is working for the benefit of the Cherokee people. In the end, he admits he has been wrong. Throughout, John Ross is a gentleman willing to forget the reason for division and to cooperate in rebuilding the Cherokee Nation. At his death, toward the end of the play, the two factions do come together.

The second element in the play is the dialogue. The Cherokees are shown to be well educated, particularly the leaders, who were indeed well educated. The only dialect used in the play is that of the Rations Boss, who is a representative of the United States government. He is shown, through his dialect, to be a member of the uneducated Southern segment of American society. His prejudice against Indians is evident, but is shown very pointedly to be unjustified by the incorrectness of his grammar in direct opposition to the perfect usage by the Cherokees. For example,

**RATIONS BOSS**

What's the matter? You deaf? I said what's yer name? Speak up. What's yer name? All right, you stubborn mule! No name, no rations!

**DENNIS**

Give him his rations. He doesn't understand you.
RATIONS BOSS

Why in tarnation can't they learn to speak American?

DENNIS

Why can't you learn to speak Cherokee (5, Act I, scene ii)?

As in this instance, the dialogue of the principal characters sometimes seems a little too formal.

The third element is the dramatic action of the play itself. The prologue introduces John Ross, Principal Chief of the Cherokees and leader of the Eastern Band; the Death Dancer; Stand Watie, a leader of the Western Band of Cherokees, who sold their Georgia lands to white settlers and moved west three years earlier; Sarah, who is the narrator in the prologue, and who is the niece of Stand Watie; Dennis, Sarah's betrothed; and his father, Jesse, both of whom are members of the Ross faction.

Also in the prologue, the audience is introduced to the action of the play; that is, that the Eastern Band, led by Chief John Ross, has been pushed west to the Oklahoma Territory by the United States government because of a treaty signed in 1835 by the Western Band. This journey is called by the Cherokees "the trail where they cried." The action of the play revolves around the resentment caused by this move, and the determination of the Cherokees to bounce back.

The play opens with the news of the death of Quatie, the wife of John Ross, along the trail of tears. Then, in scene ii, at the end of the trail, each family of new
arrivals is issued rations according to an agreement made between the United States government and the Cherokees. The Rations Boss tries to cheat the Cherokees but is stopped by Chief Ross.

Resentment between the Eastern and Western Bands of Cherokees is disclosed in the discussion between Ross and Jesse. The Western Band had broken sacred tribal laws by selling lands to the whites.

This leads to a confrontation between the two bands. At this confrontation, Sarah and Dennis meet after several years of separation. Their embrace causes a clash between the two bands. A question of tribal leadership arises and another clash occurs. Here the audience is shown Ross's call for Cherokee unity in comparison with Watie's insistence on division. After Sequoyah restores order, Jesse proposes a solution; that they "select three men from each side, let these six choose three more, and these nine draft a code of laws under which the tribes can unite" (5, Act I, scene ii). There seems to be no way to placate both sides, however, and the confrontation ends on an angry note. This is indicative of the thematic thread of Cherokee history portrayed in Trail of Tears; the Cherokees' inability to get along with one another.

Scene iii portrays the hope of the Cherokees with the union of the two opposing sides. Sarah and Dennis are seen in a playful moment at the building site of the Ross cottage.
Jesse enters this lighthearted scene with news of a tragedy. Several leaders of the Western Band have been murdered. Ross is certain that he will be accused of these crimes, so he disperses everyone from his land.

In scene iv, Sequoyah comes to John Ross and tells him that he plans to leave. Ross asks him to stay, but he refuses. The Death Dancer follows Sequoyah offstage.

Scene v shifts to Washington, D. C. After continued efforts of John Ross, he and Stand Watie have been granted an audience with President James K. Polk. In the meeting, Ross and Watie agree to a new treaty proposed by Polk. A hesitant handshake between Ross and Watie reunites the Cherokees into one nation. The irony of the situation is that, in retrospect, it is obvious that the reunion cannot be a lasting one because of the differences of the two leaders, and also because the reunion is proposed by the white government, the force responsible for the Cherokee split in the first place.

The reunion is celebrated by the Victory Dance in scene vi. This scene indicates the never-dying faith of the Cherokees. Act I ends on this note of faith.

Act II begins at the Cherokee Female Seminary in the spring of 1861 as preparations are being made for a dance, which points up the high degree of "culture," in the white man's view, which has been reached by the Cherokees.
Scene viii follows with the specter of the Civil War which hangs over the United States. Once again the theme of Cherokee factionalism is portrayed when Watie and Ross take conflicting positions on the question of the alignment of the Cherokee Nation with either North or South. Watie wants the Cherokees to align with the South, while Ross wishes to remain neutral.

Boudinot, in scene ix, delivers a message from the governor of Arkansas, asking that Stand Watie lead the Cherokees on the side of the Confederacy. He urges Watie to force Ross to call a tribal council to let the people vote on secession.

In scene x, the action shifts to the Ross cottage where Superintendent Pike, Dennis, and Stand Watie debate the alliance of the Cherokee. Watie prevails, and scene xi depicts the Civil War in a stylized dance.

Scene xii shows the murder of Dennis. He is yet another victim of the hatred and division among the Cherokees.

As a result of the Cherokees' entering of the Civil War on the side of the Confederacy under Watie's leadership, in scene xiii, Boudinot and Watie are confronted with bad news from every quarter:

... out of five thousand men, one thousand have no weapons whatever except knives. Two thousand have no change of clothing, hundreds are barefoot ... they look more like tramps than soldiers ... there is a letter from Major Carter, tendering his resignation (5, Act II, scene xiii).

Finally Watie admits to Sarah that he has been wrong.
Gradually the Cherokees rebuild. Oklahoma becomes a state, and scene xiv is a celebration in Tahlequah in 1907. In this scene, Sarah is taken away by the Death Dancer, and the play ends with the symbolic dance of the Phoenix Bird, the promise that the Cherokees will forget their differences and continue to rebuild.

Throughout these events, three main characters stand out. The others seem to exist only to highlight Sarah, John Ross, and Stand Watie. John Ross, principal chief of the Cherokees was seven-eighths white, of Scottish descent. He was well-educated and a gentleman. His desire was to build a strong, once again independent Cherokee Nation. In the play, his will is very strong and seemingly he never waivers. His moral stance is almost beyond reproach. He is a strong leader, every inch a hero. While he is intelligent and powerful, he never uses his abilities as a means of achieving anything but Cherokee unity. Throughout the play he is very intense, but always in control of the situation.

Stand Watie, in contrast, was a proud man. Described in the prologue as "a man who never forgets," he refuses to admit his failures. He says he is working for the good of his people, but in the final analysis, he is really working to prove that he was not wrong in selling his Georgia land. He is proud, but ephemeral, always ready for a fight. Though his will is very strong, however, his moral stance is not above reproach. In most questions, he will make the right
moral decision. Yet if that decision seems to prove that he has been wrong, he will not choose it. He is also very intense throughout the play, and in command of every situation. The meetings between Stand Watie and Ross are the moments of greatest conflict in the play.

Sarah, being a fictional character in an historical play, goes through many changes demanded by the action of the play. In the beginning, her desire, like Ross's, is for unity within the Cherokee Nation; but the reason behind her desire is a purely selfish one. She belongs, by familial ties, to the Western Band, but the man she loves belongs to the Eastern Band. Her will from the beginning of the play is strong, but as the play progresses, and her desire for unity becomes more true, her will becomes almost unshakeable. Finally, after her husband is murdered, she becomes the one person responsible for the unity of the Cherokee people. Though her moral stance is never put to a serious test, she seems to have high moral values. Sarah seems to represent the essence of the strong Cherokee woman.

In the beginning of the play, Sarah is not a dominant figure. She seems, in fact, a subordinate character. But as the play progresses, and as the story calls for it, she becomes an important character. In the end, her presence in the story becomes unquestionable.

In Trail of Tears, the idea of the play can be determined by looking at the separate parts of the play and then combining
them into a whole. The title of the play describes the journey of the Western Band of Cherokees. The Cherokee "trail of tears" was a time of suffering, blizzards, disease, hunger, and death. Since this journey was brought about by the Eastern Band, the title also describes the bitterness between the two factions. The pride of both factions, and the idea of each that it was the fault of the other, stood between themselves and union.

One philosophical statement that appears again and again in the play was presented earlier: "Stand attired in the morning red: Your pathway lies at the treetops." This phrase shows the bitterness of the Cherokee against the white man for continually pushing him westward. But the phrase also describes the pride of the Cherokees in that it shows a reluctance to admit they were pushed. It seems to imply, rather, that the westward movement was the will, if not of the Cherokees themselves, then of the Great Spirit.

In many ways Trail of Tears is also about individuals who value their own prejudices more than they do the welfare of their own people. They are so blinded by their own pride they cannot work together, but they cannot succeed in life until they do. It is a play about the tribulation of division and a final triumph through union.

Summary

Trail of Tears has meaning because its dramatic elements work separately, as well as together, toward the same goal.
There are no discrepancies to detract from telling the story of the Cherokees in Oklahoma. With each word that is spoken, each action that is depicted, the audience comes a little closer to the truth about the Cherokees in the period recorded through the play.

Because the play is historically accurate, that truth was dictated to the author. The addition of Sarah, however, and the pageantry of the play, the dialogue, and the narration, makes this truth even more evident to his audience.

The dialogue and the characters work together within the given circumstances to create the dramatic action which expresses the ideas of the playwright and thereby give meaning to the play.
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CHAPTER II

THE THEATRE AT TSA LA GI

During most historical periods when the drama was performed in the open air, plays were composed to fit the theatre. At Tsa La Gi, however, the theatre was designed especially for Trail of Tears.

Located on the site of the Cherokee Female Seminary in Park Hill, two miles south of Tahlequah, Oklahoma, the amphitheatre has a bowl-shaped structure, with 1800 seats that was designed by Charles Chief Boyd. (See Figure 1, p. 25.) At the time he was working on the design, Boyd was a student in the Department of Architecture at the University of Colorado. One of the requirements for his bachelor of architecture degree at that time was a thesis project. The student acquired a "client" and designed a building for him. It was unusual for any thesis project actually to be constructed.

Though Boyd was of Cherokee descent, and very interested in his heritage, he had never studied Cherokee history. For this reason, he considered the possibility of a Cherokee memorial as his thesis project.

In an interview on April 18, 1972, Boyd (1) stated that the first step in achieving his goal was discovering Cherokee leaders who would become his client. Among them were Earl
Boyd Pierce, Cherokee Attorney, and W. W. Keeler, Principal Chief of the Cherokees. Through these men, Boyd was introduced to Colonel Martin A. Hagerstrand. Although Boyd had a memorial library in mind, Mr. Pierce wanted a memorial in the form of a statue alongside a highway; Colonel Hagerstrand was thinking of a theatre. After much discussion, the three men agreed upon the project at Tsa La Gi. (See Figure 2, p. 27.)

The Design of the Theatre

The theatre at Tsa La Gi is at the same time strange and familiar. It has been called the most beautiful outdoor theatre in the world (2).

After the completion of his thesis, Charles Chief Boyd had been employed by the firm of Hudgins, Thompson, Ball, and Associates in Tulsa, Oklahoma, at the request of the Cherokee National Historical Society, so that he could realize his thesis project.

Though, as stated earlier, Boyd is of Cherokee descent and was interested in his heritage, his knowledge of the Cherokees and of the theatre was limited. Yet he believed that his lack of theatre knowledge and even his meager architectural experience were advantages. He was able to begin the design from a fresh point of view (1).

The same could also have been said of his knowledge of Cherokee history. His first research was focused on that problem, and he read everything he could find about his
Fig. 2--Cherokee Cultural Center--Master Plan
people. Of great assistance in this research were Dr. and Mrs. Jack Kilpatrick, Cherokee historians, linguists, and composers, who introduced him to many full-bloods and a plethora of information about the Cherokees.

Boyd also traveled with Colonel Hagerstrand to New York to examine Broadway theatres and their plays, and to talk with theatre architects and technicians. There seemed to have been little systematic study of outdoor theatres anywhere in the United States. Yet, there were a number of productions like Texas, at Canyon, Texas, which Boyd also visited.

The Society's chief reason for interest in the project was the wish to preserve and recount the history and culture of the Cherokee Indians. Giving employment to the Cherokees in and around Tahlequah and giving economic benefits to the entire state were also considerations.

With these goals in mind, Boyd began his systematic study as to how they could be achieved. Certain limitations were put on the final results. These limitations were dictated to Boyd by seven separate forces: the Cherokee National Historical Society's desires; the demands of Trail of Tears; the budgetal limitations; the geographical limitations; the desires of Hunter; the historical demands; and the desires of Boyd brought about by his visit to New York.

Boyd stated that the Society's desire, as voiced by Chief W. W. Keeler, was for a memorial that a tourist could
visit and walk away from knowing more about the Cherokees than if he had read several books. Keeler wanted the Cherokees to become a part of the white man's culture, but only in the sense of being Cherokees. That is, he wanted his people to be accepted as equals by the white man—as capable in every respect—but with their own distinct and unique heritage. Keeler is interested in showing that the culture of the Cherokee people is not inferior to, only different from the white man's; and he wanted that difference to be respected rather than looked down upon.

A theatre was accepted as being a part of this memorial because it could vividly portray the Cherokee heritage while also fulfilling the aims of giving employment to the Cherokees and of benefiting the entire state economically.

A facet of the design of the theatre at Tsa La Gi which was influenced by the Society's desire for a cultural attraction, along with the size and nature of the theatre itself, is the refreshment stands. The society wanted refreshments available to the audience because of the added income they would bring. Yet the stands were not to interfere in any way with the drama. Also, the theatre would house 1800 people, and Boyd foresaw a problem of circulation for this many spectators. He also foresaw a problem in the lighting of these refreshment stands; he did not want the lights to spill into the audience. For these reasons, the refreshment stands were placed facing the entrance of the
theatre, on the opposite side of the rain shelter from the stage and seating. (See Figure 3, p. 31.)

When Boyd began work on the theatre, Hunter had already made the first draft of the play. Boyd and Hunter met several times during the design stage. There were certain requirements in the script which Boyd had to meet in his design. One of these was a background screen on which mood and seasonal colors were to be projected. Boyd did not like the idea of one giant screen, because he felt the audience would be watching it like a large television set, rather than seeing the play. So Dr. David Weiss, the technical director, came up with the idea of a battery of screens. Boyd approved the idea and implemented it in his design. (See Figure 4, p. 32.)

Another requirement of the script was the intangible mood that it dictated. To recreate this mood in the production of the script, the audience had to be made to feel both a closeness with the actors and, at the same time, a definite distance from them. It was to be as if the audience were actually watching life from a clearly defined vantage point.

Combining these requirements, Boyd came up with two possibilities; a theatre-in-the-round or a thrust stage. A theatre-in-the-round was eliminated because of the nature of the play; that is, such a theatre would eliminate much of the pageantry of the play. Since much of the history of the
Fig. 3--Reflected ceiling plan
Fig. 4: The stage
Cherokees was indeed a pageant, reducing it in the play would be an injustice. Thus, the idea of a thrust stage with steeply graded, fan-shaped seating was decided upon. (See Figures 1 and 3, pp. 25 and 31.) Herein, incidentally, lies a resemblance to the Greek theatre at Epidaurus. Boyd stated that this resemblance is entirely coincidental. He did not have the Greek theatre in mind during the design of the theatre at Tsa La Gi.

A major requirement influencing the design of the theatre was the budget. Boyd explained that this theatre was much more expensive than most outdoor theatres, because most outdoor theatres are built on an already-dramatic background. The site of the theatre at Tsa La Gi had to be made dramatic.

The cost limitations led to compromises in the design. These included such things as the reduction of the size of the dressing rooms; the elimination of air conditioning in them; the use of painted cement rather than tile in the public areas; and the substitution of plastic chairs ($1.00 each) for built-in seats ($22.00 each).

A second facet of the design which evolved from both a requirement of the script as well as a lack of financing for the theatre project is the mountain. (See Figure 4, p. 32.) The play begins with the trek over the trail of tears, and Hunter requested only that Boyd give him something dramatic to work with in the design. Originally,
Boyd had planned to put the dressing rooms underground, but because of cost limitations he had to put the dressing rooms on top of the ground. So he needed some sort of structure to hide them. The idea of the mountain, therefore, filled both needs. (See Figure 5, p. 35.) It served as a camouflage for the dressing rooms, while at the same time creating a very dramatic setting for the trail of tears as well as other scenes in the play.

The mountain was man-made, of earth rolled into columns with wire and then covered with grass and vines. Had more funds been available, Boyd would have made the embankment more massive. Instead, he designed the forty-foot embankment the theatre now has.

One other requirement influencing the design of the theatre was the geographical site. The Tsa La Gi site was chosen because of its historical significance, and because it was already owned by the state. Boyd was presented with the problem of creating a dramatic setting. The location of the theatre is in the only natural depression on the property. So Boyd excavated and created a larger bowl in which to construct the theatre.

Also influencing the theatre design was Hunter's desires, one of which stemmed from his visit to the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis, where he became fascinated with the steep seating arrangement. He gave that as his only requirement to Boyd for the theatre at Tsa La Gi.
Fig. 5—Theatre section
Hunter wanted the audience to look down on the drama. This requirement fit in perfectly with the script requirement which resulted in the thrust stage and the steeply graded fan-shaped seating. (See Figure 5, p. 35.)

The limitations made by history, and by the desire of everyone involved to recreate that history as accurately and as vividly as possible set further requirements on Boyd's design. With the theatre, Boyd stated that he wanted to set a mood, a sense of anticipation for the play itself. To achieve this mood, Boyd planned to use materials related to the old Cherokee form of building. He wanted to have all the contemporary elements of the theatre, and all the functioning of the modern theatre, but at the same time to use the materials of the Cherokee. Boyd felt that the theatre at Tsa La Gi had to be Cherokee in character. He described his goal as a building which by its very spirit was a Cherokee theatre. For this reason, the theatre design includes the motifs on the roof which are influenced by ancient pottery and basketry designs which Boyd adapted to the theatre. (See Figure 6, p. 37.) There are also many decorative mounds around the front of the theatre covered with weeping love grass. Boyd explained this as being representative of the mound structures of the Cherokees. The wooden poles supporting the rain shelter also were used to represent the materials of the Cherokee.
As a further attempt to recreate history, Boyd eliminated light towers such as are found in most outdoor theatres because the attempts made at hiding them are usually in vain. He did not want the audience to sense the theatricality of lighting, and thereby lose the feeling that they were witnessing actual historical events.

Many aspects of the design of the theatre at Tsa La Gi were influenced by the Broadway theatres which the architect examined. Boyd holds the conviction that the success of the Broadway theatre lies in its intimacy. Since the Society wanted a large theatre, he aimed for this intimacy on a large scale. The wide fan shape was the answer to this requirement. In New York, Boyd found that the farthest a spectator ever gets from the stage is seventy-five feet. Though the theatre at Tsa La Gi is much larger than a Broadway theatre, the farthest any spectator can sit from the stage is sixty-six feet. Even after the theatre expands to seat 2400 people, the farthest seat will be seventy-five feet away from the stage.

Another Broadway influence is the lighting facilities of the theatre. Talking with theatre technicians in New York, Boyd found that a forty-five degree angle was the best lighting angle. So the top of the already designed rain shelter became a natural place to house the lighting equipment. (See Figure 7, p. 39.)
Fig. 7—Theatre light gallery plan
Boyd's systematic study of the requirements of these separate forces dictating the design of the theatre having been completed, and all those requirements met, he began to tie the results together, and to formulate the end product. For the refining touches to the stage itself, he turned to technical designer for the theatre, Dr. David Weiss.

The design of the stage and its machinery was the combined effort of Boyd and Weiss. Boyd provided the shell; he set up the side stages and the turntables, the light gallery and the light tormentors. Then Weiss took over the design process.

The Success of the Design

The theatre at Tsa La Gi is an 1800-seat, outdoor amphitheatre. The basic design of the stage is a thrust stage with side stages and turntables. (See Figure 1, p. 25) The back wall of the stage is a man-made mountain which is utilized as a playing area, with entrances from bottom, top, and either side on two levels. (See Figure 4, p. 32.) At the base of the mountain is a small rock platform. The stage is made of concrete and small pebbles. The side stages and turntables are wooden. On either side of the stage are the scene shops. (See Figure 1.) In back of the mountain are the dressing rooms and the costume shop. The stage is separated from the audience by a five-foot deep pit. The stage is the bottom of a large bowl. (See Figure 5, p. 35.) The seating arrangement is semi-circular and inclines steeply
up the side of the bowl. The rim of the bowl, behind the audience, is the rain shelter. (See Figure 1.) The rain shelter is on a downward incline. (See Figure 5.) It houses the ticket booth, refreshment stands, and restrooms. (See Figure 3, p. 31.) On top of the rain shelter is the light gallery and sound booth. (See Figure 7, p. 39.) Extending down from the top of the rain shelter to the stage, on either side of the audience is a wall which houses the air conditioning vents and which also hides scene shops and outside distractions from the audience. (See Figure 1.)

The success of the design of a theatre must be measured by the usefulness of each part as well as the total effect of the whole.

Each part of the stage of the theatre at Tsa La Gi is utilized in the staging of Trail of Tears, from the top peak of the mountain, to the top of the wing walls, to the pit separating stage from audience. The only part of the stage which has been questioned is the mountain. Although it is used widely and very effectively, many actors complain of its steepness and of the narrowness of the trails. The trails are made more treacherous by the ever-growing vines and bushes which make passage at points very difficult indeed. But the narrowness of the trails can be remedied, and the steepness gotten used to. It is clearly evident that the mountain is there to stay. (Boyd stated that the
engineers who built it are quite surprised that it is still standing.)

The other parts of the theatre, also, are completely utilized. The theatre at Tsa La Gi is, despite its largeness, very compact. For example, the roof over the rain shelter serves not only as shelter, but also as the floor for the light gallery; the side walls not only seclude the audience, but also house the air conditioning equipment and vents; and the rain shelter itself is built with expansion from 1800- to 2400-seat capacity in mind.

As for the overall effect of the entire theatre, it is breath-takingly beautiful, and surely fulfills Boyd's goal of creating a spirit and a mood. A visitor cannot enter the theatre and not want deeply to know what goes on there at night; what kind of a story is told about the Cherokee people.

Boyd feels that some things suffered in the design, such as the finishes in the public areas, but that was only so the theatre could achieve its effect. Yet he feels that none of the compromises he made affected the concept of the theatre as such; none of them damaged the character of the theatre.

A difficulty in describing the theatre at Tsa La Gi is that it cannot be photographed the way it feels. There is a definite mood which invades the visitor who is viewing the theatre. Suffice it to note that every fifteen years the Guild of American Theatre Technicians chooses the fifty best theatres built in America. The theatre at Tsa La Gi was included in the Guild's most recent list.

CHAPTER III

PLAY PRODUCTION AT TSA LA GI

Any given play may work particularly well in a certain theatre, yet not work at all in another theatre. Aside from the physical plant and the requirements of the drama, the reasons why this is true may be the direct result of what can be termed the "theatre machine": that is, a working apparatus which includes the locale of the theatre, the playing areas, the backstage space, the audience section, and the technical machinery. Although any one of these parts at Tsa La Gi may bear strong resemblance to that of another theatre, the combination there is unique.

The Locale of the Theatre

The term "locale," particularly in reference to the theatre at Tsa La Gi, consists of first, the geographical location, and second, the placement of the theatre outdoors or indoors. George McCalmon and Christian Moe (4) discuss the advantages of the outdoor theatre. A primary advantage is that, "the aesthetic value of open-air performances is very strong. By nature we are an outdoor people and feel more relaxed and refreshed . . . under the open sky" (4, p. 119).
Many outdoor theatre sites have been chosen because of some unusual bit of natural beauty, such as the production of Texas in Palo Duro Canyon, or Unto These Hills in Cherokee, North Carolina. Other locations have been chosen solely for historical significance, such as Lexington, Massachusetts, for Lexington, or Peoria, Illinois, for Thunder on the River.

McCalmon and Moe (4, p. 129) list seven criteria to be applied in the selection of a site for a permanent outdoor amphitheatre: proximity to areas of historical significance, generally favorable weather conditions, accessibility to and from major traffic routes, beauty of surrounding natural landscape, topographical suitability, relative freedom from outside intrusions of noise and lights, and favorable acoustical factors. As noted in Chapter II, the theatre at Tsu La Gi is located in Park Hill, Oklahoma, because of the town's historical significance. A great many of the historical events portrayed in the drama actually occurred in the same location. This aspect of the theatre machine has a definite effect on the production of Trail of Tears. The audience is aware that, in a real sense, history is repeating itself before their very eyes. The grounds thus become in some way hallowed, and the reverence of the visitors lends an air of openness and acceptance for the story that is presented. McCalmon and Moe speak of sites which "conjure up a sense of the living past" (4, p. 120), and this is,
indeed, what happens at Tsa La Gi. Although Trail of Tears probably could be produced successfully in another theatre in another part of the country, this particular location overwhelmingly enhances the production.

The weather in northeastern Oklahoma is noted for its unpredictability. In the five seasons Trail of Tears has been performed, however, the performance has been rained out only once. As if cooperating with the producer, rain has usually come only on Monday nights, when Tsa La Gi is dark. The major problem with the weather faced by the patrons of the theatre during the first season was the heat; the addition of an air cooling system has overcome even that.

Accessibility has been no problem at all. Tsa La Gi is located two miles off State Highway 69, and only four miles from U. S. 51, two of the most heavily traveled highways in northeastern Oklahoma. The road leading to Tsa La Gi, moreover, has been paved.

The terrain around the theatre site, before the inception of the Tsa La Gi project was nothing more than rolling, densely vegetated plains. It has been landscaped, however, and is now very beautiful. It is still heavily wooded, but with paths cut from the parking lots to the theatre, the village, the museum, and the archives.

The theatre, as noted earlier, is located in the only natural bowl in the area. Even so, excavation was needed to make the bowl suitable for the theatre. As noted earlier,
the mountain which stands behind the stage had to be built. Though both of these supplements to the natural topography were costly, given the Society's choice between either a geographically more suitable location or this historically significant one, the cost became less important than the effect.

Since the theatre is two miles from the nearest highway, and four miles from the city of Tahlequah, the outside intrusions of noise and lights are minimal. Also, the wooded inclosure helps to minimize what intrusions there are.

The acoustical factors of the theatre at Tsa La Gi are favorable because both the tall trees which surround the bowl and the mountain backing the stage direct sound toward the audience. The side walls provide further enclosure, and also aid the transmission of sound. Prevailing breezes in the area during the summer season tend to be from an easterly direction and blow from stage to auditorium to carry the actor's voices. As a result of these factors, the words of the performers are always clear and intelligible.

The seven criteria set forth by McCalmon and Moe for an ideal location, then, were either present when the theatre was planned, or overcome by the design. The geographical location, therefore, seems to be more than adequate.

A second aspect of locale is the placement of the theatre at Tsa La Gi out of doors rather than inside a building. By being able to view the historical site of an
action at the same time as the dramatic reenactment of the action, the audience is better able to feel the full impact of the events being portrayed. The viewers come to believe they are watching actual history rather than a dramatic reproduction of it. If the theatre were enclosed in a building this effect would be lost. Too much of the atmosphere required for the acceptance of *Trail of Tears* would be left to the imagination of the audience.

A third aspect of locale is the limitation placed on theatre techniques available to the production. The type of drama that can be produced successfully is usually defined by the locale. Sheldon Cheney (1, p. 112) states that there is one quality that, more than any other, distinguishes the outdoor drama from the indoor drama: genuineness. He states that in the successful outdoor production, "the play, the setting, and the acting must above all else be simple and sincere. The whole must be lit up by a certain joyousness in life, and interpreted with a sympathetic understanding of the openness and freedom of nature" (1, p. 112). Cheney (1, p. 113) also finds there are three types of productions that can be successfully attempted on the outdoor stage: the simple, stately play of compact action and broad spiritual significance; the play that depends on the sensuous beauty of line and mass and color; and third, the drama rich in beautiful poetry.
Trail of Tears falls into the first category. More specifically, the theatre at Tsa La Gi, rich with the historical significance of its geographical location, automatically limits its productions to plays concerning the history of the area. The audience expects only this kind of play.

The Playing Areas

A second aspect of the "theatre machine" is the playing areas within the theatre. The typical stage has fewer than three playing areas, and most have only one—the main stage. Although playing levels are not a new idea, having originated in ancient times, relatively few theatres today have them built in; a given production design must develop them. McCalmon and Moe state that "many levels for acting areas permit a panoramic sweep of action" (4, p. 123).

Frank Waugh finds that the stage "should present a definite background. In general this should be of a somewhat monotonous neutral and inconspicuous character. We should understand that this is a background and not a part of the performance" (6, p. 51).

Combining these two ideas would lead to the conclusion that a stage should be only adequate for the play produced there—a total environment, as it were. Most theatres in existence were created not with one specific play in mind, but to accommodate many varied types of performances. Perhaps this is the reason why most stages have only one
playing area, the main stage, which can be imaginatively subdivided by the director with properties and scenery to fit the individual performance. On the other hand, those theatres created specifically for one play, such as the theatre at Tsa La Gi, can be architecturally subdivided into separate playing areas so that a minimum of directorial subdivision, as well as properties and scenery, is necessary.

It would seem as though if there was too great a diversity of acting areas on stage, the stage would overtake the performance, as Waugh suggests. If the diversity is necessary and is utilized by the director, however, the stage becomes the important tool that McCalmon and Moe suggest.

In the theatre at Tsa La Gi there are nine general playing areas: the main stage, two side stages, a raised rock platform at center back of the main stage, three levels on the mountain, the top of the mountain, and the pit separating the stage from the audience, as described in Chapter II. (See Figure 4, p. 32.) The use or non-use of these areas in the production of a play can contribute greatly to its success, and they also dictate the type of drama that can be performed most successfully. That is, since the scope of the stage itself is vast, a play performed on it would necessarily have to be of broad scope, or else be overwhelmed.

The large number of playing areas of the theatre at Tsa La Gi certainly enhances the production of Trail of Tears. The drama calls for a large number of people to cover great
distances in space and time. By utilizing all nine playing areas, the play achieves the necessary scope. For example, the spectators easily accept the idea that the action taking place on the right side stage is completely separated from the time and place of the action on the main stage, and that both of these are divorced from action occurring on top of the mountain. Transitions are more easily accepted.

The mood set by the scope and diversity of the theatre matches the scope and diversity of Trail of Tears. The stage itself seems part of the story; they compliment each other in their effect on the audience.

The Backstage Space

The third aspect of the theatre machine is the backstage space described in Chapter II. McCalmon and Moe (4, pp. 136-137) list five requirements of backstage areas for outdoor theatres. Even more than their indoor counterparts, outdoor theatres require adequate backstage space for the maneuvering and storage of all scenery and properties, as well as any necessary repairs. There should be, therefore, a sheltered, weather protected scene shop, accessible to the stage.

Outdoor theatres also require adequate costume rooms. Because outdoor productions typically have large casts, and because costumes must be stored during long periods of non-use, the costume rooms should be large, well-ventilated, and weather proofed. These rooms need to be equipped with
heavy-duty laundry facilities and basic costume construction and repair equipment.

Backstage area is also needed for dressing rooms that are comfortable for the entire cast. For quick changes, the dressing rooms should be located near the stage. For quick costume repairs, the rooms should be located near the costume shop.

Performers require space not only for dressing and performing, but also for getting to and from the stage. Traffic control is particularly important in the outdoor theatre because the cast is so large and many performers are entering and exiting from the stage at the same time. This problem becomes amplified if the costumes include broad period-style skirts. The backstage passageways should be wide and free of steps which could trip the hurrying performers.

A last, though somewhat less essential requirement is a large space not far from the stage where the entire cast can assemble for last minute instructions or mass entrances.

The theatre at Tsa La Gi seems to meet these requirements. The backstage space consists of long, steeply inclined ramps leading away from each of the side stages which lead to the scene shops. At the scene shops, these ramps curve and continue their upward incline until they form a semi-circle. At the peak of the semi-circle are the dressing rooms and the costume shop, level with the top of the mountain, much higher than the stage. (See Figures 1 and 5, pp. 25 and 35.)
These backstage areas are of great importance in the working theatre, since they ease or hinder the ability of the actors and technicians to perform their jobs. The relatively close proximity of each of the backstage facilities to all of the stage entrances is a definite aid to actor and technician. This compactness makes it easy to get from one place to another rapidly.

The ramps leading from stage to scene shop are approximately fifteen feet wide. They are made of concrete, with a smooth surface. The space for maneuvering of props and sets is entirely adequate. There are two scene shops on either side of the stage, both large aluminum structures, approximately sixteen by twenty feet each. Both are equipped for storage as well as construction. Since there are two scene shops, the transportation of properties to both sides of the stage is no problem.

The costume shop is located in a central position behind the stage, centered between the four dressing rooms. (See Figure 1, p. 25.) The costume shop is divided into a construction area and a storage area. Both have rows of shelves lining the walls. The construction area is equipped with a large cutting table, sewing machines, fitting forms, and fitting rooms. Also available are an industrial washing machine and clothes dryer. The storage area contains plenty of clothes racks and shelves. The costume shop is the only part of the backstage area that is air conditioned.
The dressing rooms at Tsa La Gi are the only parts of the backstage area that do not measure up as completely as would be desirable. There are four dressing rooms: a small one and a large one facing each other on the east side of the costume shop for all females in the play, and a small and a large one facing each other on the west side of the costume shop for all males in the play. (See Figure 1.) Although the rooms are large (the small ones are approximately sixteen by twenty feet, and the large ones approximately twenty feet by twenty-eight feet), they are still too small for the size of the cast. To add to this problem, the rooms are poorly ventilated; the only method of cooling is by small portable fans. Yet the dressing rooms are only feet away from the costume shop and the stage, and thus provide easy access for the actors going or coming.

Traffic control backstage is not a problem, even with the large cast, because of the excellent design of the backstage passageways. (See Figure 1.) At the center of the backstage area, in front of the costume shop, the paved passageway is approximately four feet wide. As it curves around toward the stage, the width increases to approximately fifteen feet. There are no steps, and the inclines are not so steep as to be difficult to walk on.

The natural areas for actors to assemble for mass entrances is just offstage in the passageways. The space is entirely adequate and very convenient. A perfect place for
cast calls is on the green in front of the costume shop. (See Figure 1.)

But the basic design of the backstage area can be a hindrance in isolated cases. Walking along the inclines from any backstage facility towards the stage is downhill. This makes it easier and faster to transport props from scene shops to stage, and for actors to get from dressing rooms to stage. Normally, the uphill climb from stage to backstage facilities creates no problem since speed is not a normal requirement. There is one scene in *Trail of Tears*, however, in which Sarah must exit right, at the close of the scene, and must open the next scene with her entrance at left (3, Act II, scenes xii and xiii).

The Audience Section

The problems in designing an adequate seating area are not to be taken lightly. Without an audience, a drama could not exist. Maximum comfort and involvement of the audience being therefore necessary, an important step towards this ideal is the arrangement of the seating area. As Richard Southern states, "what is needed is not a stage before an audience, but a stage within an audience" (5, p. 42). This type of open staging is a requisite for active audience involvement in the drama.

Cheney (1, p. 139) describes two types of outdoor seating systems; the high narrow stage with flat or saucer-shaped auditorium, such as is the case in many garden theatres, and
the low stage with steeply sloping auditorium, such as those used by the Greeks in their theatres. The latter would best fit Southern's requisite of a stage within an audience, because the separation would not be distinct.

Five requirements of an adequate audience area are listed by McCalmon and Moe (4, p. 110): well-trained ushers, comfortable seats, aisles providing easy access up and down, good sightlines from seat to stage, and good acoustical conditions. The first three of the requisites will affect the audience comfort and the last two their ability to become involved in the production.

At Tsa La Gi, the ushers are trained to be courteous and helpful, but guiding guests to their seats is not their only purpose. All ushers are Cherokee and are fully costumed in period dress, so that they also help set the mood and the anticipation for the drama.

The seats, as described in Chapter II, are inexpensive plastic bucket-style chairs, but are very comfortable. An interesting fact to note here is that the chairs are a bright orange in color which, being an earthy color, is representative of Cherokee culture and therefore further sets the mood. More important, the bright color tends to promote a lively involvement of the audience members, and will therefore heighten their receptivity to the drama.

The four and one-half aisles are wide, and the steps are necessarily steep. The only hindrance they seem to pose,
however, is exit from the seating area. It becomes quite an accomplishment to climb the stairs from the bottom row up to the rain shelter without pausing for breath. But considering the steep grade and the seating capacity of the theatre, a remedy for this is not evident, if one is possible at all.

The sightlines from all seats within the theatre are excellent, probably because of the fan-shaped arrangement of the audience area combined with the steep grade. Cheney notes there are "three common arrangements to insure perfect sightlines laterally: first, a semi-circular auditorium facing a very wide and shallow stage; second, a fan-shaped auditorium facing a wedge-shaped stage; and third, a rectangular stage of the same width" (1, p. 143). The theatre at Tsa La Gi fits perfectly into the second category.

The acoustics of the theatre at Tsa La Gi are also excellent. Cheney states that it is very uncommon for an outdoor theatre to have poor acoustics. Usually the natural acoustical properties of the site settle the matter. "It is undoubtedly true that the bowl-like shape of the classic theatre has special advantages, the semi-circular rings of seats and the high stage wall holding the sound and yet giving back no echoes" (1, p. 149).

Spreading in a wide fan-shape, and on a steep incline, the seating area at Tsa La Gi is very compact. The audience area, more than any of the other components of the theatre machine, definitely affects the involvement of the audience.
Colonel Hagerstrand believes there is not a "bad seat" in the house; vision and sound are the same from every chair. Yet the prices of the seats are different in different parts of the section; center seats are more expensive than seats on either of the side sections. Nevertheless, although the view is clearer from the center section, there is no interference with view or hearing from any seat.

As has been stated earlier, even though the theatre has an 1800-seat capacity, no seat is further than 66 feet away from the stage. If the theatre were to expand to a capacity of 2400, no seat would be farther than 75 feet away from the stage.

This close proximity combined with unobstructed seeing and hearing makes it easier for each person in the audience to enter fully into the drama. Although more comfortable and attractive chairs would be a further asset, the ones currently used are not liabilities.

The Technical Machinery

The lighting of a production is an important factor in the outdoor theatre, and the problem of finding suitable mounting positions for instruments is not always easily solved. Most existing outdoor theatres make use of lighting towers on either side of the auditorium and footlights on the stage (4, p. 136); but, as Cheney states, "nothing else so quickly destroys illusion as a glare" (1, p. 164). Thus, it becomes the architect's duty to the audience to see that
the placement of lights is so masked that not a single instrument can be seen from the auditorium.

The angle of lighting instruments is also important. The accepted optimum slant for the light to fall on stage is at an angle of thirty-five to forty-five degrees (4, p. 136). This is the most natural lighting angle, and makes for a minimum of distortion of facial features.

There must also be a control booth which has a view of all stages. This control booth will house the controls for all lighting instruments and sound equipment.

At *Tsa La Gi*, the light gallery is housed above the rain shelter described in Chapter II. (See Figure 7, p. 39.) Each of the seventy-five lighting units is set at an angle of forty-five degrees to the stage, and no lighting equipment is visible to the audience. Boyd's aim was to create the idea as subtly as possible that the viewers are watching life rather than a story about life. The forty-five degree angle was chosen because it creates the most natural effect; the enclosure of the lighting instruments was planned so that the theatricality of the lighting would not be sensed by the spectators. The only lighting which is somewhat theatrical is the projection of mood and seasonal lighting on the battery of screens atop the mountain. The subtlety with which this is done, however, achieves the purpose of suggesting moods and seasons without attention being drawn to the screens;
indeed, many visitors leave a production of the drama without realizing the screens are there (4).

This aspect of the technical machinery is important to the production of *Trail of Tears* because it helps to intensify the idea that this play is more than a story; it is life itself. Another drama might be hindered by the lack of lighting and sound facilities, whereas a larger variety of lighting instruments might harm the production of *Trail of Tears*. Therefore, just as the locale and playing areas dictated the type of drama which could be performed at the theatre at Tsa La Gi, so does the lighting equipment dictate the type of mood that can be created in the theatre.

Only a minimum of sound equipment is used at Tsa La Gi. The acoustics of the theatre are good enough to eliminate the necessity of microphones and other instruments for the magnification of the sound emanating from the stage. The only sound system which is used is for the purpose of the music and recorded narration for *Trail of Tears*.

This sound system is an aid to the production of *Trail of Tears* but may or may not aid the production of another drama. It would not be a hindrance to any production.

The Use of the Theatre Machine

The combination of these five elements making up the theatre machine is unique to the theatre at Tsa La Gi. The manner in which they are utilized in the production of *Trail of Tears* is also quite special. The spirit, meaning, and
heart of the Cherokee people are expressed admirably, and the audience is entertained. As has been noted, the locale of the theatre was chosen with the idea in mind of creating the feeling in the audience that they are watching history being made; the size and diversity of the stage symbolizes the long history and the scope of the Cherokee culture; the technical machinery indicates the simple beauty of the Cherokee world view; in combination, the elements of the theatre machine work together to create an awe for the Cherokee Indians and their culture.

The principal use of these elements, by the producer, director, writer, actors, and technicians of the drama is to create a unity of purpose; each element is made to enhance the other. An example would be the playing areas. There are nine general playing areas, which have been delineated previously. Each of the playing areas has a purpose and a meaning. The stage left turntable is for scenes inside the homes of Cherokees. Always uncluttered and unpretentious, it is simply decorated, and denotes the natural elegance of Cherokee taste. The stage right turntable is used for scenes inside the homes and offices of the white man. It is decorated elegantly and materialistically. Fine silk drapes, large bookcases, heavy desks, plush chairs, and mirrors point up the difference in the two cultures.

The main stage is used for group encounter scenes. The natural beauty of the mountain, the vastness of the playing
area itself, as well as the circular design of the stage further highlight the spirit of the Cherokees and the dimensions of the tribal history. The audience is made to feel the hardship of the Cherokees in overcoming their own differences, but also realize that the Cherokee culture, like a circle, is never-ending.

The mountain trails are used to designate high and low points in the spirit of the Cherokees. As an actor is coming down the mountain (as in the opening scene, at the end of the trail of tears), the audience can feel the weight of his burden pressing him down; as the actor climbs the mountain, and pauses toward the top to deliver words of inspiration, the audience feels the elation of the knowledge that the Cherokees will do great things (2).

The top of the mountain, as well as the top of the wing walls (used only by the Death Dancer) portray the dream-like scenes and the pageantry of the drama. These areas signify not only the heights the Cherokees are aiming for, but also the realities that are continually checking them in their progress. The only scene not a dream that takes place on top of the mountain is Sequoyah's death scene (3, Act I, scene iv), which is placed there to stress the reality of death, even to great leaders.

The pit separating stage from audience (see Figure 1, p. 25) is used only once in the drama, symbolizing the lowest regions the Cherokees have ever been to. It is the place
where Cherokees hide in order to murder Dennis, a fellow tribesman (3, Act II, scene xii). The use of the pit very forcefully shows the humanness of the Cherokees, and the primary factor that kept them down for so long; their inability to get along together.

Each of the other elements of the theatre machine works in much the same way, and for the same purpose. For example, the technical machinery is not elaborate, and neither are its effects; but the Cherokee people are not elaborate, and their taste is simple. Fantastic effects would be inharmonious with a portrayal of their history. Lighting and sound equipment are only the minimal necessary for the audience to hear and see the drama. The only elaborate use of machinery is the play of lights against the projection screens on the mountain and the echoing sound system for prerecorded narration. Both of these things denote the dreams of the Cherokees, which must have been great judging from those dreams they did achieve. The Cherokee history was a colorful one; the elaborate use of the machinery in these instances point up that color.

The locale of the drama is also used to point up the closeness of the Cherokees with nature. An indoor play about Cherokee history would be a great injustice to its people. Oftentimes within the drama, attention is called to the dialogue and the action; the Cherokees' oneness with nature is merely symbolized. The audience is made to feel
the importance of being at the place where the history they are watching was made and also the splendor that the Cherokees must always have felt with their unity with the earth.

The audience areas and backstage areas are used to facilitate the other elements of the theatre machine to achieve the purpose of the drama; the backstage area makes it easier for the actors to get to the stage and perform the history of the Cherokees; the audience area makes it easier for the members of the audience to see, hear, and feel the plight of the Cherokees. Had less attention been paid to either of these two elements, perhaps the drama could not have achieved its purpose.

Summary

The theatre machine of the theatre at Tsa La Gi seems to function like a smoothly running clock. Each part works for the benefit of the whole. The effect achieved does surely seem to be the one strived for; the audience enters the theatre with little knowledge or respect for the Cherokees, but he almost invariably leaves singing their praises.

The understanding and respect for the Cherokees that viewers of the drama walk away with has little to do with the words that are spoken. Rather, they are caused by the intangible mood created by the theatre itself, as a smoothly operating machine.

Each element of the machine is unique, and each is indispensable. It gives the theatre at Tsa La Gi an
individuality and an ability to express itself. It gives meaning to the drama. And it does, indeed, capture the spirit, meaning, and heart of the Cherokee people.


CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

This work has been an attempt to delineate the process of the development of the theatre at Tsa La Gi, and to analyze the effectiveness of the design of the theatre and the production of Trail of Tears.

It would seem as though the decision to develop Tsa La Gi came about by chance; that is, the basic idea was in the minds of several unrelated individuals, who happened to come together by a number of chance encounters. Once the idea was firmly implanted, however, progress was never delayed for an instant. Although slow by some standards, the design of the physical theatre by Charles Chief Boyd was actually very rapid when allowance is made for his lack of knowledge about the theatre as well as of the Cherokees. Undoubtedly, the overwhelming willingness and enthusiasm displayed by Boyd and Colonel Hagerstrand were the key factors in the speed of the development of the theatre project.

The effectiveness of the resulting theatre and production, however, was not a matter of chance. The product represents much careful study and many long hours of work on the parts of those people involved. Hunter's goals of perpetuating the history and conditions of the Cherokees in and around Tahlequah, promoting tourism to the area, developing
a theme in *Trail of Tears* which expresses the spirit, meaning, and heart of the Cherokee people, and entertaining the audience were surely met. It would seem that there would be no better way to perpetuate history than to present that history in a dramatically effective, artistic pageant; no better way to promote tourism to an area than to vividly portray an important segment of the history of that area. It would seem, further, that entertainment of the audience would be automatic if the theme Hunter attempted were indeed expressed in the drama. The techniques that Hunter used to develop the theme of *Trail of Tears*—broadness of scope, accordionizing history, and colorful characterization—were indeed key factors in the expression of the spirit, meaning, and heart of the Cherokee people.

The figures and events from Cherokee folklore in *Trail of Tears* furthered the progression of the theme of the play in that they were representatives of certain Cherokee traits, such as pride, optimism, respect of self and heritage, and oppression. They also acted as unifying forces, giving meaning to other actions in the play, as well as relief from mounting emotions.

The dramatic event of the production of *Trail of Tears* is meaningful because each element of the play works separately as well as together, toward the same goal. Because these elements are in unity with one another, the audience progresses
steadily toward the truth about the Cherokee in the period recorded in the play.

Since the theatre at Tsa La Gi was designed especially for Trail of Tears, the objective of the architect was to enhance the theme of the play by creating a facility with which the director could work effectively. Boyd's work was limited by seven separate forces: the desires of the Cherokee National Historical Society, the demands of the play, budgetal limitations, the limitations of the geographical site, Hunter's desires, the demands made by a desire for historical accuracy, and desires created by Broadway influence. Molding these limitations together, Boyd produced the present theatre. It is in many ways unique, particularly because of the absence of lighting towers and the presence of the man-made mountain; but at the same time it is familiar in that it strongly resembles ancient Greek theatres, such as the one at Epidaurus, with its semi-circular thrust stage and fan-shaped seating arrangement.

Although the theatre does have certain limitations, primarily due to lack of financing, such as small dressing rooms and the lack of finishes in the public areas, these limitations are acceptable in view of the great success of the theatre as a whole. The theatre is breathtakingly beautiful, and surely fulfills Boyd's goal of creating a spirit and a mood. As has been stated earlier, a visitor cannot enter the theatre and not want deeply to know what goes on
there at night; what kind of a story is told about the Cherokee people.

The physical theatre welded together with the production of the drama is the final determinant in the success of all parts of the whole at Tsa La Gi. The theatre machine of the theatre at Tsa La Gi functions as a precision instrument; each part works for the benefit of the whole. Each element is utilized thoroughly; and each element, separately and together, creates a mood of anticipation and excitement for the life that is displayed there each night. The machine is also responsible for the ease with which the actors and technicians can perform their duties. Each element of the machine is unique, and each is indispensable. This machine is what is responsible for the individuality and the success of the theatre at Tsa La Gi.

The conclusion can be drawn, then, that the theatre project at Tsa La Gi is a highly successful one, both economically and artistically. Tsa La Gi has recreated the noble past of the Cherokee Nation and awakened a new interest and pride in a heritage of a civilization that predates the coming of Europeans to the New World. It is hoped that this thesis will further that purpose.

The theatre being only one part of the complex of Tsa La Gi, further study is needed in the areas of the other attractions: the village, museum, and archives. Since the village predates the theatre, more extensive analysis of
effect is possible; and since both the museum and archives are awaiting opening, a closer look at the process of development can be taken. Generally, the goals of each of the four parts of *Tsa La Gi* are the same, but each has a specific purpose. A study of each of the specific areas is in order, and necessary for a further understanding of *Tsa La Gi*. 
APPENDIX

THE TRAIL OF TEARS

by
Kermit Hunter

1971 Version

Copyright 1966
Cherokee National Historical Society
Box 515
Tahlequah, Oklahoma
(Used by permission)
CAST OF CHARACTERS

SARAH, niece of Stand Watie
Narrator
JOHN ROSS, principal chief of the Cherokee nation
JESSE, a Cherokee statesman
DENNIS, his son
Rations Boss in Indian Territory
STAND WATIE, a Cherokee patriot
SEQUOYAH, cherokee patriarch
Rev. Samuel Worcester, a missionary
William L. Marcy, Secretary of War in 1846
President James K. Polk
Senator Daniel Webster of New Hampshire
Talara, daughter of Dennis and Sarah
Jimmy Looney, her beau
E. C. BOUDINOT, nephew of Stand Watie
Albert Pike, Confederate agent to the Cherokee
Dennis III

The Death Dancer, assistants to Rations Boss, Ross
young people, Presidential aide, ritual leaders of
four nations, Amy, wife of Stand Watie, the Walking
Horse children, master of ceremonies in 1907.

Soldiers, villagers, dancers.

TIME: 1839-1907

PLACE: Eastern Oklahoma, Washington, D.C.

Certain characters and events of this play are drawn from actual
historical records, while others are fictional. In the case of
actual characters and events, modifications have been made in
the interest of dramatic unity. In the case of fictional charac-
ters and events, no similarity to actual persons, living or dead,
is intended, and any such similarity is purely coincidental.
THE SCENES

Act I

Prologue

Scene 1 - Along the Trail of Tears, winter of 1839
Scene 2 - A field by the Illinois River near Tahlequah, June, 1839
Scene 3 - The unfinished home of Ross at Park Hill, June, 1839
Scene 4 - The same, two years later
Scene 5 - The White House, Washington, D.C., summer, 1846
Scene 6 - The public Square at Tahlequah, autumn, 1846

Act II

Scene 7 - Park Hill, a dressing room in the Female Academy,
         evening of May 6, 1861
Scene 8 - The garden, a few minutes later
Scene 9 - Home of Stand Watie south of Tahlequah, summer, 1861
Scene 10 - Home of Ross, August, 1861
Scene 11 - The Cherokee ceremony, 1861 to 1865
Scene 12 - Home of Dennis, spring, 1865
Scene 13 - House of Stand Watie, spring, 1865
Scene 14 - The public square at Tahlequah, November 17, 1907

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ACT I

(The opening music plays for two minutes. As it reaches an end, SARAH comes out, walks briskly down to lower left, where there is a corner of fence rails (or a well, or a stump) which has a live microphone inside. She is young and very attractive, articulate, strong yet feminine. She wears the long dress and braids that she will wear in Scene 3. She looks at the audience with a pleasant smile, then speaks thoughtfully.)

SARAH

That music you just heard is not Indian music, but it fits. It has deep emotion, perhaps suffering, perhaps triumph. It fits the story of my people.

And yet, our play this evening is not necessarily an Indian play. It tells about human beings, all kinds, some brilliant, some very average.

(Midway in her speech JOHN ROSS enters from up right and through the scene paces slowly at right, on the turntable and down right, deeply troubled. As SARAH goes on, two couples enter and huddle around a campfire at right.)

That stocky little man, almost broken with grief and despair, is John Ross, principal chief of the Cherokee. He is seven-eighths white, of Scottish descent. He is a cultured, educated gentleman, a strong leader.

In these desperate years of the Eighteen Thirties it does not matter that his people have a constitution, a legislature, a newspaper, Christian churches and schools, the one Indian tribe in all of North America with a written language. No . . . the only important thing is that the white civilization along the east coast must have room to expand across the mountains. Whether or not President Jackson actually despised all Indians, it was the white frontiersmen who had put him into office, and all Indian nations are being pushed westward.

John Ross watched the noose tighten around the four other great tribes of the Southeast: Seminole, Choctaw, Creek, and Chickasaw. Now a handful of our poor Cherokee farmers have been talked into signing a paper called a "treaty." The U.S. Army is at this moment marching eighteen thousand people from North Carolina to Oklahoma Territory.

(Two women hurry across from up right and disappear at left.)

These few have camped here in the lonely twilight along the Arkansas River, because the lovely Cherokee wife of John Ross is dead. A few nights ago she gave her blanket to a freezing child, and now she herself is waiting for the death dancer to come.

(The death music is heard, and the Dancer appears on the top level, makes a few sweeps, then holds position. At the same time Quatie comes out, in black dress and high neck, glistening tan face, two long braids of hair. She goes to the left turntable, stands with her back pressed against the back wall, her hands folded over her breast, her eyes closed.)
(Speaking as Quatie appears)

This sweet, lovely wife of John Ross goes by the Cherokee name of Quatie. We will not see her again, because the Death Dancer will soon sweep her away.

(The Dancer begins to move down toward the center stage.)

That figure up there is the Death Dancer. He is visible only to you, the audience. None of us in the play can see him. But the Death Dancer is always nearby. Along the Trail of Tears he was a constant companion of the Cherokee.

(The death music dims out. The Dancer has passed the center level above. STAND WATIE and ELIAS BOUDINOT appear, as if in quiet conversation as they walk along the second level from right to left, pausing once to point out across the audience then move on without delay. The narration continues without pause.)

That restless, bold-looking man passing by is Stand Watie. With him is his scholarly brother, Elias Boudinot, a Christian minister, educated at Andover College in Massachusetts. These men belong to the Ridge Party, a small band who sold their Georgia land to white settlers and moved to Oklahoma several years ago. They made a terrible miscalculation: you see, all lands are considered tribal lands, and selling them is a crime against the sacred laws of the people.

(The Death Dancer is at the main stage, the two men have passed almost out of sight.)

Those two men are my uncles. My family came with them to Oklahoma three years ago. You will not see Elias Boudinot again; because he is going to be murdered. You will see his son, almost a carbon copy. And you will surely see my Uncle Stand Watie throughout this play, a man who never forgets.

(ROSS has squatted a moment beside the campfire and is speaking quietly to the people. He helps a woman adjust a blanket more warmly around her shoulders, rises and pats a man on the shoulder, then turns away distraught, gazing upward. DENNIS has now entered, and he pauses to pat ROSS on the shoulder, then he himself paces restlessly. Back of him comes JESSE, who comes to ROSS, offers his condolences, then stands waiting quietly.)

That younger one there is Dennis, the man I love. There behind him is his father, Jesse. They belong to the Ross Party, who tried to hold the lands in the east and resist the government. The feud between the Ross Party and the Ridge Party seems destined to burn on down the years, foolishly kept alive by a few noisy people who value their own selfish prejudice more than they do the welfare of the Cherokee people. But, in the history of mankind this sort of blindness is not uncommon. So here we are: the play is ready. Notice that it begins with Death.

(The death music rises again. The Dancer has moved across to Quatie, and now he wraps his cloak about her. The turntable revolves and takes them both out of sight. SARAH at the same time turns and runs out up left. When she is out of sight, the voice of SARAH is heard on the PA system. With the beginning of the music again ROSS has moved downstage, where he now stands gazing upward, finally raising his arms to the sky.)
O wild bird crying in the sunset,
Your blue wings soaring through the night of my soul,
Forever flying against the dim sky,
Where is my pathway?
Where is the shelter for my spirit?
O wild bird flying,
Raise me into the crimson glowing of eternity.

(The drums rise in a heavy crescendo, ROSS raises his arms. The body of a woman, covered with a sheet, is carried on a litter on the shoulders of two men, from left to right across the stage and out. The procession goes quickly, and the drums die down, then dim out. ROSS covers his face with his hands, and JESSE comes down to him. ROSS clenches his fists and gazes off in pain.)

ROSS
Oh Jesse, Jesse! There is nothing . . . nothing any more!

(JESSE pats ROSS' shoulder in silence.)

We have lost our homeland . . . four thousand of our people have died along this trail of tears . . . and now my beloved Quatie . . . I can't go on any longer!

JESSE
(Consoling.)
All things finally pass . . . and we will go on.

ROSS
(Bitterly.)
She never in her life did a wrong thing.
(Looking upward in pain.)
Why has God forsaken us?

JESSE
Do not think such things. Who are we to question God's purposes?
(Putting his arm around ROSS' shoulder.)
At sun-up we will bury her, here above the river. Then we will march on, to the end of the trail. Come, we will make some bark tea, and wait for the sunrise, and talk of the old days in the land of our fathers.

(ROSS takes a deep breath of resignation, starts with JESSE up the center stage. A man hurries in back of DENNIS and murmurs a message, then hurries out. DENNIS gives a bitter laugh.)

DENNIS
The perfect irony! One of the women has given birth to a child!

ROSS
(The instinctive concern of the Chief.)
A boy?

DENNIS
(Exploding.)
What difference does it make?
ROSS
(Sending the woman out.)
Will you see about the mother?

(They rise and go quickly.)

DENNIS
On this trail of death a child is born! Damnation!

JESSE
My poor son is bitter and impatient, like all young men. He has an opening in a law firm in Washington, but what does he do? Rattles along this lonesome trail to Indian Territory!

ROSS
Because of loyalty to the Cherokee?

JESSE
No! Because of a girl . . . the niece of Stand Watie! You hear that?

ROSS
(Incredulous.)
The niece of Stand Watie?

JESSE
Stand Watie and Elias Boudinot . . . who sold their birthright for a mess of pottage. Dennis and the girl grew up together. Her family moved west three years ago with The Ridges and the Boudinots.

ROSS
(Studying DENNIS a moment, then turning slowly.)
You must love her very much, Dennis.

(DENNIS wanders offstage as they watch. DENNIS surveys his father.)

DENNIS
Why did you and John Ross stay on to fight Andrew Jackson. Why? Why?

JESSE
Because we are not cowards!

(DENNIS turns away, throwing up his hands.)

DENNIS
So we have proved our manhood! Hallelujah!

JESSE
(Intensely.)
"Stand atired in the morning red. Your pathway lies at the treetops!"

DENNIS
Don't quote these old Cherokee charms and incantations to me! I've heard enough of that stuff. We're dealing now with real men, evil men with guns and hatchets!

JESSE
Dennis, listen to me: do you know why Rev. Sam Worcester named his newspaper The Phoenix? Because it means re-birth. Someday the Cherokee will do one great thing, so great that even God will be pleased.
DENNIS
Do you really think God is the least concerned with the Cherokee?

JESSE
Young men can afford to be cynical. But never forget, never let your children forget... live for that one great day when the Cherokee find peace. Eh wat le os, tat gat eh.

(The drums rise in a low background. DENNIS whirls impatiently and strides out. JESSE gazes upward in anguished prayer.)

JESSE
O Ancient One! Make the fire rise at our feet as we pass on toward the nighthland! When the night swims through our souls, let the flame rise before us! O Ancient One! Eh wat le os, tat gat eh... peace, peace for the Cherokee!

(The drums die out under the choir humming "Amazing Grace." JESSE turns and crosses toward the left to mingle in the upcoming scene. The left sidestage is turning to reveal the RATIONS BOSS and his men. Indians are lined up waiting their turn. The humming goes on back of the narration. As the scene progresses, the stage fills with people coming down the mountain slope and from the sides, a kind of pilgrimage.)

NARRATOR (Male Voice)
Week after week of Eighteen Thirty-Nine the ragged immigrants straggled into the Indian Territory. Spring came, then early summer. As each contingent arrived, the first thing was to draw rations. The government had made a contract with the firm of Glasgow and Harrison, who set up several stations, one of which was along the Illinois River here in Tahlequah.

(The humming stops.)

RATIONS BOSS
What's the matter? You deaf? I said what's yer name? Speak up. What's yer name?

(The Indian does not understand. He looks at JESSE.)

All right, you stubborn mule! No name, no rations!

DENNIS
(Stepping forward quickly.)
Give him his rations. He doesn't understand you.

RATIONS BOSS
Why in tarnation can't they learn to speak American?

DENNIS
Why can't you learn to speak Cherokee?

RATIONS BOSS
(Closing the book.)
If I don't write down his name, he don't git no rations. Understand?

DENNIS
(With sarcasm.)
Write down John Smith.
RATIONS BOSS
You tryin' to git smart with me?

JESSE
Write it down!

RATIONS BOSS
How do I know that's his name?

DENNIS
(With irony.)
Can't you write American.

RATIONS BOSS
I can write American.

DENNIS
Well then, write! . . . Mr. and Mrs. John Smith! And this is Mr. and Mrs. Blue Grass!

RATIONS BOSS
(Writing.)
G-R-A-S . . .

DENNIS
Mr. Smith and Mr. Grass are entitled to beans and flour, dried fruit, one milk cow, two pigs, four chickens.

RATIONS BOSS
Yeah?

JESSE
You can dump that worm-eaten flour in the river. Give them their beans, fruit, and livestock.

RATIONS BOSS
Well now, I got some mighty painful news for you. We got one sack o' goods left here for each one. We're plum outta livestock.

HENRY
Not quite, we've still got a little left.

RATIONS BOSS
. . . 'ceptin' one bull.

DENNIS
What do they want with a bull? These people need milk, butter! They have children!

RATIONS BOSS
Let 'em put in a complaint at Ft. Gibson . . . 'ceptin' Mr. Smith here . . .
(Marking in the book.)
Blue Grass one sack. John Smith one sack, and one bull.
(Calling the third man.)
What's he weigh, Henry?
THIRD MAN
Round twelve hundred, I reckon.

RATIONS BOSS
(Writing.)
One bull, twelve hundred pounds.

(Unseen by the others, JOHN ROSS has entered with five other men. JESSE is incensed.)

JESSE
Twelve hundred? Are you crazy? I could pick up that bag of bones with one hand! He couldn't weigh over three hundred!

RATIONS BOSS
The book says Mr. John Smith got one bull weighin' twelve hundred pounds, an' you know the book ain't never wrong. You wouldn't doubt our word now, would you?

(He looks at his men and smiles. They all laugh. The second man sets the two sacks on the table, laughing as he nudges the RATIONS BOSS.)

Here you are, gentlemen. I guess we're all done Ceph, that's all the sacks we have. Mr. Smith, don't forget to pick up your bull. Guess it's the end of the day for us. Come on Ceph, you too Henry. Let's move along.

(He is laughing as he sees ROSS and the others. He stops at once, rises, nods to the others, and begins to pack his things. ROSS comes down toward the sidestage.)

ROSS
Just a moment. Here stand seven men who will swear that the bull weighs two hundred pounds.

RATIONS BOSS
Go ahead and swear.

ROSS
The firm of Glasgow and Harrison is cheating the Cherokee people. We shall report this to the Secretary of War.

RATIONS BOSS
(Summoning his bravado.)
Who's this sawed-off squirt with the big mouth?

ROSS
John Ross, Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation,

(DENNIS and the others meanwhile, weapons in hand, have quietly made a circle around and are now a threat to the three men. The RATIONS BOSS studies the situation, nods to the other two.)

RATIONS BOSS
Well, now, conditions bein' what they are and so forth, these people bein' newcomers to our fair land: whaddya say we just give Mr. Smith that bull? Strike it off the books and call it square. He can draw a cow at Ft. Gibson, an' that way he can start a family. Ha-ha! Whaddya say, Mr. Chief?
ROSS
I say it is a federal offense for Glasgow and Harrison to falsify government records. You shall go to jail.

RATIONS BOSS
Now wait a minute! Nobody said anything about---

ROSS
Just write "one very sick bull, weight about two hundred pounds, offered to John Smith, Cherokee, June third, Eighteen Thirty-Nine, at McCoy's Camp Ground, refused delivery by order of John Ross, Principal Chief."

RATIONS BOSS
(Writing hurriedly.)
Glad to accommodate, Mr. Chief, yessiree! Write it in the book like the man says, yessiree! . . . now then, all fixed up! Henry, Ceph, let's git along. Good day, gentlemen! Henry, grab that bull. If they don't want it, we'll take it along with us.

(The three scurry out.)

JESSE
Scoundrels! Scoundrels! Every trick on earth to rob and cheat the Cherokee!

DENNIS
And the Seminole, and the Creeks, and all the rest.

ROSS
Never mind. I shall take this matter personally to Daniel Webster in Washington.

DENNIS
Do you think he'll listen.

ROSS
There's nothing a U.S. Senator likes better than to investigate the War Department.

(Indicating the people downstage.)
Have those people been taken care of?

JESSE
As well as possible. They'll camp here tonight, then take up land to the north.

ROSS
They need to get crops planted, houses built.

JESSE
Notice how different our people are, these who came west three years ago. You see that, don't you?

ROSS
Indeed I do.

JESSE
Reckless, irresponsible . . . drinking and gambling . . . too much government commissary at Ft. Gibson . . . our people from the east work hard and save their money. God knows, we have a job to do!
ROSS
All our affairs must begin with the National Council. And I am afraid, Jesse, that the western crowd means to dominate the Council here today.

DENNIS
I say postpone the Council for a while.

JESSE
Why, Dennis?

DENNIS
For one thing, all the white settlers around here are arming themselves. They're nervous because twelve thousand Indians have suddenly moved in from the East. First thing we do is call a big "pow-wow," as the whites call it. We need to explain what we're doing.

ROSS
The western Cherokee called this Council. I have no power to stop them. Besides, there are issues that must be settled without delay.

JESSE
I'm afraid my son is right. Even our own people are not in a good mood.

DENNIS
There is hard feeling against the Ridge, against Stand Watie and his brother, Elias Boudinot. They sold their land to white men.

ROSS
(Thoughtfully.)
I suppose they honestly believed it was best for the Cherokee. Somehow we must accept this, forget the past, and move on.

(As they talk, the immigrants have moved offstage and the area is now filled with villagers. The difference between the ROSS group and some of the others is very obvious, the latter being obstreperous in a raucous crowd up right. As ROSS stops, there is a drum roll, and Stand WATIE enters, along with BOUDINOT, and back of them THE RIDGE with his small son. WATIE is a commanding figure, cool and confident, a born leader. The people sense the tension and move instinctively to separate sides. With WATIE is SARAH, surveying the crowd anxiously. DENNIS rushes toward her. As the drums stop, she hurries into his arms.)

WATIE
Sarah!

(DENNIS holds her closely.)

Sarah! Come here!

DENNIS
(Straightening.)
Don't use that tone of voice!

WATIE
Who the devil are you?
DENNIS
You know perfectly well who I am.

WATIE
If you have any sense, you'll stay away from this girl.

DENNIS
Maybe I don't have any sense.

WATIE
And maybe I'd better knock some sense into you!

DENNIS
Do you think you're man enough?

(They close in battle, but are quickly torn apart and after some crowd excitement they settle back and brush their clothes.)

ROSS
Stand Watie... Cherokee...

WATIE
(Drawing himself up.)
John Ross. So... after four years you also decided to move west. Or did the United States Government decide it for you?

ROSS
I am glad to see you have prospered.

(He turns and starts up center to a throne-like chair.)

WATIE
Just a moment.
(As ROSS pauses and turns.)
The Western Cherokee have an established government of their own. Our chiefs have called this Council to welcome our Eastern brothers. That chair will of course be occupied by the Principal Chief, John Brown, aided by Assistant Chiefs Rogers and Looney.

(There is a tense silence. The people move closer.)

DENNIS
There is only one Principal Chief, and his name is John Ross. Let Brown come forward and challenge him.
(A pause.)
I say, let John Brown come forward and challenge John Ross!

(The men on each side prepare for battle. Two men in the crowd scuffle. The people begin yelling.)

VOICE
I vote for John Brown!

ANOTHER
John Ross is Principal Chief!
DENNIS
(Stepping in the middle, raising his club menacingly.)
Everybody quiet down now, before I knock your brains out!

ROSS
(In the sudden silence.)
Let us ask the venerable Sequoyah to act as leader of this Council.

CROWD
Eh wat le os, tat got eh.

(The people relax, JESSE motions to SEQUOYAH, who comes from the crowd and goes to the chair. He studies them in silence a moment, then speaks commandingly.)

SEQUOYAH
Sam Worcester, please have the goodness to invoke upon this Council the blessings of Almighty God.

(DENNIS shoves a few belligerents back into place, as the people bow.)

WORCESTER
O eternal Father, stand alongside thy children. Be with us now, here in this Council. Walk the trail before us. Bring peace to the Cherokee. Eh wat le os, tat gat eh.

CROWD.
Eh wat le os, tat gat eh.

WORCESTER
Amen.

SEQUOYAH
Brother Cherokee: as Stand Watie has said, some of us have lived here for a decade, some for a generation. Many children have grown to manhood in these hills. The Western government called this Council for the single purpose of welcoming our brothers from the East, to assure them that they are free to join us as one people. Will anyone speak for the Eastern band?

(A few people call, "Ross! John Ross!" ROSS moves to the center.)

ROSS
Mr. Chairman, with due regard to this gesture of friendship, and with the utmost respect for the organization you have established over the years since you left home, we modestly submit that there are no Eastern and Western bands, but one Cherokee people.

(This brings a murmur of satisfaction from the entire assembly, then a smattering of applause.)

ROSS
We respectfully urge you to consider that your total population is around four thousand, while the main body now arrived is over twelve thousand, three times as many. In view of our long separation, we suggest that you join us in setting up a new government by popular vote.
WATIE
(Irked.)
You want the people to vote? Twelve thousand to four thousand? So that's it!

DENNIS
Are you afraid for the people to vote?

WATIE
We are well acquainted with the tricks of John Ross! For years he sat with his wine-drinking aristocrats in Washington while a tide of white settlers overran the Cherokee country!

(The western elements shout approval!)

Instead of preparing our people to sell their lands for a good price, he forced the Cherokee into fighting the government! So, you were driven out like cattle! John Ross pretends he loves the Red Man, yet he himself is seven-eighths white!

(The two factions shout defiance at each other. SEQUOYAH quiets the crowd.)

SEQUOYAH
These recriminations are unseemly. Speak of unity, not division.

JESSE
Mr. Chairman, why not select three men from each side, let these six choose three more, and these nine draft a code of laws under which the tribes can unite?

SEQUOYAH
An excellent idea! I hereby ask both factions to take under advisement for twenty-four hours this new proposal, and bring a reply to this Council tomorrow morning. Now, if there is no objection, we stand adjourned.

(The people start to go, apparently satisfied. ROSS steps forward.)

ROSS
People of the Cherokee, hear me a moment. The U.S. Army and the white population around here believe that this Council was called to organize a war on the whites. The Governor of Arkansas has actually called up his militia. Therefore we urge you to behave with all propriety and judgement. In heaven's name stay away from the saloons at Fort Gibson. Let us camp here by the river, visit among ourselves, renew old acquaintances, and thank God for our blessings. We are not a beaten people! As the venerable Jesse says, "Stand attired in the morning red! Your pathway lies at the treetops!"

(The people applaud loudly. The WATIE group leaves, except for SARAH, who pulls away from them and stands gazing at DENNIS. He goes to her, and they walk away together. WATIE looks back at this. DENNIS hurries SARAH offstage on the other side. WATIE stalks out.)

SEQUOYAH
(Lifting his hands.)
John Ross speaks well. Let the people dance. Now is the time of the green corn. Let our young people dance for joy as the rich earth nourishes the young corn.
(The music rises on a rather lively dance: percussion for deep rhythm, woodwinds to carry an irregular, wandering melody, an occasional harp sequence. The background screen is gold and green. The green corn, danced by men, is nourished and brought to maturity by the earth, danced by women. The dance continues for three minutes, then as it finishes the lights dim out. The music of strings is heard in a hesitant, tentative dark mood as the Narrator speaks, a man's baritone voice. The background moves to dull red and dark textures.)

NARRATOR (Second Male Voice)
In spite of the urging of Sequoyah, the Western faction turned down this proposal, along with Ross' idea of a new government, and the first big Council adjourned in anger. Certain leaders met privately to work out a new proposal, in order to call another Council. Divided or not, the nation had to have unified government. But then a horrible tragedy took place. John Ross heard about it while working on his new home at Park Hill.

Scene 3
(The choir is heard singing "Oralee." SARAH and DENNIS come running out onto the center stage down right. He grabs her around the waist and tries to kiss her, but she pulls away laughing. DENNIS tries to catch SARAH, who continues to elude him, laughing and backing in circles. The music dies out.)

SARAH
(Hands on hips.)
How do you expect to get Mr. Ross' house built with all this foolishness going on? One crowd singing Oralee, a handful sawing and hammering, and you chasing me all over the place. What will people say? Don't you have any manners?

DENNIS
All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.

SARAH
Work? For heaven's sake, you haven't turned a hand all morning!

(DENNIS stands back and bellow the last line of "Oralee," ends with a flourish.)

DENNIS
Did you ever hear such a grand voice?

SARAH
Worst noise I ever heard in my life.

DENNIS
It's the others who sound bad. My voice is wonderful.

SARAH
Hah!

DENNIS
I am also a fine dancer. Watch this.

(He and SARAH dance a few steps, leaping and twisting.)
SARAH
This is silly, dancing at eleven-thirty in the morning! Mr. Ross' house will never get finished.

DENNIS
It's his own fault.

SARAH
His fault? How?

DENNIS
He brings his beautiful nieces west, and they invite their beautiful friends to visit, like you, and we can't get any work done. Besides, it's lunch time.

(He takes her in his arms a moment, then she turns away. DENNIS takes her hand.)

DENNIS
Sarah!

SARAH
Dennis, do you realize that Uncle Stand and Chief Ross despise each other?

DENNIS
A Chief despises no one.

SARAH
You know what I mean: my whole family signed the 1835 Treaty and moved west: Uncle Stand, Reverend Boudinot, the Ridges... your family belongs to the Ross Party.

DENNIS
(Taking her hands.)
It is our job to bring them together.

SARAH
Yes, but how?

DENNIS
By getting married. If both sides will have grandchildren in common, the fighting will have to stop.

SARAH
So that's why you want to get married!... to bring peace to the Cherokee! It has nothing to do with me!

DENNIS
Will you go with me to Washington? I have an opening in a law firm.

(Before she can answer, JESSE hurries in, tense and grim-faced.)

JESSE
Where is Chief Ross?

DENNIS
What is it? Have you seen a ghost?
JESSE
(Waving his hand impatiently.)
Where is the Principal Chief?

ROSS
(Coming out, rubbing his hands on a cloth, followed by others.)
Here, Jesse. What is it?

JESSE
Elias Boudinot has been murdered!

(The women gasp. The men stand frozen. SARAH'S hand goes to her throat. ROSS shakes his head in stunned disbelief, rubs his forehead in bewilderment.)

ROSS
Murdered?

JESSE
Also Major Ridge . . . his son, John . . .

(ROSS stands shaking his head. SARAH sobs, buries her face against DENNIS as he holds her closely.)

Last night John Ridge was dragged from bed and stabbed to death. His father was ambushed early this morning on the road to Arkansas and shot five times. And hour ago, hardly a mile from here, Elias Boudinot was butchered by three men.

DENNIS
. . . all within three hours, at different places . . .

ROSS
(Turning away anguished.)
Three murders carefully planned . . . I should have thought of this! I should have known! I did know, without realizing . . .

DENNIS
(Intensely.)
They sold Cherokee land!

ROSS
People will say I did this.
(Turning away.)
Oh, Jesse! . . . assassination! Killing and more killing! Just like the tribal raids of a hundred years ago! Must we be always and forever killing?
(Stiffening.)
Sarah, go quickly and pack your things! Stand Watie will come riding in here with an army! Go quickly!

DENNIS
We are not part of this feud!

JESSE
Dennis, be sensible! Send her home for a while, till this thing blows over!
DENNIS
We will get married at once!

ROSS
(Somewhat irritably, firmly.)
Send her back to her family! ... or you'll both be dead by nightfall! Sarah, pack your things immediately! You girls help her. You fellows harness up a rig!

(The girls hurry out with SARAH, and the young men go the other way.)

DENNIS
The least I can do is drive her home.

ROSS
Sarah will drive herself home. Jesse, take this young man and head north immediately! Go quickly, Jesse. When things quiet down, we will talk.

(Men with rifles enter and post guard.)

JESSE
Dennis, are you coming?

DENNIS
I have my horse. Start on in the buggy.

(The choir is heard humming "Oralee." JESSE shakes ROSS' hand and goes out. SARAH re-enters, says goodbye to the girls, who then hurry out. SARAH sets down the carpetbag and looks at DENNIS. He takes her in his arms. The music stops.)

We will go back East, to Washington. I'll practice law.

SARAH
We can't leave now.

DENNIS
Why not?

SARAH
Because we are Cherokee.

DENNIS
(Inflamed.)
Do you see this circle of riflemen? The Cherokee are savages! ... three men murdered in one day!

SARAH
We have to work with our own people.

DENNIS
White men will take over the Territory and drive us farther west! Where do we go next? ... California?

(She turns away in confusion.)
While Cherokee fight among themselves, white men take over.

SARAH
Well, we can't solve our problems by running away!

DENNIS
Sarah, I want us to be somebody! Is there any special virtue in living in a wilderness?

SARAH
It is our duty as Cherokee to stay here and rebuild our nation! Do you know why the white man always wins? Because white children are made to work and build!

DENNIS
What's the use? The Indian is disappearing anyway. People mumble about "the twilight of the Cherokee."

(ROSS re-enters quickly, pauses to listen.)

SARAH
Don't talk like that! Your father said there is something great that the Cherokee will do. We must labor to bring about that day. Dennis, the White Man and the Red Man are like two rivers coming together. Each changes the other, but off in the distance at last they become one stream, flowing toward the same ocean. Neither one wins out: they simply mingle together. It is like our marriage, Dennis, like our loving each other.

(He embraces her in silence. ROSS comes down to them, puts his hand on DENNIS' shoulder.)

ROSS
Practice law here, Dennis. We are going to build a capitol. We must set up law courts. The government has to go on. Will you think about it?

Scene 4
(The music rises. DENNIS looks at him, reflects, glances down, and without answering he puts his arm around SARAH and hurries her out. The music is harp and flute.)

SARAH'S VOICE
For everything there is a season, and a time for everything under heaven...
A time to be born, and a time to die;
A time to plant, and a time to pluck up what was planted;
A time to kill and a time to heal...
All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full:
To the place where the streams flow,
There they flow again.

(The colors on the background screen change slowly, still showing a ruined landscape of trees in mist. SEQUOYAH enters slowly, walks down to ROSS, pauses, then goes by. ROSS notices him, looks away. The two men seem searching for words.)

ROSS
Two years have gone by, and these murders are still not solved.

SEQUOYAH
Perhaps they will never be solved.
ROSS
But this thing runs through our people like a hot mist, dividing, destroying!

SEQUOYAH
Grief passes. Time goes sweeping on, washing out all the footprints of the past. Be patient.

ROSS
You are wearing a new scarf.

SEQUOYAH
I have come to say goodbye.

ROSS
(Shocked.)
No! Sequoyah must not leave his people.

SEQUOYAH
This is what they told me when I was a boy: "Stand attired in the morning red: your pathway lies at the treetops."

ROSS
Westward . . . always westward . . . you have to stop sometime!

SEQUOYAH
My world is gone. I am a tired, ineffectual old half-breed.

ROSS
You are the most respected man in the Cherokee world! You gave us dignity, decency. You taught us to communicate. You separated us from barbarians and made us men. I need you! All about us there is tension and bitterness. You cannot leave me!

SEQUOYAH
My time has come to search back of the sunset.

ROSS
How can I tell our people that Sequoyah has gone away?

SEQUOYAH
(Gazing off.)
Do one thing for me: build schools! . . . schools for boys and girls, schools for men and women. You have a great opportunity. There is not a female seminary west of the Mississippi.

(The death music is heard softly, the Dancer is seen in a dim light, and Sequoyah turns away with a shiver and grasps his elbows. The Dancer comes down toward Sequoyah.)

The Cherokee have a strange yearning to go backward. They harbor old grudges and nurse old wounds. Teach our people to live! Teach them, before it is too late!

ROSS
But you are the one to do this!
SEQUOYAH
(Moving away.)
Get a man like Stephen Foreman. I have no mind for organizing. I am a pitiful old dreamer in a world of action. My place is out in the woods alone. My sun is going down forever.

(The music rises in a plaintive longing. SEQUOYAH plods out of sight as the Dancer follows at a distance. The screen remains dimly lighted as the NARRATOR speaks.)

NARRATOR
Sequoyah was gone, and with him went unity and stability. The result was five long years of violence. Houses and barns were burned, fathers and sons were stabbed or shot in cold blood, as each side fought to destroy the other.

But by 1846, Ross' long struggle in Washington was beginning to show signs of victory. The President of the United States was James K. Polk. It had been another Tennessean, Andrew Jackson, a friend of Polk, who had inflicted the treaty of 1835, and no Indian tribe could expect much from Washington in those days.

Scene 5
(As the lights rise, POLK is entering the office. He goes back of a large desk to sit. DANIEL WEBSTER rises, as the two men exchange nods, and MARCY goes to put some papers before POLK. He examines them and then speaks as the narration stops.)

POLK
Marcy, you said you wanted Senator Webster and me to hear a letter.

MARCY
I have it here, Mr. President.

POLK
Daniel, do you wish to sit or stand?

(WEBSTER shrugs.)
I don't know why I even bother to ask you. A stubborn Yankee is going to do what he wants to anyway. Go ahead, Marcy.

MARCY
(Reading.)
The Cherokee who signed the Treaty of 1835 knew they were running a dreadful risk. By their laws it was death for any person to barter away land, even to the United States.

WEBSTER
That's exactly why those three men were murdered as soon as the main body reached Indian Territory.

MARCY
(Shifting, resuming his reading.)
Ridge, Boudinot, Rogers, Bell, and others united and made the treaty. They had counted the cost and had deliberately made up their minds to offer their lives, if necessary, to save their people.

WEBSTER
Poppycock! They betrayed their people.
POLK
Daniel, please! . . . let's hear the letter.

MARCY
(Still reading.)
I consider Ridge, Boudinot, and Bell and their associates as having acted on the
purest principles of patriotism in negotiating the treaty; their object was to
save their country from a war of extermination and ruin, and to provide them
a quiet and peaceable home, which they could not obtain in the East, in the
land of their fathers.

WEBSTER
Of course not! They were being hounded and scourged by unscrupulous white
scalawags, aided and abetted by the United States government!

MARCY
(Irked.)
Senator Webster, the man who wrote this was John Schermerhorn, a minister of the
gospel!

WEBSTER
Gospel? Hah! Why Schermerhorn is a shyster and a crook!

POLK
Then why did he write this article?

WEBSTER
To ease his conscience: four thousand Cherokee died on that march!

POLK
Four thousand?

WEBSTER
For seven years now the Cherokee have been angry, divided, frustrated. So the
Secretary of War seeks to perpetuate this division by keeping this ridiculous
treaty in effect.
(Exploding.)
In heaven's name, is it our purpose to wipe out the Cherokee people? If so,
why bother to make treaties? Just send in the army and slaughter them all!
It would be cheaper for the taxpayers and it would give the troops target
practice!

MARCY
Senator Webster, I beg you to keep a civil tongue in your head! You are ad-
dressing the President of the United States!

WEBSTER
Thank you, Secretary Marcy . . . confound it, I bet $1,000 on Henry Clay's
campaign---and lost it!

POLK
(Waving his hand.)
Well, let's get to the business of the treaty! Bring in those Indians.

(POLK nods to MARCY, who goes to the door.)
WEBSTER
James, you're backing the wrong side. When these Indians come in, notice the
great cultural differences among these three. Decide for yourself where the
truth lies.

POLK
You? . . . talking about no politics?

(The visitors enter. Ross is first, dressed very conservatively.
Watie and Bell follow, both in flashy clothes. Watie comes
directly to the President, claps him on the back, seizes his
hand.)

WATIE
Mr. President, my name is Stand Watie.

POLK
Mr. Watie, that's a mighty fancy suit of clothes you're wearing.

WATIE
Latest Washington style! This is John Bell. We represent the Western Cherokee.
In our opinion the Treaty of 1835 spoke the will of our people, and if they
were allowed free elections, that fact would soon be borne out.

WEBSTER
Didn't you have free elections last spring?

WATIE
(Quickly.)
Free elections are impossible. First they transferred General Arbuckle from
Ft. Gibson to Baton Rouge. Then General Zachary Taylor came from Ft. Smith
...

POLK
Did you have some special relationship with General Arbuckle?

WATIE
Oh no, not that. You see . . .

POLK
Wait a minute. Am I correct? . . . the Cherokee nation has about four thousand
early settlers called Western Cherokee, about two thousand who like yourself
came in 1835, and about fourteen thousand who came with Ross in 1838.

WEBSTER
That's true. The vast majority consider John Ross their leader. Mr. President,
I present to you the Principal Chief of the Cherokee.

(ROSS and POLK shake hands. Watie turns away irritably.)

POLK
Mr. Ross and I met twenty years ago at the home of Senator Henry Clay: a
reception for the British ambassador, I believe. I remember your charming
wife. I trust she is well?

ROSS
She died eight years ago, Mr. President . . . one snowy night in a cave above
the Arkansas River, during the march from Georgia.
I am happy to say that two years ago Miss Mary P. Stapler, of Wilmington, Delaware, did me the honor of becoming my wife - much to the joy of my brood of children.

POLK
I am glad to hear it. Now, let's see: Mr. Watie, a considerable body of Cherokee oppose any new treaty with the United States, is that correct?

WATIE
We have no business maintaining a separate government inside the United States government. We should be subject to the laws of this country.

POLK
As far as I am concerned, all people are subject to law.

WATIE
Then see to it that our leadership enforces the law.
(Spreading his palms.)
Thirty-three murders in the last three years, all unpunished.

POLK
Chief Ross, do you wish to answer this?

WEBSTER
Let me answer it: the 1835 Treaty recognized the Cherokee as a sovereign nation capable of governing their own affairs. But they have never been allowed to do so.

POLK
Why not?

WEBSTER
The Army at Ft. Gibson - General Arbuckle - has continually interfered.

POLK
In what way?

WEBSTER
Selling whiskey to the Indians, making false arrests on trumped-up charges, opposing and ridiculing the Cherokee government. The same applies to Arkansas: Cherokee are arrested and taken into Arkansas by Arkansas militia.

POLK
For what reason, Marcy?

MARCH
Oh, to testify in court . . . to answer complaints from white people.

POLK
What complaints?

MARCH
Mostly about unpaid damages.
WEBSTER
(Sharply.)
Let's be precise, Secretary Marcy: the Arkansas border is peopled by unscrupulous whites who prey upon the primitive Indians and make continuous trouble. Indians are hauled into court without even knowing what they are charged with!

POLK
How can a man be arrested in Indian Territory, and taken to court in Arkansas? Marcy, I don't like this! What else, Daniel?

WEBSTER
The government still owes the Cherokee millions in damages for their property in the East.

POLK
Go on.

WEBSTER
Innocent people are victimized by white scalawags because the Cherokee have no clear title to lands in the Territory.

POLK
(Spreading out the papers.)
Very well, Senator. I am proposing to Congress a new treaty. It provides that a large piece of the Indian Territory belongs to the Cherokee... that means all the Cherokee, not just one faction.

ROSS
Most gratifying.

POLK
(Reading.)
General amnesty for all crimes, closing of military outposts, laws to be administered by local authorities...

ROSS
Very good.

POLK
A sum of five million dollars for reimbursement of claims against the government. Mr. Watie, a sum of five thousand each is provided for the heirs of Major Ridge, John Ridge, and your brother, Elias Boudinot.

(WATIE broods in silence.)

Mr. Watie?

WATIE
This new treaty sounds like a good thing.

POLK
I shall do my best to secure passage of this bill only on one condition: I want you two men to shake hands, and promise to work in harmony for the peace and progress of the Cherokee people.

(ROSS and WATIE look at each other. WATIE slowly puts out his hand and ROSS takes it firmly, as each places his hand on the
other's wrist. The music rises in a chord of triumph as the lights dim down quickly. The music diminishes to a background for the NARRATOR.

NARRATOR
Thus in 1846 John Ross and Stand Watie shook hands before President Polk, and in that one handshake the Cherokee nation was re-born. When the news was tele-graphed back to Indian Territory, a giant rally was called, and the Victory Dance was brought forth again, the first time since 1814, when the Cherokee helped defeat the British.

Scene 6
(The music changes to percussion for the movements of the following sequence. As the narration continues without interruption, lights rise to show the center stage filled with Indians in elaborate costumes, some primitive, some in sartorial excellence.)

On this special day the Five Civilized Tribes came together, both to pray to their ancient gods and to dance the long-neglected rituals of their ancestors. The Cherokee watched as their brothers assembled.

(The background is gold and red, drums of many tones are blended, also rattles and noise makers in rhythm. A Seminole in plumed headdress, loin cloth, long light cape, and mocassins appears, moves ceremoniously in a half-dance down to a kind of altar on the upper level, while certain of the dancers come in and stand poised: the females in brightly-colored costumes. The NARRATOR has not paused, but is speaking during this movement.)

Our Brother Sun, your soft eyes fall upon the people of the Seminole, the children of Osceola, making green and red and gold the fruits of the field. O Giver of Life, tell us in dreams again of our homeland beside the faraway ocean.

(As this speech ends, the Seminole from the upper level and the NARRATOR continues.)

The ancient land of the Creek always looked northward toward the tall pines. It stretched southward through the high plains and the distant meadows. We walked with the sun and the rain. O Red Eastern Wind, come and sit by the hearthfires of the Creek people.

(The background changes to wine and purple. The same process is repeated as the Chickasaw comes forward in wine-colored tunic, a 6-inch-wide medallion suspended on his chest by a large chain about his shoulders, a pale yellow turban, dark blue pantaloons New Orleans style, mocassins. He drops handfuls of seashells onto the altar from a basket, gazing upward.

The Chickasaw tiptoed beside the silent rivers and the cypress trees, when the hunting moon made the tree-moss into blazing velvet. O River of Life, we are floating twigs on your infinite bosom, white shells scattered along your edges. Wash our souls, O River of Life.

(The background is a red ball in a mass of beige and brown. The same process is now repeated for the Choctaw, who comes wearing buckskin trousers, striped tunic, a broad-brimmed hat, and two braids of hair hanging down his back.)
In the brown fields the Choctaw followed the plow all the way into the sunset, then back around to the sunrise. We laid aside the flintstone, the twang of the bowstring, and took up the plow and the warping-frame. O Father World, O Earth Mother, we go on remembering and waiting.

(The stage is now filled with dancers, surrounded by a colorful mass of onlookers. The music suddenly bursts into a vivid dance movement and the dancers sweep into action. In the Victory Dance the adversary is the Death Dancer, who suddenly races down into the midst of the dance and scatters the dancers. They fight him, and several times he successfully drives them back. Then at last he is overwhelmed and driven off into the darkness, after which the joyful dancers whirl to a vivid climax and the lights go down.)
ACT II

(The opening music is a heavy discontent, the foreboding of tragedy. It continues for about 30 seconds as the lights dim down, then it stops and the Dancing Day music is heard coming up. The lights rise in a dim blue on the center stage to show preparations for the garden party at the Seminary. A few people pass to and fro, several girls run with their costumes to the left sidestage. Here the lights rise more brightly to show the female students getting dressed for the dance. They chatter and laugh among themselves. SARAH walks in, looks at them with a smile, turns, comes down off the turntable to a fence corner (well, stump) down right where there is a hidden microphone. The music dims down and the laughter and talk subside.)

SARAH

During the Eighteen Fifties, times were better. But peace did not come. Outlaw gangs such as the Starr boys robbed and plundered and murdered, and had their own murdered in return. There was continual wrangling with whites across the Arkansas border. A lot of Cherokee moved to Texas, which had now become a state, but in Eighteen Forty-Nine they were driven out. I felt so sorry for Chief Ross, with his people strangely unable to find themselves . . . the pathway of the Cherokee was still a trail of tears . . . as Sequoyah had said, a strange desire to destroy themselves.

(Brightening.)

But, they did listen to Sequoyah: here on this hilltop they built a female seminary. It was now the spring of Eighteen Sixty-One, and the students were holding their annual music and elocution contests. I remember spending the whole day sewing on dresses. Young girls grow so fast . . . in the strangest places . . .

AMY

Sarah? I need help. Sarah?

(SARAH turns back to the stage and starts helping AMY, who is working with an exceptionally large bosom and a corset which is obviously too small. SARAH'S beautiful daughter, TAIARA, now eighteen, sits in the background combing her hair before a mirror.

SARAH

Let me see . . . try sucking in your stomach.

(As the girl pulls in her middle, SARAH quickly fastens the lower part of the corset halfway.)

Good! Now exhale and shrink your chest.

(As the girl pulls in her chest, SARAH tugs and fastens the corset.)

There, that's it.
(The girl cannot breathe. She makes a desperate gasping sound like the bark of a seal. SARAH hastily unfastens the corset, and as it bulges open the girl leans against the table and breathes deeply. SARAH is resigned. Two of the girls finish getting their dresses on and go out. AMY takes up her petticoat and resignedly puts it on, with SARAH'S help. SARAH studies the bosom.)

Amy, what makes you so . . . so big? I mean . . . well, at least we tried.
You put on three petticoats, you hear?

TALARA
I'm going to make that Jimmy Looney kiss me tonight.

SARAH
(Barely listening, studying AMY.)
Amy, I said three petticoats. What were you saying, Talara?

TALARA
I'll just kiss him.

Who?

SARAH
Whom.

TALARA
Him. Jimmy Looney.

SARAH
(Suddenly aware.)
Kiss whom?

TALARA
Him. Jimmy Looney.

SARAH
(Suddenly aware.)

TALARA
It's not ridiculous. It's fun.

SARAH
Fun my foot! It's . . . well, it's ridiculous, that's all! Do you know what kind of girls kiss boys?

TALARA
Every kind.

(Two more girls go out, leaving AMY, TALARA, and SARAH. AMY is smoothing her dress, fretting about her amplitude, as SARAH watches critically, trying to listen to TALARA.)

SARAH
What kind?

TALARA
I said, every kind.
SARAH
Every kind of what? I guess it's all right, Amy.

TALARA
Every kind of girl kisses boys.

SARAH
(Hearing again.)
Talara! I'm shocked! If your Grandfather Jesse were alive . . . if your father heard you talk like this . . . Amy, you need something else, a touch of color. Why don't you go out there by the porch and get a rose . . . pin it on yourself . . . draw attention to . . . I mean . . . put it in your hair, Amy.

(AMY goes out. SARAH watches with a sigh.)

I wonder why girls want to wear less and less? Two petticoats is almost indecent!

TALARA
It's unfashionable to wear more than one.

SARAH
Nonsense!

(Tidying the room, she glances at herself in the mirror.)

TALARA
(Pulling on her dress.)
Underpants, overpants, corset, camisole, petticoat, dress---that's plenty. In New Orleans they wear only one petticoat.

SARAH
New Orleans is a wicked city. And, as usual, your father is late.

TALARA
Mention wickedness, and instantly you think of Father. I'll bet you two had a gay old time.

SARAH
Talara, you're a wicked child! I should wash your mouth with soap.
(Studying her.)
There's something wrong with you. Other girls catch husbands, girls not one-tenth as attractive as you.

TALARA
I'm in no hurry. I'm perfectly happy. Anyway, why settle on one?

SARAH
Talara! You're eighteen years old, and still unmarried! It is no joking matter.
(Surveying her.)
Maybe you have too much education. A girl shouldn't know too much. Maybe you're too . . . Talara, how many petticoats do you have on?

TALARA
One, Mother. I'm a wicked New Orleans Jezebel. Now I'm going out and track down Jimmy Looney and kiss him . . . passionately.
SARAH
Talara! You idiot!

(DENNIS is entering. He stops and stares.)

DENNIS
A gentle, competent mother does not address her offspring as idiots. After all, it's a reflection on the parents.

SARAH
Fiddlesticks.

(She is picking up scraps of clothing and placing them on the table.)

DENNIS
(Coming to SARAH, glancing at TALARA who is again combing.)
Our daughter is beautiful, Sarah, much more beautiful than her mother.

SARAH
Ah, yes, I am a faded old woman of thirty-seven.

DENNIS
If you had gone with me to live in Washington . . .

TALARA
Just think, I might not have been born.

SARAH
What a happy thought! Well, noble husband, are you sorry we stayed here?

DENNIS
Well, a man has to do what his wife wants now and then . . . understand I said "now and then" . . .

(Taking SARAH in his arms.)
The dance is about ready. Come fly with me to the masked ball.

SARAH
You're always wanting to fly somewhere. Our daughter speaks of attacking a handsome young man, and you want to fly to the masked ball. I am surrounded by idiots: an idiot husband, idiot children . . .

(They go out. TALARA decides to work on her stocking, and she is bending over, he dress pulled up above her knee, when JIMMY enters, nervous, bashful, dressed fit to explode. She suddenly realizes someone is watching, and she straightens with a flounce.)

TALARA
Well! A lady might as well dress in the public square in Tahlequah! This is not a dressing room . . . it is a railway station!

JIMMY
If an engineer saw you, his train would jump the track.

TALARA
What is that supposed to mean, Mr. Looney?
JIMMY
It means you're beautiful.

TALARA
(Casually.)
And so?

JIMMY
Well... that's all.

TALARA
That's all?

(He is taken aback. Boldly summoning his courage, he moves closer, touches her shoulder, jerks back his hand nervously. She shrugs and turns away. Once again he gathers strength and touches both her shoulders, turns her around. She looks at him. He wilts, gazes helplessly at the audience. She suddenly seizes him and kisses him, leaning him back over the dresser until he is almost on his back. When she finally releases him, he slides to the floor in the heap. She turns, brushes her hands with finality, turns, and goes out onto the center stage. JIMMY scrambles to his feet, leaps into the air with a yell, and hurries out.

Scene 8

The music rises, the lights come up on the center stage, and the dance begins. The dancers are female, in white ballet-like costumes in a moonlit garden, with pale blue lights and Japanese lanterns. The dance continues for several minutes, and then it ends with the dancers curtseying low. The people onstage applaud. As the applause dies out, suddenly STAND WATIE strides onto the scene, stops, looks around. The people react with stunned silence. Several people crowd in back of WATIE.)

WATIE
Where's John Ross?

SARAH
What is it, Uncle Stand?

WATIE
Secession, that's what! Secession!

ROSS
(Having come out of the crowd.)
Secession my hat! The Cherokee have a treaty of friendship with the United States!

WATIE
What happened today makes that treaty null and void!

ROSS
Nothing makes that treaty null and void! We pledged our word!

VOICE IN THE CROWD
When did the United States Government ever keep its word?
WATIE's people shout agreement.

WATIE
The State of Arkansas has voted to join the Southern Confederacy!

(WATIE's sympathizers shout in triumph. The other side looks about in stunned silence.)

This has been coming a long time!

(The people cheer and agree, some dancing around. WATIE has a folded flag under his arm. Two men grab it and unfold it, holding it up by two corners while the rest salute gravely then shout "Hooray." Gradually they grow quiet and turn to ROSS, who stands grim-faced.)

ROSS
Why are you saluting that flag?

WATIE
We're Southerners, all of us! You are too!

ROSS
We are Cherokee!

WATIE
You trying to say you're not a Southern sympathizer? ... a man who once owned slaves on a Georgia plantation?

ROSS
We are Cherokee!

WATIE
Louisiana, Texas, and now Arkansas: what do you expect us to do?

ROSS
Remain neutral!

WATIE
You mean take no sides at all?

DENNIS
For centuries the white man stood by and watched the Cherokee kill each other. This time we will stand and watch them do it!

WATIE
(Growing angry.)
Do you think we can separate from other states all around us? ... live on an island by ourselves?

ROSS
We must!

WATIE
Maybe you can, John Ross, with your Yankee friends and your Eastern wife and your fine house and your rich cronies in Philadelphia! But the land of the Cherokee is in Southern territory. We are Southerners!
ROSS
Stand! For heaven's sake, calm down!

WATIE
(Turning to his crowd.)
The Principal Chief thinks I am a fool because I choose to go with Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas!
(Coldly.)
All right; let me tell you this, Mr. Principal Chief, and all the rest of the blue-bellied Yankee! - we have a Confederate government, and its president is Jefferson Davis, and its capitol is Montgomery, Alabama, and this is our flag! And when the time comes, here is one Southerner who is going to take up arms and defend his homeland! Anybody else feel the same way?

(His crowd cheers lustily.)

DENNIS
(As they grow quiet.)
Why didn't you take up arms and defend your homeland back in Eighteen Thirty-Five, instead of running off to Indian Territory?

(There is an ominous silence. WATIE comes toward DENNIS and faces him from a few steps away.)

WATIE
One day I'll settle with you!

SARAH
Uncle Stand! This is my husband! ... your own nephew!

(WATIE glares, turns, strides out. His followers stand in a kind of confusion, then one of them bravely starts singing "Dixie," and the others join. They march around and follow the flag offstage, a rather pitiful band. The others stand gazing in bewilderment. SARAH buries her face against DENNIS. The heavy roar of drums rises as the lights dim out quickly. The drums are joined by the whine of ricocheting bullets in the background, dimming down somewhat for the NARRATOR.)

NARRATOR
To the Cherokee Indians the conflict which began in Eighteen Sixty-One, echoing down the years from Bull Run to Appomattox, was not really a war in support of a Southern Confederacy or anything else. It was a sudden, diabolical opportunity for old feuds and hatreds to burst open again, a tragic excuse for the Cherokee to kill each other, for the nation to be crippled beyond recognition. The quarrels of the white man again destroyed the Indians.

Scene 9
(The drums continue for a moment, but the firing stops. Lights come up on the WATIE area. His wife is a watchful woman with a retiring manner who sews on buttons and listens in silence, a kind of buffer for his volatile temperament. She is seen sitting at a table sewing. WATIE enters after a moment, very nervous and impatient, his sleeves rolled up. He wears from the previous scene a pair of gray trousers with a yellow stripe down each leg. He finally sits down heavily. She stops her sewing and comes to him, puts her hands on his shoulders. He breathes deeply, glances up at her, then goes back to his thoughts.)
She studies him sympathetically, then she goes back to her sewing. Back of them enters CORNELIUS BOUDINOT, so much like his father that he can be played by the same actor: tall, slender, scholarly. He has a sheaf of papers. He comes down to the table. WATIE looks at him with a frown and then turns away. The drums stop.)

WATIE
Cornelious Boudinot, my lean and hungry nephew. Why do you have to look so much like your father Elias? Why couldn't you be short and strong and open-hearted? You bother me.

BOUDINOT
Am I welcome in the house of my own uncle?

WATIE
(Impatiently.)
All right, all right, what do you want? Why did you come?

BOUDINOT
I have been elected secretary of the Arkansas Convention.

WATIE
(Looking up.)
What kind of a game are you playing with those politicians in Arkansas?

BOUDINOT
I bring a message from the Governor of Arkansas.

WATIE
Why should the Governor send a message to me? I'm not the Principal Chief of the Cherokee.

BOUDINOT
John Ross is a Northern sympathizer.

WATIE
(Suddenly curious.)
Why should Arkansas elect a Cherokee as secretary of their Convention?

BOUDINOT
The white people of Arkansas want to know what our people are going to do.

WATIE
Oh they do, do they? They want to know what we are going to do... we, a primitive outcast people! We have no voice, no stature, no name, no respect, but they come rubbing their hands mumbling about what the Cherokee are going to do! Thunderation!

BOUDINOT
(Grimly.)
The first thing the Cherokee need to do is get rid of John Ross. Thirty years he has kept himself in office! Now is the time to stop him!

WATIE
How? ... Mr. Secretary of the Arkansas Convention?
BOUDINOT
Four-fifths of the Cherokee people believe in the Southern Confederacy. Only Ross and a little crowd of abolitionists are keeping us neutral.

WATIE
The full-bloods, Cornelius, are Northern sympathizers.

BOUDINOT
You can make them follow you.

WATIE
Why should I?

BOUDINOT
The white Confederates of Arkansas want you as their leader: you, Stand Watie!

WATIE
Why should I?

BOUDINOT
You can make them follow you. Twenty-five hundred rifles are being sent from New Orleans. You must take command!

WATIE
This is ridiculous, I'm not a soldier. I'm a farmer.

BOUDINOT
You're a leader. The Federal Government already looks upon the Cherokee as rebels, because we live in the South! We have to join the Confederacy to get protection! If we don't, Federal troops will take over Cherokee land!

WATIE
That's what I've been telling John Ross . . .

BOUDINOT
Ross! All anyone ever gets from him is promises to maintain cordial relations with both sides . . . and remain neutral.

WATIE
Make John Ross call a Council, and let the people vote on secession.

Scene 10

(Boydinot stands brooding, beating his fist in his palm. Finally he nods to his wife. She clutches her throat, then slowly she picks up the gray coat she has been sewing on, holds it for him, and he puts it on. As the lights dim down he walks out and strides across the center stage to where the lights are rising on an office at Ross' home. Several men are gathered solemnly as Superintendent Pike paces gravely. Watie joins the group. The drums stop.)
PIKE
Mr. Ross, the Confederate States of America have established a Department of Affairs. Mr. David Hubbard, the Commissioner, has sent me here as your superintendent, asking me to convey his best wishes.

ROSS
Thank you very much, Mr. Pike. But you and Commissioner Hubbard must allow us, a sovereign nation, to maintain our own course until this unfortunate matter between you and the Federal government has been settled.

PIKE
It is my information, Mr. Ross, that an overwhelming majority of your people are in sympathy with the Southern Confederacy.

ROSS
A majority of our people will do what the Council assures them is the best thing for the Cherokee nation.

PIKE
You realize, of course, that the states of Texas and Arkansas have seceded from the Federal Union. Your neighbors the Choctaws and Chickasaws have long since joined the Confederacy.

ROSS
Meanwhile, the Creek and the Seminole have declared strict neutrality, and will have no part in any struggle.

PIKE
I merely wish to emphasize, Mr. Ross, that by joining the Confederacy your people would have protection and security.

ROSS
It might also draw down Northern armies into our territory.

PIKE
(Firmly.)
Even if the North should win, you would still lose everything, because you reside in the South. Mr. Ross, we are your friends.

DENNIS
Mr. Pike, every time a white man decides to rob, cheat, or murder an Indian, he begins by declaring his undying friendship. We have heard this for two hundred years.

PIKE
(Irked.)
I understand you have a radical group called Keetoowah, that the members wear two crossed pins on their shirts as a symbol of membership. These are people with Union sympathies, are they not?

ROSS
There is a Keetoowah, or Pin Society. There is also a secret group of Southern sympathizers who call themselves the Knights of the Golden Circle, whatever that means. Personally, I have no interest in secret societies, because usually they are based upon fear of one sort or another.
PIKE
(Picking up his hat with some irritation.)
Is it not a fact, Mr. Ross, that your nation is split wide open?

ROSS
Yes, it is . . . much like the American nation. Good day, Mr. Pike.

(PIKE stalks out. WATIE leaps to his feet.)

WATIE
What do we gain by insulting the new Cherokee superintendent for the Territory?

DENNIS
Upon what authority is he superintendent? Appointed by Jefferson Davis!

WATIE
Don't you understand? . . . we are surrounded by the Confederacy! If we refuse to join them, we will be swallowed up!

DENNIS
(Hotly.)
Why do we have to join either side?

WATIE
I'll tell you why! Right now a division of Confederate troops under General McCullough controls this territory! Meanwhile the Federal Government has said nothing, but the Confederacy has patiently begged us to join them! . . . to join Texas and Arkansas and Louisiana, to join the Choctaw and the Chickasaw!

(He pauses to study the faces around him.)

Superintendent Pike mentioned one very interesting fact: in spite of the Chief's mixed blood, this looks very much like a quarrel between full bloods and mixed bloods, with one clinging to the past, trying to remain an island in a sea of white men, the other trying to take a realistic view of the world, be a responsible part of the life around us!

(A spotlight rises to show the Death Dancer. The music is faint. At this moment a messenger hurries in and hands ROSS a slip of paper. ROSS unfolds it and reads, crushes it, flings it to the floor. WATIE picks it up.)

Yesterday at Wilson's Creek, Missouri, Federal troops were defeated by troops of the Southern Confederacy.

(The Council reacts with shock.)

ROSS
(Shaking his head.)
It seems to be our destiny to be forced into quarrels. Scarcely one generation in a new land, and suddenly we are again surrounded by white men, urging us to join their quarrel.
WATIE

In Virginia the Federal troops were scattered, and also in Missouri. The Federal Government has not sent a new agent from Washington: our annuities have not been paid. The Confederacy sends an agent, they offer to pay annuities, they guarantee to honor our sovereignty. They offer a good treaty, because they are seeking us.

ROSS

(Glancing around the circle.)

I must look to you men for the answer. You are the leaders of our people: Joseph Vann, James Brown, John Drew, Bill Ross, Benge, Stand Watie. Will anyone else speak?

(There is a silence. WATIE stands again.)

WATIE

As God is my witness, I believe the interests of the Cherokee will be better served by joining those states who have economic and social outlook similar to ours. Our decision is made by our location: we are of the South!

DENNIS

(Rising with intensity.)

We are not Southern slave-holders! We are not Northern factory-owners! We are not Texans or Kentuckians or Pennsylvanians! Don't you understand? We are Cherokee, Cherokee! not like any other people! We are Cherokee! We must stand above the fog and dust and confusion of our time, and show this nation how to live! "Stand attired in the morning red! Your pathway lies at the treetops!"

ROSS

Thank you, Dennis. I ask all of you to think carefully, and I now call on the Council to vote. How many wish us to join the Southern Confederacy?

(DENNIS and WATIE exchange looks of defiance.)

DENNIS

Once again you have talked our people into becoming traitors to the United States of America!

WATIE

(A pause of anger, then pointing his finger.)

No man says that to me! You will die for it!

(Scene 11)

(The drums rise. DENNIS turns and walks out. He meets SARAH down center. They look at each other, then she hurries into his arms, and they stand for a moment. The lights dim, and back of them at the mound a spot of a different color rises. Into this leaps the Death Dancer, and as the drums rise in volume, DENNIS and SARAH run offstage quickly. From either side come four dancers, two women and two men in each group. They wear ponchos over leotards, and the ponchos are yellow. The Death Dancer waves his hand and the death music starts. The two sides dance to the music, and as the Death Dancer produces a large white rope, the dancers reverse their ponchos to reveal four blue and four gray, and the two sides come toward the Death Dancer. He...
hands them the rope, and a tug-of-war takes place, a stylized struggle between the two sides with Death at the center. This goes on for about one minute. During the dance the Death Dancer urges them on gleefully, and they strain almost in slow motion, neither side winning. Back of the death music there gradually rise the sounds of battle, so that by forty seconds the battle is a roar of bullets, firing, explosions, and shouts. It builds to a climax, and at sixty seconds the Death Dancer stands triumphant with arms upraised and the dancers all collapse.)

Scene 12

(Lights rise on the left sidestage to show the interior of SARAH'S house, plain and sparse, but clean and attractive. ROSS sits at the table, brooding, tired, older. SARAH pours a cup of liquid, and he thanks her, stirs it, sips thoughtfully.)

SARAH
He'll be here soon. I know he'll want to see you.

ROSS
It doesn't matter. I'll be on my way. Tell Dennis that I ... well, I plan to stay in Washington until I get some kind of a new treaty worked out. (Gazing around in something of agony.)

Oh Sarah, I'm so tired! ... tired of this eternal fighting and quarreling! ... this foolish war between the states ... the Cherokee nation ruined ... our only hope is to open up our territory to white settlers, bring in new money, get us back to life. First of all we have to apologize to the government in Washington.

SARAH
Is the Southern Confederacy finished?

ROSS
The last stand is about to take place in North Carolina, Virginia, somewhere in the East.

SARAH
Someone should tell my Uncle Stand.

ROSS
He's done a thorough job. Between the Yankee guerillas and Stand Watie's crowd the land of the Cherokee is a field of ashes. (Rising slowly.) I'm too tired even to drink your good bark-tea. Maybe when I come back from Washington ... tell Dennis not to give up ...

SARAH
He's tired too, Mr. Ross, like you.

ROSS
He has remained neutral, and the people know that. He has good sense, and they will listen. He needs to step out and assume leadership, take hold of this nation and rebuild it. Only Dennis can do that. Tell him I'm depending on him.

SARAH
I will, Mr. Ross.
(He kisses her cheek.)

ROSS
Our Cherokee women are like nothing on earth, Sarah, and you're the best of them all. God bless you.

(He hurries out. SARAH dries her eyes. The sound of "Oralee" is heard in a low humming. She listens. She gazes out over the audience. Her voice is strong, yet filled with emotion.)

SARAH
(Brooding intensely.)
Oh, Dennis, I should have listened to you. You wanted me to go with you to Washington twenty-five years ago, but I insisted on staying here. For what? Ruin and despair! And now this long endless struggle to get the Cherokee nation back on its feet . . . oh, Dennis!

(DENNIS enters, rather tired and older, but strong and alert.)
He comes to her and she rushes into his arms.)

DENNIS
A man comes home after a long hard day and finds his wife crying. I think I'll go over about Muskogee and find me a good Creek woman, maybe a Chickasaw.

(She laughs and hugs him, then turns to the teapot.)

SARAH
How about a cup of bark-tea? Chickasaw woman make no-good bark-tea.

DENNIS
I'll make a deal with you: you pour the bark-tea while I wash my face and hands.

(They look fondly at each other, then she pours the tea.)

DENNIS
Is Talara all right? And Jimmy?

SARAH
Yes. They stopped by today. The grandchildren looked fine, a little thin, but all right.

DENNIS
Where are the boys?

SARAH
They went to stay a few days with Talara and Jimmy.

DENNIS
And left you here alone? These guerilla raids are still going on.

SARAH
Fiddlesticks. Stand Watie is my uncle. Here, drink your tea.

DENNIS
I'll go see about the livestock . . . close the barn door . . . imagine a lawyer raising cattle, hoeing a garden. Anyway, we'll have something to eat.
It's getting dark. Take a lantern.

(She comes to him and he puts his arm around her.)

DENNIS

(Gazing out.)
The moon is bright. April in this country is like nothing else on earth. Perhaps this has become home for the Cherokee, after all? . . . to make a home here and be content? What was it my father was dreaming? Oh, I wish I could talk to him again! What a wise man he was!

(The Death Dancer appears descending from the path above, and the death music rises softly. DENNIS goes out and around the house. SARAH stands with her hand to her throat, as if afraid of something. Suddenly she decides to follow him. At this moment he is attacked by three dark figures and stabbed repeatedly, dragged back of the house of of sight. She comes out hurriedly, looks for him, calls his name two times, sees the scene back of the house, screams in terror, runs off stage back of the house. The death music goes on for five more seconds as the lights dim out. Lights rise at once on the other side-stage to show the house of STAND WATIE once more. WATIE sits at the table, disheveled, dusty, his uniform grimy. He seems weary and defeated. His wife sits patiently watching him. Back of him CORNELIUS BOUDINOT enters. WATIE turns and sees him, turns back with no reaction, gazing straight ahead. The music has faded out.)

BOUDINOT

There is a lot of mail.

WATIE

Anything from Richmond?

BOUDINOT

President Davis advises us to open the territory to white settlers.

WATIE

(Closing his eyes wearily.)
Six months ago I asked for ammunition, shoes, uniforms, wagons . . . and they write about opening the Territory to white settlers!

(Grimly.)
I wish to the devil they'd give up this eternal yapping about white settlers! He sounds like John Ross. To hell with settlers! We have a war on our hands!

(There is a long silence as he leans back and closes his eyes.)

Anything else?

BOUDINOT

(Flinging down some letters.)
Complaints. Everyone complaining. Captain Bell says that out of five thousand men, one thousand have no weapons whatever except knives. Two thousand have no change of clothing, hundreds are barefoot. He says that they look more like tramps than soldiers.
WATIE
(Dully, his eyes closed.)
Can I help it if the Confederacy is run by nincompoops?

(SARAH enters. WATIE looks at her, gazes away.)

BOUDINOT
A letter from Major Carter, tendering his resignation.

WATIE
(Still leaning back.)
Inform Major Carter that if he leaves his post, I will blow his brains out.

BOUDINOT
I have a message from the women in Tahlequah: they say for God's sake stop
your raiding parties! The whole Cherokee nation is ruined!

WATIE
Tell them I said go to hell.

(SARAH stands grimly.)
Why are you standing there? What do you want?

SARAH
My husband has been murdered . . . three men in gray uniforms . . .

(WATIE leaps to his feet in shocked disbelief. He gazes at her, shakes his head, slowly sinks to his chair.)

WATIE
Now I know how John Ross felt.

SARAH
(Exploding with rage.)
Do you by any chance know how I feel? Or do you care? Do you know how the
hundreds and hundreds of other Cherokee widows feel? Do you?

WATIE
(Hoarsely, defensively.)
I didn't start this war . . .

SARAH
Oh no, but you hugged it to your bosom! I remember four years ago right up
there at the Female Seminary, you were strutting up and down singing "Dixie."
Let's hear you sing a verse now, Uncle Stand. Come on, sing a verse of "Dixie!"
Let the Cherokee people hear you sing!

WATIE
Sarah . . . Sarah . . .

SARAH
My husband did nothing his whole life but try to help the Cherokee people!
John Ross left for Washington to try to make up with the Federal Government,
and he said for Dennis to try to rebuild . . . rebuild . . .

(She stops, sobbing.)
BOUDINOT
General Watie had nothing to do with this. I swear to you he was not even in this Territory.

WATIE
(Turning on BOUDINOT.)
Get out! Get out, or I'll knock your brains out! I'm sick of hearing you talk, sick of seeing you. Get out!
(In a hollow voice.)
I've killed a hundred men, maybe five hundred . . . who knows? . . . and my brother is just as dead as he was that morning twenty-five years ago. Get out, Cornelious, get out.

(BOUDINOT goes out. WATIE is gazing straight ahead.)

(Brokenly,)
Sarah . . . I'm sick inside . . . God help me, I've been wrong . . . wrong! But Dennis was wrong too . . . wasn't he? And John Ross . . . we've all been wrong . . .

(He rubs his face with his hands, then broods again.)
Sarah . . . I swear to you . . . from this moment on I will do nothing but make up for this . . . somehow . . . I will rebuild the Cherokee nation, what there is left of it . . . God help me, I'll do it!

(He buries his face and bows his head. His wife comes to him and puts her hands on his shoulders comfortingly. SARAH looks upward in anguish, turns slowly, starts across the center stage. The choir is humming "Amazing Grace." She slowly grows old, and by the end of this speech she is 83.)

Scene 14 VOICE OF SARAH

They all finally passed away, even Uncle Stand Watie . . . and the years rumbled by like heavy stones, one after the other. I was the only one left, a tired old woman remembering my lost Dennis in the long, long ago. Little by little the new century crept in upon us . . . railroads, schools, banks, hospitals . . . my grandchildren were grown up . . .

(More anxiously.)
Now suddenly they were talking about statehood for Oklahoma . . . no more Indian Territory . . . a state in the Federal Union!

(Looking out and up.)
Do you hear me, Dennis? I know you are listening. They say the Five Civilized Tribes will disappear and a new state will be born. Maybe this is what your father meant, that great thing the Cherokee must do . . .

(The lights rise on the center and a crowd of people comes rushing in, dressed in costumes of 1907. As some of them set up a speaker's stand down left and a sign reading OKLAHOMA, and the statehood date, the music rises suddenly and a group of dancers performs a lusty two-step. The dance ends with a flourish of excitement and the people applaud. The MAYOR on the speaker's stand waves for silence.)
MAYOR
All right, everybody! All right! As mayor of Tahlequah I wanta say one thing: that's the goldangest dancin' I ever saw in my life!

(The crowd cheers and applauds.)

Whaddya call that thing anyway?

VOICE
Two-step!

MAYOR
Two-step! Looked more like two thousand steps to me!

(He thinks this is a side-splitter, and he guffaws as the people applaud.)

Well, here we are, folks. The celebration's about to begin. The great day has come at last: statehood for Oklahoma!

(The people cheer. He looks over the crowd.)

Got to git on with our speech-makin'. Dennis? Dennis? Where are you? Hey, where's that boy got to?

VOICE
He's goin' over to Granny Sarah's house.

SECOND VOICE
Gone to fetch his grandma.

MAYOR
Tarnation! I thought she uz here already. Well, we can't do much till they git here.

VOICE
Go ahead an' introduce 'im.

MAYOR
Well, I reckon I might as well. That'll save time when they do git here.

(The people applaud.)

Ladies and gentlemen: our speaker today is a graduate of the Harvard Law School.

(There are low whistles of amazement.)

That's right: a poor dumb Cherokee boy graduated from the Harvard Law School in Boston, Massachusetts.

VOICE
I don't believe it!
MAYOR
Don't make a dang what you believe. He's got a diploma to prove it. Furthermore, he's been selected to serve in the administration of the first governor of Oklahoma. Course, that figgers about right: they couldn't run this new state anyway without at least one Cherokee to look after everything.

(The crowd cheers. The MAYOR points.)

Well, here they come now. Hey, Dennis, come on over here, boy!

(DENNIS and SARAH enter. He is a young replica of his grandfather, and SARAH holds his arm as they cross. The people applaud. He leaves her down center and goes up the speaker's stand.)

DENNIS
You people are expecting me to say something important, but I'm just a poor dumb Cherokee who happened to have a great father and mother, and especially a great and wonderful grandmother, that grand lady standing there.

(The people applaud. The Death Dancer appears, and through the speech comes slowly down and at last wraps SARAH in his cloak and they go off together.)

She's the one who should be talking to you. That awful day when Elias Boudinot and the others were murdered, my Grandfather wanted to leave this country and never come back, but my Grandmother Sarah kept him here and made a man out of him. When John Ross and Stand Watie quarreled, my Grandmother stepped between them. When Stand Watie was out scorching this land and killing Yankees, it was my Grandmother who made him stop it and rebuild this nation.

(The people applaud.)

That great lady walked all the way from North Carolina to Oklahoma, and here she is today, proud and glorious, a queen of the Cherokee. Nothing I can ever do will ever match my father or my grandfather, but all of us put together could not hold a candle to this great woman.

(The people cheer. The Dancer wraps his mantle about her and they start away. The lights dim down on the stage, but SARAH and the Dancer walk into lights as they go off. SARAH'S voice is heard.)

SARAH
You hear, Dennis? That's our grandson talking. Aren't you proud? Now I understand, Dennis. The past has to die so the future can be born. The phoenix burned itself to death so a new bird could rise up out of the ashes of the past. The one great thing the Cherokee had to do was to die, so that the great State of Oklahoma could be born . . .

(The people have left the stage.)
NARRATOR (Man's Voice)
This is what they told me when I was a boy. There was a fabulous bird, brightly colored, sacred to the sun. The bird made a nest of twigs, then set the nest on fire and died by burning itself alive. From its body came forth another bird, replacing the body of its father. Gathering strength, it rose and flew, taking the ashes and the nest to a secret place and hiding them forever.

(The music rises, the lights show the phoenix being carried out onto the stage in brightly-hued colors. The dance goes on for about two minutes and then comes to a climax, after which the lights dim down. The music rises broadly, the lights come on, and the cast is arrayed over the whole stage area. The closing chords last about ten seconds, then the lights dim out.)
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