

MASTER OF THE UNIVERSE: THE THEATRICAL DIRECTOR AS ARTIST AND
COMMUNICATOR

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Dedication

To my parents who, though they did not have the benefit of formal education, are among
the smartest people I know

*“Wisdom and good judgment live together, for wisdom knows where to discover
knowledge and understanding.” (Proverbs 8.12 TLB)*

&

To my husband, Dr. John Thomas, and our children, Katie and Stephen

*“What gives us hope and joy, and what will be our proud reward and crown as we stand
before our Lord Jesus when He returns? It is you! Yes, you are our pride and joy.”
(1 Thessalonians 2.19-20)*

Acknowledgements

According to the participants in this study, a collaborative creative effort produces a better result than the efforts of one. That has certainly proven to be true in the production of this thesis. I am grateful to the many people who have been part of this process. The guidance, encouragement, accountability, and investments of others have made this possible.

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I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the people who love me. They have believed in me and kept me moving forward through obstacles that threatened to derail me. My husband shared his wisdom from a lifetime of learning; my parents said, “You can do it, Neesie!”; my friends prayed for me and my family loved me through my absences from them for the sake of my studies. I can’t adequately express how much they have all meant to me while I have pursued this degree and completed this research.

You must remember, family is often born of blood, but it doesn’t depend on blood. Nor is it exclusive of friendship. Family members can be your best friends, you know. And best friends, whether or not they are related to you, can be your family.

– Trenton Lee Stewart, *The Mysterious Benedict Society*

The love of family and the admiration of friends is much more important than wealth and privilege.

– Charles Kuralt

Abstract

This qualitative study was undertaken to examine the processes by which theatrical directors determine the theme for a production and communicate their unifying artistic visions to the agents who, in turn, relay it to the audience. The research revealed that the director's message is formed through comprehensive study of the text, the artifact around which the system is formed, as well as information which provides context for the work of the playwright; consideration of the theatrical organization's missional objectives (the environment in which the system exists); and concerns of artistic leadership. Communication of the concept to stakeholders, and ultimately to the audience, is accomplished by clear communication of the artistic vision (the system's goal) and strategy which mediate collaboration among the artists. The collaborative process reflects Systems Theory in its circularity of process, co-causality and synergy. Theories emerging from the research are that the theatrical production company functions as a centralized, temporary system; that theatrical directing can be taught from a systems perspective; that the objectives and orientation of the system are formed in the director's process of preparation; that effective communication is necessary for leadership of the system; and that transformational leadership is effective for facilitation of the creative collaboration.

Key words/topics: Systems Theory, collaboration, theatrical director, communication, script analysis, phenomenology, qualitative research, transformational leadership, interpersonal communication, artistic vision, minimalism, Georg II, temporary system, centralized system

Table of Contents

Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Abstract	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Rationale	2
Purpose of the Study	4
Definitions of Terms	4
Locating the Researcher	5
Significance of the Study	5
Chapter Summary	6
Chapter 2: Literature Review	7
Systems Theory	7
Role of the Director in Historical Context	16
The Director as Artist	19
The Director as Communicator	26
Chapter Summary	29
Chapter 3: Methods	30
Nature of the Study	30
Selection of Participants	31
Data Collection and Analysis	32
Ethical Considerations	36
Chapter Summary	37

Chapter 4:	Results	38
	Profile of Participants	38
	Participant Responses	41
	Interview Question #1	41
	Interview Question #2	44
	Interview Question #3	46
	Interview Question #4	50
	Interview Question #5 & 6	53
	Interview Question #7	56
	Interview Question #8	59
	Interview Question #9	63
	Interview Question #10	67
	Additional Comments	71
	Chapter Summary	73
Chapter 5:	Discussion	74
	Answering the Research Questions	74
	Research Question #1	74
	Research Question #2	78
	Research Question #3	81
	Implications	86
	Limitations of the Study	92
	Recommendations for Further Research	94
	Conclusion	96

Appendix A: Correlation of RQs and IQs	98
Appendix B: Consent Form	100
Appendix C: Interview Questions	102
Appendix D: Study Participant Profiles	103
Works Cited	104

Chapter One: Introduction

The theatre world is full of creatives who have something to say and are most comfortable saying it from the stage. Some long to be under the lights in front of an audience, delivering their lines with confidence. Others prefer to speak their piece through the creations of their hands, designing visual aspects of a production. Whether actor or designer, each has a unique singular perspective on what s/he wants the audience to experience. Each, left to his/her own devices and talents, has the ability to tell a story and perhaps to move the audience. However, the power of a unified system to communicate is much greater than the sum of its individual parts. Ideally, the efforts of the actors and designers come together to deliver to the audience a common message under the leadership of the director.

In the work of the theatre, there are multiple players and contributors to a production but there can only be one vision (the *thema*). In order to present a cohesive and impactful message, contributions of all of the players must be focused to support that concept. The director is the artist who is responsible for developing and communicating the vision (purpose or direction for the production). However, when the show goes up, he is not usually the one on the stage, bringing the message to the audience. Instead, it is the work of actors and designers that the audience sees and experiences. How then does the director communicate his intention to the agents whose work communicates it to the audience? The purpose of this phenomenological, qualitative study is to examine the process by which theatrical directors determine the theme for a production and communicate their concept to the agents who, in turn, transfer it to the audience.

Rationale

The role of director is relatively new, having surfaced in the last 150 years (Sarlos 240). It remains somewhat undefined and emergent, “an unmapped art or an academic discipline with almost no fixed landmarks” (Trousdel 25). Rather than giving definition to the role of theatrical director, renowned directors such as Konstantin Stanislowski and Michael Chekhov seem to be associated with schools of thought about acting and actor training, describing directing by its relationship with other arts and artists rather than as a self-governing function. According to Richard Trousdel, “Directing offers few schools of thought about its nature, preparation or technique” (25). Directors hone their craft through trial and error, often as assistant to an experienced director. Formal classes in directing are often taught in a workshop format where students’ efforts are critiqued and the training borrows methods from other art forms such as visual arts, acting and literary criticism (Trousdel 25).

In a field in which most information is gleaned from the experiences of those who are in the trenches, a phenomenological study is appropriate for exploring the communication structure which translates the written text to audience experience. Though the experiences of study participants may not be generalizable across the art form, they give insight into the processes of working directors and may provide the foundation for informed speculation as to the applicability of their methods. Viewing the work of the theatrical director through the lens of Systems Theory allows the researcher to explore the theatrical production company as a system and the role of the director in that system. This yields information regarding the applicability of Systems Theory to the process of the theatrical production company, the functions of the director as the guiding

element of the centralized system, the role of communication in the leadership of the system, and the validity of Systems Theory as a means for teaching theatrical directing.

According to Ludwig von Bertalanffy, pioneer in its research and application, Systems Theory is appropriate for studying any multifaceted entity (Phillips 469). Broader than a theory, General Systems Theory is considered by some scholars to be a unique worldview which emphasizes the interrelationships between elements (Whitchurch and Constantine 325). The theatrical production company may be viewed from this perspective. It is a team, developed around an artifact (the text) for a limited time and specific purpose (Posner 35). It has the characteristics of a system, consisting of objects which have unique attributes, is characterized by relationships between the objects and exists within an environment with which it interacts (Hall and Fagen 52). As such, Systems Theory is an appropriate lens through which to view the workings of the theatrical company. In other studies, Systems Theory has been used to examine art and architecture (Kwinter 91); interaction between actors and audience in the environmental ecosystem of theatrical performance (Sherry n.pg.); social organization, social recognition and public opinion within theatre communities (Bickerstaff 87-88); and the plot and character interactions of specific plays, such as Pia Teodorescu-Brinzeu's study of Othello (Teodorescu-Brinzeu 21-41). A dissertation by Jimmy Bickerstaff investigates Creativity Process Theory which combines individual creative process with Systems Theory dynamics to create a collaborative theatrical product (Bickerstaff iv). However, in preparation for the present study, this researcher found no evidence of the application of Systems Theory to the director's process of creation and communication. The aforementioned studies do not address the theatrical process from a systems perspective

or the role of the director in the theatrical system. This study treats the theatrical production company as a holistic system and examines the role and influence of the director as the guiding element of the centralized system.

Purpose of the Study

Using Systems Theory as a theoretical guide, this study seeks to discover the process by which directors discern the message or theme of a play and communicate it to the actors and designers who, in turn, relate it to the audience. The following research questions are addressed:

RQ1: How does a director determine the message s/he wishes to communicate through a production?

RQ2: How does the director communicate his/her concept to the agents who will, in turn, relay it to the audience?

RQ3: How does this process reflect the principles of Systems Theory?

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study *director* is understood to indicate the person in a managerial position over a theatrical company; one who makes artistic and logistical decisions regarding the work of the company and the intended impact upon audience experience and response. *Company* indicates all members of the production team, including actors, designers, artists and technicians. *Vision* is understood to indicate an over-arching concept or theme. *Audience* indicates those who fill the house during a performance, who attend a production with the assumption that they will be the recipients of a theatrical performance.

Locating the Researcher

My interest in director communication stems from my own experiences as playwright, actor, stage manager, teacher and sometimes director. I have had opportunities to work with and under the guidance of directors who came to projects well-prepared and equipped; who guided the company in sharing a cohesive, unified message. I have also observed directors, and perhaps been numbered among them, who seemed to be feeling their way through the production process, figuring it out as they went along. As writer, I have seen the spark of an idea become words on a page and then, in the hands of a director move through the rehearsal process to a fully realized production with audience as recipient of the message. From my perspective, director communication is essential for determining the objective (what s/he wishes the audience to experience) and the route by which the production company (actors and designers) will bring it about. Each director has a pattern unique to him/her which guides the company, either purposefully or by happenstance, in understanding and presenting a message to the audience. Studying the processes of directors provides insight into the system by which words on a page become performed message, and opens the door to a body of knowledge that lies within their experiences of director communication.

Significance of the Study

The literature is wealthy with sources which admonish the director to create a conceptual vision for the play, to communicate well with actors, to understand the work of the actor and assist him/her in locating the truth to be communicated in his/her performance. This study seeks to provide better understanding of how those tasks are accomplished by gleaning insights from and looking for patterns in the work of

experienced directors. It views the theatrical production company as a system and explores the role of director as primary element in the centralized system, the processes by which the objectives and orientation of the system are established, and patterns of director communication in system leadership. While the scope and nature of the study are not sufficient to generalize the findings across the discipline, it is hoped that this study adds to the reader's understanding of the theatrical production company as a collaborative system and the work of the director in leading the system.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate the processes by which the theatrical director develops his/her vision for the production and communicates it to the actors and designers who, in turn, relay it to the audience. This chapter introduces the study, gives a rationale and purpose for the study, locates the researcher and discusses the significance of the study. As justification for the study, Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature considering the historical role of the director, the director as artist, the director as communicator, and the tenets of Systems Theory. Following the literature review, Chapter 3 is dedicated to the methods used in this original study. Chapter 4 reports the results and Chapter 5 provides discussion, conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the process by which theatrical directors determine the theme for a production and communicate their concept to the agents who, in turn, transfer it to the audience. To that end, a review of the literature is undertaken to examine the role of director as artist, as communicator and in historical context. Additionally, an exploration of Systems Theory literature is conducted.

Systems Theory

Let one good musician be told to play whatever comes into his mind, and at worst you may have something that you do not care to listen to. Indeed, if he is a good musician and your tastes happen to agree, then probably you will find it quite pleasant to hear what he produces. But ask each of one hundred excellent musicians in an orchestra to go about choosing his own notes in complete disregard of the others, and the result will be musical mayhem, noise (Ramo 27).

In his book, *Cure for Chaos: Fresh Solutions to Social Problems through the Systems Approach*, Simon Ramo captures the difference between a collection of artists presenting their own works loosely structured around a topic and the cohesive, purposeful product of artists functioning within a system. “It is a choice between something that we can enjoy or a cacophony of sounds that is bedlam rather than music” (Ramo 27).

The theoretical orientation for this original study is Systems Theory, pioneered by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in the mid-twentieth century. Originally proposed as a concept for understanding scientific and mathematical processes, systems thinking has spread

across a wide range of fields and is applicable to any organization or process. In their book, *Systems-Sensitive Leadership*, Michael Armour and Don Browning point to the example of a woodland pond (7). Biologists may study the pond, identifying the many individual organisms which live in or around it. However, the pond is not just a collection of isolated species. Instead, it exists because of the interactions between the living entities which make up the ecosystem. While examining an individual element in isolation from the whole provides information about that particular member of the system, understanding its relationship to the system supplies meaning for its function within the whole. To fully understand an element, it must be examined in interaction with other elements. Bertalanffy states that the only consequential way of studying an organism is to examine it as a system, treating it as an interaction of mutually dependent elements (9). He notes that the behavior of a system's parts is different in interaction with each other than when studied independently (Bertalanffy 31). Almaney observes that each element of the system may be considered a subsystem of the larger system and that "a change in one of the subsystems could produce far-reaching reverberations in the other subsystems and consequently in the larger system" (36).

The core assumptions of Systems Theory are that a system consists of objects (parts, elements, variables) which have unique attributes (qualities or properties of the objects), that there are internal relationships among the objects, and that the system exists within an environment with which it interacts (Hall and Fagen 52, Systems Theory n.pg.). Three concepts of systems functioning are circularity of process, co-causality and synergy (Armour and Browning 47). *Circularity of process* refers to the cyclical nature of systems in which processes within the system provide feedback that is incorporated into

the continuing activity of the system (Armour and Browning 47); for example, air circulating through the cooling system of a home. In his article, “The Nature of Living Systems”, James Miller provides an explanation of this cycle that is particularly applicable to the theatre company. He states that the *structure* of a system is the arrangement of its elements, a configuration that is always changing over time (284). Any change within the system is identified as its *process*, including management of information, the ongoing *function* of the system and the *history* of the system (birth, growth/learned habits, development, change, evolution, aging and death). These aspects of a living system create a cycle: the structured system carries out its function, information is processed and history is created, and a new structure arises out of the additions to the system’s history (Miller 284). In the context of the theatrical production, this cycle can be observed in the rehearsal process. Director to actor, actor to text, actor to character and character to character relationships undergo evolution and growth as each rehearsal session moves through its paces. Connections and divisions, passages and obstacles, objectives and means are revealed. New learnings are processed, resulting in changes to the structure. Each subsequent rehearsal builds upon the development of its forerunner.

The concept of *co-causality* refers to the potential of each system element to influence change in others (Armour and Browning 47, Hall and Fagen 59). The action or choice of one element can be seen to impact all of the other elements. The cooling system of a home provides a clear example of interdependence. The thermostat triggers the air conditioning unit. By cooling the air in the home, the A/C unit has the ability to trip the thermostat which, in turn, signals the A/C unit to turn off. Systems Theory views any

organization not as a product or entity but as “a total and dynamic process, consisting of a number of variables that constantly interact with one another and with the external environment” (Almaney 350). According to Bertalanffy, the system as a whole has properties that are absent from its isolated parts (qtd. Phillips 474). The interrelated elements form a unified, dynamic whole which is more than the sum of its components. In the case of the production company, the resulting theatrical experience is more than the accumulated creative impulses of the ensemble’s members. Therefore, the parts of a system are best studied within the context of the system as they cannot be separated from one another without altering both the individual part and the system as a whole (Phillips 471).

Synergy refers to the principle that the whole is more than the sum of its parts; that the elements or processes within a system can produce more when working together than the accumulated sum of the elements (Armour and Browning 141). The interplay of the elements produces a type of expression that cannot be achieved by the elements separately. Consider the example of a telescope. Looking through a single lens alters one’s perspective. However, looking through a combination of lenses, such as is found in a telescope, provides a view that is different from what is seen through the individual lenses or by adding the two views obtained when looking through the lenses separately. In the theatrical performance, the actors act as lenses through which the audience views the story, each contributing nuances which interact to produce the telling of the tale.

Communication, the flow of information within the system, acts as the glue which holds any system together and integrates the elements of the system in a way that internal stability is maintained. In this way, the system is a communication network (Almaney

37). Communication also links the system with its environment, allowing it to adapt to changes in the environment (Almaney 37). In a system made up of human elements, communication plays a vital role in coordinating the efforts of the members. “People aspire to a deeper knowledge of their role, their manager’s expectation, and how their contribution and efforts articulate” in the work of the system (Vasile 185). In a centralized system, one element plays a dominant role in the functioning of the system (Hall and Fagen 60), its actions and decisions directing the behavior of every part of the system. In the case of the theatrical company, this central role is assumed by the director.

There exist within every organism two systems of communication: maintenance and adaptive mechanisms. The maintenance system is activated to deal with internal tension and conflicts between components, taking action to restore stability (Almaney 37). In the theatrical endeavor, the director mediates between artists, characters, and impulses, maintaining the equilibrium of the system by keeping all of the elements moving in the same direction. The adaptive mechanism is activated in response to interaction between the system and the external environment, assessing environmental changes and determining the appropriate response (Almaney 38). The theatrical director coordinates with the system’s environment which consists of the theatrical organization, the audience and the physical space. The system’s bipartite communication system acts as a stimulus for action and provides coordination for the aggregate so that it may function as a synchronized whole.

In addition to its functions for uniting and maintaining systems, communication plays a role in establishing a system’s identity. Contrasting with elementarism in which a collective is recognized by its individual parts, the interaction and interdependence

between the elements of a system produce structure and meaning for the holistic organism (Almaney 36, Ruben 164). That system identity is constantly reproduced in the system's internal and external communication. Human systems are characterized by "complex patterns of human networks playing off one another", their interactions determining the character and dynamic of the whole (Armour and Browning 7). In a system of human beings, with each person being a subsystem of the larger system, an individual does not act independent of the system; instead his/her actions are, in part, formed by the system. The person is, at the same time, affecting and being affected by the system. "In certain types of systems, each of the parts or elements seems to take on its identity only by its relation to the others" (Phillips 473).

Systems Theory has been applied to research in various disciplines. El-Bdour implemented a bioecological systems approach to the study of the influence of television on preschool-aged children (El-Bdour n.pg.). In 2006, Kenneth Williams administered Living Systems Theory to the examination of leadership in rapid church growth (K. Williams n.pg.). Stow employed a family systems perspective to a rhetorical analysis of mother-daughter relationships in post-Civil war Spanish novels (Stow n.pg.). In 1998, Bausch used integrated systems science approach to conduct a meta-analysis of Systems Theory in the arena of social psychology (Bausch n.pg.). These examples offer just a sampling of the wide use of Systems Theory in research applications (Balram n.pg., Harris n.pg., Lu n.pg., Petrakis n.pg., Wilson n.pg.). The following five articles provide examples of Systems Theory utilized in the study of theatre and the arts.

In their article, *Some Management Issues in Temporary Systems: A Study of Professional Development and Manpower – The Theatre Case*, Richard Goodman and

Lawrence Goodman use the theatrical production as a temporary system in which to examine management styles and concerns. They define a temporary system or organization as “a set of diversely skilled people working together on a complex task over a limited period of time” (Goodman and Goodman 494). The authors compare role-clarity model with blurred-role model to determine effectiveness for utilization of human resources, management style and professional growth. They conclude that blurred-role definition is beneficial to creating group participation and interaction and for promoting professional growth and that role-clarity is instrumental for task accomplishment (Goodman and Goodman 501).

In his analysis of Fiona Templeton’s Poet’s Theatre production, *YOU-The City*, James Sherry examines a unique production in which the actors, audience and environment all function as contributing elements of the system. In this environmental theatre piece, the audience member is consciously and actively participating in the acting out of scenes. No longer observers, the audience engages in the collaborative network of individuals and enters into the action of the play. In this particular work, which focuses on concerns for the well-being of the environment, each of the fifteen scenes is in a unique setting within the city, with actors and audience moving between them and interacting with them. According to Sherry, the definition of ecosystem provided by McGraw Hill’s life sciences glossary supports this interchange: “a unit of interaction among organisms and their surroundings, including all life in a defined area” (qtd. n.pg.). Sherry states that this interaction between actor, audience and environment breaks down barriers in traditional theatre which inhibit the “essential symbiosis and cooperation required to create and produce theatre and to manage its resources” (n.pg.). While the

tenets of Systems Theory are evident in this article and the production which it addresses, Sherry notes that he engages Systems Theory hesitantly out of concern that it be used to determine poet's theatre's environmentalism (n.pg.).

In his dissertation, *The Collaborative Artist: Creativity Theory for Theatre Production*, Jimmy Bickerstaff uses Creativity Theory to explore the creative process within an individual. Then, he describes Systems Theory as the operating system for the theatrical production which coordinates and melds together the creative processes that are operating within each individual simultaneously. In Chapter Five of his dissertation, Bickerstaff presents two case studies of evolving systems, each a separate production company under the auspices of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. He conducted interviews with members of each company, exploring their unique creative practices in an effort to understand the evolution and function of the system. In his conclusions, Bickerstaff notes that, even in a collaborative project, creative individuals are emphasized over the creative system (264). However, the collaborative theatrical process brings together the creative fragments produced by individuals and integrates them into a synergetic whole. He observes that "in a collaborative creative enterprise these processes are operating simultaneously in every individual involved and in the collaborative as a whole" (265).

Marylouise Caldwell applies General Living Systems Theory to explain and predict the buying-consuming thoughts, feelings and actions associated with attending performing arts events. In *Applying General Living Systems Theory to Learn Consumers' Sense Making in Attending Performing Arts*, she proposes a consumption system which is based upon behavioral triggers and constraints, motives for consumption, and buying-

consuming activities, all of which are drawn from an individual's long-term memory and everyday life experiences (Caldwell 499). Caldwell's system examines variables considered important to understanding the experiences associated with attending, going beyond understanding of choice to discerning the lived experiences and perceptions of participants. Regarding cognitive transactions, Caldwell notes that information processing regarding buying-consuming is a combination of rational (a conscious appraisal based on logic and proof) and experiential (relying upon feelings and memories of past experiences) processing (507). For example, one might consciously evaluate his/her reasons for liking the performance of a specific piece of music. At the same time, the song might automatically evoke feelings of nostalgia in the hearer. The person's response to the performance, then, is a combination of both automatic and controlled operations.

Pia Teodorescu-Brinzeu applies Systems Theory to the analysis of Shakespeare's *Othello*. She uses the "black box" method of analysis of the dramatic character because nothing is known about Othello except what we learn from "the inputs of the environment (the replies of the other characters) and the outputs of the hero (his own replies)" (Teodorescu-Brinzeu 352). Each of the characters, then, is a subsystem and their interactions create the system. Attention is given to the historical system (past to present to future) which evolves and feeds back into itself, molding future interactions and decisions. Teodorescu-Brinzeu's primary focus is on the system that is Othello which, at the beginning of the play is in equilibrium. Inputs received from other subsystems (Brabantio, Cassio and Iago) cause the Othello-system to be out of balance, as manifested in jealousy, restlessness and changes in values. The murder of Desdemona brings the

Othello-system back into balance but leaves the social system off-kilter. Othello's discovery of the truth and self-imposed punishment (suicide) restore order to the collective system.

Having the characteristics of a system (consisting of objects which have unique attributes, characterized by relationships between the elements, and existing in an environment with which it interacts), the theatrical production company may be understood more clearly by the application of Systems Theory to its study. This researcher has found no other studies which have applied Systems Theory to the exploration of the director's process of creation and communication. This original study uses systems as its theoretical lens to explore the work of the director as artist and communicator.

The Role of Director in Historical Context

Though early accounts of Greek, Roman and Medieval theatre indicate little about the existence of the directorial role, it is logical to assume that there was some coordinating, if not interpretive presence for this system. Accounts of fifth century Greek drama speak of the playwright/director, the *didaskalos* (teacher) who instructed the players on the proper performance of the play and, through the performed message, instructed the audience (Brockett and Hibly 21). In the late Middle Ages (1300-1500), the *pageant master* acted as actor/manager/director of cycle plays, pageant wagons and festival plays, overseeing practical issues of logistics, personnel and business matters (Brockett and Hibly 85-6). Moving forward into *commedia dell'arte*, the Golden Age and Renaissance theatre, discussions of the evolution of theatre seem to focus on the playwrights and forms of storytelling, still without mention of an organizer or guide

(Brockett and Findlay 8, Schanker and Ommanney 301-6, Taylor and Strickland 51). The Restoration period brought the addition of music, dance, moveable scenery, illusionistic painting, costumes and special effects (Schanker and Ommanney 309). Eighteenth century neoclassicism saw an increase in the intricacy and elaborateness of costumes and scenery as well as melodramatic and grandiose acting (Brockett and Findlay 9-10). The spectacle created by adding these inanimate elements to the system drew crowds but history does not record an organizing authority behind these productions.

Early references to leadership in American theatre, in the 1700's, were to "managers" who were largely focused on the business aspects of a company. Staging was probably worked out by actors in one or two rehearsals before a performance (Lillywhite 9). Little or no attention was paid to methods of staging and little time was dedicated to rehearsing (Lillywhite 9-10). The early nineteenth century saw an increase in the number of theatrical productions and the improvement of business methods, acting and playwriting (Brockett and Findlay 19, Lillywhite 10). At that time, the actor was the primary influence in the theatre and "no one seemed to have any responsibility for directing his performance so as to give a more unified effect, or to produce a more authentic scenic background in which he could play" (Lillywhite 10). Prominent or celebrity actors were likely the central, guiding elements of the system. The 1800's brought changes in theatrical management with attentive, even tyrannical managers who oversaw the details of staging, costumes, scenery and stage direction (Brockett and Findlay 22; Lillywhite 11, 12, 13; Taylor and Strickland 6). Though the leadership styles of these theatre managers were the exception rather than the rule, they began the metamorphosis of the "stage-director", of taking control of the stage back from the "star"

actor (Brockett and Findlay 25, Lillywhite 11) and of the emergence of director as central system element.

It was not until the nineteenth century that a director emerged from among the company of actors. Georg II, Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, patron of the Meiningen Ensemble and hailed as the first modern director (Brockett and Findlay 38, Sarlos 240, Taylor and Strickland 51, Williams 87), believed that the play rather than the actors should be the focus of the audience's attention (Rogers & Rogers 4). The Duke revolutionized theatrical productions with the rise of director as the dominant artist and central element, bringing the efforts of actors and artist together in a unified production. Reflecting the systems principle of synergy, German opera composer, Richard Wagner, coined the term *gesamtkunstwerk* (English *aesthetics*) to represent this coming together of artistic disciplines to create a single art form – the theatre (Anbari 3). Before Saxe Meiningen stepped off the stage and into the director's chair, plays had been overseen by playwrights or lead actors in a production (Brockett and Findlay 25, Rodgers & Rodgers 4) or, as in nineteenth-century American theatre, by disciplined theatre managers. The Duke's main contribution was an emphasis on ensemble acting versus the dominance of virtuoso actors or productions used as vehicles to showcase spectacular scenic elements (Sarlos 241). Instead, he emphasized the performed and visual interpretation of the play's text, the artifact around which the system is built, coordinating all aspects of the production to create the illusion of reality. It was Georg's assumption of absolute artistic control that has caused him to be recognized as the founder of modern directing (Brockett and Findlay 38).

Expectations for the modern theatrical director seem to be vast and varied. S/he is expected to be the counterpart of the playwright-critic, interpreting the written text (Trousdel 26); midwife to the actors' characters (Jones 43); director-mediator between actor and audience (Marker 256); sculptor-architect-choreographer (Trousdel 26); sounding board for the players (Marker 257); to possess an innate sense of timing and humor (Mufson 59); and to "mine the truth of the story and the text and bring that truth together with the actor" (Eddy 27). In 1941, Herold Lillywhite quoted *Theatre Workshop's* definition of the role of director.

The new director is expected to be more than a show man, more than a clever stage manager. He is expected to be a man of all-around culture, and deeply versed in all the arts of the theatre. He is expected to be able to develop actors into genuine artists and to weld them (if he works with a permanent company) into a functioning collective. More than this he must be capable of giving any script a deep and individual reading so as to enrich the conceptions of the playwright (qtd. 15).

In pursuit of this study's focus, our attention will isolate from these many expectations to concentrate on the roles of the director as artist, the director as communicator, and how the director impacts the system of theatrical production.

The Director as Artist

Raised in an entertainment family, George Clooney has had great success in television and film. IMBD (Internet Movie Database) lists 71 acting credits, 29 producer credits, 6 director credits, 5 writer credits and 2 for crew work when he was a child ("George Clooney" n.pg.) The award nominations for his work are numerous and have

resulted in two Oscars and three Golden Globes. In a recent interview with BBC's Will Gompers regarding the film *Monuments Men* for which Clooney was credited as producer, director, screenwriter and actor, he was asked which of his four roles he would choose if he could only do one. Before Gompers had finished posing the question, Clooney quickly answered,

Directing... If you want to bring it back to art, directing is the painter and every other element of it is paint. Writing is paint; producing is paint – everything else. The director uses each one of these pieces to put the story together. The director is the painter. And it's infinitely more creative. You're answering over a thousand questions a day and hopefully getting most of them right (Gompers n.pg.)

Though he was speaking of the film production process, Clooney identifies a function of directing that is often appealing to actors in live theatre: the freedom to color with a whole box of crayons; not being confined to the shades that fit a particular role or function within the team but the liberty to choose the hues which will color one's unique and very personal interpretation of the story as a whole. This section of the literature review examines the director's work of choosing the colors by determining the creative concept and direction of the theatrical production system.

The starting point for developing one's particular interpretation of any play is the script. It is the common artifact around which all elements of the theatrical production company system revolve. As with oration, theatre begins with the written word. Unlike oration, however, theatre adds another dimension, the theatrical art object, created to convey information to the audience (Loeffler 19). Though it may seem intuitive, J.D.

Patterson reminds readers of his essay, *Price's Proposition as a Tool*, that the script is the foundation of any theatrical production (4). In her book, *Directing Plays Directing People: A Collaborative Art*, director Mary Robinson states that the director's most important relationship is with the play itself; that all other collaboration in the production system is built upon that rapport (12). Elizabeth Davies refers to the company of a production as "a textual community built around a single, common document", positing that the script mediates everything that happens within the work of the company (Davies 185). For the temporary system of the theatrical company, the script is the reason for the system's existence as well as the source of its goals. Davies notes that the script is the telling of the story which represents the playwright's original vision – the story to be told – and the one artifact which all of the system agents have in common (Davies 194). Schanker and Ommanney distinguish a script from prose or poetry by its intended use; that it is meant to be acted out and interpreted for the audience by the actors who build their own interpretations upon the concept of the director (6), reflecting the systems principle of co-causality. Hodge describes the playscript as "an artificial object you can disassemble and reassemble as you can any other man-made object" (15).

As the written version of the playwright's story, "the play script is a work of art capable of infinite interpretations" (Williams 87). As "the total designer of a production – the principal 'idea-man' who matches concrete form with imagined ideas" (Hodge 6), the work which the director does in script analysis, percolated through his/her personal interpretation, charts the course for the journey which the company-system will take in bringing the story to the stage. Script analysis has been described as tedious and painstaking (Davies 186), an extensive study of the play (Hodge 56, Posner 37),

immersing oneself in the play's world (Robinson 31), getting to know the playwright (Mitchell 44), "a penetrating search into a play" (Hodge 14), and as the foundation of any successful stage production (Patterson 4). In the book, *The Director in the Theatre*, Marian Gallaway theorizes that it is in the analysis of a play that the director's creative work is truly located (90). Analysis is the process by which the director-subsystem dissects the script as s/he seeks to understand the playwright's intentions and to develop a unique vision for his/her production of the play.

Aristotle identifies six elements of script analysis: plot (the order of the incidents), character (the features and traits of an agent whose response impacts the action), thought (the argument of the action), diction (the word choices of the agents), music (all that is heard), and spectacle (all that is seen) (Patterson 4). Trousdell states that the work of analysis includes identifying "given circumstances", uncovering "underlying human situations" that "govern individual character behavior and inform thematic content", and defining "attentive states" which form the "perceptual sequence of a play's structure" (27). Mary Robinson sees the goal of analysis not as to create a reference manual for later but to get to know the play as thoroughly as possible before it begins to evolve as the words on a page become actors on a rehearsal stage (Robinson 20).

A director's perspective, what the playscript is all about, comes about as the result of thorough examination of the text and the feelings s/he experiences during his/her study of the script. "Play-analysis is the director's objective support for his feelings about a playscript" (Hodge 15). Various approaches exist to analysis and interpretation of the script. Early American attempts at directing tended to stress visual composition, the focus of which was translating the text into patterns of body placement and movement

(Trousdel 25). Stanislavski's early directing followed this physical approach but later evolved to focus on truth in acting. His later analysis centers on uncovering "the motivational impulses that propel dramatic action, that respond to the contextual details of the play's given circumstances, and that point toward the motivational spine connecting the units of action" (Brockett and Findlay 241, Taylor and Strickland 9, Trousdel 26). Author Anne Fliotsos recommends approaching the task as script *interpretation* which allows for a broader perspective of the script and "places equal emphasis on the personal reflections of the reader as perceiver" (Fliotsos 153). Interpretation places the burden of meaning on the reader's perception of the script, including emotional, visceral and metaphorical responses, allowing for a more complete interpretation of the material (Fliotsos 154).

William Price, attorney turned playwright, introduces the use of proposition as a tool to help the director identify the main action of a play (Patterson 5). He defines a proposition as "the brief logical statement or syllogism of that which has to be demonstrated by the Complete Action of the play" (qtd. Patterson 5). Following the structure of Aristotle's syllogism, the three premises are the Condition of the Action (the beginning or point of attack), the Cause of the Action (the middle or main crisis) and the Resulting Action (a question that is answered by the climax of the play).

Francis Hodge states that a director's perception of what the story is all about results from a thorough study of the playscript combined with an awareness of the feelings which s/he experiences during the study of the script (15). He lists seven elements to be identified when taking the play apart and looking at the mechanics of how it tells the story: given circumstances, dialogue, dramatic action, characters, ideas,

tempos, and moods. Hodge theorizes that these components are what create the moods and feelings which the audience experiences (Hodge 16-18).

Trousdell recognizes the director as the counterpart to the playwright-critic, interpreting the text as well as analyzing the genre, period style, historical context, vocabulary and devices which the playwright employs (26). He advocates the identification of basic human situations as the key to anchoring perception in the tangible world and for providing context to the actions of the characters. "To situate is to define, to locate, to place, to settle boundaries, to make order, to measure relationships, to establish a point of view" (Trousdell 28). It is his assertion that there exist basic human situations that are common to most people within a culture and to which those people have ingrained patterns of unconscious and spontaneous behavioral responses. As the director identifies the situations of characters and scenes, s/he is able to analyze how dramatic structures of the play function. He states, "Awareness of situation, and of our intuitive capacity for responding to it, changes directorial analysis from a literary to a dramatic stance by helping the director distinguish thematic content from its behavioral matrix and by defining structure as a sequence of perceptual states aroused through empathy with a play's human situations" (Trousdell 37).

Regarding his method, Ingmar Bergman believed that "art arrives only by design (Marker 258). He said, "I have to prepare myself for every little moment, in every little detail. I must know that *this* is what I want to do, and then I can improvise" (qtd. Marker 258). By contrast to the practice of in-depth, exhaustive analysis conducted by Ingmar Bergman and many other directors, Neil Pepe, artistic director of The Atlantic Theatre Company in New York City believes that over-analysis can become a self-conscious

process that focuses more on the director than the play (Eddy 27). In an interview with Kathleen Eddy, he states, “When I was younger I felt like you needed to break everything down, moment to moment and understand all of the moments. But the longer that I have worked I have tried to get out of the way more” (Eddy 27). Award winning American theatre and opera director Anne Bogart concurs. In an interview with Daniel Mufson, she said, “As a young director, one wants to say: This is what I think, and this is what I know. As I get older I’m more interested in complexity, in opening something up rather than closing it down” (Mufson 62).

In the process of analysis, many directors create tangible expressions of their thoughts and impressions. The director may use reference books, drawings, models, movable figures, etc. to create a stage in his imagination. In preparation for directing Anton Chekov’s *The Seagull*, Stanislavski retreated to a tower on his brother’s estate for six weeks during which time he made over 500 notes and created a notebook full of stage designs and descriptions, diagrams of movement and groupings, notes on blocking, and visual and vocal rhythms (Jones 19). Elizabeth Davies advocates that a director’s notes include role-specific lists for designers and actors, notes for the director’s own use regarding “how each part of the play affects the work of each member of the creative team” (reflecting the systems principle of co-causality) so that s/he may guide them in bringing to life his/her concept of the story (188). In their little book *Notes on Directing*, Frank Hauser and Russell Reich propose that a thorough analysis be refined to a statement of not more than twelve words which expresses the core of the play (6). This brief statement should answer the following questions.

- A. What is the first impression the actors and the design should make on the audience?
- B. What should their final impression be as the play ends?
- C. How do you propose getting from A to B (Hauser and Reich 6)?

Taylor and Strickland instruct the novice director to record all of his/her reactions to the play and the analysis process for reference during the production process (166). By contrast, Mary Robinson states that comprehensive notes produced by her analysis are condensed into one sentence which represents the “spine” of the play (20). Once the spine has been identified, she puts away the notes and seldom refers to them again. Instead, she relies upon her understanding of the story’s world as she communicates her production concept to the system agents (actors and designers) who will bring the story to the stage.

The Director as Communicator

Loeffler states, “If communication is the transmission and reception of information, and further if in the act of communication one organism evokes behavior from another, then theatre is not merely a form of communication or related to communication. Theatre IS communication” (19). Having received the playwright’s offering and applied him/herself to diligent analysis, the director is ready to lead the theatrical company in its work of communication. Armed with his/her own interpretation of the text and guiding concept for the production of a unique work of art, his/her task is to use the tools at his/her disposal to tell his/her version of that story. The vision of the director, the message which s/he wishes to communicate, is painted in casting, style, staging, lighting, sound, costumes etc. and communication is the brush with which s/he

applies these pigments (Loeffler 19, Posner 37). This section of the literature review will examine the role of the director as communicator.

As the supervising designer and leader of the collaborative venture, the primary job of the director is communication (Eddy 26, Hodge 63, Kowarsky 32, Loeffler 19, Posner 37). Through the skilled use of communication, the director establishes working relationships with system agents (members of the company) by demonstrating leadership (Eddy 26, Gross n.pg., Kowarsky 32, Marker 260, Posner 40); facilitating collaboration (Almaney 36, Cornford 492, Eddy 27, Gross n.pg., Loeffler 20, Marker 255, Posner 40); and enabling transformation of the actor/character (Cornford 488, Eddy 27, Kowarsky 32, Taylor 273, Trousdell 28), the audience (Cornford 486, Gross n.pg., Marker 260, Mufson 61, Taylor 278), and the story (Davies 196, Posner 40). Reflecting the maintenance mechanism of systems communication, the internal environment of the system is formed and maintained by the open flow of communication between director and members of the company. Aspects of this environment include clear communication of the guiding concept (Cornford 490, Davies 188, Eddy 26, Gross n.pg., Loeffler 20, Kowarsky 32, Marker 258, Posner 35), respect for and appreciation of the process of performance artists (Eddy 27, Kowarsky 32, Marker 257, Posner 40), and permission for actors and designers to experiment and explore (Cornford 488, Eddy 27, Jones 43, Mufson 59, and Posner 38).

Each director develops a repertoire of techniques which s/he employs in his/her communication with agents of the production company-system. These techniques take a variety of forms including physical (movement and placement of the body) (Fliotics 158, Jones 25, Marker 254, Posner 37, Taylor 275, Trousdell 25), sensual (appealing to the senses) (Cornford 492, Marker 256, Mufson 56, Robinson 70), spiritual (truth in acting

and the nature of man) (Cornford 488, Jones 38, Posner 39, Trousdell 26), and rhetorical expression (concept mapping, metaphor, thematic statements, etc.) (Cornford 489, Davies 196, Fliotsos 158, May 220, Posner 38, Trousdell 27).

Perhaps the director-artist's most effective tool is the actor. Author Donald Loeffler declares that a director is an artist whose medium is people (20), stating that the actor rarely speaks for himself; instead, s/he communicates to the audience the words of the playwright and concept, or vision, of the director. For Stanislavski, the actor represents the physical portal to the spiritual objective of theatre. "The fundamental aim of our art is the creation of this inner life of a human spirit, and its expression in an artistic form" (qtd. Jones 38). For famed director Ingmar Bergman, the actor is the focus of the theatrical experience (Marker 256). Taking a minimalist approach to live theatre, Bergman believes that only three elements are necessary for a theatrical production: the text, the actors and the audience (Marker 252). He focuses on the actor to the elimination of stage settings and effects which might interfere with the connection between the audience and the actor. "The main thing is what happens to the bodies.... Nothing must get in the way.... Nothing more than the performer ('artiste'). It is that simple" (qtd. Marker 252).

Kathleen Eddy identifies the director's task, after having studied the script to determine "the truth of the story", as bringing the actor together with that truth and the script in which it lives (27). Director Rob Ruggiero sees himself as a guiding storyteller whose goal is to help actors understand how their actions move the story forward (Kowarsky 32). Stanislavski describes his older self as a midwife, asking questions and leading actors through the process of growing into a role (Jones 43). Bergman sees his

relationship with actors as sounding board, mediating between actor and audience by acting as “ear and eye, security factor, stimulator, coordinator, work foreman, and, to a certain degree, teacher” (qtd. Marker 256). Trousdell notes that directors help actors understand their characters’ unique objectives and locate the basic human situations in which those objectives are pursued (30).

Leadership scholar Barry Posner notes that a director is tasked with taking “a temporary group of people – folks who haven’t worked together or don’t even know one another, and creat[ing] an original product that will last only for a few weeks before being completely dismantled and the group members disbursed” (Posner 35). The director’s skillful use of communication is essential to creating the temporary system, imparting his/her vision and guiding the work that results in the living art work that is its production.

Chapter Summary

The aim of this thesis is to gain insight into the director’s use of communication from the lived experiences of theatrical directors; to understand the process by which they form their intentions for impacting the audience (system goals) and the methods by which they communicate those intentions to the actors and designers (system agents) who will in turn convey the message to the audience (consumers of system output). In pursuit of that goal, the literature has been reviewed regarding Systems Theory, as well as the role of director as artist, as communicator and in historical context. The information gleaned serves as a benchmark against which to evaluate data obtained from the original research for this study. The next chapter describes the method of data collection.

Chapter Three: Methods

This study seeks to discover the process by which directors discern the message or theme of a play and communicate it to the actors and designers who are responsible for relating it to the audience. The following research questions are posed:

RQ1: How does a director determine the message s/he wishes to communicate through a production?

RQ2: How does the director communicate his/her concept to the agents who will, in turn, relay it to the audience?

RQ3: How does this process reflect the principles of Systems Theory?

Answers to these questions are sought through a review of relevant literature and an original study which utilizes interviews to collect the lived experiences and perspectives of veteran theatrical directors, consistent with the tenets of phenomenological research. Systems Theory is used as the theoretical lens for the study as this theory is applicable to examination of any whole made up of interacting parts. This chapter discusses the nature of the study, the selection of participants, the data collection and analysis process, and ethical considerations.

Nature of the Study

Following the tenets of phenomenological research, the research seeks to “illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation” (Lester 1). Through the use of interviews, the research gathers information and perceptions in an effort to understand the experiences of a small number of subjects, as described by the participants. Studying a person’s experiences from the

viewpoint of that individual provides insight into personal perspective and interpretation and helps to understand motivation and choices (Lester 1). Taking into account her own background as introducing variables of context, experiences and prior understandings, the researcher makes an interpretation of what she sees, hears and understands from the data collected. Following the tenets of phenomenological study, the interviews strive for minimum structure and maximum depth, keeping the focus on research issues and avoiding undue influence by the researcher (Lester 2).

A qualitative method of discovery is used. Understanding comes from engaging the participants and experiencing their interpretations and meanings as they express them. The hub of the study is interviews with directors who have varied experience in educational, community and professional theatre settings. Consistent with the principles of qualitative research, the interviews take place in the participants' natural settings, rely upon the researcher as the instrument for data collections, are emergent, involve the use of a theoretical lens, are interpretive and holistic. This method of investigation is supported by qualitative and phenomenology research design (Creswell 173, 175, 177; Lester 2) and existing literature (Eddy 26, Kowarsky 32, Loewith and Bartow xv, Mufson 59, Shevtsova and Innes 1).

Selection of Participants

The focus of this study is artists who work or have worked as directors of live theatrical productions. Though some of the principles may transfer to work in television and film, directors from these media are not included in the study as the production process is significantly different and communication with the audience is mediated rather than live in real time and space. This study includes interviews with ten directors. The

participants were selected because of their experiences, from leaders of Southeastern theatre organizations and directors who were referred to the researcher. So that the findings might be as comprehensive as possible, variety in experience and training was sought. Participants have varying experience in educational, community and professional theatre settings, as well as diversity of age, gender and formal training. All participants have worked and are currently located in the Southeastern United States. Due to the nature of theatrical endeavors, they may or may not have been working on a production at the time of the study.

Once identified as a potential participant, the individual was contacted by the researcher, the purpose and procedure of the study explained and participation solicited. Sixteen individuals were contacted, the primary contact being through e-mail. Of the sixteen, ten participated, two declined, two were non-responsive and two agreed to participate but were not available during the study. Upon consent to participate, a time and place was determined for the interview. The researcher travelled to the locality in which the participant lives and works to conduct the interview. Prior to the scheduled interview, each participant was asked to provide a resume of their theatrical experiences, not limited to their directorial credits but accounting for all theatrical roles. Before the interview commenced, the participant was asked to sign an informed consent form, specifying the nature of the study, its purpose, issues of confidentiality and the use of the data.

Data Collection and Analysis

A one-on-one interview, lasting up to one hour, was conducted with each of the participants. Each interviewee was invited to choose the interview setting, in a location

which allowed for uninterrupted, confidential communication. All of the participants chose either their office or the common area of a theatre. With the consent of the participant, the interview was recorded so that the content could be analyzed at a later date. Consent was requested to contact the participant at a later date for clarification of comments, as needed, and follow-up questions were sent through email. Each interview was recorded and subsequently transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. The identity of participants was protected by assigning each participant a number which was used in reporting the findings. The researcher ensured that all recorded data was maintained in a secure location and connected with all other collected data.

Interviews began with instructions and disclaimer, followed by ice breaker questions to establish a conversational pattern and relationship between the researcher and study participant. All participants were asked the same ten questions and allowed to answer unguided, with little prompting from the researcher. Some participants answered briefly while other answers were more detailed and descriptive. Most participants used examples from their personal experiences, citing incidents from particular productions to illustrate their points. At the conclusion of the interview, the participant was thanked for his/her contribution to the study and offered access to the finished study as compensation for his/her participation.

Consistent with the principles of phenomenological research, interview questions were composed which would seek answers to the research questions and explore the lived experiences of theatrical directors, interpreted through their own perceptions, and by their own reports. Under the guidance of faculty advisors, questions were composed to target three principles of Systems Theory: circularity of process, co-causality and synergy as

defined in the review of the literature. Appendix A provides a chart showing the Research Questions in relation to the Interview Questions. This research method, including the interview questions, was scrutinized and approved by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) whose mission is to protect human subjects in academic research.

Questions used in the interview included:

1. According to your understanding and experience, what is the role of the director in the theatrical production process? (This question relates to RQ 1, 2 and 3.)
2. As a director, to whom are you most responsible? (This question relates to RQ 1 and 3.)
3. What is your process for analyzing the script? (This question relates to RQ 2 and 3.)
4. What non-verbals (images, music, etc.) do you use for conceptualizing and communicating the theme of the production to the company? (This question relates to RQ 1.)
5. What system of communication, processes or methods do you use for helping actors and designers understand your concept? (This question relates to RQ 1 and 2.)
6. How do you deal with conflict of ideas or interpretation in the production process? (This question relates to RQ 1 and 2.)
7. How do visual elements facilitate communication of the theme? How do they move the story forward? (This question relates to RQ 2 and 3.)

8. How do visual elements move the work of the company forward toward the goal? Effect the functioning of the system? (This question relates to RQ 2 and 3.)
9. How do you lead through verbal communication? (This question relates to RQ 1 and 3.)
10. Describe the interconnectivity of the elements of theatrical production. How would the audience experience differ if one or more was absent? (This question relates to RQ 3.)

Recordings of the interviews were transcribed and transcriptions were compared and contrasted. Analysis identified key phrases, explanations, descriptions, and emotional responses, and themes and issues were clustered and organized (Lester 2-3).

Consideration was given to the “how” and “what” of the narrative data to understand participant meanings (Creswell 189). Finally, examination of the data involved interpretive analysis, looking for links to previous research (Lester 3) and developing a general description of the phenomenon (Creswell 189). From the compiled data, the researcher sought answers to the research questions, identified new learnings, and compared the results to existing literature.

Reporting of the study results in Chapter Four provides a profile of each participating director and a comparative chart is found in Appendix D. The summary of findings in Chapter Four is arranged according to the Interview Questions. In the discussion of the findings in Chapter Five, the researcher makes interpretations of the data and develops “informed speculation” as to theories that emerge from the findings (Lester 2). Rather than drawing conclusions, issues and implications are identified for

how the interpretations, if they are accurate, may point to ways in which the findings and emerging theories may be implemented in the field (Lester 2).

All collected data has been handled in a manner that maintains the privacy of participants and is stored on a password protected computer. Recordings of the interviews will be put under lock and key for a period of two years. At the conclusion of the two year period, all recordings will be destroyed, per the guidelines of the IRB.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are present in all forms of research. Studies that use human participants must balance the tension between the aims of the research and the rights and well-being of participants. According to Bowen, ethical risks and concerns are greater in qualitative research than quantitative due to the close interaction between the participants and the researcher (214). The researcher was required by her educational institution to obtain approval from the Institutional Review Board whose mission it is to protect human research participants. Approval criteria assured that the study's procedures respected and protected the privacy and confidentiality of participants, that informed consent was obtained and that there was a reasonable balance of risk to benefit. (A copy of the informed consent form may be found in Appendix B.)

Participants were exposed to risk no greater than those which they may expect to encounter in daily life. Measures taken to protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants include assigning numbers to be used in place of participants' names in data reporting, securing printed data under lock and key and retaining digital data on a password protected computer. Because of her experience in community, educational and professional theatrical productions, the researcher may have worked as a peer or

subordinate with some of the participants in her geographical region. However, as those connections are casual and context-specific (revolve around participation in a specific production), there was no threat to personal relationships or pressure to participate because of friendship or professional association. There was no undue influence or pressure to participate and the content of the study in no way judged the professional ability of participants, as the phenomenological study solicits participants' descriptions of their own experiences.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate the processes by which the theatrical director develops his/her vision for the production and communicates it to the agents who, in turn, relay it to the audience. This chapter details the phenomenological, qualitative approach to the research, examining the nature of the study, the selection of participants, data collection and ethical issues. Chapter Four reports the findings from data collection.

Chapter Four: Results

The purpose of this phenomenological, qualitative study is to examine the process by which theatrical directors develop and relay their intention for a production to the artists who, in turn, communicate it to the audience. Chapter 2 chronicles an investigation of the literature and in Chapter 3 the method of exploration is defined. This chapter provides brief descriptions of the ten study participants and reports the data collected from the interviews.

Profile of Participants

In an effort to learn about the communication methods and patterns of theatrical directors, a powerful variable in systems leadership within the theatre, interviews were conducted to explore the recollections and reports of the lived experiences of participants. The participants in this study are artists who work or have worked as directors of live theatrical productions. So that the findings might be as comprehensive as possible, directors of varying experience and training are included. Among the study participants, there is diversity in age, gender, education, and professional experience. Three of the directors currently work in equity houses, four are professional educators, four have worked primarily in semi-professional and regional theatre, four have directed community theatre and one has experience in community theatre only. Participants report between four and thirty-two years of directing, with the collective total being 201 years and the average being 20.1 years of experience.

Regarding education and training, all but one of the participants earned a bachelor's degree in theatre (the remaining participant had no tertiary education). Six earned a master's degree, five of them a Master of Fine Arts. Three of the participants report study with non-degree formal training programs (Strasberg Institute, Actors Studio, Herbert Berghof Acting Studio, Barter Players, and Gene Frankel Studio). Additionally, several of the participants report apprenticeships and post-graduate work at various theatres and universities. Appendix D provides an at-a-glance profile of the study participants.

Director #1 is the artistic director of an equity theatre in which all plays are staged with Shakespearean traditions and conventions. After earning a BS in Theatre and English, he served an apprenticeship in London, focusing on directing and acting in the Shakespearean style. He currently directs for both the residential and touring companies of a mid-Atlantic professional theatre.

Director #2 is the artistic director of an equity theatre which is one of the few year-round professional resident repertory theatres in the nation. He earned a BA and MFA in Directing and Design and is only the third artistic director in the theatre's 81 year history.

Director #3 is the director of a post-college professional training program for young actors. After earning a BA in English and Theatre, she entered the program as an apprentice and later became a member of the professional company. She now directs for both the apprentice program and the equity company which sponsors it.

Director #4 is the chair of the theatre program at a small private mid-Atlantic college. He earned a BA, MA and MFA in Theatre Arts and trained at the Herbert

Berghof Studio in New York City. Though the majority of his career has been in educational theatre, he has both acted and directed professionally, regionally and in community theatre.

Director #5 teaches dance and musical theatre at a small private mid-Atlantic women's college. She earned a BFA and MALS in musical theatre and has done additional post-graduate work. In addition to educational theatre, she has acted and danced professionally and directed community theatre.

Director #6 is the artistic director of a semi-professional theatre company based in a Mid-Atlantic state. Additionally, he teaches theatre at a small private college. He earned a BFA in acting and an MFA in directing and has approximately 17 years of directorial experience.

Director #7 earned a BA in theatre arts and an MFA in directing. His four years of directorial experience have been in educational and semi-professional theatre.

Director #8 earned a BA in acting and then studied at the prestigious Academy for Classical Acting at the Shakespeare Theatre through George Washington University in Washington DC, earning an MFA in classical performance. She has directed in community, educational, semi-professional and non-equity professional theatre settings.

Director #9 earned a BA in English and Theatre Arts before studying at the Actors Studio, Gene Frankel Studio, Potters Field Theater and Strasberg Institute, all of New York City. She is an equity actor and has directed community, educational, regional and semi-professional theatrical productions.

Director #10 has no formal training in theatre but has extensive experience as an actor and director in community theatre productions. Additionally, she has assisted in educational theatre endeavors.

These ten participants represent a wealth of experience and a wide range of perspectives. The data collected from their answers to the interview questions reveals both patterns and anomalies in their approaches to and experience in director communication. The following section summarizes the directors' experiences as they reported them.

Participant Responses

The same ten questions were asked of each participant, the order varying according to the themes of the participant's responses. Each question asked the director to relate his/her own experience and perspective. This section reports their answers and relays some of the examples which they gave to illustrate.

IQ 1: "According to your understanding and experience, what is the role of the director in the theatrical production process?"

The first question asked of each participant is to describe the role of the director. Answers to this question relate to RQ 1 (How does a director determine the message s/he wishes to communicate through a production?), RQ 2 (How does the director communicate his/her concept to the agents who will, in turn, relay it to the audience?), and RQ 3 (How does this process reflect the principles of Systems Theory?). Responses include leader of the creative team, "the god of the play", the Big Kahuna, captain of the ship, visionary, and protector of the actors. Director #2 states that the director's role is, "bonding the actors and audience together to discover the playwright's intention". Most

of the participants speak of the director as the coordinator and overseer of the collaborative process, filtering and funneling the creative efforts of the company. This is appropriate for the director's role as the primary element in a centralized system. As the master of the universe of the play, the director does more than just lead the company on its journey. S/he sets out the boundaries of the system (Director #6), establishes the "guidelines and guardrails" (Director #4) for what happens within the system, determines the objective for the system's work (the unified artistic vision) and builds the culture which instructs guides interactions (Director #3, 5, 8). In their varied responses, participants identify three different facets of leadership at play in the director's management of the company: organization, creativity, and communication. These three themes directly correlate with the three Research Questions. Creativity relates to RQ 1, communication relates to RQ 2 and organization relates to RQ 3.

Directors #3 & 4 identify the director as the "captain of the ship" who guides the collaboration of the crew members into a cohesive whole. Director #1 notes that, in the best of circumstances, the director is not dictating but is coordinating the work of all the agents of the system. Director #5 says that, in order to inspire trust and confidence, the director must be decisive, noting that "a bad decision is better than no decision". As chief of the collaborators, the director has a vantage point that allows him/her to assess the impact of individual choices and actions upon the whole, reflecting the systems principle of co-causality.

One of the captain's primary responsibilities is to set the direction for the ship. Director #6 states that it is the responsibility of the director to create the unified artistic vision, identifying the destination toward which the production will move. The goal may

be the story the director wants to tell (input into the system's external environment) or it may be the desired audience experience (soliciting feedback from the system's external environment). Director #2 jokingly identifies the director as "the god of the play" as s/he creates the world in which the play is contained and establishes the rules for how everyone is to behave and interact within that world. While each member of the company becomes the expert on his/her individual character or role, the director is the only person who has the whole picture. Director #1 states that "everything comes out of the director's vision of the show". Knowing the intended destination, the director mediates decisions and choices that keep the system moving toward its goal. In this way, the director fulfills the systems function of maintaining equilibrium.

Having determined the endpoint of the production, the director is tasked with mapping the route for the company. Director #6 states this process as "conceiving and conceptualizing an approach and then bringing everybody together on that approach". Director #4 notes that the director must him/herself be disciplined and organized as "creativity flourishes with discipline". He states that creating "guidelines and guardrails" provides direction for artists and allows for creativity and exploration within the parameters given. In this way, the director models the culture which s/he wishes to establish for the system. Director #9 supports this idea, stating that investing the time and energy to figure everything out on paper from the beginning creates a structure within which artists may have fun and be creative. Like a painter with a canvas, she advocates doing the "broad strokes" first and later going deeper by adding detail.

Having conceived the artistic vision, the director must communicate it to the system in such a way that the other artists adopt that concept and invest in the

collaborative effort. According to Director #8, the director guides with the expectation that every element of the system is bringing his/her own creativity, ideas and expertise to the project. In answer to IQ 1, six of the ten participants discuss the importance of unity and cohesion in pursuit of the common goal. This input into the system is framed as inspiration, motivation or communication coming from the director. Director #7 describes the process as inspiring a group of artistic individuals, bringing out the best in them and getting them to work together. Director #3 says, "It's my job to love them into greatness and so get them invested in a deep way." Director #5 discusses the need to establish trust between the artists and director. As the creative work requires risk, vulnerability and exposure of oneself, confidence in the director as protector and advocate fosters creative experimentation and growth. Director #5 also observes that for effective communication to take place, the director must have some insight into individual behavior ("why people do what they do") and "how to get what you need from them".

IQ 2: "As a director, to whom are you most responsible?"

Answers to this question relate to RQ 1 (How does a director determine the message s/he wishes to communicate through a production?), and RQ 3 (How does this process reflect the principles of Systems Theory?). This question solicits an interesting variety of responses. Where other questions asked participants to describe their experiences, IQ 2 asks them to prioritize and choose only one of many possible answers. Four participants say that the director is most responsible to the audience, three name the theatre organization, two state that they are most responsible to the truth, and one designates the actors. Though each participant was asked to isolate one party, many also name other parties or elements to whom they felt responsible.

The most common answer to this IQ is that the director is most responsible to the audience, the recipient of the system's output. Responses have two themes, the first being that the collective audience is a participant in the communal experience, invited by the actors and designers to participate in the story. Director #8 states that audience members participate in the performance through listening, laughing, crying, or falling asleep. Director #2 observes that the audience votes for the production's success by paying for a ticket and occupying a seat. Therefore, knowing the target audience, their preferences and patterns is necessary for the success of the show and the continued life of the theatre organization.

The second argument for prioritizing the audience is the opportunity for the production to impact members of the audience. This premise is rooted in communicating the message of the text, the ultimate goal of the system. Director #4 states, "That's what theatre is about, to move the audience in some way so that they're different when they leave than when they came in." Director #3 says that for each show she directs, she develops a "peace corps statement" by asking the following questions: "Who is the person who might need to hear this story? Whom might this play affect in a positive way? Why should the actors assume this emotional, and sometimes, physical risk? Whose life are we trying to change?" Having personified the reason for undertaking the process, she uses that "person" as the motivation and standard by which to measure the honesty and effectiveness of choices.

Three of the participants identify the theatrical organization for which they are working as deserving their priority. Management of these organizations is identified as producer, board of directors, and artistic director. It is noteworthy that all three of these

respondents are members of professional theatre organizations or unions. Perhaps this reflects a unique perspective of the environment within which the system functions.

Two of the participants state that, as directors, they are most responsible to the truth. Though their interpretations vary, both speak to the goal of the system. Director #7's explanation of his choice is that the director is responsible for maintaining the playwright's intention as well as the production's unique response to and interpretation of the text. Director #4 speaks of truth as holding a mirror up to nature and trying to achieve truth on stage. He notes that truth in acting must be deeper and more meaningful than a surface recitation of written lines. "At its most basic, human communication is two people in the same room, at the same time, live. It's ephemeral; it's in the moment. And therefore, that's the truth that would speak to an audience."

One participant names the actors as the party to whom she is most responsible. Though she is the only participant with this priority, her sentiment is echoed by other participants who speak of the importance of all contributors to the collaborative process. This reflects the director's leadership as the central or guiding element of the system. Director #3 states that, though her first priority is the audience, she is responsible to everyone with whom she is working to help them do their best work.

IQ 3: "How do you lead through verbal communication?"

Answers to this question relate to RQ 2 (How does the director communicate his/her concept to the agents who will, in turn, relay it to the audience?), and RQ 3 (How does this process reflect the principles of Systems Theory?). In answer to this question, many of the participants speak of creating and clarifying expectations for the company and the production. This includes establishing the director's leadership of the system.

Director #8 says that she makes known her expectations and the basic rules from the beginning so that people know what to anticipate. Director #5 states that the director should let the company know that she is the leader, that she knows what she is doing and where she is going and that she will help them along the journey. Director #4's response is similar, saying that he assures them he won't let them falter or fail and that he will make them look good. Clearly articulating the artistic vision allows members of the company to understand the destination and figure out how they fit in the journey, to understand their role in the system.

Several of the participants speak of the tone or culture that they seek to establish. Director #8 says that she takes a relaxed approach and tries to model appropriate behavior and responsibility. Director #7 states that he tries to be matter of fact, not demanding, practical and flexible but firm. Director #4 concurs; "compromising means I'm listening and we're all thinking about different points of view". Director #5 observes that she probably talks too much and Director #3 says that she tries to say less versus more, modeling honesty in her communication.

Director #1 answers this question by going back to the text, so to speak. He notes that, in theatre, "language is our business". Whether through spoken language, email or written notes, "the director must be able to articulate big vision, medium vision and small details. Language is the way we collaborate." He emphasizes the importance of dialogue, versus showing what he wants, in helping actors develop characters and understand what the play is trying to communicate. "We do long runs of shows and you're not going to be able to sustain a long run as an actor in a performance unless you know what you're trying to communicate and can talk about it in addition to doing it." Director #2 echoes

this perspective, stating that mimicry creates mini-versions of oneself and, therefore, the play can never get better than the director's own ability. By contrast, exploring with the actor how the moment fits into the big picture solicits a more enriched experience from the actor. According to Director #4, mimicry removes originality from the work. Instead, "we're leading them so that they can turn on the light bulbs for themselves. Then they can grab it and go on and do more and more." By empowering and equipping them in this way, each element contributes his/her unique attributes and properties to the functioning of the system.

Some of the participants differ in their approach. Director #9 states that, given her background in dance, she is a very physical director; that she is "up there dancing with them". She reports that she sometimes demonstrates what she wants with the stage manager as her scene partner. Likewise, Director #10 says that she sometimes illustrates how she wants a particular line or scene to be played.

A recurring theme in the participants' answers is a culture of respect. Respondents speak of avoiding public corrections, active listening, balancing criticism with praise, addressing sensitive issues privately, recognizing the point of diminishing return and adapting one's communication style to that of the recipient. According to Director #4, "We as directors are constantly shifting gears on how to approach that person. I can say this to [one] person but if I said that to [another] person, they either wouldn't understand it at all or they might take it in the wrong way. So, I've got to be able to work with people on their levels and there's a sense to that, an instinct to it." Director #2 notes that a communication challenge in the theatre world is diversity of training methods which

result in different working vocabularies. Instead of expecting actors to speak his language, he finds it to be more effective to learn and adjust to individual actors.

By contrast, Director #2 also confesses that he tends to use sarcasm to get people to do what he wants and that he has resorted to yelling when he has exhausted all of the communication techniques he knows and still can't get what he needs from an actor. He recognizes that this is not a positive form of leadership but justifies it as being "just kind of who I am". He counters this confession by stating that it is never good to make people feel bad about their choices. He says that he supports people trying to make good choices as long as they are not relying on old habits or their bag of tricks.

Three of the participants discuss the nature of artistic individuals. According to Director #6, "Artists are sensitive for the most part because it is the nature of what we do. We open ourselves up and it's a vulnerable thing. You have to respect and I think there is a level of needing to nurture people." For Director #8, that extends beyond what is happening on the stage. She feels responsible for the emotional state of the actors if they come to her with issues that aren't part of the show. "Because we expect actors to open up and be emotionally vulnerable, be emotionally manipulated and create connections with the people with whom they are working, they sometimes turn to the director with their personal issues." Director #5 believes it is important to let an actor know that she cares about him/her, both what s/he is giving on the stage and who s/he is as a person. She does that by being a cheerleader and encourager, giving praise for work well done, connecting with each person and checking in with them regularly.

IQ 4: “What is your process for analyzing the script?”

Answers to this question relate to RQ 1 (How does a director determine the message s/he wishes to communicate through a production?). All of the study participants agree that the director develops and holds the guiding artistic vision out of which all choices emerge. According to the experiences and processes of the directors interviewed, that artistic vision begins in the text. Directorial choices must be consistent with the specific time period, locale, characters and given circumstances of the text. The director is responsible to be true to the playwright’s work and intention which is discerned by thorough research.

Director #4 cites Uta Hagen as having said that all tedious research is worth one inspired moment. Most of the participants report doing extensive research in the process of analysis. Director #1 reports that he reads everything he can find about a script, including articles and reviews, and watches every movie or stage-to-video version that he can get. In addition to the text itself, participants say that, when preparing for a production, they study the topic, social attitudes regarding the topic at the time of writing, historical setting, circumstances that created the play, and specific setting. They also explore the playwright’s background, culture, style, context at the time of writing, other works, and any criticism of the author, as well as autobiographies, journals and memoirs. If the play was an adaptation, the source material is read.

Repeated reading of the script is a common practice of the participants. Some report that an individual reading is dedicated to a particular pursuit; for example, the initial reading is undertaken to identify initial feelings and reactions to the material. A second reading might focus on identifying themes and repetitions. Other elements that

emerge from the readings are overall structure of the play, metaphors and themes, technical elements, visual and word images, key sentences or phrases, given circumstances (locale, historical setting, ethnicity, character titles and descriptions, etc.) and forming a visual image of each character. Director #4 asserts that, in analysis of the text, he looks for the major dramatic question, the fulcrum on which all of the dramatic action turns. Director #3 reports that she makes a list of the “millions of verbs” in the text which give life and direction to the characters. Director #9 notes that one’s concept or vision for a production must not be “set in stone” but malleable “like wet paint on a canvas that can be manipulated and change” as discoveries are made in both the analysis and rehearsal processes.

Discerning the playwright’s intent is a task for which the participants ask various questions. What should the audience walk away thinking about? What does the writer want the audience to feel? What is the underlying theme of the play? What stands out the most? What message is the writer trying to communicate? What is each character trying to achieve? What metaphors might be at play? What is the overall crisis in the play? What are the crises in the individual characters?

Director #6 shares a list of questions which he has developed for identifying the central conflict and how the spine of the play emerges from that conflict.

1. Identify the major conflict of the play. This is between two characters or a character and a group of characters or force.
2. Identify what these characters represent.

3. Identify the turning point of the major conflict. This is the point of no return. At this point in the story, the protagonist and antagonist are destined to reach the climax of the story.
4. Identify the climax of the major conflict. This is the height of the conflict. There is nowhere else for it to go and it breaks open, explodes or dies. Being as specific as possible, describe the specific moment.
5. Identify the resolution of the conflict; when the conflict comes to a conclusion. Being as specific as possible, describe the specific moment.
6. Identify the final actions of the two parties involved in the major conflict. Then explain its significance.
7. Identify each of the characters' (in the major conflict) overall objectives. This is a want that drives them all the way through the play. Keep this active and playable for the actor. Think of action verbs.
8. Identify the subject of the play. Force yourself to one word.
9. Identify the idea of the play. What does the playwright want the audience to leave with?

Some participants report that, during the analysis process, they work out practical matters such as entrances, exits, edits, scene chart, blocking and rehearsal breakdown. Director #3 speaks of this as addressing the physical life of the play; thinking through use of the performance space, art that will affect set design and “football plays” (where and how important movements take place on the stage and where characters might be in those moments). Concrete aspects of script analysis may include concerns unique to the director and his/her environment. Director #2, whose formal training is in theatrical

design, states that his analytical focus is half on imagery and half on gut instinct, looking for the tools which will allow the audience's imaginations to usher them into the world of the play. Director #1, whose theatre employs Shakespearean staging conventions, reports that he reads the script from the perspective of specific staging conditions and traditions. Several directors who have also worked as choreographers or dancers say that their analyses evolve as mental pictures, envisioning the unfolding story as a dance between the characters.

Most of the directors interviewed report making written notes during the analysis process. Some make brief notations for their own use while others compose comprehensive documents which they pass on to the agents in the system. Director #1 reports that he creates copious notes which he electronically "brain dumps" to actors and designers.

Director #3 states that, when her analysis is complete, she must come to terms with letting it go and may or may not use the information in rehearsals. From the analysis, she develops a sense of where the play is going and can reach into that knowledge to help actors find their direction, if needed. However, she encourages actors to follow their instincts and counts on them to bring their own choices to the production. Then, as director, she funnels the efforts together to a cohesive production.

IQs 5 & 6: "What system of communication, processes or methods do you use for helping actors and designers understand your concept? What non-verbals (images, music, etc.) do you use for conceptualizing and communicating the theme of the production to the company?"

Though these two questions were intended to be asked separately, the researcher found that both matters were addressed as participants answered IQ 5. Therefore, the results will be presented together. Answers to these questions relate to RQ 1 (How does a director determine the message s/he wishes to communicate through a production?), and RQ 2 (How does the director communicate his/her concept to the agents who will, in turn, relay it to the audience?).

In answering these questions, seven of the respondents differentiate their interactions with the production team from those with the actors. The other three participants either speak in general terms of the entire company or describe their interactions with the actors. Whether describing communication with designers, actors or the system as a whole, responses address the vision or direction for the production (the goal of the system), expectations and rules for the production (system boundaries and internal environment) and creative collaboration of the team (the system's process). In discussions of communication with the actors, an additional theme, character development work, emerges.

Methods by which participants report communicating their vision for the production include face-to-face interactions (production meetings, table talk, individual conversations), email, distribution of printed material, images (drawings, photos, sketches, symbols), objects and music. Directors #3 and 6 report that they are very interested in the use and power of metaphor. Director #3 says that she depends heavily upon verbal metaphor and Director #6 says of visual metaphor, "that may be the frame for which we create the visual vocabulary for what we're doing." Other non-verbals used by the participants for conceptualizing and communicating the theme of the production to

the company are collage, color palette, body posture, puzzles, videos, books and Pinterest boards.

In addition to unfolding the unifying artistic vision, the participants speak of establishing expectations and procedures for the system. These include organizational elements such as schedules and deadlines, parameters set by the theatrical organization, time and budgetary constraints, and policies established by the director. An example of this is Director #1's requirement that actors come to the first rehearsal with all lines memorized and ready to be on their feet with scene partners.

Nine of the ten participants describe the work in terms of a give-and-take collaborative process. Director #7 notes that, when sharing his vision, he tries to be as abstract as possible, providing images and concepts to which the creative, smart people around him can respond and develop their own ideas. Director #2 says that he tries to be specific without dictating; giving impressions and letting the artists with whom he is working explore their own imaginations. Director #9 states that she gives a little bit of her vision and then asks questions to see what she gets back from the actors and designers, characterizing the cooperative process as a dance. Director #8 reports that, when sharing her vision for the production, she takes a broad approach and allows the artist responsible for a particular character or design element to use their own creativity and genius to add the details.

Regarding character development, four of the participants report directing actors back to the text for solid, playable objectives and obstacles. Director #1 has actors paraphrase the Shakespearean text line by line in pursuit of literal understanding. Director #4 helps actors explore what happened before the play began so that they may understand

how each scene progresses the unfolding of the story. Director #3 has actors focus on the verbs in the text, looking for what tasks the characters are doing. She cites Aristotle as having taught that “we know characters based on what they do. Period. Not by what kind of face they make or what kind of limp they have or what [costume] they’re wearing, although you do get some information from those things. But first and foremost, we know a character by what they do.”

Two participants speak with admiration of the “European method” of design in which the creative work begins with the actors. During the rehearsal process, the designers observe rehearsals to see what the actors are doing, get ideas from what they are creating and design to match it. Though they appreciate the concept, both admit that it is not a practical approach in most American theatrical productions.

IQ 7: “How do you deal with conflict of ideas or interpretation in the production process?”

Answers to this question relate to RQ 2 (How does the director communicate his/her concept to the agents who will, in turn, relay it to the audience?), and RQ 3 (How does this process reflect the principles of Systems Theory?). Two different needs are discussed in responses to this question. The first is the need to communicate the system’s goal, the unified artistic vision. Director #6 confesses that he accepts the responsibility for conflict because it means he didn’t articulate clearly at the beginning what his intention and concept were. In such situations, he revisits the vision and explains it more clearly, believing that a clear path forward opens the door to many creative possibilities. Director #8 observes that one of the strongest qualities a director can have is flexibility, realizing that every person with whom s/he works will understand and absorb things in

different ways. Therefore, she makes a point of checking for understanding and adjusting her communication style as needed.

The second theme in participants' answers to this question is the desire of individuals to exercise their creativity. Each element in the system wants to have input into the system's function and pursuit of the goal. Six of the respondents speak of welcoming and encouraging experimentation by the artists. Director #5 observes that each individual has a unique perspective and a line or scene doesn't have to have the same meaning for every person. She recognizes the director's task of funneling the ideas of the company into a cohesive whole. Director #4 says that he appreciates "an actor who does his homework and comes in with a new objective". Director #2's philosophy is that "if you can't fail you can't succeed. People who are afraid of failure can only do competent work because there's no brilliance unless you're going to fall on your face and learn from it." He notes that, when confronted by a difference in interpretation, he engages the artist in a discussion about whether the choice helps to tell the story or fits within the realm of the world the production is creating. Director #3 refers to the philosophy of theatrical director Mary Zimmerman, saying that directing is not adding to and building a universe. Instead, it is like digging in the sand, removing the things that don't fit and discovering what the universe of the play is. From that perspective, the ideas of the system agents reveal new information about the emerging universe.

As the director deals with tension and conflict within the system, s/he acts as the maintenance communication system, taking action to restore stability. Two themes emerge in the ways participating directors reported managing conflict of ideas and interpretation in the systems within which they have worked. The first is compromise.

Director #6 says that in persistent conflict, he asks both himself and the other party to exercise a little bit of compromise. Director #4 states that there are times when the director must admit that s/he made a wrong choice and allow for another possibility. Director #5 observes that some people are not emotionally capable of, or won't allow themselves, to give what the director asks of them. In such a case, her approach is to keep pushing them in the desired direction while recognizing the limitations. Director #9's tactic is similar: to assess whether or not the issue is important enough to push for, to know how far a person could be pushed and to recognize when to let go.

Director #7 points out that he tries to be as flexible as possible and give other people's ideas a chance to work. However, he recognizes his position as the person responsible for determining whether or not the idea serves the overall concept of the production and fits the given circumstances of the play. Several participants report situations in which they entertained an alternate interpretation and then tried to help the originator of the idea understand that the choice may fit better or "be better served in a different production". Three participants talk about the use of what Director #3 calls the "velvet hammer"; situations in which the agents believe they are executing their own ideas but later realize that they have been doing what the director wants. Director #1 said that "a desirable skill for directors is being able to steer others to making the choice that he wants them to make on their own, create a collaborative process in which he is able to say 'yes' to a lot of ideas from other people."

In answering this question, two of the participants use the phrase "yes, and". Director #1 contends that he is looking for "yes, and" people who will accept his leadership and interpretation first and then show him their ideas. He believes that this

type of collaboration creates something better than an individual can produce alone.

Director #3 speaks of herself as a “yes, and” director, saying that she encourages the actor, who is the expert on his/her character, to keep the impulse that created the response while bending the response to fit the overall direction of the production. Director #4 claims a similar approach in which he may ask an actor to try to meld the two interpretations, allowing the actor ownership of s/he created while maintaining the director’s intention. He advocates following the example of Uta Hagen whom he quotes as saying that, if a director gave her a direction, she would do everything she could to justify that with her acting technique.

IQ 8: “How does the addition of design/visual elements move the work of the company forward toward the goal? Effect the functioning of the system?”

Answers to this question relate to RQ 2 (How does the director communicate his/her concept to the agents who will, in turn, relay it to the audience?), and RQ 3 (How does this process reflect the principles of Systems Theory?). According to Director #3, theatre is the ultimate collaborative experience and, as the central element of the system, the director gets to be the arbiter of the efforts of all the other agents. Director #1 describes the relationship between the elements and the work of the actors as symbiotic, needing to be “cooked together to create the stew that is the final performance”. This reflects the systems concept of synergy. Participants’ answers to this question follow two themes, that the addition of visual or design elements impacts dynamic and discovery.

Three of the participants speak of the “magic” that happens in the final stages of rehearsal, often in the last week, as all of the elements of the production come together. Director #10 likens the rehearsal process to being “prep work... just laying foundations

and planting seed”. Then, when all of the elements have been added, “when it’s all there – the magic just happens. Suddenly it all clicks and it all falls into place.” Director #7 notes that, as the rehearsal process nears an end, actors become hungry for the addition of the design elements. Having been working in an imaginary world which the director created, adding physical and tactile elements helps to ground them in the reality of the play. Four of the participants note that the addition of visual and design elements adds a sense of urgency and excitement to the work of the system. Director #9 states that, while the additions free the actors’ imaginations, they also challenge the actors to concentrate. Director #6 points out that the additions may temporarily distract the actors, evidenced by the absence of nuance in their performances. However, after an adjustment period, the work should be accelerated by the additional input. Director #5 observes that, in that period of transition and adjustment, actors may need reassurance and stability from the director.

Seven of the participants emphasize discoveries that become available to actors with the introduction of visual and design elements into the system, reflecting the systems concept of co-causality. According to Director #8, “tactile changes everything”. When the actors have actual (versus rehearsal) props, costumes, and setting, they have more to manipulate and with which to play. They have new opportunities for discovery of humor, danger, tender moments, conflict, objectives, obstacles, etc. Director #3 says that these additions introduce another set of givens to which the characters must adjust and respond. She asks of her actors, “How do you allow every single one of these elements to catapult you further into what this universe might be?” Director #2 notes that additions may either free or limit the choices available to the agents and may inform their decisions. He quotes

Stanislavski as having said that acting is all about choosing the right hat, finding the choice that is true for the character. Director #4 notes that adding in levels helps the actors with character development. For example, a gobo that simulates sunlight filtering through the trees might help the actor feel like s/he is in the woods. Or wearing the character's shoes might help the actor to engage with the poor character who can't afford shoes without holes.

As an example of how design elements may be unknown to the audience but impactful upon the players, Director #5 tells the story of a costuming choice for the Ziegfeld Follies. The story goes that the accountant for the Follies was distressed over the amount of money spent on French silk underwear for the dancers, garments that would never be seen by the audience. Ziegfeld's response was that, though the audience may not be aware of the luxury, the dancers were and would walk differently when wearing the undergarments. Director #5 goes on to say that, though a character is built from the inside out, every person wears a costume every single day; acting, moving and sitting differently based upon what s/he is wearing.

Three of the participants describe how the set itself may become an agent in the production to which the characters must react, reflecting the systems concept of circularity. Director #9 says that a set should have its own character. Director #2 contends that a set should not just be a background. "If you can't interact with a set and use it then it shouldn't be on the stage." Instead, the set should have a life with the actor that influences what s/he thinks and feels about the play, how s/he reacts to the play, how it taps into his/her imagination and ability to relate or not relate to it. As an example, he describes a French boulevard comedy for which the set was skewed so that the actor's

couldn't find where front or center was. "You stood on the stage and you thought, 'I have no idea where I am'. You were so off-balance. [The set] was slightly raked and slightly off-balance, and the result was a real sense of off-balance that gave the [play] a real heightened sense of comedy. ...It worked incredibly well because the whole family in this comedy was off-balance."

Two of the participants' responses are notable for their unique perspectives. Director #6 states that visual and design elements should never not be part of the conversation, even if they are not literally available at rehearsals. He notes that, for the high levels of concentration needed from the actors, they need to know their environment and surroundings and need to know the world that is being created. As an example, he describes a production of *The Birds* for which, as director, he explored the idea of flight by incorporating different ways of flying into the set on multiple levels (trampolines, bungee cords, zip lines, swings, rigging). While the set was being built and the physical elements weren't available for rehearsal, he constantly reminded the actors of them by using visual reminders in the rehearsal set, verbal reminders during blocking rehearsals, and visits to the scene shop during which actors could test elements as they were under construction. He believes that this constant awareness was essential so that the actors would not have to relearn the play once the elements were added. "If we've really communicated clearly with the actors... what these design elements are going to be, and how they are going to work, then my hope is that they've been waiting for it."

By contrast, working in an environment which utilizes minimal sets, Director #1 says, "I feel like the best work can happen the quickest if you as an actor don't need to know what the transition is going to be into this scene, whether or not there's going to be

set pieces, whether or not your costume is going to be long or short or what not. I want you to own your idea of the character ahead of time and ... I need you to be flexible enough to take my nudging from just making it a little different this way or doing a 180.” In keeping with this philosophy, Director #1 requires actors to begin rehearsals with their lines memorized and be able to be on their feet with scene partners on the first day. He believes that the work of the actors is advanced by memorizing the lines and having ideas about what they want their characters to be without the aid or distraction of visual or design elements. Then, as other elements are added, adjustments are made to the characterizations and elements to bring them together in a way that works for the good of the production.

IQ 9: “How do design/visual elements facilitate communication of the theme to the audience? How do they move the story forward?”

Answers to this question relate to RQ 1 (How does a director determine the message s/he wishes to communicate through a production?), and RQ 3 (How does this process reflect the principles of Systems Theory?). In the responses to this question, three themes emerge: establishing context, engagement of the audience, and communication of the theme or message of the production. Specific characteristics of several elements are highlighted and the value of minimalism is discussed.

Director #8 states that, at any point in time, a person should be able to take a snapshot of the stage and understand the story that the picture is telling. Seven of the participants refer to the design and visual elements as “setting the tone” for the performance. In establishing a context for the action of the play, they speak of creating an “environment in which the story blooms” (Director #3); of providing specifics which

inform the audience about time period, locale, culture, passage of time, economics, fantasy elements, what the characters care about, etc. Four of the respondents say that what the audience first sees on the stage, whether they enter the house to an open curtain or at the curtain's rise, tells them what just happened and signals what they are going to experience. Director #6 notes that this can be done in either realistic or abstract design. Directors #3 and 6, who use metaphor extensively, speak of the visual and design elements as extending metaphor.

Director #2 says, "I think that visual elements are extremely important in the ability of the audience to tap into [the performance] and get signaled as to what... they're going to be engaged in throughout the course of the evening." He states that the visual/design elements provide the audience with the tools they need to engage and be immersed in the experience. Director #4 states that the design aspects create a reality for the play and Director #10 says that these elements surround the audience with the world of the story. Director #7 explains that the physical world of the play draws the audience in and makes them forget that they are watching an artificially contrived performance. Three of the participants speak of the design elements as helping the audience members' imagination fill in the details of the setting provided by the language of the play. Directors #1 and 7 state that the elements propel the imagination further, making the experience deeper and more meaningful for the audience.

Three of the directors insist that all of the visual/design elements must direct the audience toward what the production is designed to communicate. Five of the participants describe how the visual and design elements support the theme or message of the production. Three of the participants speak of the design elements appealing to the

emotions of the audience and guiding them toward what the director wants the audience to feel. Director #4 predicts that the design elements can engage the audience to care about the people on the stage and, ultimately, to see themselves in the characters and the conflict. Because the design elements may illustrate themes or ideas which the director is trying to express through the production, Director #4 notes that they must support the text and reinforce the script. Along with Directors #2 and 5, he cautions that a wrong choice can distract and frustrate the audience and derail the story. Signals from the visuals and design elements which do not support the truths in the script may contradict what the director wants the audience to believe.

Specific characteristics of several elements are highlighted in the responses to this IQ 9. Director #8 discusses how light is used to focus the attention of the audience and to create mood. Three of the participants describe the emotionally manipulative power of music. Director #8 characterizes music as a subliminal journey which is like the flow of a river, moving around and over rocks and bends, moving faster and slower. Though the audience is not consciously aware of the movement, they are carried along with it. Regarding the use of auditory signals, four of the participants note that sound creates a visceral reaction. Director #2 provides an example of the unconscious reaction to sound design. For a production of the mystery *Angel Street*, the audience heard the constant ticking of a clock throughout the show. Delicately placed into the background, the repetitive sound regulated the pace of the show and created tension in the both the audience and the actors.

Five of the participants discuss the power of costume to develop the story. Director #4 says, “Costumes can express distinct personalities and how the characters

either exist together or collide.” As an example, he cites the African-American contingent, the Latvian community and the WASP’s in *Ragtime*’s upper New York City. Director #3 observes that costumes give the audience “a world of information” about each character; what they chose to put on their bodies, how they want the world to see them, what they want and who they are trying to become.

While all of the participants seem to have an appreciation for and be skilled in the use of visual and design elements, four of them laud the value of subtlety in their implementation. Reflecting the systems principle of co-causality, if one element of the system is advanced, the others must necessarily recede. A visual example of this concept is the kinetic sculpture or mobile, consisting of weighted objects hanging from rods. The objects are able to move independently or as a whole. They balance each other so that, if weight is added to one element, the others respond in such a way that equilibrium is maintained and the mobile regains its harmony. Similarly, Director #10 cautions that directors should not pursue the desired result but should allow the audience to make discoveries. Director #4 expresses concern about spectacle for its own sake. He warns that spectacle at the sacrifice of substance is not a replacement for the live experience of two human beings communicating their needs and wants and desires, an exchange in which members of the audience may see themselves. Echoing the words of other participants, Director #5 contends that good actors plus good work on a bare stage is powerful and desirable over spectacle.

IQ 10: Describe the interconnectivity of the elements of theatrical production. How would the audience experience differ if one or more was absent?

Answers to this question relate to RQ 3 (How does this process reflect the principles of Systems Theory?). Many of the participants discuss the interconnectivity of elements in their answers to IQ 8 and 9. Therefore, in their responses to this question they often recap or elaborate on their previous comments. Revisited issues are unity in the service of the artistic vision, the role of the director, and minimalism in the use of design elements. Several respondents also discuss the use and impact of specific design elements, all of which are examined in IQ 8 and 9. A theme unique to this IQ is the role of the audience.

The observation of Director #8 summarizes the comments of all nine respondents who addressed the harmony of theatrical elements. By her description, all of the elements should fit together to create “a seamless slice of a world”, woven together to tell a tale in such a way that they cannot be separated. She goes on to say that the elements work together to move the audience out of their circumstances and thoughts into the world of the play. Director #3 agrees that all of the elements dovetail with and support each other, though they sometimes do so in a state of tension. She states, “You want to give people a completely immersive experience so that they forget ideally that they’re watching a play. It feels that real to them. Not in the naturalistic sense, but in an immersive sense. You take them to another universe.” Director #7 adds that, while all of the elements work together, the visual/design elements serve the actor by supporting and enhancing the telling of the story. He notes the cyclical nature of the actors’ response to those elements and feedback into them. He also articulates the desire for the combination of elements to

transcend their collective power, saying that when everything works together, what the audience is experiencing is “just as real to you or is in fact more real to you than the fact that you’re sitting in a seat watching it happen”. This reflects three systems concepts, 1) that the elements of a system cannot be separated and 2) are best understood in relationship to each other and the system; 3) that the synergy of the elements’ interaction created something greater than their sum.

Director #8 expresses her belief that, in the interest of cohesion, the audience should not be more aware of one element than the others. However, Directors #4 and 6 discuss situations in which one of design elements may stand out from the others. Director #6 says that in the development of visual metaphor, one of the design elements is usually “in the driver’s seat in a show”. Director #4 expresses his opinion that sometimes it is necessary for one of the elements to take precedence for the play to make sense or be clear. As an example, he describes the recent production of new work in which the projection of text messages brought the audience into an ongoing conversation between characters.

As some of the participants discussed harmony, others addressed the issue of disharmony. Director #3 notes that, without cohesion, the audience gets mixed signals or an incomplete experience because something about the performance rings false. Reflecting the principle of circularity, five other participants identify the results of inconsistency among the elements as confusion, distraction, discomfort, a disconcerting feeling, pulling the audience out of the story’s world, and the derailing of the story. As Director #4 notes, all elements of the performance must continue to speak the story.

As the many elements of the theatrical production come together, the central role of director positions him/her to maintain the unifying artistic vision (system goal) and connect everything in the system to it. Director #3 says that, in assessing the relationships between the elements, the director should ask, “How do we give the audience a full experience of this universe?” She also states that it is the director’s job to know what fits into the world of the story and help everyone work within those parameters. Director #2 concurs, stating that it is the director’s task to see that all of the elements fit. He quotes Samuel Beckett as saying that all a director really needs is taste, or the ability to match things together.

Director #1 observes that it is possible to tell good stories without visual and design elements but that even more powerful and sometimes more specific stories can be told with the addition of visceral elements. In speaking of whether or not to add design elements, Director #9 says, “I’m not Barnum... I don’t envision giant productions. I really start small first and then, if things get bigger, as long as they don’t waylay what I want [to accomplish], then that’s fine.” Director #8 remarks on the power of the audience’s imagination; that the synergy between the text and minimal elements required by the given circumstances provide enough for the imagination to work with and often create a more detailed and effective set than can be constructed.

Four of the participants speak of the primacy of the actor as communicator. Director #10 states her belief that the characters are the most important elements of the play and that all other elements must support the characters’ story. Director #7 identifies actors as the most important visual element of the production and the one to which the audience connects. Director #9 quotes Stanislavski as saying that the main job of the

actor is to be the vessel of communication from the playwright to the audience.

Regarding the basic necessities of theatrical experience, Director #4 states, “We only need a platform and a passion or two and a good text and we can create theatre.” As an example of this principle, he describes a production of *The Crucible* for which he had been a member of the audience. “There was no music. There was some kind of preset on the stage. The lights went down, the characters came out, they began to speak... All that was there were the words of the play and I was rapt with attention.” While he recognizes that there were opportunities for the addition of technology and design elements, in his opinion their absence make the performance more effective and more true.

In response to IQ 10, several participants speak about the role of the audience in the theatrical production. From a systems perspective, the audience functions as an element of the external environment, providing feedback which is processed and shapes the system’s functioning. In mediating interaction between the system and its environment, the director fulfills the acts as the system’s adaptive mechanism. Director #1, whose theatre attempts to duplicate Shakespearean staging conventions, notes that in his productions a visible audience is surrounding the stage and is a part of the world of the play. In that environment, the constantly shifting role of the audience is particularly evident. Director #4 notes that, while many elements may be minimized or even eliminated from a production, the audience cannot be discarded. Their presence and participation is necessary to the theatrical experience. Director #8 notes that the audience wants to use their imaginations and to be part of the communal experience with the actors. She also observes that each person in the audience brings with them their unique circumstances and perspective. “Where you are at that place and time informs

your experience, which is going to be different from the guy sitting directly next to you.”

The ephemeral nature of live theatre creates experiences which can never be reproduced or identical for any two individuals. This differs from the viewing of a movie which is exactly the same from any seat in the theater and is without alteration no matter how many times the film is run and whether or not there is an audience.

Additional Comments

At the conclusion of the interviews, participants were offered the opportunity to share information that they believed to be pertinent to the study but had not been solicited by the IQs. Seven participants accepted the invitation and spoke about collaboration and leadership.

Director #8 states that the artistic endeavors of everyone involved in theatre come from internal places of passion; that those involved in theatre are drawn to it as a communal creative experience. She observes that theatre artists have the opportunity to fulfill the human need for expression and be part of a something that is greater than oneself. Director #6 says that he is happiest when part of a collaborative work and is part of a team; that creating in a collaborative environment is more fruitful and rewarding. Director #3 credits her mentor, John Hardy, as having taught her that theatre is not about the ones who are making it. Instead, it is a service industry whose value rests in what is being given to other people. This focus on the recipients ties the system to its external environment and, in the temporary system, its reason for existence. It also allows no room for ego among the creative. “The rule when you work for me is it’s not about any of us; it’s about those people and what we give them and what we are doing for them.” On an organizational level, Director #2 observes that theatre is a good model of efficiency.

“Theatre people understand deadline, know how to work together, understand that if someone fails all fail, and are all willing to work for the same goal.”

In their observations about leadership, Directors #3 and 6 both say that it is best to lead from within the system rather than from the top. Director #6 observes that this is in contrast to the *auteur* style of directing in which the work is dictated by the director. Having a different perspective, Director #2 notes that in a system geared for output (to meet a goal), the prime driver is the director; that everyone else “works off of what the director does”. He emphasizes the need to establish a course from the first meeting of the company, stating that failure to get everyone pointed in the right direction from that start is a missed opportunity that cannot be reclaimed.

Director #7 states that leadership is about trust. He notes that creativity is very personal. Therefore, a person’s creation is essentially a part of him/herself which s/he is exposing to the responses and criticisms of others. Powerful artistic work requires vulnerability and requires an incredible amount of risk. Demonstrating the principle of circularity, when the person in charge inspires trust, people are more willing to risk failure. S/he can be secure in the knowledge that the director knows what works and what doesn’t, knows what to do with the creative efforts of all the agents and will not let the play crumble.

Director #1’s response to the question is to discuss the importance of clear communication. He believes that more effort should be made to get better at speaking and verbal communication. “Because we’re in theatre for the art, often that part of communication isn’t emphasized enough”. He expresses his conviction that good verbal communication is the key to groups functioning at their highest abilities. Reflecting

communication's role as binder of the system, he states that all collaboration happens through communication.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate the processes by which the theatrical director develops his/her vision for the production and communicates it to the actors and designers who, in turn, relay it to the audience. This chapter looks at the collective make-up of the participants and provides a brief profile of each one. Then, the participants' responses to the ten interview questions are summarized. Additionally, participants' discussion of leadership and collaboration is reviewed. The following chapter answers the Research Questions and discusses implications and limitations of the study.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The purpose of this phenomenological, qualitative study is to examine the process by which directors in the theatrical system develop and communicate their concept for a production to the agents who, in turn, relay it to the audience. A review of the literature has been conducted and the principles of Systems Theory have been used to explore the role of director as communicator and the communication system that guides the production company. This chapter considers the results of the study in light of learnings from the collected data.

Answering the Research Questions

Having considered the knowledge gained from the literature review and the reported experiences of veteran theatrical directors who participated in this study, the researcher has extrapolated the following answers to the research questions.

RQ 1: How does a director determine the message s/he wishes to communicate through a production?

Participant responses to IQ's 1, 2, 4, 6 and 9 address how a theatrical director determines the message s/he wishes to communicate to the audience through a production. In addition to script analysis, considerations for determining the direction of the show include concerns unique to the particular theatre and matters of artistic leadership. As the artifact upon which the production is based and the temporary system is established, development of the director's vision for the production begins with a thorough analysis of the script (Loeffler 19). The playwright's story, as presented in the

text, is the foundation upon which all of the elements of theatre combine to create the structure of the production (Patterson 4). According to director Mary Robinson, all collaboration in the production is built upon the director's relationship with the text (12). The text is available to all creative parties (Davies 194), providing the given circumstances around which creative decisions can be made. In his/her study of the text, the director seeks to find the meaning of the story and convey it to the actors, designers and artists who will communicate it to the audience (Director #2, Director #4, Eddy 27). In addition to discerning the playwright's intention, the director invests his/herself into the production. As Directors # 2, 3, 7, and 8 observe, every theatrical experience is unique and cannot be reproduced. A play may have been staged many times but none of the previous productions are identical to the one upon which the director is working. As the principal artist in the system, the director's unique style, methods, and personal interpretation of the text flavor the work of the system and the resulting artifact (Director #2, Gallaway 90, Hodge 6).

Elements considered by participating directors in analysis of the script include the structure of the play (Patterson 4); metaphors and themes; key sentences, phrases and images; character objectives and actions; given circumstances; technical considerations; and the director's gut reaction to the text (Hodge 15). As reported in Chapter 2, many of these same elements appear on Francis Hodge's list of components for analysis: given circumstances, dialogue, dramatic action, characters, ideas, tempos, and moods (16-18). Identifying the central conflict, or primary dramatic question, of the play helps the director determine the underlying theme of the work (Director #4, Director #5, Director #6). In addition to an extensive study of the text itself (Hodge 56, Posner 37), the director

is challenged to immerse him/herself into the world of the play (Hodge 14), get to know the playwright (Mitchell 44), and understand the context of the work (Trousdel 26).

Materials utilized by participants in this pursuit include other works by the playwright, reviews of his/her work, memoirs and journals, historical records, and investigations of culture and social attitudes at the time of writing.

The director's perspective on and interpretation of the play is itself a subsystem of the director-system. Analysis has as its base the text and evolves as it receives input. Based upon the findings in the literature and the responses of participants, the elements which infuse information into the interpretation-system are the text itself, feelings experienced during its study, personal reflections, the Aristotelian syllogism, and the given circumstance and human situations revealed during analysis. As information is introduced, it is processed and incorporated into the identity and structure of the system.

Participating directors note that the unique nature of the theatre (the system's environment) often informs the director's concept for the production. The mission of the theatrical organization may determine the system's objectives and choices of material (Director #1, Director #4). For example, an educational theatre will be concerned with the growth of its students and may, therefore, choose to stage a particular work in the round so that students gain experience in that format. Or, a community theatre organization may use elaborate spectacle because of the preferences of its audience-base. Likewise, a theatrical organization which specializes in modernizing classical pieces may choose to do a Hatfields-and-McCoy version of *Hamlet* because it fits their *raison d'être*. Other considerations are financial and personnel resources available to the company, and the unifying theme or style for the theatre's season (Director #1, Director #2, Director #4).

Matters of artistic leadership are considerations for the director as s/he determines the message and the direction for the production. Following the lead of Georg II, the director develops a unifying artistic concept (the system's goal) which will mediate all of the creative efforts of the company (the system) (Davies 188, Director #1, Director #3, Director #5, Director #6, Director #9, Director #10). As each of the artists (the elements) becomes an expert on his or her part (Director #3, Director #8), the director is the keeper of the vision, understanding how all of the parts fit together to form a cohesive whole (Director #1, Director #3, Director #5, Director #7, Director #9) and move the system toward its goal. As the designer of the production (Hodge 6) and the central guiding element of the system, the director exercises artistic control (Brockett and Findlay 38), creating the world within which the story exists (Director #2) and, using a term coined by Director #4, establishing "guidelines and guardrails" for what happens within that world. In the words of Director #6, the director marks out the boundaries of the playground within which experimentation and creativity may flourish.

Director #3 speaks of the director as the captain of a ship who invites a lot of people – designer, actors, and audience – to sail with her to a land that has never before been visited. Having determined the destination, the message s/he wishes to communicate, the director plots the route which will take everyone to that terminus. In-depth planning and organization (Marker 258) provide a structure from which the director can lead the collection of creatives toward the goal s/he has established for the system: communication of a specific message and desired audience effect (Director #1, Director #4, Director #9). As observed in Chapter 2, tangible expressions of this structure may be used to chart the director's intentions and create a play-book for bringing to life his/her

version of the story (Davies 188). These artifacts may include notes, sketches, schedules, plots, lists, diagrams, etc.

RQ 2: How does the director communicate his/her concept to the agents who will, in turn, relay it to the audience?

Interview Questions 1, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8 provide information regarding how study participants have accomplished this goal. Clear communication of the artistic vision (Cornford 490, Kowarsky 32, Posner 35) allows members of the company to understand the destination (the system's goal) and figure out how they fit into the journey (their functions within the system's process) (Davies 188, Director #3, Director #5, Director #6, Director #8, Kowarsky 32). Techniques useful to directors for communicating the vision to the actors and artists are both verbal and non-verbal. Reflective of those reported in Chapter 3, participants employ a variety of communication techniques including movement and placement of the body (Director #3, Director #4, Director #9, Director #10), appeals to the senses (Director #2, Director #4, Director #7, Director #8), truth in acting and the nature of man (Director #4), and rhetorical devices (Director #3, Director #6). Non-verbal tools used by directors participating in this study include printed material, images, objects, websites, puzzles, videos, visual metaphor, modeling, movement and body posture. They report that verbal communication occurs in production meetings, table talks, individual conversations, and rehearsal notes. Both verbal and non-verbal communication of the directors' visions points back to and supports the text (Director #1, Director #4, Patterson 4). In coaching actors in character development, several participants report helping to identify from the text playable objectives and obstacles, context and actions, relationships and disassociations which inform creative

choices (Director #1, Director #3, Director #4, Director #5, Director #7). This seems consistent with Stanislavski's approach to the text, looking for "the motivational impulses that propel dramatic action, that respond to the contextual details of the play's given circumstances, and that point toward the motivational spine connecting the units of action" (Trousdel 26).

It has been said that theatre is a communicative transaction between artist and audience (Gross 4). Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that theatre is a series of communicative transactions, originating with the playwright and mediated by the director, reflecting the systems principle of circularity. Though directors have many tools at their disposal – staging, lighting, sound, costumes, properties, actor (Loeffler 19, Posner 37) – author Donald Loeffler identifies the director as an artist whose primary medium is people who speak the words of the playwright and the vision of the director (20). This philosophy is reflected by participating directors as they speak of the other elements of production as supporting and enhancing the work of the actor-elements. For example, Director #7 notes that the physical and tactile elements help to ground the actors in the imaginary world of the play. Similarly, Director #2 observes that the visual and design elements may either free or limit the choices of the actors. Directors seek to "hold a mirror up to nature" (Director 4), reflecting truth as found in the story and in the human interactions around the story (Director #3, Director #4, Director #7, Jones 38). Echoing Bergman's focus on the actor (Mark 256), minimalism is applauded by study participants and sometimes preferred for eliminating anything that might interfere with the connection between the audience and actors and for promoting the presentation of truth without distraction (Director #1, Director #4, Director #5, Director #10).

Communication of the unifying artistic vision extends beyond imparting the particulars of the production. Directors are tasked with guiding the system's effort (Alamaney 36, Cornford 492, Director #1, Director #3, Director #5, Director #6, Director #7, Director #8, Director #9, Posner 40), mediating conflicts of interpretation (Director #1, Director #2, Director #3, Director #4, Director #5, Director #6, Director #7, Director #8, Director #9, Director #10, Loeffler 20), and coaching the artists (Director #4, Eddy 27, Kowarsky 32, Jones 43, Trousdell 30). All of these duties, functions of the system's maintenance mechanism, require interpersonal communication skills which equip the director for the collaborative creative process (Director #4, Director #5, Director #9). The director's modeling of honest and respectful communication will establish a pattern for all members of the system (Director #3, Director #8, Eddy 27, Kowarsky 32, Marker 257, Posner 40). In order to effectively relate to the diverse body, the leader must demonstrate flexibility, adapting his/her communication techniques to "speak the language" of each individual (Director #1, Director #2, Director #4, Director #5). When conflict of interpretation occurs, the director may restore the system's equilibrium and protect the integrity of the unified artistic vision by helping the wayward artist to maintain the creative instinct while adjusting its expression to serve the overall concept of the production (Director #1, Director #3, Director #4). In leading the system, directors may establish a culture which respects and protects the sensitive creative process (Director #3, Director #7, Eddy 27, Marker 257), facilitates transformation of the character (Cornford 488, Director #3, Director #5, Director #7, Director #9, Eddy 27, Kowarsky 32, Taylor 273, Trousdell 28), and nurtures exploration and discovery (Cornford 488, Director #4, Director #5, Director #6, Director #8, Eddy 27, Jones 43, Mufson 59, Posner 38). Most of

the participating directors describe implementing a give-and-take dance in which they relay abstract ideas and allow actors and artists to employ their own creativity to fill in the details. This reflects the systems principle of circularity in which the director's feedback is incorporated into the functioning of the subsystem, prompting evolution of the subsystem. Empowering members of the company to tap their own creativity and skill fosters ownership and investment in the collective and enhances the final product (Director #2, Director #4, Director #7, Director #8, Director #9).

RQ 3: How does this process reflect the principles of Systems Theory?

The responses of study participants to IQ's 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9 and 10 provide insight into the systems functioning of the theatrical production company. In the nineteenth century, Georg II set a precedent by shifting the focus of theatrical productions from star performers to an emphasis on the work of the ensemble (Sarlos 241). Like the woodland pond described in Chapter 2, the theatrical company demonstrates the system principles of circularity, co-causality and synergy.

Circularity of process refers to the cyclical nature of systems in which feedback is incorporated into the activity of the system (Armour and Browning 47). One individual's work can generate new collaborative impulses in other members which feedback into the evolution and growth of the system (Bickerstaff 267). As the theatrical production develops, each person contributes his/her insight and creative choices which evoke response from other members (Director #2, Director #3, Director #4, Director #7, Director #8). The structure of the system is altered as these choices and responses are incorporated into the whole. As new elements are added, such as the introduction of costume pieces, new discoveries are made and the system adapts to this new information

(Director #3, Director #4, Director #5, Director #7, Director #8). As the director moderates the collaborative efforts, s/he filters the creative contributions of the system's elements. Therefore, the director controls input into the system and consequently, the course of the system's evolution. If the director encourages experimentation and investigation (Cornford 488, Eddy 27, Jones 43, Mufson 59, Posner 58) an environment may be created in which alternatives are explored (Director #2, Director #3, Director #4, Director #8), resulting in the introduction of additional feedback and promoting the growth cycle.

Co-causality refers to the potential of the actions and choices of one element to impact all of the other elements (Armour and Browning 47, Hall and Fagen 59). This concept is similar to circularity in that the process of change is propelled forward by responses of the elements to input from each other. For instance, if an actor drops an important line, his scene partner must choose an appropriate response. If she chooses to pick up the line, the meaning of the dialogue may be unaltered. If, however, she chooses to press on without acknowledging the error, the omitted information may dramatically change the audience's understanding of the scene. The dynamic is ever-changing as the elements relate. As the guiding element of the centralized system, the director has creative and organizational leadership of the collective. If the director chooses to allow an element of the system to operate outside of the guidelines established for the system's functioning, all other members must adapt to maintain system equilibrium. Similarly, if the director chooses to alter the previously established blocking of a character, other actors in the scene must adapt their responses to accommodate the new pattern.

In addition to the actors' collaboration, the visual and design elements prompt interaction (Director #1, Director #2, Director #3, Director #4, Director #5, Director #6, Director #7, Director #8, Director #9, Director #10). For example, Director #2, whose formal training is in theatrical design, posits that, if the set itself does not have a life and interaction with the actor and influence upon what the audience thinks about the play, it shouldn't be on the stage. Instead of acting independently, the elements function as variables which prompt change in the system as a whole. Director #3 states that she encourages actors to consider how every single element may catapult them further into the world of the story. All of the input into the system, whether from human or inanimate elements, becomes part of the unified, dynamic whole (Armour and Browning 47, Director #1, Director #3, Director #5, Director #6, Director #9) and each element can best be understood based upon its relationship to and interaction with the system (Bertalanffy 9).

Synergy refers to the principle that the elements and processes of a system can produce more when working together than the accumulated sum of the elements (Armour and Browning 141, Director #1, Director #4, Director #7, Director #8, Director #9, Director #10). In his dissertation titled *The Collaborative Artist: Creativity Theory for Theatre Production*, Jimmy Bickerstaff quotes Charles Marowitz's example of this phenomenon, noting that after a director and group of actors have worked together for some time, "a group intelligence is engendered which becomes greater than the director's and the actors' intelligence combined" (99).

As synergy is defined in Chapter 2, interaction by the elements of theatre creates a type of expression that cannot be realized by the ingredients separately or as the result of

adding their efforts together. Speaking of the theatrical artifact, Bickerstaff notes, “This distinction between collective and collaborative refers to the difference between viewing this form of creative activity as an aggregate of individual creative activities on the one hand, and viewing it on the other as an organic whole, influencing the individual processes of its constituent parts” (265). The interaction of the elements transcends their collective power. The nuanced performances of actors in response to each other produces something new, a living art work that has never before occurred or been experienced (Director #4, Director #7, Director # 8). Describing this relationship, Director #1 says that all of the elements of the theatrical production are “cooked together to create the stew that is the final production”. Some of the participants speak of this phenomenon as the “magic” of theatre (Director #7, Director #9, Director #10). It is as if the elements work together in such a way that they give birth to a new creature that carries the DNA of the separate parts but is wholly individual.

Communication is the means by which this synergy happens (Director #1). In the parlance of Systems Theory, the flow of information within the system is the glue which integrates and creates stability for the theatrical company (Almaney 37). It provides the system with the ability to deal with conflict and adapt to its environment (Almaney 37) and plays a role in establishing the system’s identity (Almaney 36, Ruben 164). As leader and central element of the system, the communication skills and practices of the director guide the system toward its goals (Director #1, Director #2, Director #5, Director #8, Director #10, Kowarskey 32), grant permission to experiment and explore (Director #2, Director #3, Director #4, Director #8, Jones 43, Mufson 59, Posner 38), provide identity for elements in relationship to the system (“What is my part in the whole?”) (Director #3,

Kowarsky 32, Vasile 185), facilitates transformation of the elements (Cornford 488, Jones 43, Taylor 273), and pilots collaboration which results in telling the story (Almaney 36, Director #1, Director #3, Director #5, Director #6, Director #8, Director #9, Eddy 27, Kowarsky 32, Posner 40).

As noted in Chapter 2, a system in which one element directs the behavior of the parts of the system is said to be centralized (Hall and Fagen 60). In the theatrical production company, the director is that central member. As the dominant artist in the collective, the director captains the ship, plotting the course for the journey which the company will undertake (Director #1, Director #3, Director #4, Director #6). The director is the designer of the production (Director #1, Director #2, Hodge 6) and the guiding storyteller (Director #4, Director #8, Kowarsky 32). Coordinating all aspects of the production, the director is the leader of the cohesive, inseparable whole (Director #1, Director #3, Director #5, Director #6, Director #8, Director #9).

In their descriptions of the system (the theatrical production company), the directors who participated in this study demonstrate characteristics associated with transformational leadership: creative, interactive, visionary, empowering, and passionate (Hackman and Johnson 103). They seek to inspire the company members to accept the unifying artistic vision (system goal) and invest in its success (Director #3, Director #4, Director #5, Director #6). They understand the importance of building trust between members of the company as well as motivating confidence in the director's ability to lead and value for the artists (Director #4, Director #5, Director #6, Director #7). They empower members of the company by encouraging experimentation and growth which

can only take place when the artists trust the director to respect and protect both the artifact and its creator (Director #1, Director #2, Director #3, Director #4, Director #7).

Implications

This qualitative study is undertaken in an attempt to learn how theatrical directors determine their intentions for a production (the impact they seek to have on the audience) and how they communicate that vision to the actors and artists who bring about that influence. To that end, the literature has been reviewed and the lived experiences of veteran directors have been compiled. In one-on-one interviews, ten questions have been posed to participating directors which asked them to share their personal experiences and perceptions. These questions explore their understandings of the role of director, their processes for discerning the message of the play and the intended audience effect, and how that message is communicated to the members of the company and, ultimately, to the audience. Findings from the literature review are applied to the compiled responses of study participants and, from the literature and the results of this original study, five hypotheses may be extrapolated.

First, the theatrical production company functions as a centralized, temporary system. The ensemble has the characteristics of a system; it consists of elements which have unique attributes, is characterized by relationships between the elements, and exists within an environment with which it interacts. The elements are interdependent, maintain a feedback cycle and their interaction creates something greater than the sum of the elements.

In this system, which is formed for a limited time to serve a specific purpose, the director is the dominant member. His/her agenda and directions inform and determine the

choices and actions of other members. Feedback from the director acts as input into each subsystem (each member); the information is processed and affects what is output back into the system. All creative choices of the system's subsystems are filtered by the director to determine if they fit into the unifying artistic vision. If so, they are finessed into their places in a way that maintains system equilibrium. If not, the director may choose to adjust the vision to envelope the contribution of the individual, to collaborate with the artist to retain the intention while adapting its expression to fit into the vision, or s/he may choose to reject the artifact as not conducive to the pursuit of the system's goals.

As the production process moves toward finalization (performance), subsystems within the whole become more self-guided and the director's role may evolve to a more administrative one. In its final stages, the director coordinates the incorporation of design and technical elements, mediating the adjustments inevitable in their inclusion in such a way that maintains system equilibrium. S/he may also be occupied by interactions with the system's environment, facilitating matters pertinent to the performance venue, schedule and audience. When the show opens, the director's work is done and the system performs without directorial input, now receiving input from the audience.

The second outcome of this study is that directing may be taught from a systems perspective. Educators may employ Systems Theory to help students understand the holistic system of the theatrical production company, the elements as they relate to each other and the system, and the centralized role of the director. The systems functions of setting boundaries, establishing culture and practices, defining objectives, maintaining equilibrium and adapting to the environment are all part of the business of the director.

The use of Systems Theory as a lens through which to view the work of the director does not change the role of the director. However, this researcher hopes that it has helped the reader to understand the collaboration and process of the theatrical company, as well as the role of the director in the whole. The concept of an interactive system has provided a framework on which to hang the work of the director and the artist and has given structure to their interactions. The images associated with Systems Theory, the pond and orchestra, have provided symbols for the synergistic collaborative whole of the theatre as each element performs its function in relationship with the system. Both veteran and novice directors may find success by learning from the experiences of the veteran directors who participated in this study and by applying the principles described in their processes. Veteran directors might recognize themselves in the experiences and descriptions of the participants or they might identify areas in which they need to hone their skills. Hopefully, they will be reminded of the importance of allowing each element within the system to serve its function as, in the words of Director #1, all of the elements cook together to make the stew that is the theatrical performance.

The third hypothesis which may be drawn is that it is in the director's preparation that the objectives and orientation of the system are established. This is also where the director's creativity and originality may be exercised. As s/he creates the unifying artistic vision, the director sketches out the map for the world in which the story will unfold. Based upon the original intentions of the playwright as provided in the text, and incorporating his/her own responses to the story, the director defines the route through this world which will deliver the system to its desired destination, the communication of a specific message to the audience.

In order for the director to identify the destination of the production (system's goal) and the direction that the company must take to arrive at it, thorough and thoughtful groundwork must be done. This homework includes extensive study of the text, making note of the major dramatic question or conflict, the given circumstances of the play, relationships between the characters and with the environment, the objectives and obstacles which stand between the characters and their goals, and the actions which move the story toward its end. Materials which provide context for the work give clarity to the social and cultural attitudes extant at the time of writing and in the chronological setting of the story. Data may be found in historical documents, reviews, articles written about the play or playwright, other works of the period, other productions of the same play and scholarly journals which report economic and social circumstances. Research may also reveal the context from which the playwright wrote – what s/he was personally experiencing at that time. These insights may be sought in journals and memoirs, biographies, other works by the playwright and historical documents.

As the director determines the path for the production, s/he must also consider the given circumstances of the theatrical organization (system's external environment). Financial, personnel, material and skill resources may either open up or limit possibilities for the production's development. Additionally, the objective or mission of the organization may mandate a production's style and goals. The organization's continued health and existence may be directly tied to the successful propagation of its unique mission.

Having invested in a thorough analysis, considering the circumstances of the theatrical organization (the system's external environment), the original intent of the

playwright and the context of the story, the director is equipped for in-depth planning and organization of the system's enterprise. The organizational structure created by the director defines the physical universe of the play, outlines expectations and disciplines required of the system's members, predicts the forward motion of the system, and inspires trust in the leadership.

The fourth hypothesis that may be discerned from the research is that effective communication is necessary for leadership of the theatrical company. Having developed the unifying artistic vision through painstaking preparation, the director is charged with effectively transferring that vision to the artists who will represent him/her on the stage. Clear communication of the artistic vision provides the members with understanding of the goals for the system as well as each element's part in that undertaking. The director is the only member of the system who fully understands the concept and how each element of the production serves it. As the designer and keeper of the vision, it is his/her responsibility to maintain the system's focus on the destination and the route. All collaborative efforts must be filtered through the consolidating mission to determine whether or not they serve to advance the system toward its goals.

Interpersonal skills are fundamental to the director's connection to and understanding of his/her human resources. The diversity of theatrical training methods and institutions, as well as generational differences, have resulted in the absence of a consistent working lexicon within the discipline. Therefore, the director must invest him/herself in understanding and speaking the "languages" of those with whom s/he works. Over the course of the production process, both director and players will likely

experience growth in their vocabularies as they acquire terms and meanings from each other.

In addition to rhetorical skills, the director must develop some understanding of human nature and psychology. As the leader of a system of creative individuals, the director will encounter diversity of personality and temperament, varying levels of maturity and functioning, and situations in which conflict must be mediated. The director's ability to read people and understand how best to communicate with them will help him/her to establish and maintain relationships, solicit what s/he needs from each member and demonstrate respect and caring. In addition to interpersonal communication, developing an understanding of organizational communication skills and patterns will help the director attend to the system's health and prosperity.

The fifth emergent theory is that, as the director is the dominant member of the collaborative system, transformational leadership is effective for facilitation of the creative collaboration. The theatrical production company is a temporary system, established for a limited time and specific purpose, structured around an artifact (the text) which guides its process. As the central element of the system, the director informs the choices and actions of the other members. In the cooperative endeavor, the director's creativity and vision establish the objectives of the system and guide in their pursuit. The transformational leader invites feedback from other elements, allowing them to contribute their own genius and affect the manner in which the system moves forward. As a creative professional, the director understands and respects the creative process and the investment of self it requires. S/he entrusts each member with responsibility for and freedom over his/her piece of the collective effort, encouraging, challenging and

facilitating the work of each element. The transformational director invests not only in the success of the overall system but in the accomplishments of each member of the system.

Limitations of the Study

In keeping with the principles of phenomenology and qualitative research, this study focuses on the personal observations and experiences of a small group of participants. Although qualitative methodology allows the researcher to see each participant's unique experiences, the process is limited in its focus on the depth of data rather than the breadth. It is, therefore, difficult to draw definitive conclusions about the communication processes of directors from these findings or to generalize them to a broader population of professional directors. So, while a sample of ten participants was sufficient for patterns to emerge and generalizations to be made, a larger sample size using quantitative methods may have led to additional discoveries.

The nature of the sample posed limitations as well. Though their experiences had been gained in theatrical organizations across the United States, and for one participant abroad, at the time of the study all of the participants were working in a single Southeastern state. A broader reach may have provided insight into divergent practices in other parts of the country. That being said, an additional limitation was the lack of funding which limited travel of the researcher to access directors in other geographic areas.

The use of the interview created several limitations for this study. Ritchie and Lewis describe the interview as a managed verbal exchange (159). The effectiveness of interviews depends first upon the communication skills of the researcher (Clough and

Nutbrown 134) and second, upon the effectiveness of the researcher's interpersonal skills (Opie 111). No assessment was taken of the quality of this researcher's rapport with the participants; thus, it is difficult to ascertain whether the data could have been heartier had rapport been more firmly established.

The validity of the data mined from each participant's narrative rests on the extent to which the researcher truly captures his/her voice. Although this researcher attempts to be aware and mindful of her own preconceived biases, they may obstruct her view of the participants' constructed realities. In this same vein, she may have imposed her terms on their reality rather than allowing them to express them in their unique ways. Additionally, the researcher may have unknowingly fragmented the data rather than treating it as a whole.

The quality and value of the data is not only limited by the researcher, but by the participants as well. Participants respond differently based upon their perceptions of the interviewer. Denscombe identifies that such factors as age, sex, and ethnicity facilitate or hamper what participants are willing to divulge and their honesty (184).

Even the type and style of the interview shapes the data. While there are numerous types of interviews as well as various styles an interview can take, this study employs a semi-structured interview which is the most common form of qualitative research (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 315). Although each participant was asked the same set of questions, the order and form of the questions varied according to the participant's narrative. The researcher chose to allow participants' responses to questions to prompt the next question asked so that the interview flowed.

Since the narratives of participants are wholly dependent upon their memories and perceptions, the data gathered via the interviews may or may not be accurate portrayals of their true experiences and ideas.

Recommendations for Further Research

This researcher finds the study of this population to be fascinating and rich with possibilities for future research. Further research of the theatrical production company may provide insight into the creative mindset and process, organizational behavior and communication, interpersonal behavior and communication, and the collaborative process. The first of this researcher's recommendations is the exploration of the theatrical production itself as a system. Though the present study has touched upon this topic, its focus is the role and communication processes of the director. A thorough examination of the system that exists within theatre would provide insight into not only the human elements but also the organizational and physical elements.

Secondly, the present study might be duplicated enlisting directors from only one discipline. For example, interviews might be done only with directors who work in educational settings, whose focus is developing the skills of emerging artists. A broader sample of educational directors might provide insight into methods that are effective in that particular setting, accommodating the training needs of students and the curriculum needs of professors. Likewise, a study conducted exclusively with Broadway directors would likely produce results unique to that professional level.

Another avenue for future research is to explore the value of minimalism, investigating whether the use of visual and design elements enhances or distracts from communication of the text. One approach that might be taken is to investigate the value

and power of the performed text without embellishment of sets, costumes, props, lighting and sound effects, etc. Alternately, this study might apply semiotics theory, examining the use of symbols and meaning in the theatrical setting, both in performance of the text and in design/visual elements.

Three directions are recommended for future research focusing on Systems Theory in the work of the theatrical director: assessing directors' perceptions of the applicability of Systems Theory, training theatrical directors and testing directors' methodology. First, researchers may examine how the awareness of Systems Theory might change a director's description of his/her choices and patterns. A technique which might be implemented is to describe a specific principle of Systems Theory and ask the participant to discuss how that principle does or does not apply to his/her work.

Second, researchers may investigate how the principles of Systems Theory might be applied to the training of theatrical directors. How might the application of Systems Theory improve or change the work of theatrical directors? By observing the work processes of theatrical directors and analyzing it by Systems Theory thinking, researchers might identify systems principles which are common to skilled directors. Then, processes and exercises might be devised for training others in the application of those principles.

Third, the reported methodology of directors might be tested across different systems. While study participants described their processes and provided specific examples from their observations, the self-reporting was generalized from the lived experiences of participants, taking into account many variables extant within their professional encounters. Future researchers might observe a single director across several systems in which the director is the constant. This may take the form of a director

working with different companies, or directing different plays with a resident company. Such a longitudinal study would allow the researcher to examine how the director's method changes to adapt to each system. Additionally, researchers might observe a director through the production process and test a director's self-reported methods against what is witnessed by the researcher.

Lastly, this researcher recommends the further exploration of leadership. The proposed study might test the implementation of transformational leadership in the creative system. A more focused study might examine the transformational characteristic of empowerment in the context of the theatrical production. Also, one might investigate a Systems Theory of leadership as applied to the theatrical organization, examining different levels and leadership roles within the organization.

Conclusion

This qualitative study is undertaken to examine the processes by which theatrical directors determine the theme for a production and communicate their unifying artistic visions to the agents who, in turn, relay it to the audience. To that end, interview questions were used to determine the practices and processes currently used by theatrical directors. Under the guidance of faculty advisors, questions were composed to target three principles of Systems Theory: circularity of process, co-causality and synergy as defined in the review of the literature. Study participants were not informed of the study's theoretical lens (Systems Theory) nor were they asked to comment upon how Systems Theory applies to theatrical production. Descriptions of their experiences and processes were made regardless of their understanding of Systems Theory and without connection to a Systems Theory context. Analysis of the collected data looked for the three

principles of Systems Theory at work within the theatrical production system with the director as the central, guiding element.

Though students of Systems Theory may see tenets of the theory demonstrated in the theatrical production process, this thesis does not attempt to demonstrate how it may be applied to help the theatrical director do his/her job. The researcher did not seek to identify or develop ways in which the director's work might be improved or changed by applying Systems Theory principles. Instead, this study provides a body of knowledge, derived from the reported experiences and processes of veteran directors, upon which future researchers may develop a clear application of Systems Theory to methods of director training.

The research reveals that the director's message is formed through comprehensive study of the text, the artifact around which the system is formed, as well as information which provides context for the work of the playwright; consideration of the theatrical organization's missional objectives (the environment in which the system exists), and concerns of artistic leadership. Communication of the concept to stakeholders, and ultimately to the audience, is accomplished by clear communication of the artistic vision (the system's goal) and strategy which mediates collaboration among the artists. The collaborative process reflects Systems Theory in its circularity of process, co-causality and synergy. Theories emerging from the research are that the theatrical production company functions as a centralized, temporary system; that the objectives and orientation of the system are formed in the director's process of preparation; that effective communication is necessary for leadership of the system; and that transformational leadership is effective for facilitation of creative collaboration.

Appendix A: Correlation of Research Questions and Interview Questions

	RQ1: How does a director determine the message s/he wishes to communicate through a production?	RQ2: How does the director communicate his/her concept to the agents who will, in turn, relay it to the audience?	RQ3: How does this process reflect the principles of Systems Theory?
IQ 1: According to your understanding and experience, what is the role of the director in the theatrical production process?	X	X	X
IQ 2: As a director, to whom are you most responsible?	X		X
IQ 3: How do you lead through verbal communication?		X	X
IQ 4: What is your process for analyzing the script?	X		
IQ 5: What system of communication, processes or methods do you use for helping actors and designers understand your concept?		X	

	RQ1: How does a director determine the message s/he wishes to communicate through a production?	RQ2: How does the director communicate his/her concept to the agents who will, in turn, relay it to the audience?	RQ3: How does this process reflect the principles of Systems Theory?
IQ 6: What non-verbals (images, music, etc.) do you use for conceptualizing and communicating the theme of the production to the company?	X	X	
IQ 7: How do you deal with conflict of ideas or interpretation in the production process?		X	X
IQ 8: How does the addition of design/visual elements move the work of the company forward toward the goal? Effect the functioning of the system?		X	X
IQ 9. How do design/visual elements facilitate communication of the story to the audience? How do they move the story forward	X		X
IQ 10: Describe the interconnectivity of the elements of theatrical production. How would the audience experience differ if one or more was absent?			X

Appendix B

CONSENT FORM

The Theatrical Director as Systems Artist and Communicator
Denise Thomas
Liberty University
School of Communication and Creative Arts

You are invited to be in a research study of the communication processes of theatrical directors. You have been selected for participation because of your experience as a director of live theatrical performances. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Denise Thomas, candidate for Master of Communication from the School of Communication and Creative Arts, Liberty University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore the process by which theatrical directors develop and communicate their concept for a play to the actors and designers who will in turn relay it to the audience.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Provide me with a copy of your theatrical resume.
2. Allow me to conduct an interview with you, lasting approximately one hour.
3. Allow me to make an audio recording of the interview.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

The risks associated with this study are minimal, no more than you might expect to encounter in everyday life.

There are no direct benefits to you. However, it is hoped that the study will result in a better understanding of the processes of veteran directors.

Compensation:

You will not receive payment. However, a copy of the resulting thesis will be provided to you upon request.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher and a professional transcriptionist will have access to the records.

Data will be stored on a password-protected computer and retained for three years. At the end of this period, data and recordings will be destroyed.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or your current employer. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study:

You may request to be withdrawn from the study, at which point any data solicited from you participation will be excluded from the findings. If an audio-recording has been made of your participation, it will be destroyed immediately.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Denise Thomas. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at 540-256-2567 or adthomas@liberty.edu. You may also contact her faculty advisor, Dr. Cecil Kramer at 434-582-2077 or at cvkramer@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in this study.

_____ I consent to the audio-recording of the interview.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

IRB Code Numbers:

IRB Expiration Date:

Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. According to your understanding and experience, what is the role of the director in the theatrical production process?
2. As a director, to whom are you most responsible?
3. How do you lead through verbal communication?
4. What is your process for analyzing the script?
5. What system of communication, processes or methods do you use for helping actors and designers understand your concept?
6. What non-verbals (images, music, etc.) do you use for conceptualizing and communicating the theme of the production to the company?
7. How do you deal with conflict of ideas or interpretation in the production process?
8. How does the addition of design/visual elements move the work of the company forward toward the goal? Effect the functioning of the system?
9. How do design/visual elements facilitate communication of the story to the audience? How do they move the story forward?
10. Describe the interconnectivity of the elements of theatrical production. How would the audience experience differ if one or more was absent?

Appendix D: Study Participant Profiles

Alias	Formal Training	Years of Directing Experience	Directing Venues
#1	BS, Apprenticeship in London	Approx. 26 yrs	Professional (Equity), Educational
#2	BA, MFA, Post-graduate work; concentration - Directing and Design	Approx. 32 yrs	Professional (Equity)
#3	BA, Barter Players member & intern	Approx. 15 yrs	Professional (Equity and training)
#4	BA, MA, MFA, Herbert Berghof Acting Studio (NYC); concentration - Theatrical Arts	Approx. 30 yrs	Educational, Community, Regional
#5	BFA, MALS, Post-graduate work; concentration - Musical Theatre	Approx. 25 yrs	Educational, Community
#6	BFA, MFA; concentration – Directing	Approx. 13 yrs	Semi-professional, Educational
#7	BA-Theatre, MFA-Directing	Approx. 4 yrs	Educational, Semi-professional
#8	BA-Acting, MFA-Classical Performance	Approx. 15 yrs	Community, Educational, Semi-professional
#9	BA, Actors Studio (NYC), Gene Frankel Studio(NYC), Potters Field (NYC), Strasberg Institute (NYC)	Approx. 15 yrs	Community, Stock/Regional, Semi-professional, Educational
#10	None	Approx. 14 yrs	Community

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