Page to Stage: The Craft of Adaptation Vincent Murphy http://www.press.umich.edu/4353160/page\_to\_stage The University of Michigan Press, 2013

# Contents

#### Introduction 1

## Part One. The Six Building Blocks

1. Find Literature That Compels You and Define Its Theme 17

Ways to Think about Choosing Material

Discovering Your Theme

Naming Your Theme

Considering Your Landscape and Neighborhood

How I Choose Material to Adapt

Construction Exercises for Building Block 1

2. Select Dialogue and Narrative 35

Theater's Advantage: Seeing Each Character's Point of View

Creative Partnership: Reassigning Dialogue to Different Points of View

Dialogue: The Building Block of Playwrights

Narrative: Pacing Your Build

How to Handle Different Kinds of Narration

Research on Language

Construction Exercises for Building Block 2

3. Identify Principal Characters and Primary Relationships 60

Choosing Which Characters Your Adaptation Will Enact

Know Your Characters Intimately

Actors' Skill at Playing Multiple Roles

Letting Actors Shape Your Vision

Relationship: The Mortar That Holds Characters Together

Family: The Blueprint for Understanding Relationship

Construction Exercises for Building Block 3

Page to Stage: The Craft of Adaptation Vincent Murphy http://www.press.umich.edu/4353160/page\_to\_stage The University of Michigan Press, 2013

#### x Contents

## 4. Choose an Evocative Stageable Image 75

Finding the Theatrical Environment

Contemporary Staging: Spatial Metaphors as Viable Playing Spaces

Evocative Details: Parts Suggest the Whole

Imagining Onstage: Setting the Scene with What's Necessary and Evocative

Creative Spaces

Choosing and Integrating an Evocative Stageable Image

Using Narration from a Character's Point of View to Establish Place

How Scale of Venue Changes the Focus

Construction Exercises for Building Block 4

### 5. Construct the Storyline 90

Building a Storyline on Your Foundational Theme

Conflict: Tensions between Characters That Add Heat and Light

Finding the Central Event

Prior Circumstances: The Past That Shapes the Future

The Beginning, Middle, and End of a Clear Storyline

Construction Exercises for Building Block 5

## 6. Craft Playable Actions 105

Language as Action

Image as Action

Physical Action as a Direct Theatrical Vocabulary

Effective Stage Directions for Essential Actions

Offering Suggestive Clues in Stage Directions

Construction Exercises for Building Block 6

## Part Two: Sturdy Construction: Yours, Mine, & Master Adaptors

## 7. Balancing the Blocks 123

What Is Your Significant Content Element?

What Anchors Your Adaptation?

What Performance Vocabulary Best Serves Your Story?

Trust Your Hunches

Balancing the Elements

Two Case Studies

Clarifying the Where and When

Tracking Time and Place

Utilizing Your Best Materials and Tools as You Define Shifts

Aspirations for the Next Stage

Construction Exercises for Balancing the Blocks

Page to Stage: The Craft of Adaptation Vincent Murphy http://www.press.umich.edu/4353160/page\_to\_stage The University of Michigan Press, 2013

Contents xi

#### 8. Two Case Studies: Enough and Me and My Shadow 144

The First Enough—Boston, 1979–80: Reality Theater

Casting, Producing, and Permission

The Six Building Blocks for the First Enough

Second Enough—Boston, 1984: Theater Works

The Six Building Blocks for the Second Enough

Third Enough—Atlanta and the Netherlands, 1991: Theater Emory

The Six Building Blocks for the Third Enough

"Petition"/Me and My Shadow—Boston, 1982

Speaking the Speech, and to Whom

Clues to Finding the Evocative Stageable Image

Staying Open to Finding Collaborators

The Six Building Blocks for "Petition"/Me and My Shadow

### 9. Partnership and Performance 160

Building Collaborative Relationships

The Workshop Process

The Auteur Model of the Adaptor-Director

Challenges That Multitasking Adaptors Face

Some Auteurs and the Theater Companies That Have Kept Them

Models of Collaboration

Playwriting Centers

Establishing a Collaborative Relationship with a Theater

A Way to Start: The Readers' Theater Model

Appendix: Adaptations by Vincent Murphy 177

Bibliography 179

Index 181