

NAME. ?



This is a legend of American living.
It is like the bone structure.
There are certain elements that re-cur in all times of life.
The only thing that makes them different is the point of view, not the actual incident.

Some things happen to us and some things happen to our Mothers but they all happen to us.

This has to do with the living in a very new town, some place where the first fence has just gone up.
The different parts and the various characters span a long time length and do not fit into any one period of history. In that sense it is not historical in development.

The scene is the inside and the outside of a house.
There is;

a doorway
a porch
a rocking chair
a small fence.

There will be no heavy construction; it is only the framework of a doorway, the platform of the porch, a Shaker rocking chair with its exquisite bone-like simplicity, and a small fence that will signify what a fence means in a new country.

This will be so placed as to divide the stage into two areas of action. There will be nothing casual in the design. It will have beauty of line and proportion. At times the action will shift from one area to the other and at other times both areas will be used simultaneously.

The action centers around days in the lives of people.

EDEN VALLEY
WEDDING DAY
INTERLUDE
FEAR IN THE NIGHT
THE DAY OF WRATH
MOMENT OF CRISIS.

There will be moments of dramatic urgency, of conflict and anguish, side by side with moments of lyric awareness of the simple things of living... a sense of country side, fields, dear relationships, and the usual in peoples lives.

I have used quotations from the Bible, not in a religious sense so much as in a poetic sense. There are a certain group of people who think in Biblical terms and incidents. To them everyday happenings bring to mind some such happening from the Bible. If you so desire we can change and re-write these lines, leaving the quality but without the sense of actual quotation.

I do not know how you will wish to handle the lines, whether with or without music. There will be no dancing on the lines.

All of this is rather more like a poem than a dramatic happening, although many of the happenings are dramatic in themselves and should

felt as such.

Each one of us is a theatre unto himself. Certain things are alive and present with us although far in the actual past as far as time is concerned. But America is forever peopled with certain characters who walk with many of us at certain times in a very real way. There is an irrationality, a willfulness at heart of all of us. Children have it to a marked degree.

That is why I have introduced the INDIAN GIRL. There is no reason in one sense for her to be there and yet she is always there... in the names of our cities, states, rivers, and in the play of all of us as children. We can never escape the sense of her having been here and of her continued existence as a supreme spectator to all of our happenings. She is the symbolic figure of the land, the Eve of this Genesis.

I plan to have her always on the stage. Sometimes she will not be seen but by a mere crossing of the stage at other times she can so suspend time as we often do in our own thoughts. In all that happens she is the protagonist but at most times relatively passive as far as action is concerned.

You may not like this idea. If not we can talk about it and perhaps I can remove her. She can be, however, a supremely theatrical device if used well. Naturally I do not ask you to write Indian music as we call it and she will in no sense do Indian dancing. But she is deep in our nostalgia.

It all should by theatrical clarity add up to a sense of place.

CHARACTERS.

THE MOTHER:

She is the constant figure of our early life.
She is theatric in the way American Primitives are.
She is small and exactly drawn with a certain elegance and formality.
She is dressed in the style of an American Primitive .
She looks like many picture we have seen on the walls of old American homes.
She sits in a Shaker rocking chair on the porch, leaving it twice only.

In quality she is fanatical, formal, gentle and hard in a certain delicate way.
She is the way children think of older people; never in bed, always up, always awake, terrifyingly quiet.

THE DAUGHTER:

She is the DAUGHTER of this country.
She is slender, valiant as we think of the Pioneer woman.
She has strength that is feminine;
There is a great eagerness and yet great steadiness about her and she loves and plays with a completeness.
She is what we like to think of when we think of the American woman. She at least is our heritage whether we make us of it or not. She is in our blood.

THE INDIAN GIRL:

She is like a tree or a rock in her relationship to the place. At times we forget her but she is always with us as part of the romance of our youth as a land.
She need not be dressed in the native sense but her belongings should have the sense of the exotic that they have when we look at the old drawings of the early times.
She is the supreme spectator of all we do.
She is in the names of our rivers and cities and in all of our childhood play she is very real. In the sense that she is the land she is the protagonist of all that happens here.
I think we do not know how often she possesses our thoughts. I realize that Indian material is hard to handle and that it must be done with theatricality and complete design, rather than from an anthropological point of view. In that way there is nothing exactly native about. She is not an Indian's Indian but a white persons Indian.
I think she can enter the action in a beautiful and moving way,.

THE CITIZEN:

I use this word because I do not want to call him the Man.
Perhaps we can find a better name for him later.

CHARACTERS (contd)

He is shy, fanatical, with the overtones of the Puritan about him.
He is in no way a bumpkin but he has a certain raw-boned grace about him, as well as a certain awkwardness of bone.
He is at heart the abolitionist, the John Brown.
He is the man who fights when he does not like to fight, simply because he must do so for the rights of other men.
As such he may be wrong and he may be cruel and violent and to be feared. But he is a power to be reckoned with.
He is tragic in his dedication^s as well as heroic.

THE FUGITIVE:

This is the man who is hunted, persecuted; who becomes almost clownish in his supreme agony for freedom.
He is really the slave of the Civil War period.
He will not be dressed or made up as a negro but there will be the feeling of negro body about his movement.
He will be seen in the half light and shadows. It is true that he always exists at all times but for us he is particularized by the slave.
As far as the music is concerned you need not use that material exactly but it should have a feeling of that area I think.

THE YOUNGER SISTER:

She is a minor character used as relief and to turn the scene from some moments when it might be more or less general to the feeling of the specific.
She has the headlong quality of adolescent girls and is engaging and with charm and warmth.

TWO CHILDREN:

These also serve to bring the scene into the actual and at times can serve poignantly by the bitter things with which they play so gayly.

NEIGHBORS:

These are the figures of the town, men and women.

ACTION.

PROLOGUE:

The curtain rises in darkness.
The outlines of a house are visible;
a front porch
a doorway
a rocking chair
a fence.

It should suggest by its arrangement on stage the inside and the outside of a house, something still unfinished. It is as though one were present at a roof raising. It is like the bones of a dwelling.

The first light touches the face of the MOTHER. She sits on the porch in a rocking chair. It should be like a Shaker chair, simply and beautifully designed.

The MOTHER is an American Primitive in appearance. She is small and perfectly drawn. We have seen her on the walls of many American homes. In some early American paintings only the face was different. The poses, even the dresses were alike. There is a certain special beauty about them. I do not mean that the MOTHER is quaint, however.

I think of her as I have seen my great grand-mother, quiet, never in bed, always there, terrifyingly still.

2 1/2

She seems to be looking over the land she has helped to stake and claim and win. She will always have a certain dream about that land just as we have. There are certain things we think of when we say the word American. That is why I have proceeded to introduce the character of the INDIAN GIRL. She alone stands as the classic figure of the country. She is a part of our play and our dreams from childhood on. Certain poets have used her as the figure of the land; for instance Hart Crane in the "Bride". She plays with us as part of our American life always. She is a part of the substance of our play with this country.

She is not a threat but a dream. She will not be exactly a theatrical figure of an INDIAN GIRL. She is a human figure standing there at the fence of our dream always. The legend of Pocahontas has a real hold on us and we are never quite free from her. Principally in this piece she is the part of the dream of the MOTHER as she remembers the early life. It is the youth of the country that is linked with the MOTHER'S youth that is speaking. She sees the INDIAN grass when she was young, she hears her children when they were there as children. The whole has a simplicity, a nostalgia about it.

While the MOTHER sits there in the light the INDIAN GIRL emerges from the shadows and does a dance. It is in no sense an Indian dance. It is rather the memory of the MOTHER, her point of view that is there rather than an INDIAN dance. It has the quality of an overture in some respects. It could have parts of the MOTHER'S time as far as the music is concerned with her memory of the INDIAN GIRL moving against it as an inseparable part of it.

The MOTHER speaks:

LINES:

" AND THE LORD GOD PLANTED A GARDEN EASTWARD IN EDEN."

EDEN VALLEY:

The INDIAN GIRL retreats into the shadows.
The light extends into the house across the stage as the light of dawn has a way of doing.

From within the house comes the DAUGHTER.
She comes with a young vigor, an eagerness, a welcome.
She moves along the light, down the steps into the outside area.

There follows a solo for the DAUGHTER.
It is joyous and yet deeply serious with a kind of innocent greeting to a new place.
At times there is almost a Biblical quality about it; it is a little like a joyous psalm. I do not mean that it is religious. But it is a lyrical expression and the only poetry that a woman of the background of this one would know, in all probability, would be from the Bible. It has a richness of feeling and an energy of texture. It has an electric eagerness about it, an eagerness for destiny that is the unconscious partner of youth.

The dance finishes at the fence as though she were waiting for some one.

From a distance there seems to come someone whistling. It is the feeling of distance that has no blocks to sound.

The man enters who is called the CITIZEN. (We may find a better name for him later)
I wish this could have some of the quality of the Thoreau Journals, simple straight and possessed of the magic of everyday.

The CITIZEN is shy, possessed of a certain raw-boned grace as though he were a creature of American bone.

There follows a duet between the DAUGHTER and the CITIZEN.
It is a dance of courtship but it is as simple as the ALMANAC, too.
The dance begins at the fence as though there were this barrier.
Then too, the fence is a part of the village life that is important.
This is a small fence and should be beautifully designed to give the feeling of what a fence means in a new country.

None of this need have any folk material as such unless you see fit to use it. I keep thinking of certain parts of your music. It is not the melodic line that I remember but the feelings evoked by certain parts of the score. There is the unforgettable part, the quiet part, of the LINCOLN work. That is so beautifully woven on the loom of this country without seeming to use any folk material. Then there are things like the "Quiet City".

The dance finishes.

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3" (1/2)

Looking (Tobin)
(Revival)
material

The MOTHER speaks:

LINES:

AND THE LORD GOD TOOK THE MAN AND PUT HIM INTO THE GARDEN OF EDEN TO DRESS IT AND KEEP IT."

WEDDING DAY:

This is broken by the YOUNGER SISTER running across the stage in an excited adolescent way. This serves as an introduction to the scene that follows. It should have the feeling of party, that something very exciting in the simple things of life is going to happen. The children join the YOUNGER SISTER and the stage has the feeling of quicksilver.

This is more correct
(Revival) Revival meeting, some of the picnic. It is for company.

4" In this there is a solo for the CITIZEN. It is like an exhibition of strength and has some of the engaging qualities of the Davy Crockett legend.

As he finishes it he approaches the DAUGHTER and sweeps her across the doorsill of the house as though he were carrying his bride over the doorstep.

At once there is a feeling of change. There is a breathless moment, a suspense, a curiosity, a sense of the secretive whisper that travels in the eyes of people at a country wedding.

The MOTHER speaks:

LINES:

"THIS IS BONE OF MY BONE
AND FLESH OF MY FLESH."

Immediately there are two scenes being played simultaneously; the love scene inside the house and the party outside the house. The two scenes are played in strong shafts of light. There is a feeling of separation but an awareness each of the other.

This was suggested with
4" The scene inside the house is awkward, quiet, tender. It is simple and restrained in movement, it is tender and inept and it is innocent. It is essentially a scene that takes place in a Puritan country where Protestantism is strong.

The scene outside is a strong earthy scene. It has the aspects of an old charivari. It develops from a party in a given little town into something wilder and infinitely older. It has a violence, a wild kind of beauty that was at Merrymount, as well as in the old legends of bridal.

It is the blend of the actual in a party, and the dream that goes on during the party. There are moments when the women stand still and there is suspension and the whole seems to break down into something that never quite happens. It is at this moment that the INDIAN GIRL

seems to take their places. She cuts across the path of the women and dances with the men but is never seen by the women. She is the dream of the men, the dream of the eternal woman, gentle, generous, utterly lovely and completely innocent. It is that moment when the two areas, the inside and the outside of the house seem to approach each other in quality.

This happens more than once in the dance. It is for a relatively short space of time. The women then resume the dance with the men, completely unaffected by this unseen presence. The two scenes increase in intensity until the two fade into the darkness. Only the MOTHER remains with her face in the light as always. All of this has had the quality of night time and the activities of night, with dream that is not sleep. The following scene is a return to the day again.

INTERLUDE:

The action changes once more with the play of the children as though they were around the door in the early morning. The light streams across the floor as it did in the first scene. The DAUGHTER and the CITIZEN walk from the house as the DAUGHTER did in the first scene. The MOTHER speaks:

LINES:

"AND THE EVENING AND THE MORNING WERE THE FIRST DAY."

There follows a lyric interlude for company.

I see it as having the simplicities of a telescoped day in which people behave as though working and playing together in a common bond of time and place.

There is no dramatic significance. It has a song-like quality.

Or if you wish it could have the form of a rondo in theme and variations. But that is for you to devise, and decide.

This scene has no violence, no disturbance. It has a warmth and a kind of sweetness that need in no sense be sentimental. It almost serves as a Greek chorus in its function.

This should follow the line you devise and I shall plan my activity and little dance moments around what you do. This can be the core of the piece if you like with the others more or less interludes, as far as setting the feeling of the entire piece. I do not think it can be very long in relationship to the others. But perhaps the relationships of the musical lines will determine that.

At this point one of two things could happen. Either this scene could fade again or it could be interrupted with a decided sense of break.

During the INTERLUDE the INDIAN GIRL has taken part in the activities of the scene but wholly with the children. She is their imaginary companion while the others do not see her. The play of the children which is incidental and need only thread through the whole concerns itself with her. There need be no use of themes in the sense of motifs as you know. I simply use the web as a whole if the whole bears the presence of the various parts.

In case the break is violent and with shock or whether it comes after scenes has faded again it is done in such a way that the peace is broken. It is a break that makes a pain in the heart.

FEAR IN THE NIGHT.

Into this scene of suspended time breaks a FUGITIVE. He enters as though catapulted by fear, whether the kind that comes with a rush or whether it creeps in, it is the same fear that any hunted creature has. Up to this time there has been no violence and now that changes.

This FUGITIVE by the violence of his movement, his agony of fear, the grotesqueness of his body makes you sense the urgency of his pursuit. His whole activity is a dumb clownishness agony. He falls, rises, tumbles and at times jumps into the air with a virtuosity of body spurred by his fear. He is awkward with the awkwardness of the hopeless and lonely. With all this he has a certain dignity as well.

The CITIZEN has seen this or at least part of it. As the FUGITIVE falls he rushes forward, but the INDIAN GIRL is there before him and holds the FUGITIVE across her knees almost in a way that is reminiscent of the Pieta.

THE DAY OF WRATH:

The MOTHER rises for the first time in the piece so far. She walks down the steps and across the stage as though she were pacing the floor in deep disturbance, and deep anger. She faces the CITIZEN as she starts to return to the porch and she speaks:

LINES:

"TAKE THE WINE CUP OF THIS FURY AT MY HAND."

She proceeds to her place on the porch again, with a great silent dignity as though she were waiting for the CITIZEN to make the next decision. He stands, then slowly rises into a quiet terrible action.

This dance has the qualities of the Harper's Ferry incident but is in no way literally that. As he is John Brown without actually being that character.

It is an exhortation, the utterance of a fanatical man. Hidden in every American is that fanatical strain, I think. I do not know whether it is the Puritan again or not but it always seems to be there. Sometimes it is good and sometimes it is misdirected, terrible and cruel with a ruthless selflessness.

The end of his dance is broken by the entrance of the children playing at a charade of war. It is not an actual war but it has the ~~use~~ feeling that tragic things have in the hands of children that often make them bitter toys. Again the INDIAN GIRL is part of this scene with them and in a small sense she is the captive.

The children exit and the CITIZEN follows them in their ⁿ ~~h~~ rhythm.

In all of this scene that concerns the FUGITIVE and the John Brown incident I feel that the Civil War period could be stressed a little. While I know that the FUGITIVE is an old idea and an ever present one I feel that for us in our setting it has a special significance. And that is the Civil War period. It need not be folk as I said before, but there should be some sense of the negro in the scene. It will be played in such a light as not to need that make-up but the movement will need to be reminiscent of the negro body.

MOMENT OF CRISIS:

The DAUGHTER enters and stands by the MOTHER. Slowly the stage fills with women. There is an ominous silence there and a barely suppressed hysteria. It can only be observed in the timing of the movements, the rushes, ~~and~~ followed by a great stillness, a secretive movement as though to cover up all movement.

The MOTHER speaks:

LINES:

"GATHER THYSELF IN TROOPS, O, DAUGHTER OF TROOPS."

3 " The DAUGHTER begins to dance. It has a feeling of dedication, a certain quality of prayer that might even be of the psalms treated in the way of a spiritual. This, too, is an exhortation.

This leads into a dance in which all the women join, even the INDIAN GIRL and the MOTHER who moves very little but at times forms the center of a stately pattern.

This is a combination of every ~~day~~ kind of movement and a strange formality that is almost ritualistic. It is at times interrupted by the entry of the children still playing war but it is never touched by it. It has an overall ecstatic quality. It has some of the feeling of a chorus, singing. This ends by the stage gradually becoming empty. The MOTHER goes back to her place. The women disappear. The DAUGHTER stands in the center of the house waiting. *of a*

The CITIZEN enters. He approaches the house as though he were returning from work. He enters the house and the two meet. The MOTHER speaks;

LINES:

1 " The entire piece ends quite simply. It has the feeling of the town settling down for the night, the kind of thing that happens when one hears a call in the twilight, the voices of children in the distance, a dog barking and then night. There is light on the face of the MOTHER as in the beginning. The INDIAN GIRL stands revealed in the shadows. And the DAUGHTER goes to the fence, standing waiting. Curtain.

