

Script tinkering

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Play rehearsals for "Gossamer" have begun in Milwaukee, and that means the playwright is back at work. Funny how you don't perceive stuff until director and actors begin working with it. Jeff Frank, the director, emailed me that the transition from Scene 1 to Scene 2 didn't work well...getting the characters from one place to the next was difficult, but what if we...? And he was right. I re-wrote Scene 1 and now, he tells me, that problem is solved.

Now I am about to deal with a number of other thoughts/suggestions from Jeff after he held a reading in front of an audience. This is the type of thing (I hope he doesn't mind my posting his quote here):

As much as I love scene 17 and the humor within (which I think is necessary in the rhythm of the piece), I do feel that it goes on too long – interrupting the build in tension for too great a time. We also lose some of the dramatic tension in the scene if we venture too far into the humorous aspect.

Of course this is the sort of collaborative work that ultimately strengthens the play and for which I'm very grateful. It's fun, actually, to trim and tighten with the help of such input.

He also mentioned the possibility of switching scenes 14 and 16 with each other and this is something I'll look at when I have a little more time to sit and think. Today I am flying to Newport News, Virginia, in order to speak at a Holocaust Remembrance ceremony there tonight. But I'll be home tomorrow (Friday) and back at my desk.

The differences between book/stage/screen are really fascinating. "To Kill a Mockingbird" of course has been successful in all three genres. I'm trying to think of others. Yesterday morning I had tea with writer Allegra Goodman, who lives nearby, and we talked about books-to-movies, in particular some that were better on the screen than on the pages. (Neither of us had been able to go see "The Kite Runner") For me, "House of Sand and Fog" fell into that category, and

also "The Cider House Rules."

Play-to-Screen is another interesting transition, with no book to impede or enhance the adaptation. "Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf" worked brilliantly but of course it had director Mike Nichols to thank for that. Often such a jump means a movie that seems constrained and stagey. "Equus" didn't work very well.

And oh my, I could start thinking/talking about Shakespeare now, and the various movie adaptations....the Polanski MacBeth, for example. Zeffirelli's Romeo and Juliet. Mel Gibson as Hamlet. Olivier. Kenneth Branagh. Oh dear, I must stop.

Tags: Untagged