

Cover Sheet

Studio ET Production Proposal, Fall 2012

Title/Author	<i>Awake and Sing!</i> by Clifford Odets Production Type: Studio
Director	Amanda Herman

Production Staff:

Stage Mgr	Jessica Short
Scenic Des.	Cody Whitfield
Costume Des.	Sarah Dobson
Lighting Des.	Aja Anderson
Props Mgr.	Connor Keirce and Alex Towers
Publicity/ TD Mentor	George Dippold
TD/ Master Carpenter	Hannah Martin
Other	Sound Design: Adrianna Brannon Dramaturgy: Whitney Trevillian Makeup: Lindsey Cochran Charge Artist: Ricky Osborn

Number of roles available:	2 women, 7 men
Mature Audiences Only No	
(if yes, on what basis?)	

Publisher: Creative Artists Agency (rights) and Grove Atlantic Publishing (scripts)

Are Rights Available? Yes

Royalties:	\$ 450
Scripts: 11 scripts @ \$8	\$ 88

Estimated Budget:

Scenery/Paint	\$ 600
Costumes	\$ 250
Props	\$ 350
Makeup	\$ 25
Publicity	\$ 70
Lighting	\$ 60
Sound	\$ 20

TOTAL: (fees + estimated budget)	\$ 1913
Estimated Ticket Revenue: @100%: 110 seats X 6 performances X \$4 ticket= \$2640 @75% 83 seats X 6 performances X \$4 ticket= \$1992 @50%: 55 seats X 6 performances X \$4 ticket = \$1320	Break even at 72.5%

Faculty Advisor: Dennis Beck

signature indicating agreement to be advisor (required)

signature indicating written proposal has been reviewed

Publishable brief synopsis:

Awake and Sing! tells the story of a Jewish-American family living in a small apartment in the Bronx in 1932. Though they all live together, their generational values are different, making real communication almost impossible. The two youngest especially struggle with the fine line between supporting the family's needs and losing any hope for freedom. How will the Berger family continue to live together when money, age and dreams keep them apart?

Awake and Sing! by Clifford Odets

“Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust” Isaiah 16:19

As each generation reaches adulthood, they must suddenly deal with the mess left for them by their parents, sometimes giving up their dreams.

Concept and Relevance

Awake and Sing! may be set in 1932, but it reveals truths of human nature that are relevant today. With the economic situation in the United States, we are facing some of the same hardships as the characters. We're the stars of our own life stories, which means that we aren't always perceptive to the needs of others around us. This production will focus on Hennie and Ralph, the youngest of the Berger family, as they struggle to break away from expectations. The generation before them has made a mess of the world, and they have no choice but to deal with it and hope for a better one.

The play takes place right between the presidencies of Herbert Hoover and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the latter defining much about the role of government in the United States. The government of the home runs parallel. The older generations have the good of the family in mind, but are unable to find the right tactics to fix their problems. The patriarch of the family questions everything but can seldom find the strength to pursue the answers. The second generation has learned not to question expectations and that life is about the needs of the family over their own heartbreak. Their children look for opportunities for freedom in all the wrong places. Their naivety and sense of romanticism clash with responsibility to the family. Like FDR, they try to create solutions that are not always well received.

This production will highlight the “struggle for life amidst petty conditions” through selective realism to build the world of the Berger family. I want to convey the similarities between that time and our own by putting forth a straightforward account of these people's lives. The meaning will be derived through how the audience sees themselves in Odets' characters and the intricacy of the world that the production team and I will create.

Directing

Why do a piece with “selective realism”? As a first-time director of a full production, I want to immerse myself in a world that is within my scope of experience. This will allow me to explore the relationships of the characters as well as the techniques of acting used by the Group Theatre when Harold Clurman directed this play in 1935. The process will be collaborative, immersing actors with designers in discussions about the play and the themes during a week of intensive table work before the show gets up on its feet. Using realism will make the audience aware of the parallels the characters and situations hold to their lives. Acting students in this production will have the opportunity to really apply what they are learning through the School of Theatre and Dance's training, further aiding in their pursuit of acting jobs. The conscious use of realism as a style will be beneficial for all involved in our future productions at JMU and beyond.

Acting

The way acting is taught in the Theatre and Dance program already uses many of the techniques developed by members of the Group Theatre and their students. My goal is to work with the actors before staging rehearsals to use exercises and methods of Stanislavski, Strasberg and Adler. We will compare the three styles and decide together how best to incorporate what we've learned into the production. The idea is to purify our understanding of the styles in isolation so that we can effectively combine them into the style of the production. The Group Theatre used to get together over summers and work collaboratively on physical exercises, techniques and whole productions, which brought them all closer together in terms of their work and relationships with one another. That atmosphere is what I would like to produce in the pre-rehearsal process. Another challenge to work with is the fact that most characters are middle-aged or older.

Technical Direction

Hannah Martin will be the technical director and master carpenter on this project, with veteran TD George Dippold advising her. She will be completing the construction drawings, orchestrating the rigging of the ceiling and make the purchases for all scenery components, including paint. George and Hannah have both

taken 271, 371 and the technical direction class. George is the TD on *Bat Boy* and was assistant TD on *Bright Lights, Big City*. George has worked in the scene shop for over two years, and Hannah built sets during summer Children's Playshop for the past two years.

Scenic Design

The play takes place in the conjoined front room and dining room of the Berger's apartment in the Bronx. Act I is in the late fall of 1932; Acts II and III are in late fall of 1933. The home itself traps the family. They take on boarders, and Ralph even has to put his wages into the payments. They feel like the world isn't big enough for them to stretch their limits; however, it is their home. They are comfortable there because it's where they've grown up and done everything. Set designer Cody Whitfield will be enclosing them in their own world using a box set. The theatre will be in end-stage configuration, enclosing the family on three sides and maintaining their separation from the audience. The audience is there to watch and perceive, unable to help the family as it breaks apart. Ricky Osborn will be the charge artist on the project, working with Cody to give the home a feel that it has not changed since the Bergers moved in. Cody will use his experience from the scenic design and drafting class as well as assisting on *Servant of Two Masters*, and Ricky has taken the scene-painting course and has worked on a number of shows as a painter. We allotted \$600 to account for building expenses for the flats, shelving and other set dressing units, and paint.

Dramaturgy

Whitney Trevillian will be doing dramaturgy for this production. She will be working to familiarize the entire team with information from the middle of World War I to 1935. The complicated pasts of the characters and the world of the play need a strong foundation in the politics, popular culture and other major events of the time. The history and methods of the Group Theatre will also be important to the production and will require major research. She will also be responsible for a lobby display with historical information for the audience to supplement the director's note in the program.

Costume and Makeup Design

The costumes in this production should be reflective of both the era and character. The women's clothing will look homemade, and the men's clothing will look well worn. Dark colors and heavy fabrics will parallel the way the characters are trapped by their economic status and misunderstandings of one another. Sarah Dobson will be the costume designer. She has been constructing clothes for herself for over 2 years, and is currently in Pam Johnson's costume design class. I have communicated with Kathleen Conery about borrowing certain items from stock within limits. She has given me an idea of several kinds of items we may borrow, pending availability, such as shoes and men's pants, jackets and vests. We have also discussed the possibility of using the costume shop equipment. Lindsey Cochran will be designing makeup, using her experience from Pam's class. She will be designing and teaching actors to apply varying degrees of age makeup for the characters in their 30s- 70s.

Lighting Design

The most important aspect of the lighting design for this production will be following a realistic pattern of sunlight and indoor lighting. Aja and I have spoken about the possibility of practical light in the Studio Theatre to make it light the show as realistically as possible. We also discussed using time of day in accordance with moods of each scene. Aja has been working in the electrics shop for about a year, has taken the lighting design class and is the assistant lighting designer on *Sweeney Todd*. Her budget will be \$60 for incandescent light bulbs and the gel replacement fee.

Sound Design

Adrianna Brannon will be the sound designer. Most of the sounds come from the function of the home in everyday life. Adrianna and I have discussed localizing sound when it comes from the doorbell, offstage record player or onstage radio for a parallel of unity with the practical light. Adrianna will be creating sounds of the city as well. One set of essential cues, recordings of Italian tenor Enrico Caruso, has been found in the public domain. The budget allotted will cover additional royalties for period music as needed.

Publicity

George Dippold will also be the publicist for the show. We have discussed including a director's note in the program. We will also be using the thinner poster paper, as he did for *The Long, Horrible Trip of Edgar Allen Poe*. These work just as well and are more cost-effective. In my experience as a Nuts-and-Bolts-certified student for Stratford Players, I have noticed several places on campus where student organizations can advertise, including TVs in academic buildings and a slide at Grafton-Stovall movie theater, to name a couple.

Props

The props for this show are important to the realism we are looking to achieve. There is real food, records that are broken, 1932 newspapers, a wooden leg and period pieces not necessarily in the script to create the home. We want it to look lived in, imagining that the Bergers have lived there for almost 30 years. Connor Keirce, though new to the department, is passionate about learning props. He will be starting his experience under the guidance of Morgan Yeates for *A Servant of Two Masters*, as well as working with Alex Towers on *Bat Boy*. I am confident that Connor and Alex will grow from this experience as well as do the show justice. I have spoken with Shane and he has told me that there will be available period furniture and set dressing items in the warehouse (depending on what is being used on the Mainstage) and that we will be able to borrow items from storage as well, pending availability.

Setting

Act 1: The front room and dining room in the Bronx apartment of the Berger family, early evening fall 1932

Act 2: Scene 1: One year later, early afternoon. Scene 2: That night.

Act 3: One week later, evening.

Character Breakdown

Bessie Berger. Mid-40s. The mother, who acts also as father in this family. She has a tremendous amount of energy and will do anything to help her family.

Myron Berger. Late 40s. Bessie's husband. Not a do-er. He is generally cheerful, but in a sad way. He is "heartbroken without being aware of it."

Hennie Berger. Mid-20s. Their daughter. Someone who embraces being alone; she doesn't need anyone. She is like her mother in many ways.

Ralph Berger. Early 20s. Their son. A dreamer. Eager, naïve, romantic, sensitive. Just wants to make his mark on the world and fall in love, but he's stuck in his responsibilities.

Jacob. Late 60s. Bessie's father. A Marxist. He wants to start a revolution but he is an observer, a teacher; he has no power to act.

Uncle Morty. Late 40s. Bessie's brother. A rich business man. Loves to be generous, but only if everyone is watching. Materialistic. Straightforward and intolerant.

Moe Axelrod. Early 30s. A sometimes boarder at the Berger house. Lost a leg in WWI. Bitter. Proud. Secretly sensitive. He sees the good in people. Loves Hennie more than anything.

Sam Feinschreiber. Early 30s. An immigrant. Always feels as though people are laughing at him. Delicate and hypersensitive to his own shortcomings.

Schlosser. Early 70s. The janitor of the building. Pained, alone, has no sense of identity for himself.

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