

BELA BARTOK'S BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE

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Bela Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle* was written in 1911 for a competition sponsored by the Hungarian Fine Arts Commission. It was rejected as inappropriate for the stage and set aside until 1918 when the conductor, Egipto Tango enthusiastically brought it to the stage. One author describes the opera:

Bela Bartok's one-act opera *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*, the creation of two Hungarians whose close acquaintance blossomed with unexpected vigor to produce a work that explores a theme deeply personal to both: the loneliness of the human spirit.¹

As an opera, the ancient and mythical tale reveals itself, not with words but with music that is both majestic and haunting. Bartok combined his classical training and experimental style with traditional folk music representing peoples from all over the region to lift the Symbolic story of Bluebeard to an ancient and magical plane. "The Bluebeard material's highly-coloured brew of sex, violent death, gloom and mystical self-analysis was a perfect vehicle for Symbolist treatment."² Bela Balaz was a student of French Symbolism and German Romanticism and it is quite evident by his treatment of the Bluebeard tale. The characters of Judith and Bluebeard personify Hebbel's concept of "tragic guilt", "The tragedy of existence lies in the facts that strong individuals are incompatible with the sense of general world balance and the more they assert their individuality, the more force the universe applies to restore balance."³ *Bluebeard's Castle* is an ancient story about being human, searching for love, and ultimately, the loneliness of being trapped within one's self-imposed limitations of self.

¹ Leafstedt, Carl S: *Inside Bluebeard's Castle*, p. 4.

² John, Nicholas: *The Stage Works of Bela Bartok*, p. 37.

³ Leafstedt: p.47

Bluebeard, the story

The story of Bluebeard itself is much older than the fairy tale of the same title penned by Charles Perrault in 1697, which is the basis of Balaz's version written at the turn of the 20th century. The themes of Bluebeard are; caution against female curiosity, the perils of a woman's ambition, the ideal of unconditional love's redemption, and the nature of complete loneliness have been handed down since biblical times. The creation myth found in the book of Genesis, for example. "In *Genesis II and III*, God plays Bluebeard (and the serpent, perhaps the key) in an account of a broken taboo. Eve tastes the fruit of the "tree of knowledge of good and evil" despite the warning that she will die if she does so."⁴ The motif of forbidden action is carried on throughout the ages via classical myths such as "Cupid and Psyche", "Semele and Zeus" as well as the stories of Helena and Pandora. Charles Perrault's fairytale, first published in 1697 came from a fourteenth century tale entitled *Perceforest*.

The first hint at the motiveless evil of Perrault's bridegroom occurs in this period: a Breton legend tells of a king Comorre who murdered many women, and finally his wife Tryphime; she was restored to life by St. Gildas. And from Brittany also comes the identification of Bluebeard with the historical Marshal Gilles de- Rais (1404-1440).⁵

The historical Gilles de- Rais distinguished himself as a member of Joan of Arc's special guard and was even considered for sainthood due to his valor and bravery. However, in retirement he became a cruel, sadistic sexual predator and murderer of children (particularly young boys). At his trial, he admitted to torturing and murdering hundreds

⁴ John, p. 35.

⁵ Ibid, p. 35.

of children. One of the hundreds of witnesses brought forth during his trial gave this description:

... he had considerable pleasure in watching the heads of children separated from their bodies. Sometimes he made an incision behind the neck to make them die slowly, at which he became very excited, and sometimes he would ask, when they were dead, which of them had the most beautiful head.⁶

From this diabolical character came the blood thirsty, wife murderer of the Bluebeard stories before the 20th century. The common elements of all of these tales were, the doors and keys, the murder of women, and the central character of the man, Bluebeard.

There are numerous tales from all over the world with the same themes and motifs.

Tales from Germany, Africa, Breton, Italy, and even Kentucky and the Appalachian Mountains tell the story of young women who fell in love and were lured to their deaths because of it. Sometimes they tried to escape and other times they meekly accepted their fates as their just rewards for disobedience.

⁶ Frye, Todd. "Gilles de Rais", internet. Access 9 November 2010.

Bela Balaz, the playwright

Bela Bazal's rewriting of the story is truly a manifestation of the cultural and artistic rebirth that was taking place all over Europe at the time, particularly in Hungary. Bazal's work was based on Perrault's fairy tale but there were major changes in the Duke's character in this operatic version.

... written when the Freudian investigation of human relationships had moved into the sphere of art, instilling there a willingness to portray the unknown, and sometimes darker, undercurrents of the human mind. In developing the theme of man's thirst for redemption through the agency of a woman and in emphasizing the basic humanity of the two characters, Bartok's symbolic tale of spiritual isolation finds striking analogues in other, contemporary retellings of the same story.⁷

In Perrault's version, the murderous husband had killed many wives that dared to disobey him and open the final door of seven. The first six thresholds were given freely and opened to vast treasures and many pleasures. The final forbidden door, meant instant death and when the intruder entered, their shoes became stained with the blood of the victims that came before, as witness to their deed. At the turn of the 20th century, cultural sensitivities would not allow such brutal treatment of women or the shallowness of the monstrous character of Bluebeard. Balaz was a gifted, ambitious, and well rounded writer with a deep vein of Hungarian nationalism, something that he and Bela Bartok had in common. "He was extremely well versed in the work of late nineteenth- and early twentieth century European playwrights, such as Ibsen, Strindberg, d'Annunzio, Hofmannstal, and Maeterlinck. It is quite natural that traces of the work of such

⁷ Leafstedt, pg. 177.

prominent figures as these should filter into the expressive voice of the aspiring Hungarian writer."⁸

The symbolism, spiritual and mystical motifs within the libretto of *Bluebeard's Castle* were amplified and lifted to new heights through Bartok's music. The castle is not just a castle and the seven doors, not mere thresholds, and much of the staging was created with the magic of stage lighting, a fairly new stagecraft art at the time.

By replacing scenes of splendor and horror with appropriately colored shafts of light, Balaz reduces the stage to utmost simplicity. This helps focus the audience's attention on the two characters before them. Balaz seems to say; it is what each door represents to Bluebeard and Judith that determines its dramatic significance. His use of colored light to represent symbolically the door's contents also neatly sidesteps what could have become a real impediment for stage producers. The multitude of vivid scenes would crowd the drama psychologically; but, perhaps more important, it would also require a large stage with impressive resources to portray all these scenes...⁹

As Judith moves from door to door and deeper into Bluebeard's mind, soul, and body, there are specific colors and symbols that represent the man's complexities and weaknesses. Judith enters the castle with confidence and a tenacious determination to light up her new husband's world and heart. "Judith's penetration into the castle, we realize, also represents the unfurling of Bluebeard's soul before the firm but loving advances of his new wife. The doors therefore, represent windows into his soul; the castle, the man himself."¹⁰

With the first five doors, Judith brings light into the castle and the man. Judith is filled with love and confidence when she sings, "Watch and marvel, watch the sunrise. Heaven's brightness! We must open all the doorways. Healthful air shall flutter through

⁸ Laki, Peter. "Bartok and His World", p. 121.

⁹ Ibid; pg. 127.

¹⁰ Leafstedt, pg. 36.

them. Every door must be open!"¹¹ The first door is the color of fire and reveals Bluebeard's chamber of torture. Although Judith is horrified by what she sees, she is strengthened by the small shaft of light that enters from the chamber and the living castle sighs in response. "Do you hear that? Do you hear that?" Judith asks her hopeful husband. The second door reveals Bluebeard's Armory. The color associated with this vision of war is red. Red is a part of every door and aspect of the castle, which only reminds the audience and Judith that there is indeed danger all around and that death might be at the end of her journey.

Judith's psychological response to the castle's newest revelation is complex and unexpected. The appearance of blood ("Blood dries on your weapons / Your tools of war are bloody!"), oddly enough, only strengthens her resolve. She turns back toward the opened door as if seeing it for the first time, "Beautiful stream of light", she sings, eager to show Bluebeard the transforming power of her love.¹²

The next door, door number three, is the first of three more positive revelations of Bluebeard's soul. The tremendous treasury of the man is represented by a golden light as it glows brightly within the living walls. Judith is urged on by an eager husband, who believes that perhaps, finally, he has found a woman that will love him unconditionally but within his own limitations. A garden of splendor and delight is symbolically brought to light by a shaft of deep emerald brightening the castle even more. The garden scene is one of the longest in the opera:

Bluebeard's garden reacts to Judith's presence as if it were human. Like the castle itself, it has animate qualities. The flowers "bow" to Judith and "ring bells for [her] at dawn." The lilies, she quietly observes, are, "as large as a man." Through references like these we begin to appreciate the garden's symbolic identity as another facet of Bluebeard's soul. Bluebeard tacitly acknowledges its larger

¹¹ Bartok, Bela. "Bluebeard's Castle", BBC recording.

¹² Leafstedt, pg. 98.

meaning when he projects his own emotions onto its contents. If not tended correctly, he warns, the flowers can just as readily wither in her presence.¹³

The fifth door reveals the brilliant light and vast majesty of Bluebeard's kingdom, in all its grandeur and awe inspiring wealth. Judith is immediately overwhelmed by the sheer size and audacity of the visions that are represented by the images of sea and landscapes. There is a subtle, yet powerful change that comes over Judith. This scene is the first climax within the opera and a pivotal point for Judith. "And when, through the fifth door, a flood of light and warmth engulfs the castle, and Bluebeard - liberated, redeemed, luminous, grateful in his happiness - wants to embrace the woman in his arms, already the daylight is no longer visible ... She sees only the bloody shadows."¹⁴ At this point, the light fades from the castle and the man and Judith is convinced that he did indeed murder his other wives and must be brought to justice.

When the sixth door is unlocked, the stage becomes noticeably darker and the light that emanates from the door is a cold and shimmering blue, the color of a sea of tears. But whose tears is not evident by the opera. Do they belong to the wives that came before her or do they belong to Bluebeard himself, or perhaps they are a mingling of the two? In any case, Judith is alarmed at first but her resolute spirit wins out. Even after Bluebeard pleads with her not to insist upon opening the final door, they both know what the outcome will be. Judith responds to his pleas:

I have guessed your secret, Bluebeard. I can guess what you are hiding. Blood-stain on your warrior's weapons, blood upon your crown of glory. Red the soil around your flowers. Red the shade your cloud was throwing. Now I know it all,

¹³ Leafstedt, pg. 106.

¹⁴ Ibid, pg. 108.

oh, Bluebeard, know whose weeping filled your white lake. All your former wives have suffered, suffered murder, brutal, bloody.¹⁵

As Judith moves to unlock the seventh door, upon the insistence of her husband, the castle darkens dramatically with shades of lavender, a mixing of the color of tears and the color of blood. Behind the final door, Bluebeard has imprisoned his former wives. They are very much alive but entombed within the walls of the castle and the soul of the man.

The seventh door scene is the second climax and the finale of the one act opera. Expecting death, Judith is at first confused and then terrified at the sight that lies within the chamber of the seventh door.

The women are *alive!* From behind the seventh door the wives - who had been loved at one time by the man - rise to their feet, dreamlike, from the deep recesses of slumbering memory. And wreathed with diadems and halos they are more beautiful than all women presently living.¹⁶

Bluebeard kneels and sings praises to each of his previous wives. He describes his first wife, "The first I found at daybreak, crimson, fragrant early morning. Hers its cool and coloured mantle, hers its gleaming crown of silver, hers the dawn of every new day." The second, "... I found at noon, silent, flaming, golden-haired noon. Hers is every noon hereafter. Hers the heavy burning mantle. Hers their golden crown of glory." The third, "... I found at evening. Quiet, languid, sombre twilight. Hers the grave and umbered mantle. Hers is every solemn sundown."¹⁷ As the wives descend upon Judith and adorn her. She cowers and submits without argument. "The man's dream kills her, the very

¹⁵ Bartok, BBC recording.

¹⁶ Leafstedt, pg. 122.

¹⁷ Bartok, BBC recording.

dream she herself has conjured up in him. And the dreaming man remains alone once more, his castle again locked and dark."¹⁸

Bela Bazal, the playwright, was heavily influenced by Maurice Maeterlinck and French Symbolism as well as Friedrich Hebbel and German Romanticism.

"Maeterlinck's plays addressed the mystic aspects of humans powerless to control their fate, of souls battling with universal forces they could neither understand nor alter."¹⁹

Both Judith and Bluebeard want to believe that their love will conquer the darkness.

Judith starts her journey through the castle filled with confidence, assuring her new husband that, "Light and air will cheer your castle."²⁰ By the end of the journey however, she silently and resolutely accepts her fate and entombment within Bluebeard and his domain. Judith's relentless insistence upon discovering the secrets behind each door, her need to bring light into darkness tips the already fragile balance of the finite universe of Bluebeard's castle.

Once the universe has set in motion the corrective counterbalancing force, the process grinds forward until the individual is extinguished. The universe's counterbalance here takes the shape of entombment behind the seventh door. What is Hebbelian about the conclusion of *Bluebeard's Castle* is the way in which Judith, after the fifth door scene, drives the drama forward to its tragic conclusion and ruins herself in the process.²¹

The real tragedy of the opera is that both characters desperately want to love and be loved but are unable to overcome their tenacious hold on their self imposed isolation and superiority.

¹⁸ Leafstedt, pg. 122.

¹⁹ Laki, pg. 128.

²⁰ Bartok, pg.39.

²¹ Laki, pg. 142.

In Perrault's version, Bluebeard was a monster that mindlessly murdered his wives for disobedience. Balaz created a more enlightened human being, a lonely and somewhat vulnerable creature that truly desired the unconditional love of a woman. This Bluebeard does love his wives, yet he is unable to reveal himself to them. "To preserve control, Bluebeard kills his wives, metaphorically, by imprisoning them behind the seventh door, even as he glorifies them."²² As Judith descends willingly into the depths of the castle and his unrevealed soul, Bluebeard is enveloped in darkness and isolation, accepting his fate to live without love, clinging to his own magnificence.

By choosing the symbolic name of Judith , "Balaz places on stage a striking combination of characters; the fairy-tale character of a man who kills women, and the biblical character of a woman who kills a man."²³ The biblical character of Judith is a seductress that murders the enemy of her people by taking his head, much like Salome and John the Baptist. At the turn of the century, the name Judith represented a fatal seductress that was able to overpower men with her sexual allure. The name gave the character power. The original tale was one of warning to young women that ambition and curiosity were a deadly combination. It was also thought to be passed from mother to daughter, "The story isn't warning against temptation and curiosity in marriage, but the practical consequences of marriage. In the time when childbirth could be deadly since you could be killed by your husband with the simple act of becoming pregnant by him."²⁴ By naming the character Judith, Balaz empowered her, representing perhaps, the

²² Leafstedt, pg. 182.

²³ Ibid, pg. 186.

²⁴ Lang, pg. 4.

changing role of the women of his time. However, the Judith in this opera was not a seductress, the physical aspects of love are all but absent.

The erotic attraction between man and woman, in this opera, has little impact on the dramatic situation. It is more important to Bartok's conception, for the love between Bluebeard and Judith to occupy a profoundly spiritual, and hence transcendent dimension.²⁵

As husband and wife, Judith and Bluebeard's relationship was one of unrealized, idealized, symbolic, and unattainable love.

²⁵ Leafstedt, pg. 197.

Bela Bartok, the composer

Bela Bartok was born in Transylvania in 1881. His childhood was plagued with poor health and the death of his father when he was still quite young. His mother made sure that the gifted youth was exposed to the best music and culture as her limited income would allow. Although his village was quite provincial in most ways, the musical heritage of the village and surrounding countryside was quite diverse and included Romanian, Hungarian, Saxon, Serbian, and Gypsy folk music. The young composer recognized the importance of this musical heritage and immediately following his graduation from the Budapest Academy of Music, he embarked on an extensive, almost scientific exploration of the region's folk music. Bartok absorbed what he learned from the peasants, gypsies, and villagers, which added an element of "basic humanity" to his work. *Bluebeard's Castle* was considered Bartok's first fully realized work that exemplified his unique and eclectic style. "In his mature style Bartok went beyond folk-style melodies to a modern personal language rooted in peasant music. A sinewy, rhythmic drive derives from the dance music he had heard."²⁶ Bartok toured the entire region, collecting and cataloguing the folk and peasant music beginning in 1904. "The discovery of popular *melos* brought about the revelation not only of new melodies, tonalities, rhythms, or harmonic possibilities, but also the discovery of the oldest and most primitive musical elements in general: it was the beginning of all that is called 'magic' and 'demoniac' in Bartok's music..."²⁷

²⁶ John, pg 18.

²⁷ Szabolcsi, pg. 35.

In *Bluebeard's Castle*, the music underscores the symbolism and self revelation of each door and at the same time adds to the elements of mystery and danger that exist in the script. Bartok takes the audience on a journey that may or may not end in murder. The story follows an arch, beginning and ending in darkness with a glimmer of the bright promise of love filling the stage for just a moment at its apex. Will the curse of Bluebeard end with Judith?

Bartok leaves this crucial matter of interpretation to be decided by his performers, for what he sets is the text, not the underlying intentions. There is, in other words, a moral distance between the composer and his creatures, and it is not at all clear from the score whether Bluebeard begins with the idea that he can enjoy a new, untainted life with Judith provided he keeps his past a secret, or whether he knows himself all along to be the victim of an inevitable cycle in which his wife will come to know him and therefore be lost to him.²⁸

Bartok's music brings the text to life, without it, the script is static and the dramatic action severely limited, as Judith simply moves from one door to the next.

As an opera, *Bluebeard's Castle* is truly a unique work and Bartok, a gifted and even eccentric composer, is showcased within its pages and, "... quite unusually successful as an opera for the ears alone, with the orchestra generously supplying visions of the castle and the different wonders that lie behind the seven doors."²⁹ Bartok created a dark world of loneliness and danger, a world suspended in time, filled with majestic beauty, tainted with dried blood and rivers of icy tears. His ability to unite his classical training with his rich and diverse musical heritage into a cohesive and yet unheard of operatic score set Bela Bartok apart from not only his countrymen but all of Europe as a composer of great merit with a truly unique style.

²⁸ Griffiths, pg. 61.

²⁹ BBC recording booklet, pg.4.

Bartok did not attempt to outline the structural formality of the text in a musical way, no doubt sensing a danger of monotony in a work where the opening of seven doors is the only action. Although the loose tonal scheme mirrors Balazs' arch form, the action is controlled with an acute sense of timing and psychological insight into the two protagonists so that the doors, for all their extravagant musical depiction, become a logical extension of their relationship.³⁰

Bluebeard's Castle was the first opera that Bartok wrote but was not performed until years after it was penned. His career, although successful, was mediocre and unknown until the Italian conductor, Egitto Tango agreed to perform *The Wooden Prince* in 1916. After the surprising success of that ballet, Tango brought *Bluebeard's Castle* to the stage in Budapest, a year later.

Bluebeard's happiness is destroyed through Judith's (symbolizing the world's?) lack of comprehension. From beginning to end one is held spellbound by the tragedy of the two human beings doomed to misunderstanding and by the intensity of the musical utterance. The work ends in despair as Bluebeard says, "Now it is eternal night - always, forever."³¹

The loneliness and isolation of the characters in the opera are symbolic of the composer and playwright's own states of mind. Both men were passionately nationalistic and creative and each had the soul of a poet, destined to solitude.

Bartok's life and work were not only plagued with his own ill health but the tumultuous ill health of his country's politics. Hungary was in constant political upheaval and Bartok, as one of its leading and most public composers was under constant scrutiny.

The political nature of Bartok's work is not a subject of this paper but it must be touched upon here as a part of the opera's composition and creation. The composer's place in the history of his country is best described by the author, Danielle Fosler-Lussier:

³⁰ John, pg. 26.

³¹ Helm, pg. 45.

As a Hungarian with relatively little in the way of a national art-music tradition to draw upon, he became an eclectic. Not only did he absorb many different trends of European art music, but he also studied and recorded the folk and peasant musics of many different peoples, incorporating some elements of these musics into his compositions. At the same time, he sought recognition at home and abroad as a specifically Hungarian composer. In this way Bartok's music could be both universally relevant in the European sphere - for it had something of everything in it, from Germanic forms and French inspired harmonies to a Russian-style reliance on folk melody and adaptations of folk melodies from all over Central Europe and beyond - and universally foreign, for it represented no single tradition.³²

Bela Bartok's treatment of the opera specifically and his music in general, sets the man up as pivotal in the cultural-political-social controversies of his time. The mythical-ancient-diverse story of Bluebeard the man also becomes an ideal vehicle to portray the tragedy of one human being set against a system that is universal and relentless in its goals. The French symbolism and German Romanticism of Balazs' text is echoed by the, "Germanic forms and French inspired harmonies," of the musical score. The opera, *Bluebeard's Castle* is a universal tale indeed.

³² Lussier, pg.xii.

The Design

The symbolic and mystical nature of *Bluebeard's Castle* make it a challenging work to set on the stage. Originally, it was produced with a unit set that consisted of seven doors and each door's revelation was symbolized by a different colored single shaft of light. Most subsequent productions followed this model or simplifying it even further to an almost bare stage or a single oversized door that dwarfed the characters. Literal or more realistic representations of the seven worlds/levels become too complicated and cumbersome for the one act production. The action moves from door to door without pause and the setting must support this movement.

The castle is an extension of the man, a living entity that breathes and bleeds and devours people even though the man desires only to be loved and accepted, as he is, without judgment. Scenic elements that move organically from door to door as if the castle were responding to Judith, as an extension of the man is the basic design concept for this production. The "life/movement" of the set is accomplished through the actions of stagers, or dancers dressed appropriately for each door's scene or as the castle. These stagers will move the set units and then step into the scene until it is time to change the set, once more.

As an opera, there are traditions of production, the "park and bark" mentality of the operatic world are both limiting and self defeating for such a work. In this conceptual work, the idea of a constantly moving setting and a responsive light plot set it apart from more traditional production styles. As the research developed and the sketching and

small piece modeling moved from one idea to another, it became apparent that the design for this opera needed to literally have the capacity to move and breath as a living embodiment of the story and characters themselves. Simplicity, color, and energetic movement became the most important elements of the design concept.

Researching past productions of the work made it clear that a break from tradition was called for. The musical recordings were filled with exhilaration and energy, yet when the visual elements of setting it on the stage came into play, many of the productions seemed to be bogged down with a literal interpretations, that were in conflict with the symbolic nature of the work. The two character nature of the opera also created a challenge to keep a visual interest for the staging of the work. By adding the element of "moving set pieces" in the form of dancers, a new visual stimulus was created, without distracting from the music or story itself.

By choosing an opera for design, the textual element for interpretation and conceptualization became less important and the music became the focus of design. In this particular opera, due to Bartok's treatment of the script, the words are even further removed from the telling of the tale. It becomes a tonal poem based on an ancient tale with the universal themes of loneliness and the loss of love's redemption.

The introduction of the work was through audio recordings alone, to limit any influence of past visual productions or even the story itself. The music is grand and dark with extreme levels of intensity at both ends of the emotional spectrum. The overall first impression was the feeling of extreme loneliness and isolation. It was evident that the

intense pain and pleasure of love and the complexities of the relationships between men and women were represented by the musical journey of the two characters.

The first visual impressions were of various spirals, moving up and down a spinning shape that would disorient any person that entered into its interior. A shape with no beginning and no end, a maze of circles that grew smaller or larger depending on where one looked, the idea of a galaxy, a helix, something universal and familiar. Bluebeard's castle was a trap for all who entered, including Bluebeard himself. It was a trap that seemed to have an escape route until one realized that they were indeed, back where they started. The idea of the spiral, although visually appealing turned out to be impractical when set on a physical stage.

As the research grew to include the text, the castle became more concrete and the idea of a series of moving arches and ramps became the conceptual focus. Through sketches and small models, each door was represented with more literal images and the set opened, moved up or down, in or out depending on the revelation of the door's symbolism. After much time and energy, sketches and modeling, it became apparent that this concept was too cumbersome and complicated to support the opera. Even with the most technically advanced scenic elements, this idea would only distract from the production's symbolic and mystical impressions. The emphasis needed to return to the simplicity of the original setting, minimal movement and colored light.

The initial response of a maze and the idea of a living castle could be combined with the simplicity of seven doors and colored light. Through the use of multi level platforms and stairs that fit together in a variety of shapes and heights and fixing the

doors within moving panels decorated with maze like Escheresque imagery, the design took shape. The castle would be represented by dark imagery that was suggestive of a biological entity with dancers as a part of the entity moving the platforms and stair units in response to the action of the players and the music. Each door was unique in shape and surface decoration, each door would be richly ornamented and when opened the entire door unit and supporting elements would be lit with a single color. The proscenium arch would have a subtle color change as well to further the visual impression that the castle represented the deep well of Bluebeard's soul, a distant and magical place.

The lighting for the opera became an integral part for the individual imagery of each door scene. The overall effect of lighting would be a blue haze picking up the textures and richness of the doors and creating an atmosphere of hidden dangers. As the first doors are opened the overall lighting is brought up until the entire stage is lit up with the fifth door and the projections of Bluebeard's kingdom cover the entire stage. The two characters would be lit with follow spots in order to keep them in focus throughout. As the sixth door is revealed, the castle once again slips back into darkness. Moving lights representing fire in the first door scene and water in the sixth door scene would open and close the storyline of the doors as the seventh door reveals a cavern from which the three previous wives emerge. This cavern would be lit from below the massive stair unit with the color of fire as the trancelike victims emerge, each one lit with a follow spot as Bluebeard introduces them to Judith. The rib-like cut drop silhouettes against the cool colors of blues and violets of the drop behind it. As the stair unit moves forward and Judith is adorned with her spectacular costume and taken into the abyss, the stage goes

dark once again and Bluebeard returns to the beginning set of a dark scrim with the maze like Escheresque image projected upon it. He is lit with a follow spot that fades to black.

The costumes for the opera do not change for the main characters throughout, except at the end when Judith is dressed on stage in her new garments representing midnight, the first three wives representing morning, noon, and evening. Conceptually, the costumes could be of any era, since the story is based on a fairy tale. I chose to set the look loosely in the middle-east, the ancient biblical times of Judith's namesake. The look of the main characters and the three wives needed to be elaborate and ornate, larger than life due to the fantastical story line and setting. The dancer/stagers dressed in either dark blue or deep bronze unitards become gender neutral and interchangeable for use as scenic elements and stage hands that are a part of the castle itself. These characters become the life of the castle itself. Bluebeard's costume needed to include all the colors of the castle itself in rich fabrics and intricate designs. His head is unadorned and he is the only character whose hair is visible. It is his castle, his body and he has no need to cover his head. The idea of vulnerability is introduced through this image as well. Judith enters the castle in earth tones that counter the cool darkness of the castle's interior. She too is richly dressed and bejeweled. Her head is covered completely as are the other women in Bluebeard's life. The costuming for this production adds a level of spectacle that might be lacking in the darkness of the set.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this project has been a process of self discovery, more through the process itself than the work produced. As a scenographer and designer, one needs to develop the ability to quantify time and through that ability create a specific schedule for the completion of a work. It has been a rude awakening that this designer lacks that ability. One needs to break down each specific task after the conceptual decisions have been made and then create a timeline of these tasks in order to complete the necessary elements for the completion of such a project.

It is just the beginning to explore and create the designs and imagery for the scenographic needs of a particular play or opera. The real work begins when those concepts are developed and the necessary paper work created in order to realize the elusive design concepts. If a designer lacks these basic capabilities then their ideas will remain just that, ideas, without the possibility of presentation on the stage or anywhere else. One must develop the concrete skills for the steps necessary to take ideas to the concrete and then have the discipline to finish each step on time and in a professional manner. The awakening to the lack of said discipline is something that this designer will make a great effort to improve upon in the future.

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AUDIO/VIDEO RECORDINGS

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Bartok, Bela. Bluebeard's Castle. London Philharmonic Orchestra. Produced by Unitel GmbH & Co. MTV. 1981. DVD.

Abstract

This project is a scenographic exploration and design of Bela Bartok's opera, *Bluebeard's Castle*. It includes literary and historical research of the story of Bluebeard and the opera. Multiple sources of Bela Bartok's music and productions of the opera were used in the development of this paper and the designs for the opera.

The scenic, lighting and costume design elements represent the concept of the castle and the music of *Bluebeard's Castle* as living and psychological extensions of the man himself. Judith enters into the world and the man at the same time and her journey ends with the tragedy of their souls forever entwined in mutual isolation within the living castle's breathing, crying, and bleeding walls.

In addition to the written work, this project includes a scenic model, scenic renderings and drafting as well as costume renderings and a light plot with the appropriate paperwork to support the designs in each area.

APPENDIX A

Costume Renderings

Costume plot

Piece list for each character





DRAF #1

TORTURE

NINE SET
PIECES - SHIR 301



UNITAED





TREASURE

HEAD PIECES
FABRIC
FIBER



BRONZE
UNITARDS

MOVE
GET PIECE
BELOW
'SCULPTURE'

TEARS

CAMP
UNITARDS



DANCERS
MOVE SILK
TO
BECOME
RIVER







WIFE #1

MORNING
DAWN

BACK VIEW

LAYER UPON LAYER







CHARACTER	WIFE #1	WIFE #2	WIFE #3	WIFE #4	WIFE #5	WIFE #6	WIFE #7	WIFE #8
WIFE #1	[Red, Blue, Green, Yellow]	[Red, Blue, Green, Yellow]	[Red, Blue, Green, Yellow]	[Red, Blue, Green, Yellow]	[Red, Blue, Green, Yellow]	[Red, Blue, Green, Yellow]	[Red, Blue, Green, Yellow]	[Red, Blue, Green, Yellow]
WIFE #2	[Orange, Green, Yellow]	[Orange, Green, Yellow]	[Orange, Green, Yellow]	[Orange, Green, Yellow]	[Orange, Green, Yellow]	[Orange, Green, Yellow]	[Orange, Green, Yellow]	[Orange, Green, Yellow]
WIFE #3	[Orange, Blue]							
WIFE #4		[Red, Orange, Yellow]						
WIFE #5			[Orange, Yellow]					
WIFE #6				[Green, Yellow]				
WIFE #7						[Blue, Grey]		
WIFE #8							[Grey, Yellow]	
WIFE #9							[Orange, Yellow]	
WIFE #10							[Blue, Purple]	
WIFE #11	[Blue, Grey]	[Blue, Grey]	[Blue, Grey]	[Blue, Grey]	[Blue, Grey]	[Blue, Grey]	[Blue, Grey]	[Blue, Grey]

COSTUME PIECE LISTS BY CHARACTER

BLUEBEARD- wig, coat, tunic, belt, pants, boots, gloves

JUDITH #1- crown, hair cover, shirt, sword, belt, skirt, shawl, jewelry, slippers

#2- new head piece, gown, cape, gloves, jewelry

TORTURE #1- blue unitard, blue slippers, torn shift, rope belt

#2- blue unitard, blue slippers, torn trousers, rope for wrists, rope belt

SOLDIERS- bronze unitard, helmet, red slippers, chain mail hood, chain mail shift, armored gloves, armored leg guards, leather over armor, shield, spear

TREASURE #1- bronze unitard, bronze slippers, head piece, arm bands, neck piece, sheath

#2- bronze unitard, head piece, bronze slippers, arm bands, false beard, loin skirt

TEARS #1- blue unitard, blue slippers, pants, tunic, arm pieces

#2- blue unitard, blue slippers, tunic, arm pieces

STAGER #1- blue unitard, boots, cowled hood, sweater, pants

#2- blue unitard, boots, cowled hood, tunic, pants, belt

WIFE #1- turban, cape, gown, petticoats, hood, corset, hose, slippers, jewelry

#2- head piece, jewelry, gown, cape, hose, slippers, bra

#3- head piece, jewelry, cape, dress, gloves, corset, petticoats (2), hose, slippers

APPENDIX B

Drawing for drop

Model images for set configurations

Opening

Doors 1-7

Closing











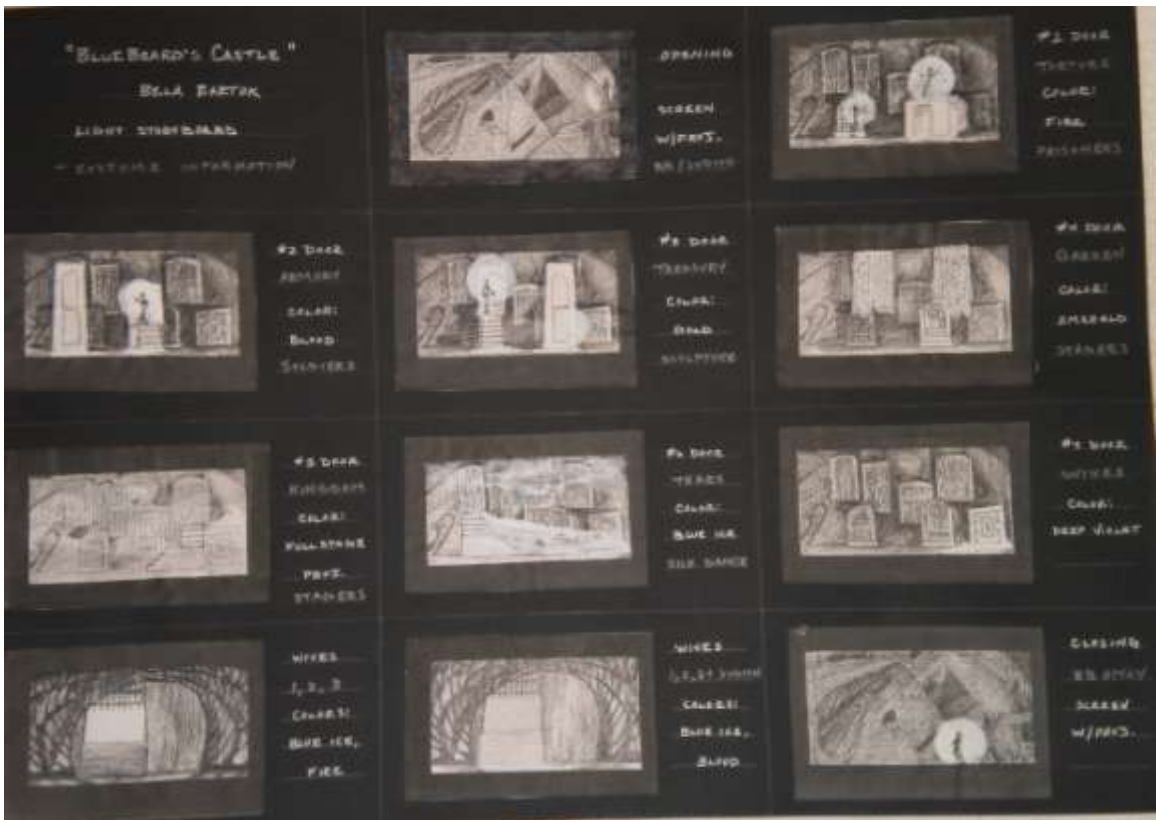


APPENDIX C

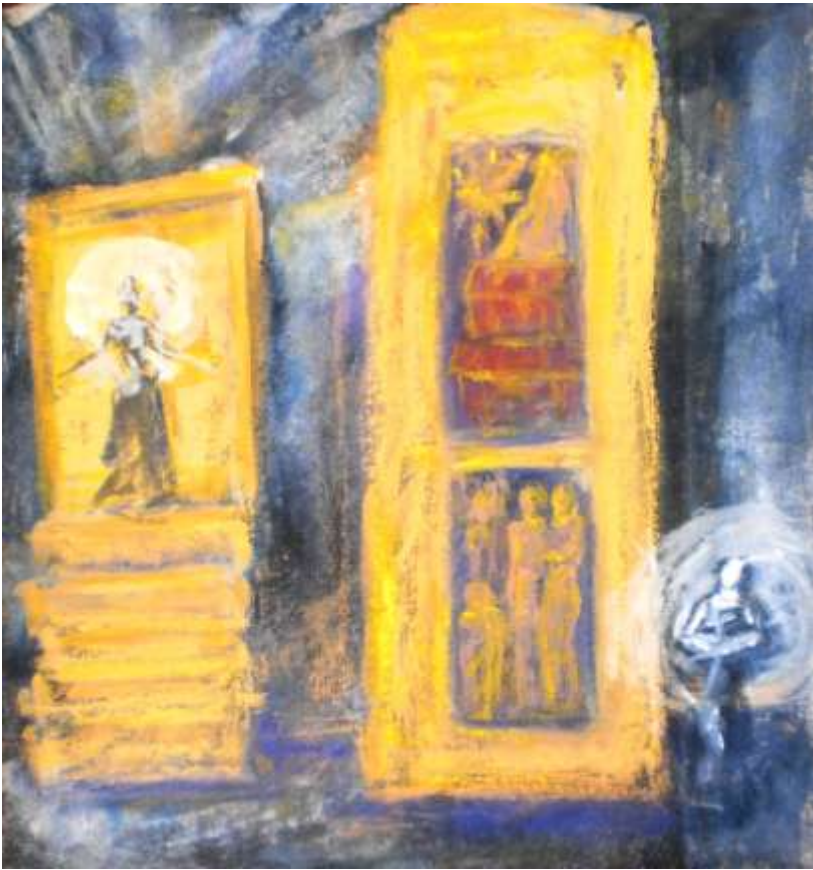
Lighting storyboard

Lighting images of each door concept

Gel sheet





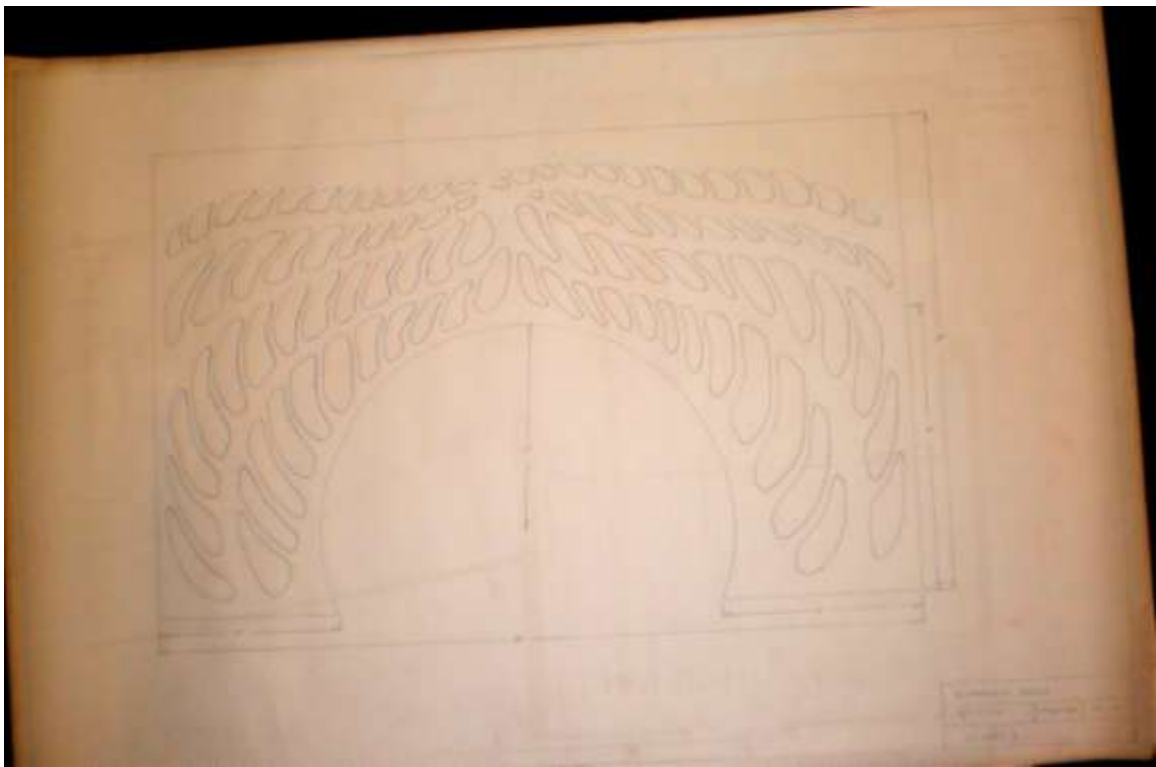
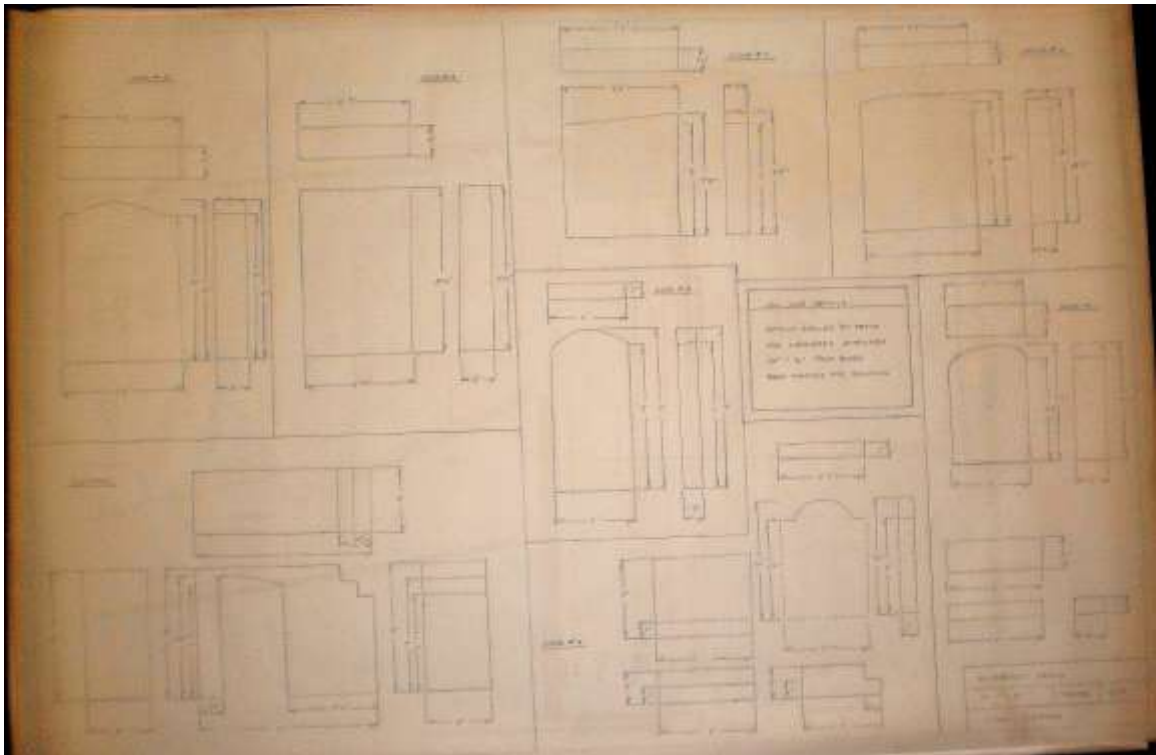


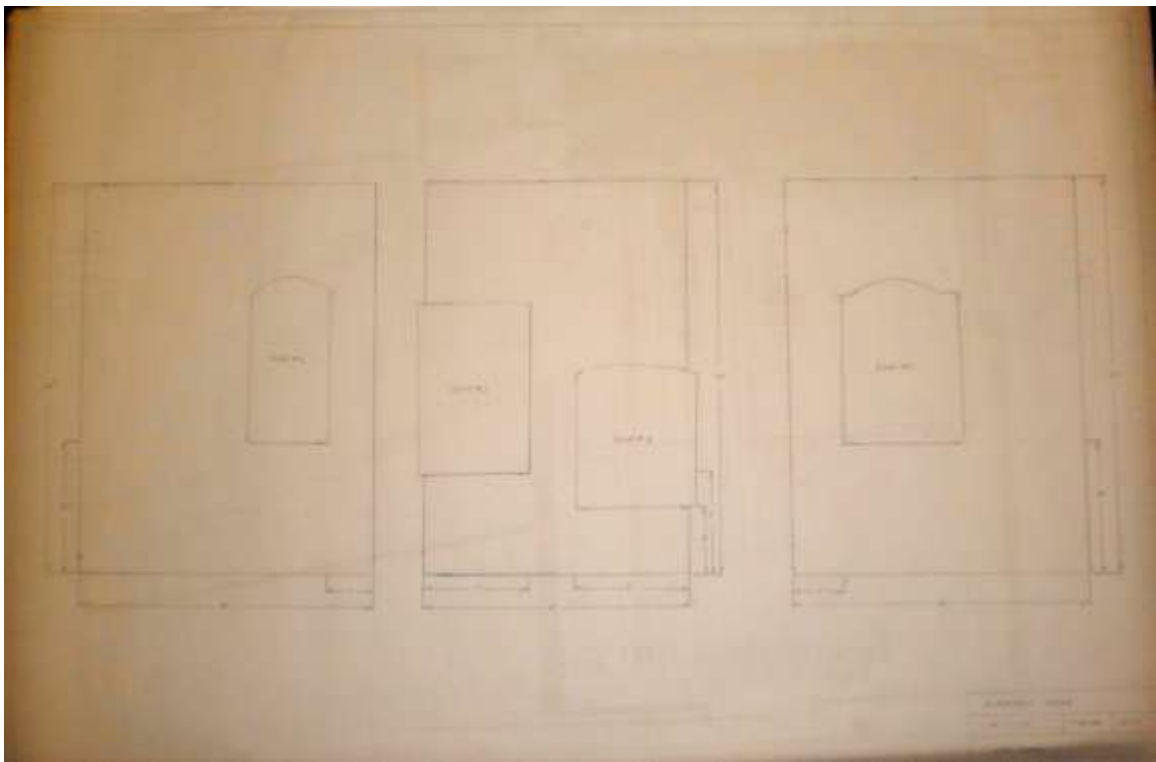
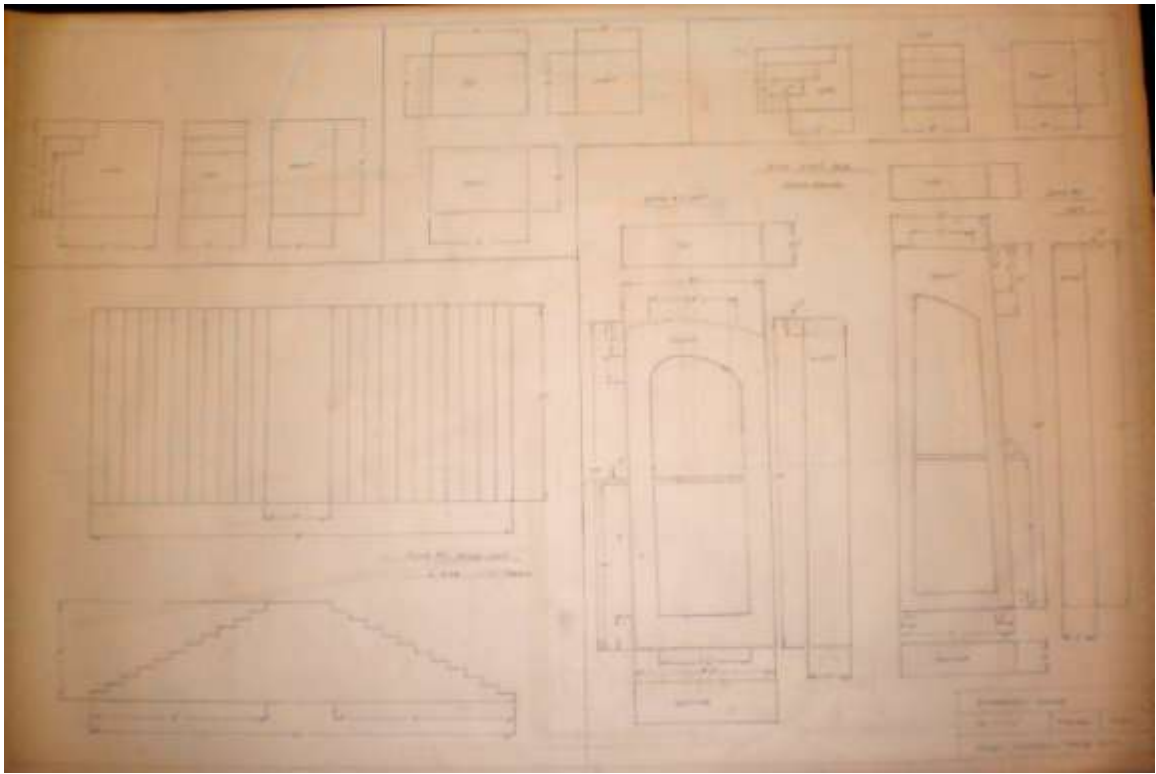




APPENDIX D

Drafting for set





APPENDIX E

Vectorworks plates for lights

Vectorworks plates for groundplans

Vectorworks side section