

EXTRACT

WAY OF THE TILT

Bill Reed

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WAY OF THE TILT
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NOTE ON THE SCRIPT

This is an unedited manuscript as provided to us by the playwright. We distribute it in good faith; however it may contain layout inconsistencies or typographic errors.

The behind-the-screen shadow action – or ‘inner background’ play -- can only ever keep ‘pace’ with the reading, not *keep up* with it. Because of the resultant and necessary shadow-play distillation of the storyteller’s tale, the extensive stage directions given in this script are only intended to be indicators as to what *might* be used for the shadow-play side of things. They deliberately go beyond what the director would employ and are given merely as a range of possible shadow-actions he or she might want to use in the ‘distillation’.

The Characters

STORYTELLER

He comes and goes in the action. When or if needed, he has his own shadow player:

STORYTELLER SHADOW PLAYER

represents the STORYTELLER in the shadow play behind the scrim; is pretty impassive as an action character, but plays his part.

CREEPY MANNY SHADOW PLAYER

As the main shadow-acting character, he will be adept at moving from one walkway platform to the other without damaging himself – and this applies to moving between the behind-scrim shadow area to front stage and full-viewed. Is very often dictated to by the over-arching winged moustache prop, which, whenever he bids, he points ‘biddingly’ up to as to how it, by gesture, indicates his thinking.

SHADOW PLAYERS

4 or 5 as necessary to illustrate the narrated incidents. The occasional ‘huddled masses’ etc can be achieved by props-plus-lighting-plus-sounds.

Production note

Behind the scrim curtain, at the very basic, should be an acting walk-way from one side of the stage to the other sloping, say, 10 degrees, plus at least one 'flat' walk-way, positioned such that a shadow player can step from one to the other without much discernible difference.

Down or up the slope, people and 'things' will slide along one way or the other -- either mechanically or free-wheeling or clinging desperately to a lifeline. Or they can comprise a whole scene -- say, a prehistoric group sitting around a fire -- as they slide by.

The moustache and the pince-nez are 'giantish' props... either stringed or hand/pole-held... that float above the action at stage level with amusing artificial intelligence. The moustache in particular evokes a large open-winged creature, very lopsided and does a lot of curling-the-old-mo etc.

Way of the Tilt

1.

(The scrim curtain divides the stage into two lateral areas – the shadow-playing behind-the-curtain area; and the front stage where the STORYTELLER is positioned.

When lighting comes up, it does so firstly behind the scrim where it seems that perhaps child-like figures seem to be playing... some are sliding downhill; some are pulling themselves uphill (perhaps hauling on lifelines); some are running left-to-right, right-to-left on the flat.

Then general light emerges to show the STORYTELLER, who rather gently stands with back to audience and, using conductor's hands, motions for all the movement behind the scrim to slow down, then to stop. Satisfied with his 'place' having been established, he turns back to audience)

STORYTELLER: It's the tilt, don't you know. It's what we do, being tilted. Including you, I dare say.

(obligatory wave of his script)

Doesn't it happen to all of us? There was one time I was at an important interview for a job and they asked me when I was born, and for the life of me, I couldn't remember. My own birthday! See?, it had just slipped on by. Even the year of it!

(waves script)

No wonder I... or any of you would... need this.

(Behind the scrim curtain, there comes, on the flat, CREEPY MANNY and the STORYTELLER shadow players. They carefully manipulate each other into position, while the props and the other shadows... live

and inanimate... come into view to re-enact as many of the narrated episodes to come as possible:)

STORYTELLER: His name was Creepy Manny. What's sure was he wasn't called that in any putting-down way. It was just what he did. Not crime-related or anything; just 'Creepy' around *where he was placed in the world.*

(He pauses while CREEPY shadow player wobbles on his feet)

STORYTELLER: And that where-he-was wasn't where he was as an antique buyer – in that, it says here, he was unfailing. No, don't let appearances fool you; apparently he was this unfailing antique buyer who just was never in the right place at the right time and blamed the wind for this, not his pathological inability to make up his mind about where he was from one moment to the next.

(He points out the CREEPY shadow player who is turning circles on the spot, needing steadying by the STORYTELLER's shadow player)

STORYTELLER: Something like that, you see. And there he is, not lost or anything, but right in the middle of an auction. I mean, which way's the auctioneer and which way's not where the bidding is? Don't ask him, Creepy Manny, it looks like.

(calls back stage)

Stop that, okay?

(CREEPY shadow player does so, waits for the next narrative cue)

STORYTELLER: *(goes back to script)* What we are looking at here is a gentleman from Cairns, of once Anglo-Indian stock, or certainly looks it, who was this pretty good antique buyer who was a serious human being committed to going to see no other



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