

“Hello John,” says Edith “I see that the properties for the play are coming on.”

“Yes.”

“What is that one?” asks Edith, pointing at a long sign, not too tall, with just one word on it.

“Ah, that, that is the name of the railway station for when the diverted train arrives and they get off.”

“How did you get that name, did you make it up?”

“Actually no, I had a look in an online translation program for a name I put in the name of a fruit and then looked at what is the translation in several Central European languages. I started with the word ‘apple’ but the words that I found were too like the English word ‘apple’, so I tried the word ‘pear’ and I got this word in two different languages. As it includes a lowercase s caron it seems to look good and gives the right ambience.”

“Indeed. I expect that most of the audience, maybe all of them, won’t know that the name of the town is ‘Pear’ though it does seem a bit strange.” says Edith.

“Well maybe the town is the centre of a rural area where they grow fruit and”

Edith looks at John. However John does not notice as he continues.

“... some of it is sent out by rail as fresh fruit and some of it is canned in a local cannery, ... which is run as a cooperative.”

John stops as he realizes that Edith is giving him one of her old-fashioned looks, then a smile.

“Well, I suppose there needs to be a backstory.” says Edith.

John smiles.

“How many signs are needed?” asks Edith.

“Three, one for the railway station, one for the hotel and one for the art gallery. I am still trying to find a name for the hotel, I am thinking of the word ‘Hotel’ followed by a word with a c caron in it. The word ‘Hotel’ seems to translate unchanged. And a name for the art gallery. In one language the word ‘Gallery’ translates as ‘Galerija’ so having some name such as ‘Galerija’ followed by the name of a fruit or vegetable might look good. I have already found two that each have a c caron in them: maybe I can find one with both a c caron and an s caron, though I have not found one at present, and maybe there isn’t one - anyway, it all adds to the ambience.”

“I notice that you have used a sans serif typeface for the railway station sign.”

“Yes I am planning to use a serif typeface for the hotel and an italic of a serif typeface for the art gallery. And also to vary the colours so that they are each quite different from the other two.”

“Good, that’s excellent as it differentiates the three locations as they are all intended to be performed in the same part of La Flava Floro, with scene changing while the focus of the action is in one of the other two locations.

“I have asked Julia if we can use one of her large panels on wheels so as to produce a sort of off-stage area within the room - for example, when people leave the railway station for the hotel they can go behind the screen and then when they arrive at the hotel they can come out from behind the screen and then when they get the meal the screen can be moved away so as to reveal a dining table and two chairs and they can sit down. Then when another scene is taking place the screen can be put back and then they can emerge from behind it so as to visit the art gallery.”

“What, the screen moved during the performance? Indeed moved when that area is active?” asks John.

“Ah, you think that there could be a problem?”

“Well, there might be.”

“Well, alright, but we need to figure out how to get them to the table for the food to be served without needing to move the screen or the table.” says Edith.

A pause.

John speaks. “Maybe the table and chairs could be there beyond the panel so that when the waiter leads them to the table they go behind the panel and then out from the other end of it and then to the table. As they go behind the panel the waiter is handed the meals on a tray and a waitress follows him and puts a tablecloth and cutlery on the table just before Margaret and Anne arrive and sit down. And Margaret and Anne keep talking during all of it so that the audience know that it is not a change of scene when they go behind the panel.”

“Yes” says Edith rather cautiously “but then the audience will need to stretch round to look beyond the panel to follow the action.”

A pause.

John speaks. “So could we put the panel between the hotel area and the information management centre area, so that the table can be viewed without stretching round?”

“Yes,” says Edith, “that will do it though I will ask Julia if we can use two panels, one each side of the hotel area, then going from the railway station to the hotel can be by exiting to the right as the audience views it, and then arriving at the hotel can be from the right and going to the table can be to the left as the audience views it.”

“Excellent.” says John.

“Anyway,” says Edith “what I came to say is that I am hoping that we can have a rehearsal at La Flava Floro tomorrow afternoon. I asked Julia and she is happy with that. She said that she does not usually get many customers on a Tuesday afternoon - sometimes none - but if any do arrive she can serve them in the smaller dining room or even the Incunabula Room or the Modern Art Room.”

“That’s a good idea. It will be good to experience how it all goes in the setting where the actual performance is due to take place. Hopefully it will all go smoothly, but if there are any problems there should then be time to sort them out before the performance.”

Tuesday afternoon, La Flava Floro.

“Right everybody,” calls out Edith “this is what would be called a dress rehearsal in the theatre, but as we are wearing ordinary clothes and no make up for the performance it does not seem to be really a dress rehearsal as such, though otherwise it is in that all of the scenery is in place for the start and all of the scenery moves are being done. So could everybody go to their starting positions please and we will try to get going.”

The people performing go to their places. Julia sits in the middle of the area where the audience will sit for the performance.

Edith looks around and then turns to face Julia and performs her introduction welcoming people and setting the scenario.

There are three staging areas. From Julia’s viewpoint they are in an arc of around ninety degrees.

At the left is an area near the entrance that is the home of Albert Johnson. Edward is playing the role of Albert Johnson and Georgina is playing a female role at the same location though it is not explained whether she is Albert’s wife or Albert’s sister. Also part of that scene is Iris, who works as a computer programmer, who plays the part of the television announcer, though she is not seen; in fact she is behind some scenery and reads from a piece of paper.

To the left of the centre of the arc, using the stage area of La Flava Floro, is the Information Management Centre with two ladies as the staff there, Sonja and Tanja, they are played by Caroline and Paula respectively.

At the right of the arc is the area in front of the doors leading to the smaller dining room. This area is initially set up to be the railway station, later in the play it will be the hotel, and even later it will be the art gallery. In each case there is to be a sign at the left of the area as viewed by the audience, each sign indicative of the location. As the first sign, the name of the railway station, does not obviously indicate that the location is a railway station, the dialogue will have the chef du train introduce himself, and then introduce the railway station master, to the stranded travellers with “Ladies and gentlemen, the train has reached the end of the branch line along which we have been diverted. This gentleman is the station master and I will give him the list of your names so that he can pass them through to the authorities to let them know that you are safe.”

John is playing the part of the chef du train and Henry is playing the part of the railway station master. Henry is happy to take part in the play as such but was concerned about whether he would need to remember a lot of lines. So Edith has arranged that Henry will only speak one word. The part of Margaret Gattenford is played by Olivia who works in

the press office and the part of Anne Johnson is played by Rose, who works as Edith's secretary.

In scenes in which they are not involved, Edward, Georgina, Caroline and Paula will remain 'on stage'. Edward and Georgina will just sit quietly as if watching television and Caroline and Paula will just sit at their computer terminals as if monitoring information.

The rehearsal reaches the point where the waiter, played by Gregory, is leading the ladies to the dining table. As they go behind the panel the waiter is handed the meals on a tray and a waitress follows him and puts a tablecloth and cutlery on the table just before Margaret and Anne arrive and sit down. It does not seem right. The waitress is played by Sonja who works in the press office assisting Olivia.

"Could you stop please." calls out Edith.

They all stop.

"That does not seem to work. Could we change it round please so that the waiter comes on first with Margaret and Anne and the waiter has the tablecloth and the cutlery and then, after he has put the tablecloth and the cutlery out, then the waitress brings the meals. ... Could you try that please, from where Margaret throws the message to the waiter."

The actors resume their positions and start performing.

The waiter is trying to manipulate the tablecloth while holding the cutlery ... with no great success.

"Could you stop please." calls out Edith.

They all stop.

"I think it would be better if the waiter just has the tablecloth and that the cutlery is on the tray with the meals. Could you try it that way please, from where you restarted before please."

The actors resume their positions and start performing.

This time it works well, and the waiter and waitress leave Margaret and Anne to enjoy their meals.

"Ah, pasta pieces and tomatoes," says Margaret, "and I can tell that the pasta is gluten-free because the pasta pieces are in that special shape for pasta pieces in which only gluten-free pasta is made."

There is a slight pause, deliberate, and Tanja exclaims "Margaret Gattenford Jarg!" and the focus switches back to the Information Management Centre for the next scene.

The rehearsal continues. All goes well.

"Very well done everybody, thank you." says Edith.

Julia applauds and everybody spontaneously joins in.