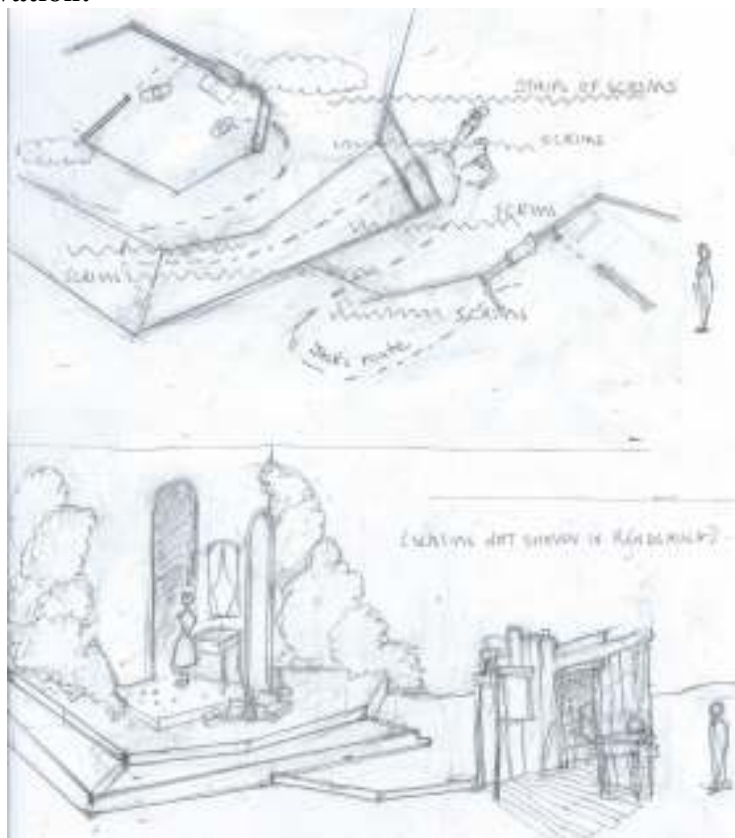


Jack and the Beanstalk Adapted for the stage by Nancy Linden

An adaptation of the Jack and the Beanstalk story, as a design project.

Set floorplan and elevation:



Jack House is Downstage Left. It is a simple two walls, bare wood planks in an irregular construction; wood plank floor. Soft earth colors, dust colors: faded browns, tans, greys, amber. A wooden chair; utensils; a board floor. Behind the house is open prairie.



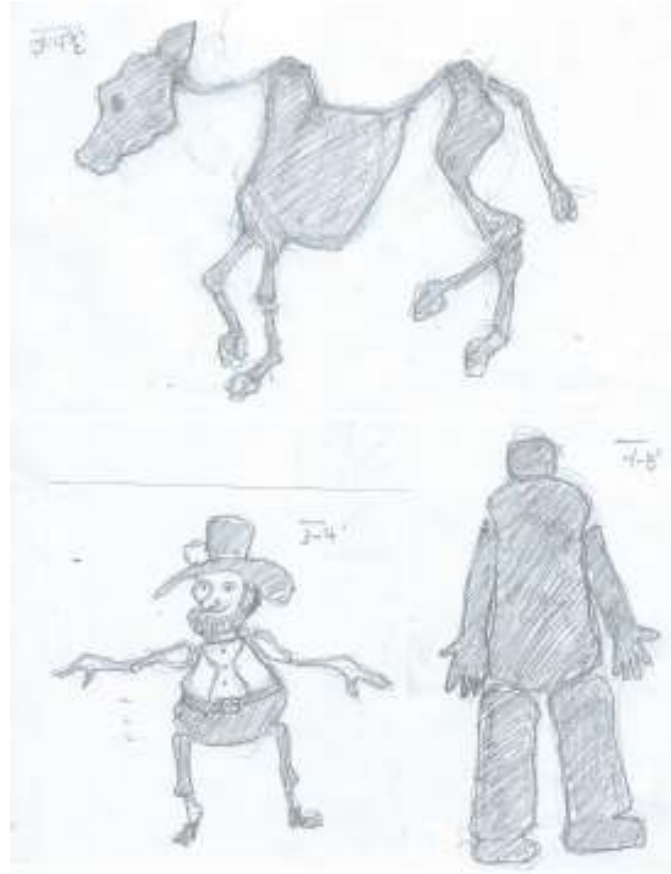
Upstage Right is the Giant House, of similar construction but very tall and very cheerful, with wallpaper and linoleum in warm colors and homey patterns. It is surrounded, and partially obscured, by greenery.



The stage between and around the houses is thickly hung with narrow, loosely hanging strips of scrim or cheesecloth, ranging from 1' to 3' wide, in creams and tans, at random intervals throughout the space, from varying heights, some extending to the floor, some not. On his travels, Jack will walk through them, among them, sometimes obscured, sometimes fully visible. They will be capable of nearly obscuring the Giant House. Backdrop a patchwork of same, a collage; can be lighted as sky or as greenery. To simulate “rain”, narrow beams of light will be projected onto the scrims; greenery will be projected onto them. Jack will also rise to higher levels as he walks to the Giant House, up a series of platforms.

Lighting notes: Scenes in Jack House and Giant House will be lit by instruments hung behind the scrims; the scrims will disappear and the actors and set will appear nearly as usual. When the scrims are front-lit, wholly or partially, to portray overgrowth or rain, shapes and activity behind them will be obscured to varying degrees. There will be some light—shadowy, irregular—on the scrims throughout much of the play. Rain and greenery will be projected on them, as noted above. The general lighting on scrims may be from projections as well, probably in the form of vertical bars of light; leaf gobos and the like. Strong sunlight through Jack’s window in the mornings. There will be lighting upstage of the scrims for the Giant House.

Costumes and Critters: Mother wears a sackcloth dress in the Jack House, a pretty housedress with apron in the Giant House. Jack wears torn shirt and pants in earth colors. Cow, Starbuck and Giant are full-size puppets, their handlers in costume. Cow is a rather skeletal puppet, about 4' high, with two operators in collaged browns. Starbuck is a cheerful leprechaun puppet with one operator. Giant is 7-8' tall, a rather amorphic puppet, with perspective decreasing toward his head as if we were looking up at him. Charcoal, black, dark brown. 1 or 2 operators, perhaps in dark cloaks.



Jack and the Beanstalk, the story:

Mother and Jack sit in their house, Cow moving about contentedly outside the window. Mother is sad because she is poor and can't take proper care of Jack. She decides they must sell off Cow. Cow is a dear old thing, but she is old and no longer gives much milk. She should bring enough to keep them for a few weeks, and maybe something will turn up in that time. Jack fetches her, puts a lead around her neck, and they walk together on the route to the Giant House until intercepted by Starbuck. The room fades as they depart.

On the road, Jack meets Starbuck. He is enchanting; he laughs at Cow, big joke, but I will give you something better: magic beans: your mother will be so happy. You will never go hungry again.

Jack makes the deal and returns home singing. He proudly tells Mother what he has done. She begins to cry, and goes through the door into the next room. Jack is shattered. He begins to cry. He feels

like a fool and angrily throws out the beans. Eventually he goes to bed, with a candle, on a pallet in main room.

It has begun to rain. It rains like your heart would break. Narrow shafts of light are projected on and through the strips of scrim, playing side to side, up and down. Everything grows darker, until all is dark except dim candlelight in Jack house, then that is extinguished too, and the stage is dark.

But the stage is not dark: the rain grows brighter, silver; a luminous blue behind it. Gradually the shafts of light take on color, rising from the bottom up: lush greens, then adding orange, yellow, red, pink; a Rousseau painting.



Jack wakes. Light is streaming through the window. Jack is drawn out by the light, to find the lush overgrowth. He is enchanted. Enters it. Walks among and through the strips of scrim. The cabin fades, as the scrim in front of it are lighted with leaves. (Jack's route to the Giant House is shown in dotted lines on the floor plan.)

Jack climbs a series of platforms, ending at the door to the Giant House. Lighting upstage of the scrim reveals a bright kitchen, full of light. Mother, in a pretty dress, is cooking, singing to music. She welcomes Jack, gives him a bowl of soup. Jack eats, happy.

The Giant returns home: shadow is cast across the greenery; the music becomes discordant, ominous, with a heavy rhythm. Mother is frightened. She gives Jack a bowl of oranges and sends him home. Giant enters the door as Jack escapes; Mother retreats into the next room. Stage darkens; the Rousseau landscape darkens, becomes denser. Back at Jack House, Jack presents Mother with the oranges. She smiles. They eat oranges and retire: Mother within, Jack on his pallet.

Bright morning light awakens Jack another time. The bowl of oranges has refilled overnight. Jack travels again to the Giant House, a similar interaction with Mother. This time the Giant's approach is more clearly defined, more threatening he is angry, detecting an interloper, doing the "fee fie foh fum". Mother hurriedly gives Jack a chicken and sends him home. Giant enters, slaps her. She retreats into the inner room, crying.

At home Mother cooks the chicken and they eat a fine dinner. The next morning the chicken is replaced.

The third time the Giant House visit is repeated, they are running late. Mother gives Jack a bag of gold, but before he can escape the Giant arrives, finds Jack, beats him as if to kill him. Mother grabs a kitchen knife and in the struggle, stabs the Giant. Giant stumbles out of the house and crumples into a black mass, USC.

Immediately the greenery darkens, becomes denser and denser, more and more chaotic and overgrown. Jack races home, avoiding the pile of now-decaying Giant, tumbling down the platforms. When he arrives home, Mother is hurt, is sick. She smiles at Jack; she glows; lights fade.

Epilogue. Jack, an old man (and a different actor), revisits his old home. Dark dense overgrowth. Maybe additional scrimms have descended, largely obscuring the Jack house. The Giant house is not in sight. Jack walks through the rooms of Jack house, sits on the stoop, dreams. Rises, walks through the scrimms, retraces his old journey. As he approaches the UR house it gently glows, increasing in brightness. He passes Cow, munching happily in the rich grasses. Starbuck is a lawn gnome in the yard. Where Giant had collapsed, an enormous orange tree grows. Jack sees Mother in the kitchen. He enters the house. They embrace. The greenery brightens back into the Rousseau painting, obscuring the house, and then all fade.