Occidental College

From the Selected Works of Susan Gratch

1998

Charlotte's Web, Assistance League, Los Angeles, CA

Susan Gratch, Occidental College

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/susan_gratch/24/
Charlotte’s Web
Based upon the story by E. B. White, Book by Joseph Robinette, Book & Lyrics by Charles Strouse
Scenic Designer
Directed by Jessica Kubzansky
Assistance League of Southern California, Nine O’Clock Players
Los Angeles, CA
January 1998

The Nine O’Clock Players is a volunteer group of women who produce and perform in plays for underprivileged children – during the week, school and child care groups are bussed in free of charge, while on weekends, the public pays to see the plays. In the case of Charlotte’s Web, the producer has secured the commitment of Lexington Scenic Studios to supply most materials, build and paint the scenery. This was an unheard of luxury. Looking at photographs of previous productions, the director and I felt that we wanted something bright and magical, and concurrently I received a book of Marc Chagall’s designs for the Russian Jewish Theater. I shared this with Jessica, also being of Russian heritage, and we decided to try this unlikely combination of Americana with Russian fantasy. Permanent portals framed the drops, cut and solid, for the three locations. On the back of these portals were web constructions of PVC pipe and ½” white nylon rope. As Charlotte begins to write her messages to Wilbur the pig, the webs traveled into the portal opening. Charlotte’s web itself was a spiral staircase from a kit, built onto a castered metal platform with stair railings funneling up and out to suggest the web structure.