

Measure for Measure

Research & Set Design

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PROD 221

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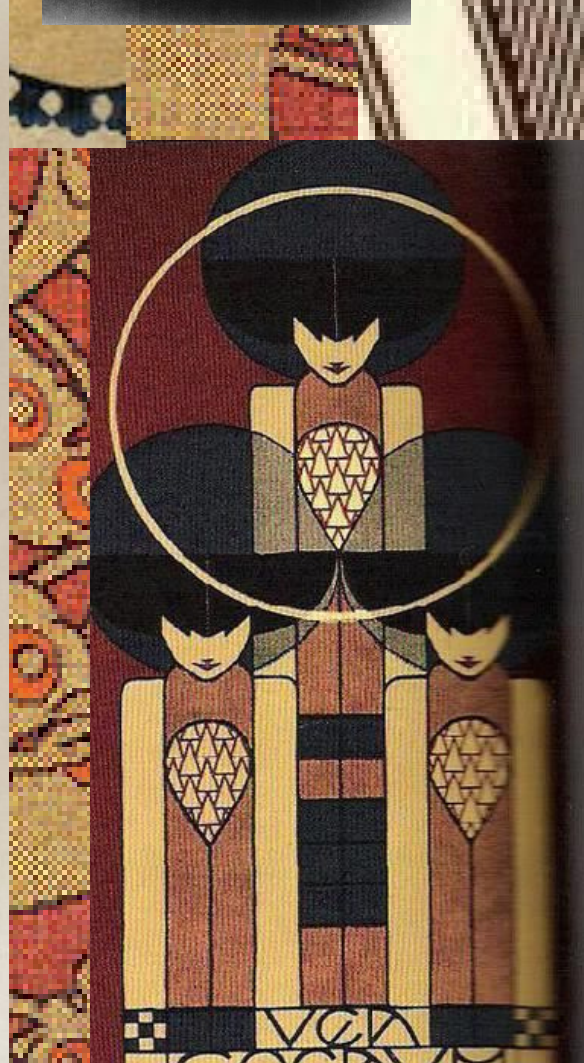
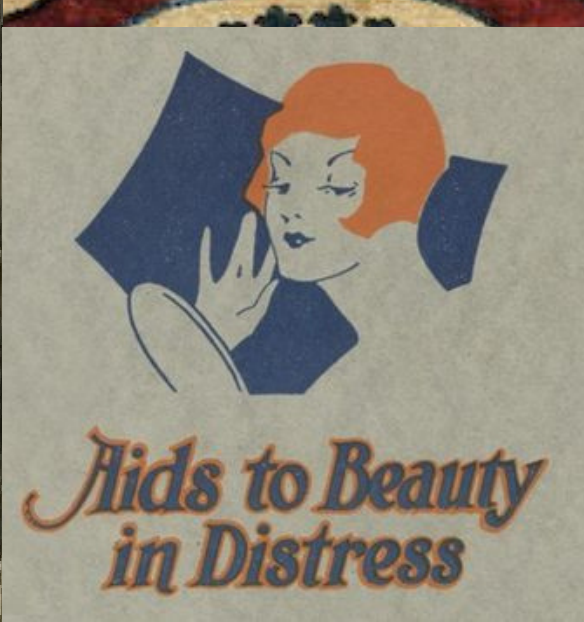
WINTER 2021



Original Mood Board
*Early Conceptual
Research*

Concept Development for the 1st mood board

My Mood board was inspired originally by the secessionist movement and especially the art of Charles Renee Mackintosh. However, as I explored images from this time period I found myself drawn to women's fashion images and fabric patterns. I loved **the color palette and the strong sense of vertical lines and sharp angles**. The 1920s were the first time that **women's styles became more "masculine"** and I thought this was an interesting dichotomy, especially when considering the treatment of the women in Shakespeare's play. I feel like women are the heroes of the story and the main players in it and yet their free will and life choices are constantly subjugated by the men. I thought it would be interesting to design the set around **this idea of the masculine/feminine silhouette** and an era of fashion where, for the first time, **women were visually claiming their power** and rejecting the male gaze.





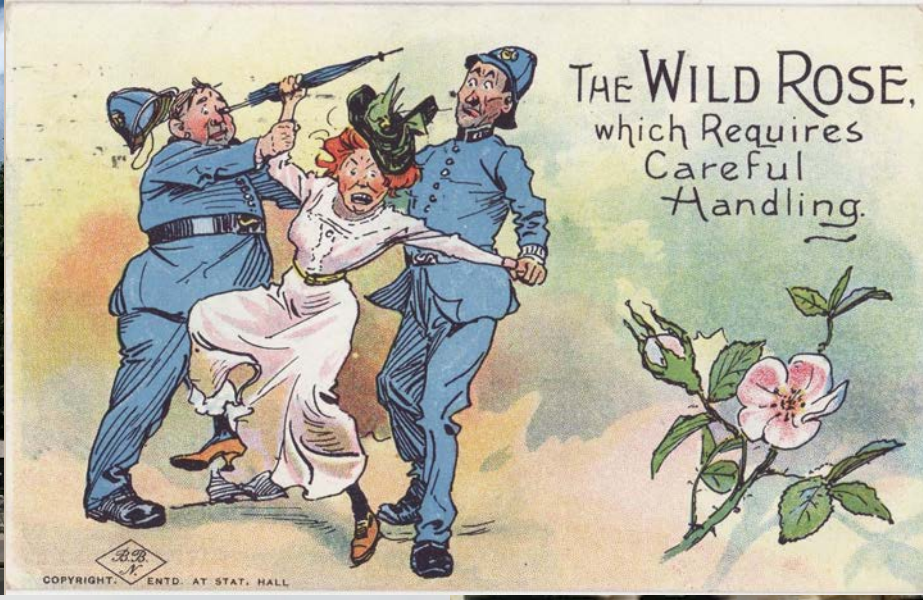
Refined Mood Board

*Early Conceptual
Research*

Concept Development

for the 2nd mood board

As I studied the images that I selected for the first mood board, I realized that what had originally drawn me to them was the contrast between the traditional role and dress of women before the 1920s and the new masculine influence of dress for women in the 1920s. I really wanted to further explore this idea of the **masculine vs. feminine** so I studied women's rights in Vienna and **the suffrage movement and the traditional role of women**. I discovered that most women were married before the age of 21 and that, even though the 1920s gave women the right to vote and new choices in their lives, most still chose to follow the traditional family path. So I then began to study women that chose to live a more independent life and I discovered **Madame d'Ora and Tamara Lempicka**. Madame d'Ora was the first professional female photographer in Vienna who began her career with fashion and society photographs but soon branched out into "more serious" topics. Her photographs were interesting because she photographed men and women so differently. Men were often in the edges of the frame, looking away from the camera and often occupied by something else or seeming distracted. **Women on the other hand were centered in the frame**, facing the camera and making eye contact. **I liked the way she gave women power but also the way that her framing and lighting made them seem vulnerable**. A portrait she took of Tamara Lempicka lead me to discover the polish-born painter who married an Austrian Baron. Lempicka painted primarily portraits of women in an **art deco style**. Her color palette and the **compressed and distorted use of space** that her work displays reflected some of the fashion illustrations I was initially drawn to. This art deco style of painting lead me to further study art deco buildings in Vienna and what I discovered was a far more feminine style of art-deco than what I was used to seeing. I believe that these images provide a more refined example of my research and a better starting point for a future set design.





The Cornell Box
Emotional Design



The Cornell box is based on the emotional response to the role of women in Shakespeares' *Measure for Measure* and in the 1920s as a whole.



Lust



Family



Marriage

Although the 20s were the first decade when women had the right to make their own choices (women's suffrage began in 1919 in Austria) they were still restricted by the choices they could make. They had to choose between living a "modern" lifestyle and ruining their reputation or choosing marriage and giving up their freedom. This very much reflects the situation that Isabella faces in the play and this is what I wanted my Cornell Box to reference and represent. Isabella is pulled between three men who are trying to control her and want to possess her or use her: her brother (family responsibility), the duke (marriage), and Lord Angelo (lust). Two of the men are sort of in opposition over her and in the center, her brother seeks to use her as a bargaining chip.



In the center, Isabella is represented by a bouquet of purple flowers and white roses bound together by a gold wire. White roses traditionally signified purity and purple, white, and gold were the colors of the women's suffrage movement. The bouquet is tied together with a tiny vial holding three pearls. Pearls are another symbol of purity and the number three traditionally signifies the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in Christianity. The bouquet is trapped within a cage, and although bits of the cage are beginning to break away, signifying the changing freedoms of women in this era, the bouquet is still being pulled in multiple directions and manipulated like a puppet by social and emotional ties represented by the strings which tie her to the displays representing the duke and Lord Angelo.



Whereas the ties that pull isabella towards the duke and Lord Angelo pull out and upward like puppet strings, the ties that bind her to her family pull out and downward heavily. These are red to signify a blood connection and they carry little coins because Claudio seeks to trade Isabella like currency to secure his freedom. This is not a completely foreign concept as families typically used female members as a commodity that could be traded away for social or financial advancement and this continued well into the 20s.

The cage holds a tiny valentine showing a couple who share an icecream cone. This is a metaphor for having relations out of wedlock and sharing things that they maybe shouldn't. The language of flowers is once again used in the baby's breath around the cage to signify an incoming birth.



Finally, the background is made up of layers of burnt paper arranged to once again reflect the shape of a white rose for virtue and purity. It's burning from the outside edges inward to signify the way Isabella will ultimately be consumed by the men in her life and the way that her choices will be taken from her.

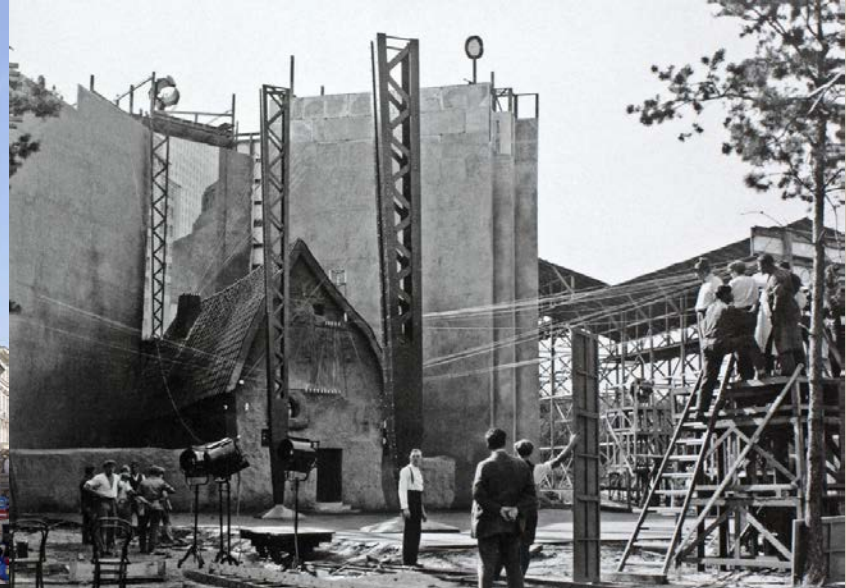


Set Design

*Practical Design
Mood Board*

Inspiration Research *for the set design*

Before beginning to create the set design, I wanted to create another mood board that was less historical images and conceptual images and more architectural details and practical design methods that could be translated into a set design. The architecture I chose was largely examples of art deco styles in Vienna and abroad. In my research, I noticed that much of the "art deco" architecture of Vienna was more Beaux-Arts or Art Nouveau, and yet the artist that I was using for conceptual inspiration, Tamara Lempicka, was an Art Deco painter. Therefore I also chose examples of more typical art deco buildings to use as inspiration. I also included some of these paintings from my conceptual research because I wanted to attempt to recreate the shallow depth of field that they display, the color palette, the use of dramatic light and shadow, and their very linear design. I also added several stills from the film Metropolis because this film captured the feeling of humans dwarfed by a vast and threatening world perfectly. The oversized, forced-perspective set design was something I wanted to emulate.



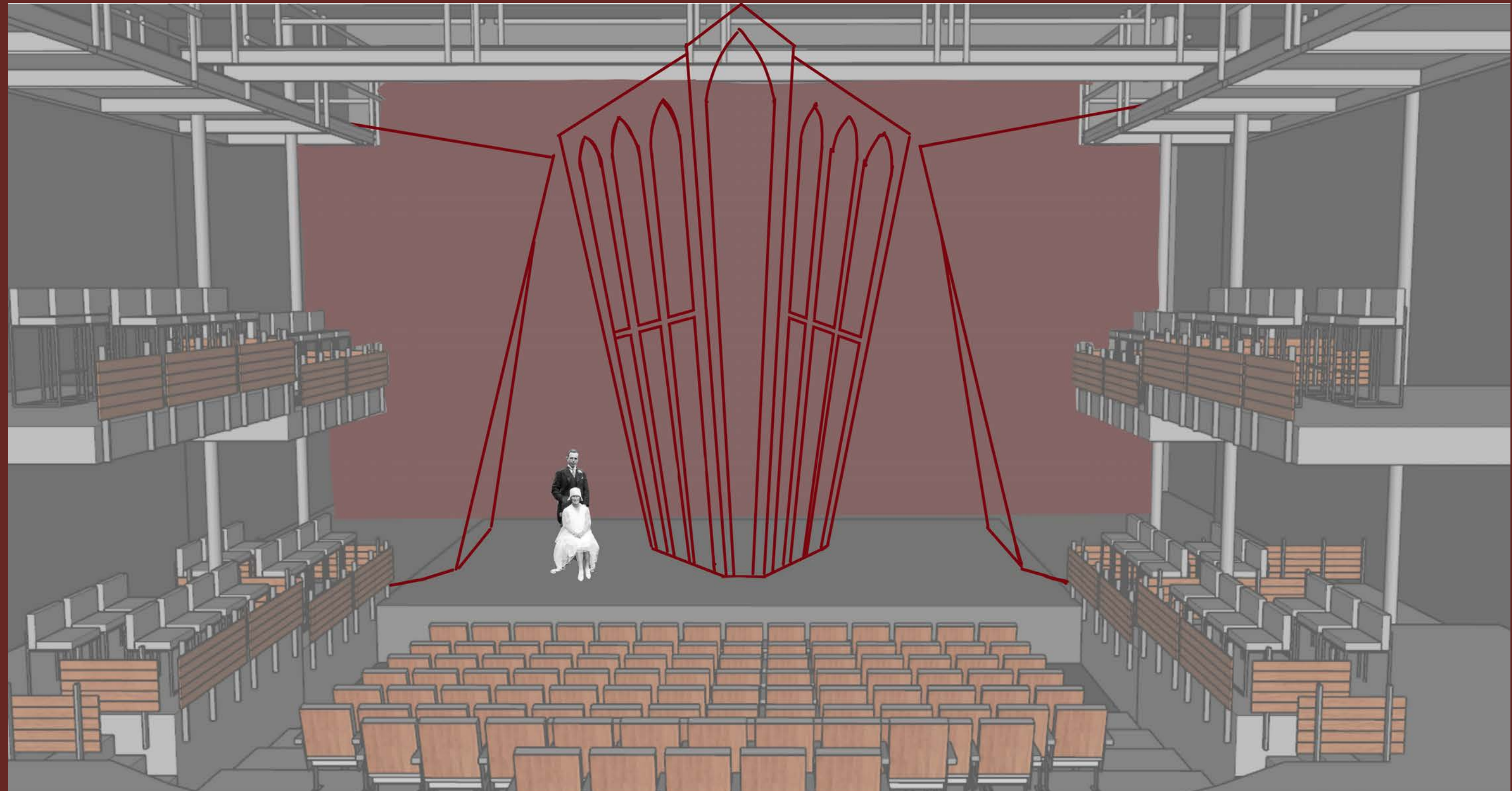


Set Design

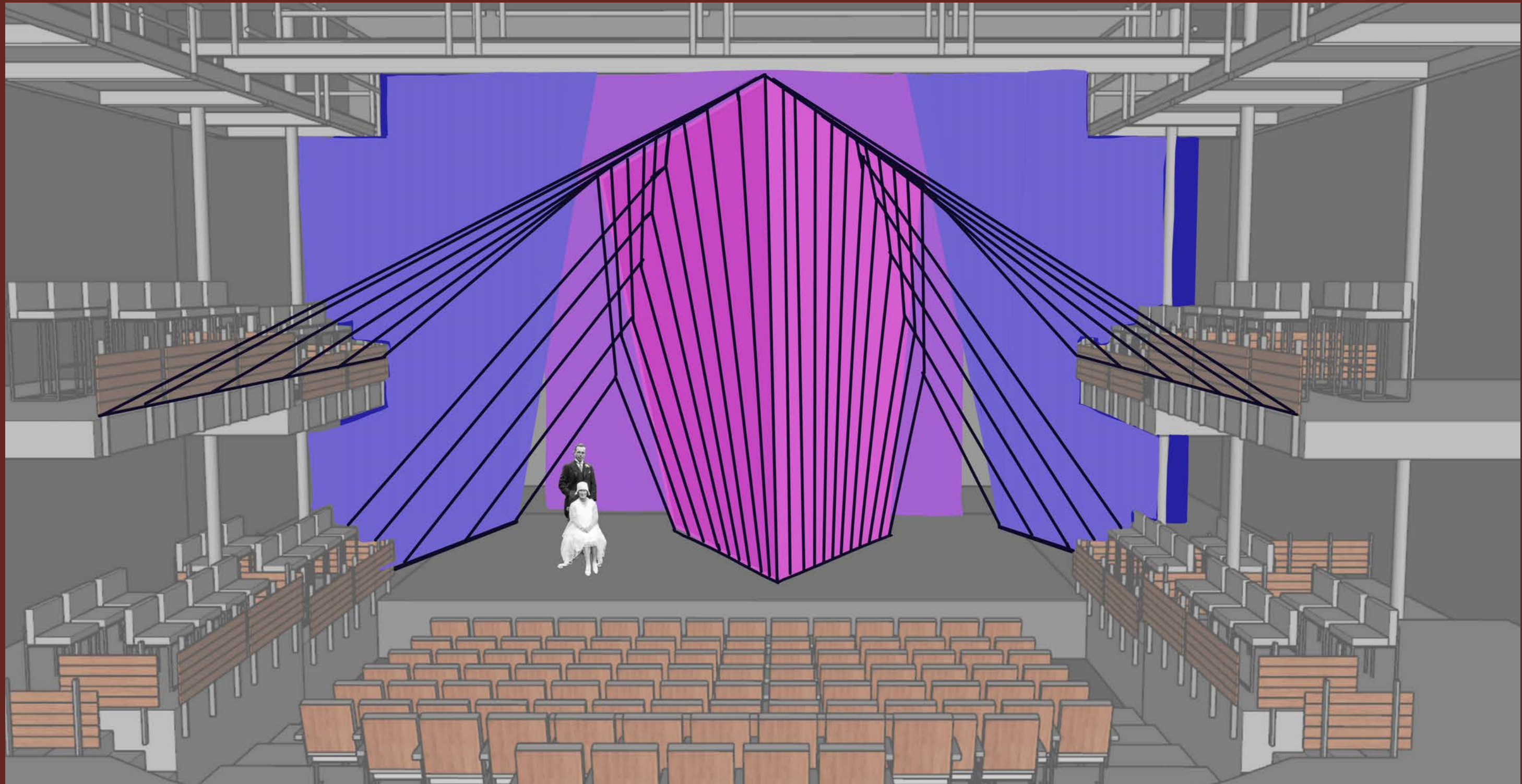
Initial Sketches

Mapping the Layout *for the set design*

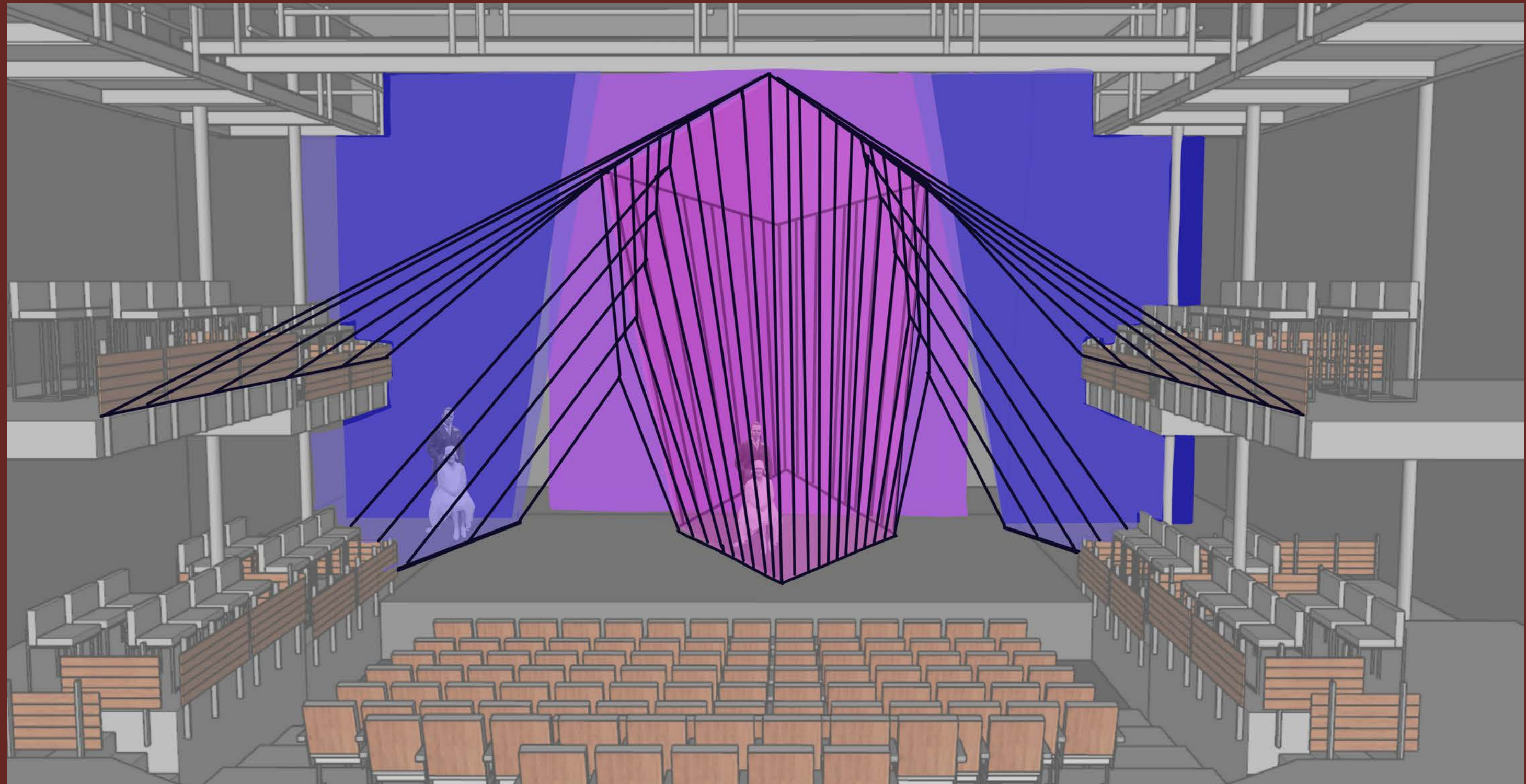
When it came time to tackle my set design and layout, I really wanted to find a way to translate the design of my Cornell Box to a larger scale. I wanted to be sure that I continued to feature a sense of a central female form being overpowered by flanking male forms. I also wanted to continue the use of symbolism and the color palate. To test these ideas, I sketched out two different designs: a more concrete set design, and a more abstract set design.



The first set design was focused on creating a more literal street layout with a central form that echoed the shape of a church without being consciously defined as a church. This would be the brighter, lighter, female form in my design. Set to either side, two lurking abstract blocks made of scrim cloth could either restrict the stage space or create separate rooms for scenes set within a building. Forced perspective on all of the structures creates the feeling that the buildings are looming over the actors.



The second set was very abstract. Ropes were used to create a central form, which was stretched and pulled by ropes stretching into the wings and out into the audience.



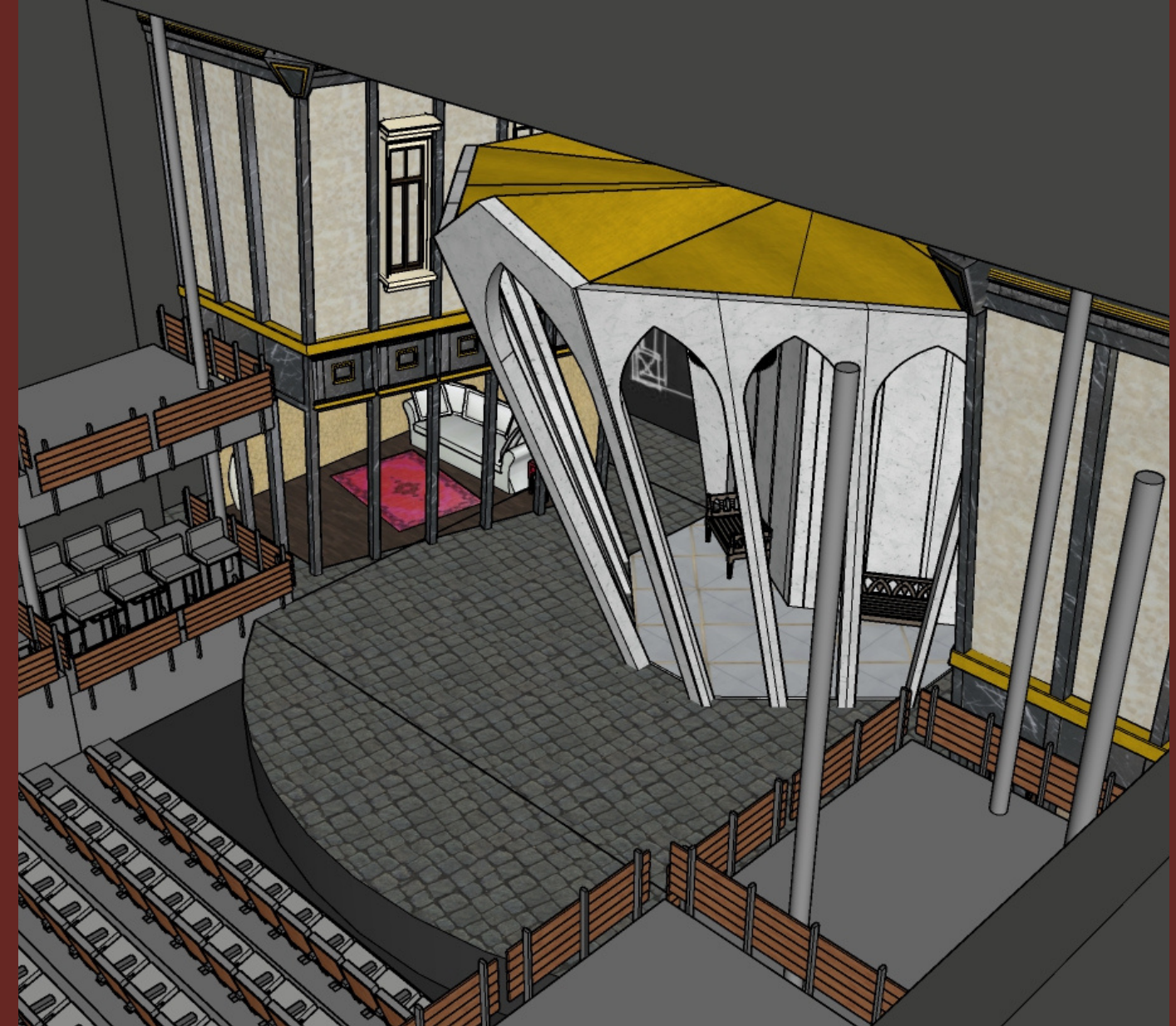
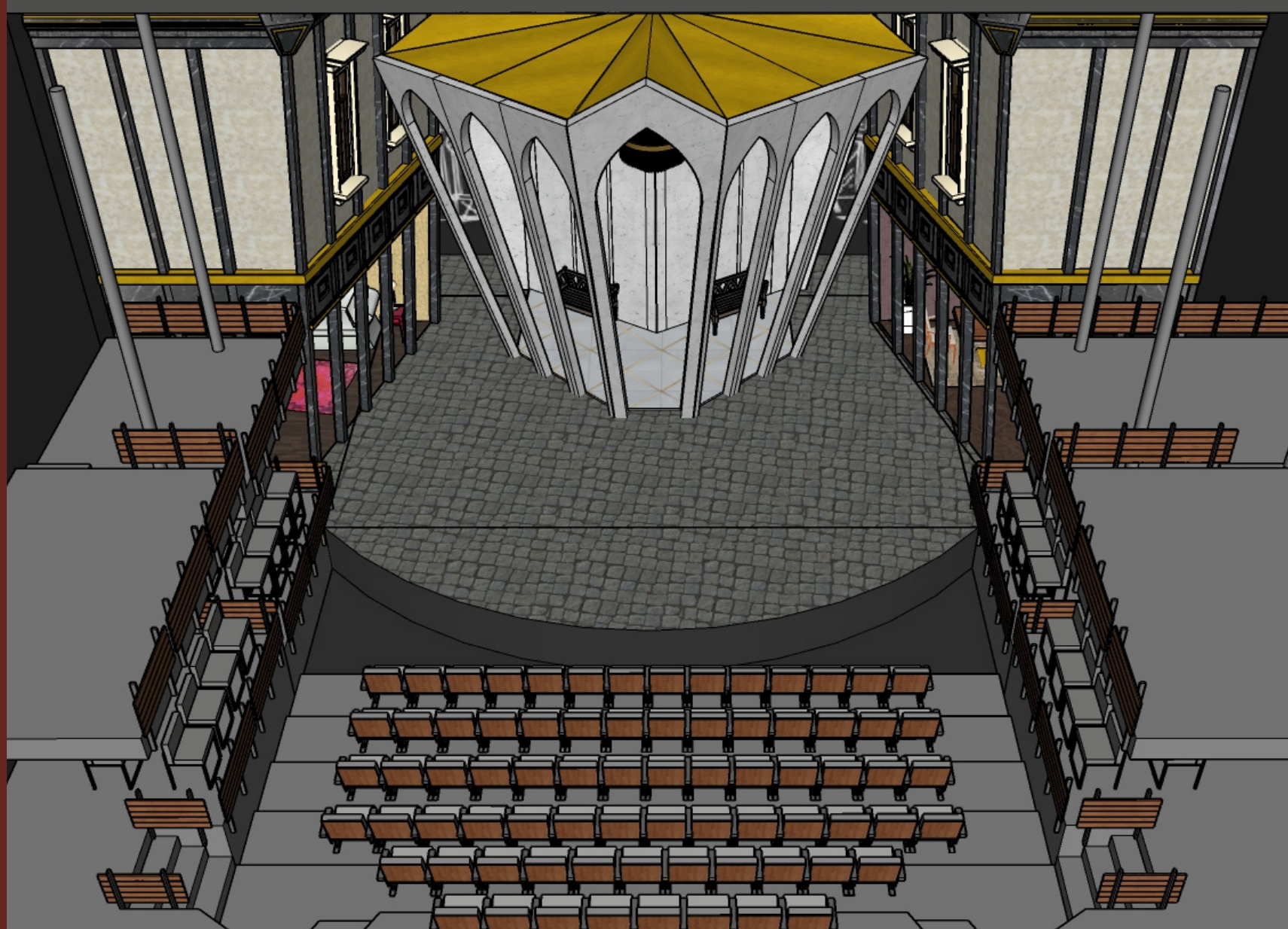
Scrim and backdrops allow the space to be opened or closed as needed to create a wider view or restrict the view. All spaces essentially become conceptual, in the traditional form of Shakespeare, and audience members are forced to imagine interior and exterior spaces depending on the dialogue in the scene.



Set Design
Final Design



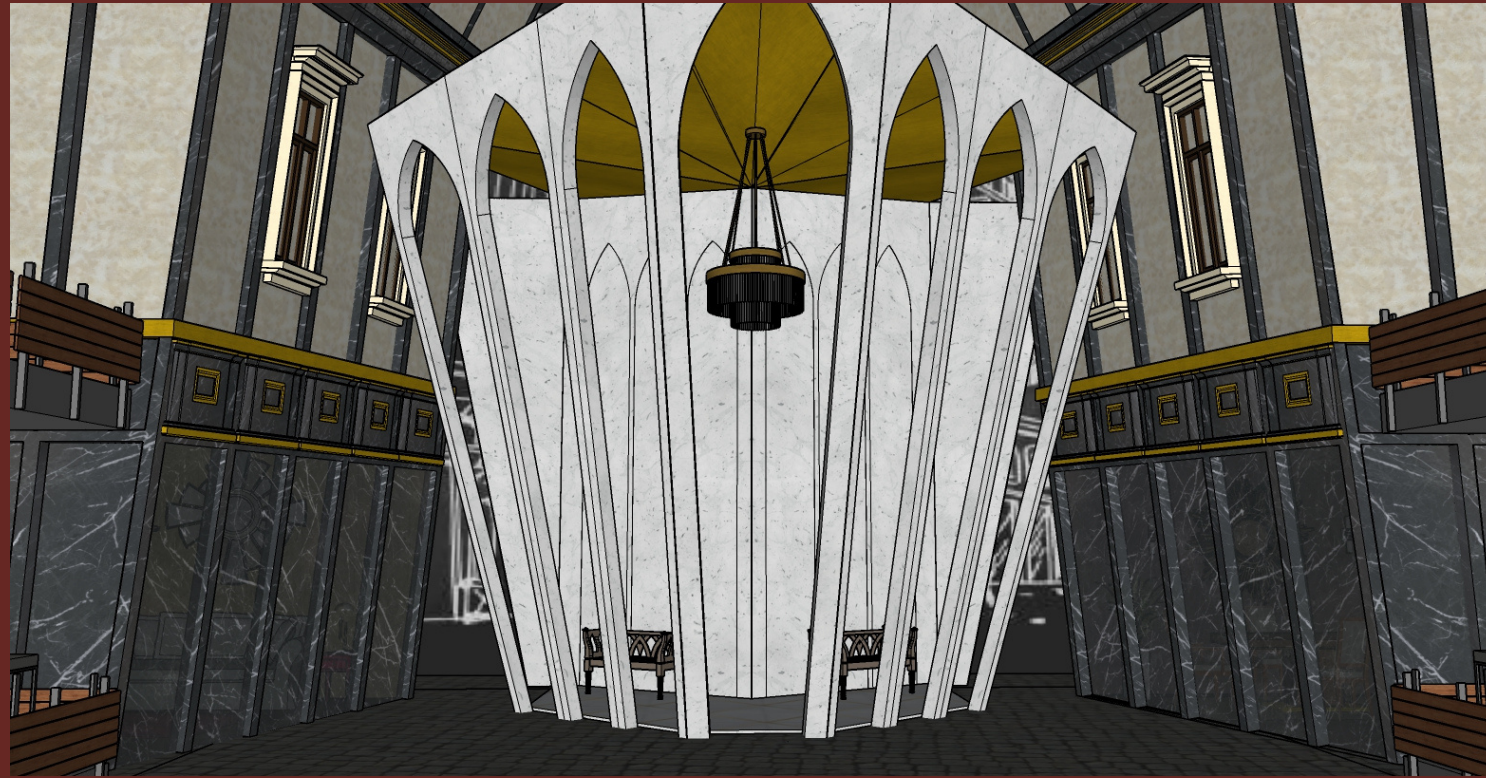
In the final set design, the forms of the first sketches were enhanced and made more literal to create a true city street setting. The central form is still the abstracted view of a church, which is meant to both represent religion and Isabella. This structure splays out at the top to suggest that it is being pulled and stretched dangerously much in the same way that Isabella's free will is controlled by the men in the play. This also creates the feeling that it is trying to break free and live its own life but it is being held back in some way. The two flanking structures become more literal as well. These are designed in heavy dark materials in a Viennese Art Deco style which is more Beaux-Arts in nature to represent the idea that they are the establishment fighting to control the new modern woman.



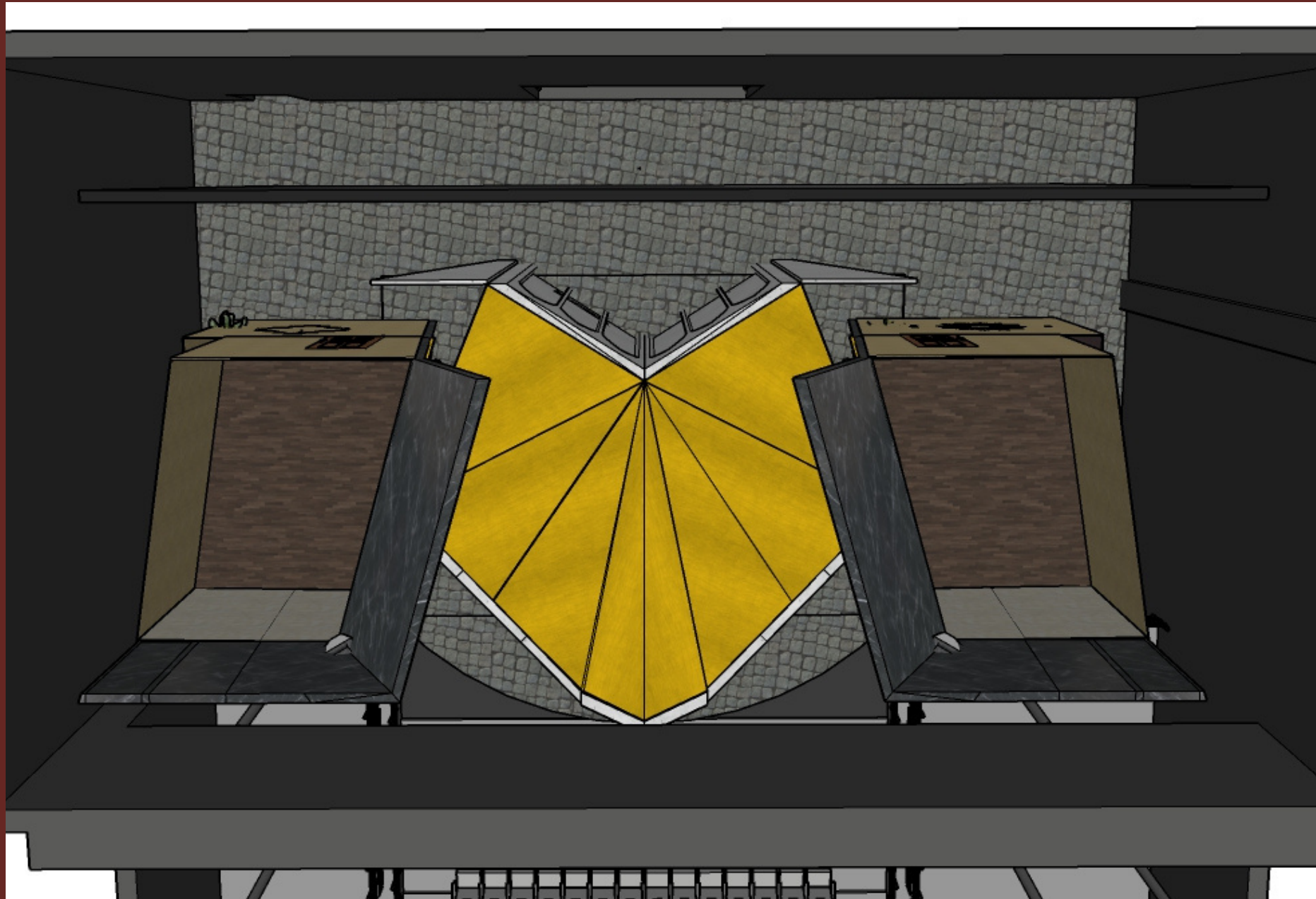
This central structure doesn't just represent Isabella, however, it also represents the way religion is used to oppress and hide people throughout the play. Isabella's faith and her dedication to that faith hang over her choices and direct her actions. Likewise, Angelo hangs religion over Claudio to give the acting lord cause to imprison and execute Claudio. To demonstrate this, the central church doesn't just use forced perspective to feel imposing, it actually leans out, breaking the proscenium line and seeming to push the stage out into the audience. The entire story unfolding on stage presses its way out into the onlooker's personal space and, hopefully, creates a small sense of oppression and discomfort to echo what Isabella felt throughout the story and what women felt in the 1920s as they fought for their rights.



Importantly, the flanking structures are not simply solid forms, which take up stage space and crowd the action on stage. Instead, they hide more space for action to take place. The first floor of these structures can be opened up by lighting the interior spaces from within and negating the effects of the scrim walls. This allows a space for scenes that take place in the Duke's palace or Angelo's home to play out on stage. However, the heavy "marble" column grids remain and stretch across the entire facade of the structure. These are meant to echo the bars of the jail cell that Claudio is trapped in and the cells that women were forced into when they fought for equality and their freedom. Likewise, they seem to pen the pure form of the feminine church inside the darker and opposing forms of the masculine homes.



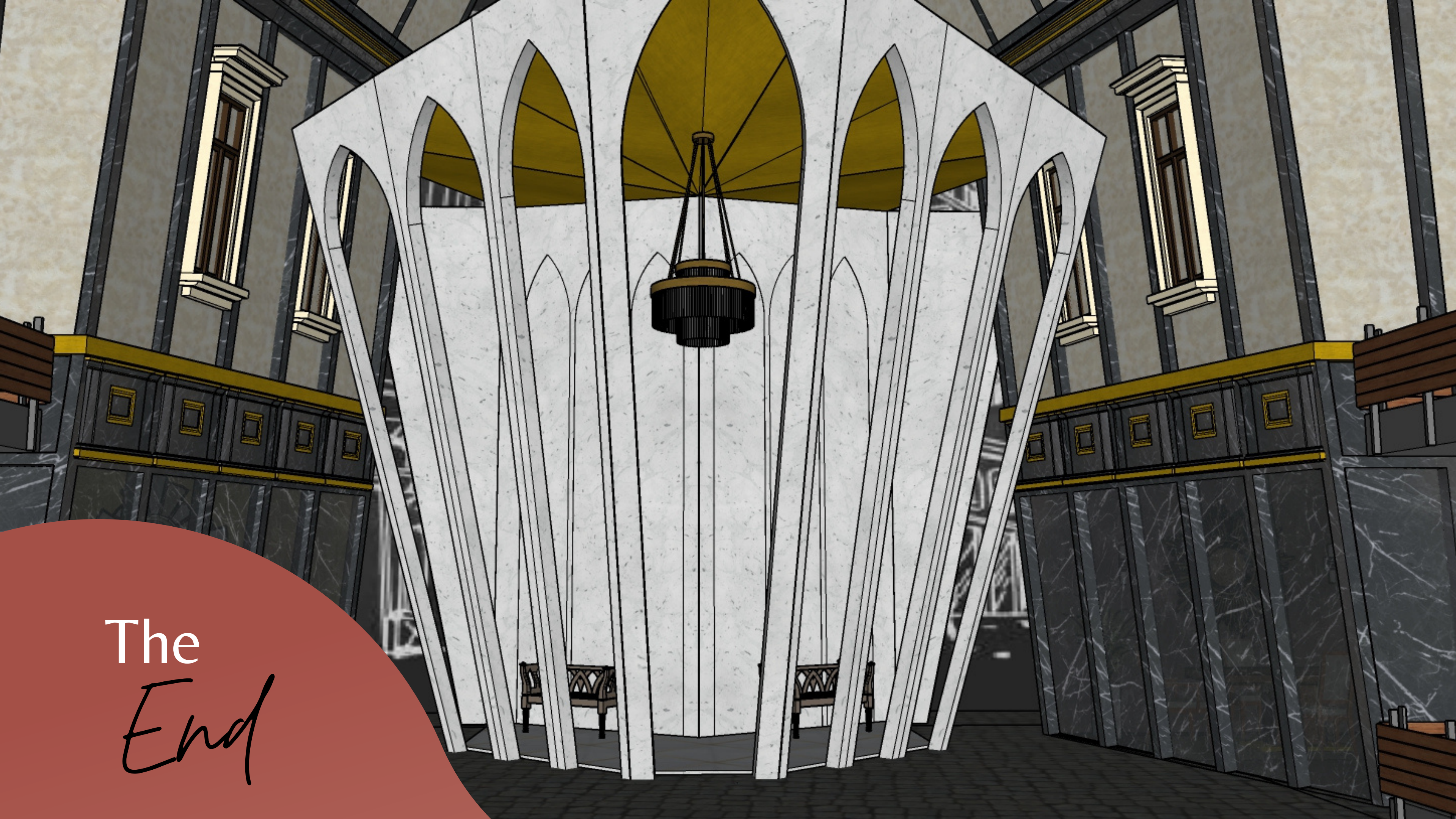
These are a handful of views taken from the central floor seating and the seating along the lower level side platforms. They illustrate the emotional effect the set has including the feeling of the entire set looming over the audience and the way that the side buildings loom over the central church. It is important to note that the set design makes the side seating on the upper levels impossible as they would not be able to see the action taking place in the lower side structures on their sides. Additionally, although the lower seats offer views of both side rooms on stage, those views are limited. These would therefore likely become discounted seats.



Because the stage has no traditional proscenium or wing space in the existing structure, the set itself works as masking. The set pieces are set far forward on the stage and the backdrop allows actors to move across stage and enter from either side without being seen.



As for creating a more literal prison for Claudio, if the church structure is lit from above and slightly behind, a series of bars of light would be thrown across the stage floor. These, combined with some other form of containment such as handcuffs and traditional prisoner costuming, could be used to create a more metaphorical prison. This would be especially interesting because it is the fact that Claudio pursued a relationship with his sweetheart before being married in the eyes of the church that got him into trouble. In essence he is confined because of religious practices and so it is only fitting that the religious structure should create his cage.



The
End