COSTUME DESIGN: A VISION FROM PAPER TO REALITY

by

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DEDICATION

To my friends and family who have helped me to achieve my goals and who have supported and pushed me to succeed. Without them and my many, mentors who have guided me, and struggled with me along the way this would not have been possible.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am thankful to be able to hone my craft, by pursuing a higher level of education in my field. Also, for the opportunity to collaborate with talented, experienced mentors in my area of study as they have helped bring my imagination to reality. I am thankful for the chance to be able to my share my dreams with countless audience members and touch their lives, through my art and work.
ABSTRACT

What is art? Thomas Merton said, “Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time.”¹ This thesis is a detailed reflection of my process as a designer and how I have grown not only as a person but also, as an artist during my three years at the University of South Carolina. It describes my process and effort to refine my skills as a costume designer and to create the indelible world; that captures a plays mood, its characters, genre and time period. Magdelena Abakanowicz stated that, “Art will remain the most astonishing activity of mankind born out of struggle between wisdom and madness, between dream and reality in our mind.”² I believe this is evident in my documented experience of the productions of Lady of Larkspur Lotion, This Property is Condemned, Macbeth, Boeing Boeing and The 39 Steps, as well as in my internship at Barter Theatre, where I designed three children’s plays while, also working on wardrobe crew and being a design assistant. It is a testimony of the in-depth circumstances of a play and the research involved in uncovering its focus, and in turn conveying that idea through a visible means of expression. Using the principle elements of fabric, texture, silhouette and color, the costume designer creates characters that are part of the creative world of the play script From each production I gained design experience and knowledge, which helped me to discover my own method and approach to design, making me a better collaborative, artist.

² IBID
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INTRODUCTION

THE COSTUME DESIGNER: CREATING CHARACTER

“See. That man is playing the part of a beggar…. When we look at him we recall, not any particular beggar, but all beggars we have ever seen or read about…. He is dressed, not like a real beggar, but like a painting of a beggar. No, that’s not quite it, but as he stands there or moves about we are continually reminded of great paintings.”

—Robert Edmond Jones

Figure 1.1 A Beggar Woman By Hughes Merle

Robert Edmond Jones’s quote describes the character of a beggar through a design perspective. The beggar takes on the role of countless before him, acting a recognizable part that is both poetic and profound. The expressive, visual quality he evokes is tragically beautiful. In his description of a beggar he suggests that an audience
sees him as a downtrodden man beaten down by the world. An idealized personification of what a beggar ought to look like. The beggar is romanticized through the arts and the emotional heartstrings of sympathy one feels just by looking at him. Jones describes the beggar as a painting and its ability to compositionally depict a mood and character of a beggar without words. In this sense it reflects the movement and dynamic quality of the person depicted.

The beggar, who in reality we ignore and pass by on the street, becomes a focal point and an interest of the artist. As a viewer we are drawn to him and feel his strife and desperation. What is it about him that speaks in such a way that merits interest? In a theatre production the beggar is no mere man but everyman. The beggar’s movement and dress define him and reveal his story. An audience can visually identify him. Jones suggests that, as a designer one must capture the mundane things of everyday life such as the clothing of a homeless man by creating an impression of his essence. Then by freeing oneself from a realistic viewpoint, in favor of imagination, a designer can achieve a level of artistic merit. Robert Edmund Jones’s ideas are essential in establishing specific characters in a play, their functionality and background.

A costume designer has the ability to transform a play through a character. This can be through a historical aspect and the visual storyline of a character’s garments. It is both an individual process and collaborative journey, from pre-production to strike. The costume designer works with everyone on the design team as well as the actors. Communication is essential for a costume designer to achieve a final product. During my three years at the University of South Carolina I have learned how to effectively convey
ideas, research and a concept to a director and to a costume shop so that the design process and pre-production goes as smoothly as possible.

Through my class training I have had the opportunity to focus not only on the history and time period of garments but, also their construction and understructure. This helped me to accurately draw and represent the silhouette of a time period and to distinguish how a garment will flow and move onstage. Classes in crafts, hair and makeup then completed the “look” and silhouette of each time period; making it possible to enhance a character in different ways. I also experienced the design process from a set and lighting perspective. In these classes I learned how to identify the specific tools and elements needed to create the world of a play. Thus, bringing my costumes and characters to life by unifying all of the dramatic elements.

All of these classes in turn, allowed me to be able to communicate, through design language, with others in my field when working on a production. Hands-on experience through my internship then completed this knowledge; by being involved in the backstage process and working one-on-one with other designers. All of this training, I believe enhanced not only my skill as a designer but made me a well-rounded designer as a whole both, technically and artistically.
Figure 1.2 New Orleans French Quarter Inspiration

Tennessee Williams is a celebrated American playwright known for his larger than life characters, which live within their own reality. He transposes the harsh, cruel actuality of life, love and poverty with relatable issues and figures. These characters have become victims of their own making and rejected by society. Williams explores the recesses of the middle class mind and tears away all notions of hope or escape. These figments and reflections of ourselves are then left unchanging, as they are unable to move
forward. This can be seen in two of William’s short one act plays *Lady of Larkspur Lotion* and *This Property is Condemned*. In these productions and in my designs I sought to bring these “Tennessee Williams qualities” to life, by representing the characters in each play as the broken people they depict while, still giving an allusion of what they wish to be. In this sense I exposed their vulnerability and naivety. They are represented in a blurry, disconnected, sepia-toned world, but are relatable enough so that the audience can understand their plight.

### 1.1 LADY OF LARKSPUR LOTION

I found the *The Lady of Larkspur Lotion* a depressing description of a tragic circumstance. Each character has his or her own version of the unpleasant situation. It is hopeful “A world of pitiful fiction” from which they cannot escape. The play opens on a small cramped room in New Orleans’s French Quarter mid 1940’s. The environment is filthy, musty, sad and dismal, with a peculiar infestation of “flying cockroaches.” This day for Mrs. Hardwicke-Moore is unlike any other because it is the day she cannot escape who and what she is. It is the day Mrs. Wire gives her the ultimatum to “pay or get out.”

The *Lady of Larkspur Lotion* consists of three characters, Mrs. Hardwicke-Moore, Mrs. Wire and The Writer/Anton Chekov. Mrs. Hardwicke-Moore is a woman barely scratching by, a woman of the night. I imagined her in a robe and slip that was once nice that she may have purchased years ago, it shows wear and sweat stains. I wanted to represent her in dull muted colors of blues and purples that are no longer as alluring as they once were. Mrs. Moore has dyed, ratty blonde hair in an attempt to appear younger than she is; she shows weariness and deprivation of sleep and malnutrition.
Figure 1.3 Lady of Larkspur Lotion Production Photo #1

Figure 1.4 Lady of Larkspur Lotion Production Photo #2
The writer I pictured as a slovenly, dirty, “starving artist” type. He is wrinkled, living and sleeping in the only suit he has. His robe is tattered and stained with ink, sweat and years of wear. His colors are also dim hints of color and hope; as for Mrs. Hardwicke-Moore, I used blues and grays and green. I wanted the writer to have a more gritty wool texture, which, can be seen in his paisley terry-cloth robe and his knit cap. For this character I also, wanted to depict him as an attempt to look like his “ideal” Anton Chekov by having him wear rounded glasses and have a beard.

Mrs. Wire, the pushy, outspoken landlady, I chose to represent in dull browns with subtle hints of yellow, tattered lace. Mrs. Wire’s hair is tied-up with a kerchief and an apron, askew from cleaning. Her shoes are the nicest things she owns and her heels click, so you can hear her as she walks down the hall. Mrs. Wire is unlike the other two characters in the script-she is very “black and white” unchangeable and finite; she knows her place in society and accepts it.

Figure 1.5 Railroad Track Research Image
2.1 THIS PROPERTY IS CONdemned

Tennessee William’s *This Property is Condemned* is a sad reflection of tainted innocence. It is a melancholy, existence of a child forced to grow up too soon, vs. a carefree young boy who unknowingly wants to take advantage of her. I was drawn to Tennessee William’s gothic description of the characters and the point of view of the story, told through the eyes of children. Each character has a significant prop, a doll and a kite, symbolic of their childishness and personality. The “crazy doll” is a mirror of the young girl’s destiny to be a prostitute like her sister. The red kite shows a boy’s flighty tendencies pushed aside in the favor a young girl. Yet for all their silly, naive banter, both prove wiser than their years in a perverted, juvenile manner.

The setting for this play is a winter day on a railroad track outside of Mississippi in the late 1940’s. It is a brief conversation between two people, lasting approximately only ten minutes. *This Property is Condemned* opens on Willie, a young, dirty, girl covered in cinders balancing on the tracks holding a nasty doll and a rotten banana. Willie has lost all of her family and she still has not recovered from the loss of her older sister Alva, who died of tuberculosis. She has been living in her parent’s old, yellow house, which is now condemned. Tom, a young boy flying a kite, comes upon her. The mood and environment is light and almost creepy like an empty, rusty playground. Everything has a layer of half-truths, lies and inexperienced relationships. There is a sense of doom and a cyclical continuation of child prostitution and the impending mortality that life will bring. The play can basically be compared to a cat and mouse conversation, of one trying to get the other.
The two characters in *This Property is Condemned*, Willie, a girl of thirteen and Tom, a boy of fifteen, are described in great length by Tennessee Williams. Willie is pictured in her sister’s old torn dress that is obviously too big for her, wearing cheap costume jewelry and covered in soot. In the script the dress is blue velvet but in designing and speaking with the director we decided we wanted something brighter to show her loss of innocence. I decided to put her in a deep, burgundy satin evening gown. She is a living replica of her doll. Her fabrics and details are light and feathery like her flakiness, weighed down by dirt and a tainted childhood.

Tom is a schoolboy who has been running around attempting to fly a kite. I pictured him in grays and blues. He is simple with hints of red in his sweater vest and geometric patterning and stripes in his shirt. Tom is a typical young boy on the verge of adulthood. His pants are a little loose “hand-me downs” and his shoes are worn from play. Tom wears a newsboy hat and is fidgety, transfixed with Willy, a silly girl who is wearing an evening gown. Their attitude and comments echo a childish yet wise insight that makes them older than their years. To reflect this visually I wanted the color pallette and style to be bright and youthful though the fabrics and clothes are worn and distressed. Their clothes are wrinkled and dirty from being outside. As a designer, I saw Willie as a girl playing dress-up who is confused and Tom as a boy who is discovering girls for the first time.
To begin my renderings for *The Lady of Larkspur Lotion* and *This Property is Condemned*, I started looking at the playwright, Tennessee Williams’, biography and period research for each play. From this point I was able to create a color pallette and story of emotions that I wanted the costumes to evoke visually. I also, did some additional research by watching films for inspiration including, *This Property is Condemned* with Robert Redford, *Paper Moon, Camille* and *Blue Velvet* and for Mrs. Wire in *Lady of Larkspur Lotion* I was inspired by *Kong Fu Hustles* landlady. From here I began sketches, thumbnails and finally my renderings.
Figure 1.7 Blue Velvet Scene

Figure 1.8 Kung Fu Hustle Landlady Image
For each play I wanted a separate feeling and rendering style. In order to accomplish this I chose different media and color scheme for theatricality and to support the characters of each one act. For my renderings for *Lady of Larkspur Lotion* I used watercolor and a mixture of colored pencil and chalk-pastel. This created a soft faded appearance, and for my background I sponged sepia paint to create an old photograph mood. In contrast my renderings for *This Property is Condemned* are darker with more shadows created by using charcoal and Prisma markers, to create a child-like storybook quality. I then scanned and put all of my renderings in Photoshop to enhance the color and tints. After I printed these I then redrew on top of my renderings, to add texture.

![Figure 1.9 The Writer Rendering](image1)

![Figure 1.10 Willie Rendering](image2)
To produce these two one acts for stage I pulled mostly from stock and period garments in the costume shop. For these costumes I mostly altered, distressed and re-dyed them. Mrs. Hardwicke-Moore’s slip was altered and bleached out then re-dyed several times to acquire a worn, faded look which I then smeared with some grease and makeup to make it feel like a “dirty prostitute” had been living in it for years. The pants for the writer we did not even hang up but wet them and crumpled them in a pile to make them appear as messy as possible. For This Property is Condemned I bought a vintage 1980’s dress and manipulated the fabric so it appeared more 1930’s-40’s. To complete the dress we distressed it with paint and frayed the material. I also, lace painted the hem by spray painting through lace to get an uneven splotchy texture.

Although these two shows were just one acts, it gave me the opportunity to focus on the process of designing a show. The Lady of Larkspur Lotion and This Property is Condemned are two separate stories with different styles and looks however they have similar themes. Both stand on their own as tragic fiction and both give a small glimpse of the reality of the impoverished and eccentric and their hope for a better life.
Figure 1.11 This Property is Condemned Production Photo #1

Figure 1.12 This Property is Condemned Production Photo #2
CHAPTER 2

MACBETH: WALKING SHADOWS

ADAPTED AND DIRECTED BY: ROBERT RICHMOND

SCENIC DESIGN: HEATHER ABRAHAM
LIGHTING DESIGN: BRAD COZBY
HAIR/WIG/MAKEUP DESIGN: VALERIE PRUETT

Figure 2.1 Lady Macbeth and Macbeth as King and Queen

William Shakespeare’s Tragedy of Macbeth or “the Scottish play” is a tale of brutality and conniving schemes. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth’s tragic character flaws are brought about by their own “leaping” ambition. The Macbeths face a point of no return, from their greed and uncontrollable blood lust for power. A once noble Macbeth becomes
seduced, by both his wife’s vanity and the witches’ prediction of higher status; transforming him into a paranoid schizophrenic. Macbeth kills the King Duncan while he sleeps, and also all those that impede his quest for the Scottish throne. This leaves the notorious, couple guilt ridden, as their sanity slowly erodes away, revealing the evidence of their malicious crime. Proud Macbeth over-estimates foretold, invincibility, foretold by the witches and is defeated by MacDuff. MacDuff avenges his family’s murder and returns Scotland and the throne to the rightful heir, Duncan’s eldest son Malcolm.

Figure 2.2 Three Witches Production Photo

Of all Shakespeare’s plays Macbeth is unique in its use of occult, black magic and the use of witches. This was mainly for audience entertainment, due to King James and English society’s superstitions during the early 1600’s. Both the court and the masses had little education and no understanding of science and general medicine. The court
particularly had an odd fear and fascination of evil, including King James. Disease or suffering was attributed to Satan and one’s sin, according to the Protestant religion. This can be seen in the retribution or “just rewards” of Macbeth and his wife.

A burdensome, single or elderly woman in society was targeted as a scapegoat, named as a witch and “consort” of the devil. The witch’s leader was called Hecate and could be found at the crossroads. During this time in history witch trials were prevalent. Both young and old women alike were hung, burned, drowned and tortured. King James was said to have had an encounter with a witch, and he wrote a few books on the subject. In *Macbeth* the witches are antagonists for our ill-begot hero, Macbeth. The witches use riddles and apparitions to push and deceive him, causing him to act out of character, leading him to his “destiny” and final demise.

2.1 RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

While reading *Macbeth*, I began to visualize and associate things “emotionally” with the scenery and time period, surrounding the character of Macbeth, to artistically create my own interpretation of Macbeth. In this sense I made step-by-step storyboards of each scene to define the mood and feeling of the play. I envisioned blood in the snow and heard the echo of swords in a nearby battle. I saw looming, shadows of circling crows over the battlefield and the stench of death as it permeates everything. In the dark forest tall, gnarled, tress drip with icicles, hiding the enemy soldiers. Celtic runes are carved on the trunks of the ancient trees. Within this tribal environment I began to develop the characters in Shakespeare’s tragedy. I was inspired by the imagery of Gustav Klimt and http://www.cyberwitchcraft.com/witchcraft-in-elizabethan-england.html 2011
Goya paintings for their vivid color and grotesque horror and used these artists to help create a representation of the war faring world of *Macbeth*.

Figure 2.3 Gustav Klimt Hygieia  Figure 2.4 Goya Saturn Devouring his Son

Gathering research for *Macbeth* was a huge, collaborative process with the director and other designers. Robert Richmond’s concept of *Macbeth* was loosely based on the style of the HBO series *Game of Thrones*, from the books written by George R. Martin. From this we began to developed our ideas based on each other’s inspirations, developing endless possibilities that could lead the show into several directions, stylistically and visually. I assembled a research book with information and images from history, literature, music, art and film. The number of influences made it a little difficult to concentrate my designs into a solidified uniform design aesthetic for each of the characters. I began by twisting details and silhouettes from the past. I used Medieval/Gothic period clothing layers and textures and armor and combined it all with a modern couture fashion. I was drawn to the work of fashion designers Rodarte’ and Alexander
McQueen. I was partial to their use of bold beauty and elegant form. I studied the drapery and line of the fabrics as well as their texture, color and the way they reacted to light and shadow. To me they represented the fantastical and wild nature I wanted to attribute to the witches and Lady Macbeth.

Figure 2.5 Alexander McQueen Wrap Dress

Figure 2.6 Alexander McQueen Wool Dress

After deciding on a mood and style for the costumes I created a color pallette ranging from earthy tones of deep reds, browns, greens and metals like, silver and gold. I wanted Macbeth and Lady Macbeth’s color pallette to metaphorically change throughout the play by becoming darker, reflective of their growing evil. For most of the ensemble and other characters I began breaking down each character and ranking them in a social hierarchy. I then developed a “class look” and silhouette, forming groups that complemented one another. For example, characters that were family or allied with each
other, I related through color and style. Essentially, I had a generic foundation garment and elaborated on it for each character to unify everyone in the cast. I imagined the characters as broad shouldered, with high chainmail necklines, heavy boots, wild hair and braids.

Once I had a basic silhouette for everyone in the cast and unifying color scheme, I supported most of my design details and choices with my character analysis. Analyzing the main characters of a play is crucial in order to understand their traits, motivations, personalities and how these contribute to the actions in the plot. By defining these qualities I can then link specific archetypes to a character. These then can be brought out in a person’s appearance and emotional color pallet. Within the script there can also be textual evidence and dialogue that indicates the look and persona of a character.

![Feast at Macbeth’s Castel with Duncan Production Photo](image)

**Figure 2.7 Feast at Macbeth’s Castel with Duncan Production Photo**

King Duncan is a noble ruler of Scotland with his two sons Malcolm, his heir and Donalbain, his younger son. Malcolm is headstrong, proud and will fight for his born
inheritance. These three characters visually had to convey the idea of royalty. In order to do this I chose rich fabrics such as silk and velvet in colors such as burgundy, plum and gold, combined with fur pieces and metalwork to embellish their clothing and set them apart from the other characters. Macbeth, in comparison, is a general in the Scottish army, Thane of Glamis and cousin to the king, who will in fact kill for the chance to be king. He is easily swayed and we see him progress from a soldier, to a king, and finally to a mad man. It was vital to have several different costumes to help represent Macbeth’s change of status and the diminishment of his mind. Lady Macbeth, his wife, was married previously in Shakespeare’s text and lost a child. She is cold, calculating and craves prestige and a higher rank in society. I wanted her costumes to be evocative, bold and form-fitted with masculine touches, such as her corselet armor piece. Her clothes complement her husband’s in color scheme and richness, and their costumes progress with their characters.

Banquo is a loyal subject and of the same rank as Macbeth. It is foretold that Banquo’s sons will be kings and his murdered ghost haunts Macbeth for having him murdered. This brought about the question of how to represent a ghost in this world and if the actor would have the ability to change before he reentered as a ghost. In the end we decided Banquo’s ghost was just a dead, bloody corpse, slowly driving Macbeth crazy.

Macduff is a noble who believes Malcolm is the rightful king, after Duncan’s death. He does not trust Macbeth and finds him suspicious. His clothing contrasts with Macbeth in color and texture. I chose to represent the MacDuff family in natural tones of brown, green, tan, and quilted fabrics. Lady Macduff is distraught when her husband
flees the country for help leaving her and their children alone without protection; they are murdered in his absence. She, in comparison to Lady Macbeth must appear loving, matronly and pure. For Lady Macduff I chose a distinctive conservative, medieval silhouette.

Figure 2.8 Macbeth Fighting MacDuff Production Photo

The porter in Macbeth is the comic relief and clown. He is a bawdy, drunken, peasant who guards the gate to Macbeth’s castle on the night of the King Duncan’s murder. At a glance the porter has to appear like a lowly, grungy servant who is filthy and drinks often. To achieve this look the porter wore distressed, muddy rags and was covered in soot. I designed a pudgy gut and made his face ruddy and red from drinking.

I had a difficult time finalizing my renderings for Macbeth. I struggled to find a media that represented the mood and style that I wanted to create. My characters seemed flat, void of emotion and just generic. The fabric and texture needed energy and
movement. Finally, I began sketching with a grittier media of charcoal and at a larger scale. My drawings became more gestural and I was finally able to capture that missing element that helped to define the show.

2.2 CONCEPT AND PRODUCTION

Building off the concept of *Game of Thrones* we established a cold, rugged environment plagued by civil war and plots to rule the kingdom. *Macbeth* begins in Scotland during the winter, in the ancient forest of Inverness. The stage set is an overgrown wilderness. It is then transformed into a banquet hall with garlands and a large long table. Within the forest is a pond, center stage, that doubles as a bath for Lady Macbeth and the bubbly cauldron in the forest for the witches. The inhabitants are medieval in look but live in a world where fantasy and fate exist. The characters are
masculine and strong willed and unfeigned by blood and death and their sense of loyalty to their king.

I wanted to represent this attitude and lifestyle texturally, by incorporating layers of fur, wool, suede and leather with homespun and quilted fabrics and silks. It is also a society at war and constantly fighting for survival, so armor and metalwork was needed to create this sturdy, silhouette and form. For this show I was lucky to pull several looks and pieces from previous shows for most of the ensemble members. However, they did have to fit and match within the world. To make these garments cohesive we altered and embellished items with trim and metal studs, and dyed or distressed the over layers.

The witches and Hecate on the other hand, are a reflection of one’s cruel wishes and hidden evils within. Hecate is a witch goddess and the Weird Sisters are her companions and followers. They are monsters that have succumbed to their dark nature. In this concept the witches are ever present on stage, influencing and aiding Macbeth and Lady Macbeth for their own twisted devices. They are asymmetrical and untamed, “of the wilderness,” wrapped in translucent fabrics, rags and moss. This made it possible for them to blend in with their forest surroundings. Hecate became a serpent/lizard-like creature in our production influencing Macbeth and soiling anything in her path. Her movements were slinky and crouched low to the ground. She stands out from the witches because they are her subjects but they all have elements of the forest. Towards the end of the production Macbeth began to take on the hunched form of Hecate, becoming feral and mad. He is represented in a ratty robe withering away, a puppet of Hecate and the witch’s cruel source of amusement.
Figure 2.11 Witch 1 Rendering

2.12 Lady Macbeth “Suicide Scene” Rendering

Figure 2.13 Witch 2 Rendering
Unique to our production was the portrayal of Fleance, Banquo’s young son who is predicted to be King of Scotland one day. Shakespeare links King James to Fleance as he is a descendent and rightful king. Fleance represents the innocence and virtue of good and loyal men. The director wanted Fleance to be ever present, like the witches watching scenes unfold from a tree. To develop this character we transformed a teenage girl into a young boy. We achieved this by giving her a loose, boxy figure with layers and a yoke over-collars to square her shoulders.

Building costumes for Macbeth required problem solving and essentially, trial and error using various non-traditional materials. Some challenges were creating light flexible armor and chainmail and rigging gauntlets, and designing headpieces for quick changes. For example we knitted collars to be chainmail out of rope and then pressed silver leafing onto them to have a reflective, metal quality.

Lady Macbeth’s costumes had some critical issues to address as well. In her first scene she was to appear to be naked in nude undergarments, silhouetted in a bath. Then, she was redressed on stage soaking wet. To make sure this worked the costume had to be thin enough for light to reflect through the fabric, easily taken on and off, and able to dry on its own. To solve this we used a silk, wrap robe that she was able to slip in and out of easily. Lady Macbeth’s final scene, when she kills herself, required blood packs and rigging. By doing this she could rip her nightgown apart and it would be soaked in blood. To make this possible we draped fabric over a bathing suit and rigged it with blood packs making it detachable so that the entire costume could be washed after each show.
I was also confronted with the quandary of how to create a physical representation of the three witches and Hecate. Like in Jones’s quote I was searching for a way to evoke power, fear and the embodiment of their spirit. The witches have evil natures and seductive allure over Macbeth’s fate. I found it challenging to illustrate a unique version of a witch without making them stereotypical. I needed something to make them conceptually stand on their own in a remarkable way, to set them apart from other witches. They each had a primitive, feral quality and sense of evil beauty. I designed skin that was gritty and textural creating a unitard out of stretch, crushed fabric and painting in shadows and color. Then by using knit and woven layers of fabric we were able to create a bark-like, cracked skin for the witches and scales for Hecate.

Each of these characters also, had their own distinctive color pallette. The witches had a mixture of muted blues, grays, purples and brown in contrast with Hecate’s earthy browns, reds, tans and gold. They also, had mossy, wild and unkempt hair and fabrics that draped and clung to their body. This helped to reinforce the witches’ relationship to the woods and made them appear dirty and ragged yet young and seductive in physique. Hecate evoked as if she were shedding and molting her lizard-skin.

In retrospect, there were a lot of choices in my designs for Macbeth that I would have reconsidered or been more sure of. The witches were not as eerie or striking as I had envisioned but they were interesting and unique. Hecate and the witches did not necessarily fit within the world, as I would have hoped. However, they are magical beings it is plausible that they stood apart from the other characters. They had the ability to change form and had freedom of movement, due to specific fabric and design choices.
These creatures did evoke an element of corruption and decay in the world, by metaphorically sucking the life out of Scotland. Although I think they would have been more visually dynamic if I had enhanced or stylized their silhouettes in some way, I do not think that they detracted from the world of the play. I could have made stronger design choices but I believe they did help develop the world and bring it to life.

*Macbeth* was my first full cast design experience that was realized and carried through, from beginning to end. I gained insight into the life of a costume designer. Also, the practical skills needed to succeed in the field. I addressed the desire to cope with the pressure of deadlines, the possibility of going over-budget and the demand to become a stronger more confident leader. I learned to remain true to my vision and express it through my renderings. It is necessary to continually return to research and the script to support my design decisions. However, facing these things, I believe prepared me for my next show. I was able to plan my time more efficiently, had a stronger sense of the design process, and had technical answers ready for developing my designs.
Figure 2.14 Lady Macbeth Suicide Production Photo

Figure 2.15 Hecate Production Photo
CHAPTER 3

Boeing Boeing: A Flight Risk

Directed By: Richard Jennings

Scenic Design: Meredith Paysinger

Lighting Design: Robert Eubanks

Hair/Wig/Makeup Design: Valerie Pruett

Figure 3.1 USC Boeing Boeing Poster

The starting point for theatre design is generally determined by the genre of a play, its language and style. In this case Boeing Boeing, written by Marc Camoletti is a comic farce taking place over the course of one day, set in 1960’s Paris, near the Orly
Airport. Today is unlike any other in the world of our main character Bernard, for he loses control of his detailed schedule. Everything is off-kilter, due to the recent acquisition of the new Super Boeing Jet that his three fiancés work on. His usual plans fall through with the arrival of an old friend and his three fiancé all in one day. He is left to suffer the consequences of his actions. For the audience however, it is a bumpy and wild ride.

A farce is an exaggerated, frenzied, absurdist style of theatre focusing on the petty wants of human nature and the comedic highs and lows of man’s own foolishness. To support this view the director Richard Jennings wanted to portray Boeing Boeing as a circus of young women, heightened sexuality, with the carousel of people constantly coming and going. To create this atmosphere the design team decided to translate the fun, sexy 1960's into a complete look and color pallete, focusing on the primary colors for each girl.

Figure 3.2 Boeing Boeing Publicity Photo
3.1 DEFINING THE 1960’S

**Figure 3.3 Yves Saint Laurent Mondrian Dress**

I believe the costume designer should visually create a well-defined character and overall look from head-to-toe. In order to accomplish this, it is imperative to have clear visible research to support each decision regarding their costume, especially if it is a period piece. Of course one can take artistic liberties to support the conceptual world of the play. *Boeing Boeing* is set during the 1960’s. It is during this time that we see a change in women’s dress due to more women in the work place as fashion moves away from the restricted 1950’s “flower” housewife silhouette. The pill also became readily available contributing to women’s freedom in a whole new way. Technology begins to influence society and the convenience of travel, which can be seen in *Boeing Boeing*, as the modern airplane can now travel to the speed of sound.
Fashion in the 1960’s can be linked to the technological influence of “the space age” and the vision of the future can be see in the work of Pierre Cardin, as well as in the film, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, in 1968. The production of metallic and plastic fabrics also made it possible to produce sleek, stylized uniforms that appeared futuristic and modern. The overall style of the 1960’s can be characterized by the use of new synthetic fibers such as, gabardine and bright, blocky colors and print dresses with chunky jewelry and square-heeled shoes. The A-line silhouette is attributed to the emergence of new designers like Mary Quant, known for the mini skirt, and Norman Norell’s loose fitted dresses. Colors and prints can be linked to the art of Mondrian, Andy Warhol and Pucci prints. Fashion icons such as, The Beatles and Twiggy also, brought about the international “British Invasion” or mod look during the 1960’s in both men and women’s
wear. Along with the re-emergence of “Dandy’s” in menswear fashions including tailored suits with eccentric patterns, frilly floral silk ties, slim fitted pants and turtlenecks.

Figure 3.6 Mary Quant  
Figure 3.7 Mary Quant 1960’s Research

It is important as a designer to understand the characteristics of a time period and the class of the characters. A costume designer should clearly define a time period or conceptual fashion and tailor it to a given script. For Boeing Boeing, I created a silhouette and color pallette based on 1960’s research and iconic figures. I then broke down the different looks for each character over the course of the play, creating an actor/ scene chart. Once the dramatic action was clear I then focused on the specific details based on each character’s personality, their shoes, hat, bag and even undergarments. This helped to clearly define each character and ground them into the world of the play. Everything had a purpose and meaning. The cut of the garment, its color, pattern, texture and accessories all enhanced the quality of the actor’s character choice and director’s intent.
Bernard is a confident American playboy living in Paris. He is orderly and schedule based. Over the course of the show he becomes frazzled and more and more disheveled. I based his suave personality off the *MAD Men* character, Don Draper with the style and wit of James Bond. I wanted his suit to be two-tone with his pants darker than his jacket, so they he appeared more formal and like the mod fashion. For his color pallate I decided to use blue, navy and black because they would complement all of the stewardess colors and look sharp and sophisticated.

![Figure 3.8 1960's Menswear Research Bernard](image)

**Figure 3.9 1960’s Menswear Research Robert**

Robert is Bernard’s old school friend from Wisconsin. He is naïve and bookish with glasses. Compared to Bernard, Robert is inexperienced with women. He wants to find love and achieve the confident air that Bernard possesses. For Robert’s first suit I wanted him to appear outdated fashion-wise and academic. I chose a suit that compared
to Bernard’s was more frumpy and textural. Robert’s color palate was neutral using browns and yellows so that standing in Bernard’s snazzy flat he appeared lost and out-of-place.

I chose the blue and gray suit tones to complement their female counterpart’s color palate. For example Robert’s beige and yellow suit jacket helps to link his character with Gretchen, who is in yellow as well. It also helps to allude to their romantic feelings for one another later in the second act of the production. Robert wears a dark navy suit, which connects him to Bernard, as he seems to emulate Bernard and transforms into a more confident “playboy” type.

Boeing Boeing embraces the freedom of women at the beginning of the sexual revolution. The costumes, wigs, hats and accessories reflect the vivid colors and cuts of the 1960’s fashion as well as the defined stereotyped character stressed by the director.
Each female character in the show has her own unique color pallette and style, personified by her country of origin; American, Italian, German and French. The cut, line and fit of each costume was also designed to accentuate each actress and give them a feminine appearance and walk. This can be seen in the short A-line Mary Quant styled dresses and the sheer lingerie and undergarments worn throughout the show, to draw attention to the actress’s silhouette and physique.

![Figure 3.12 Robert and Gloria](image)

There are four different uniforms in *Boeing Boeing* each a different country of origin and personality that I used to make design decisions on fit, style and color. Gloria is Bernard’s American fiancée. She is strong, independent, wild, outspoken and from Texas. She is a flirt and her theme song for the show is “Don’t Fence Me In”. Since Gloria is an American I chose blue and white for her color scheme. It also created visual
contrast with her Auburn wig. Designing Gloria’s uniform I researched the traditional TWA uniform and found it plain. Then I began looking at various vintage patterns decided to combine stylistic elements of the period into something that echoed the fashion icon, Jackie Kennedy. I did this by adding a rounded boat-collar, $\frac{3}{4}$ length sleeves, and a fitted A-line skirt, matching shoes and pillbox hat and some pearls.

![Figure 3.13 Bernard and Gabriella](image)

Bernard’s second fiancée, Gabriella, is a feminine and emotionally volatile Italian, whom he calls his “kitten”. She truly loves Bernard. Her theme song in the show is “That’s Amore”. I chose red for her uniform color to portray her passion and because it is a predominate color in the Italian flag. Gabriella flies for Alitalia, whose uniforms are known to be unique and high fashion. I wanted her silhouette to be voluptuous and with fashion-line details. I was inspired by another vintage pattern that incorporated a front and back triangle keyhole. I then added piping detail, a lower neckline, and short fitted
sleeves, and narrowed the hem so it was no-longer loose but, hugged her hips and created an hour-glass shape.

Figure 3.14 Gretchen and Berthe

Gretchen is German. She is the third fiancée who and flies for Lufthansa. She is patriotic and boisterous. She is a dreamer, in love with the idea of Bernard. The theme song that sums up her personality is “The Ride of the Valkyries”. I chose to make her uniform the traditional yellow/gold and use similar details of the original stewardess uniform. I decided I wanted her uniform to have a military-feel. To do this I incorporated bell-sleeves and a cuff with covered buttons, piping along her collar and her hat had a brim. For the skirt of her dress I added a ruffled hem to give her some femininity, and a long matching scarf to complete the line of her silhouette.
For the three stewardess uniforms we ended up using the same polyester fabric in different hues of scarlet red, royal blue and mustard gold. This fabric was durable and stayed neat. It also, resembled a wool or gabardine that they would have been made of in the 1960’s. I then selected a contrast color for each uniform that matched their country of origin for example, Italy red and green, America blue and white, Germany gold and black. I then used these color schemes to design a bag to match their style with their airline logo.

Figure 3.15 Berthe and Robert

The fourth uniform for Boeing Boeing was for Berthe, Bernard’s French maid. Berthe is older, blunt and pessimistic. She is constantly tired and having to prepare for all of Bernard’s fiancées. We based her look and personality on of Edith Head. For her color scheme I decided to do pink and dark gray like a French Coquette, instead of the
traditional black and white French maid. Her uniform was simple with ¾ length sleeves and pink ruffle detail on the hem and a high, ruffle collar. She needed to have comfortable shoes due to the fact that she was running up and down stairs in each scene. I decided to get black and white saddle shoes because; they matched her uniform, and I added some chevron tights for flare. I wanted it to appear that Bernard had chosen a fashionable and youthful housekeeping uniform for her.

3.2 CREATING A FARCE

Figure 3.16 Robert Rendering Figure 3.17 Berthe Rendering

I felt that my initial renderings for Boeing Boeing I lacked the personality and fashionable quality that defined the play. I had based my inspiration and style for this production on Barbie illustrations. In hindsight, I realized I had not captured this in my drawing at all. For my re-renderings, my proportions and figures were leaner and more equivalent to 9 head proportions like a fashion figure, instead of the traditional 6 figure ratio when drawing the human figure. This elongated figure made my renderings appear
glamorous and visually, evocative. The line and shape of the figures helped to tell more of a story. I also, changed the media in which I rendered my sketches from watercolor to bright, Prisma-color markers. This helped create the high-fashion sketchy quality I desired with bold use of color. I felt these new drawings were much more successful in conveying the characters in *Boeing Boeing* as well as their identity and beauty of their costumes.

![Figure 3.18 Barbie Fashion Illustrations](image1)

![Figure 3.19 Gloria Rendering](image2)

![Figure 3.20 Gabriella Rendering](image3)

![Figure 3.21 Gretchen Rendering](image4)
The production of *Boeing Boeing* supported the themes of constant motion and sexuality, with characters running from room to room and the blatant sexual innuendos. The set met the necessary requirements for the script and had a sense of color and style mirrored in the lighting and costume. I believe the design team underestimated the physical blocking of the production and the director’s highly comedic interpretation of the script. Knowing this I wish I had made my designs in a more heightened, exaggerated style. Overall, I would say the design team worked together to create the given world the director wanted, I believe the audience found the show amusing and responded well. I think the use of sound and music added to the quality of the show as well and gave it eccentricity, setting the tone for the show’s time period. There was also a curtain speech by a stewardess that established the setting and created a complete sensory experience for the audience with sights, sounds and emotion.

As a designer I believe this show helped me to establish a specific design process that is more efficient and easier to convey to a director and shop staff. For example, *Boeing Boeing* seemed to come together quickly and I was able to manage my time without being too overwhelmed. I was more decisive and had a clear vision based on my research and breakdown of each character. Previously, I had a hard time condensing all of my research, which made it difficult to communicate my designs.

*Boeing Boeing* gave me more confidence and a personal step-by-step design process, which worked best for me. Beginning with taking notes on the script, to creating an action chart and a character breakdown, to research on the time period and the plays characters and finally, drawing my renderings. Through my re-renderings *Boeing Boeing*
helped me to discover the most effective media to finish my renderings quickly and in good quality. This show was a turning point as a designer. I gained more experience speaking with a director and the drapers building the costumes. I felt this made a better collaborative process and successful product. I was very happy with the outcome visually; it was what I hoped to create for the world of the play and the costumes truly brought its characters to life.

Figure 3.22 Boeing Boeing Final Scene “Good Night”
CHAPTER 4

INTERNSHIP: WORKING AT THE BARTER THEATRE

Figure 4.1 Barter Theater

To gain hands-on professional work experience I took an internship at the Barter Repertory Theatre in Abingdon, Virginia. Although it is a smaller company I felt it was an advantage because I was able to work in all areas involving the costume process, from working in the shop and assisting designers, to backstage with the wardrobe crew, running the show and doing maintenance on costumes.

I believe this training helped me as a designer to understand the wear and tear on a costume during a run and be able to anticipate rigging for quick changes in a show. Working with a shop manager and designer I learned the value of speedy, organization skills and creating paperwork to keep track of all the costumes for a
large show. You can never have too many lists or charts. I also learned how to maintain a budget, and fitting room etiquette and preparation.

I was also faced with new challenges such as working with Equity actors, making a pre-set and run list, and maintaining a show quickly and efficiently. Before working at Barter I had not previously worked with many Equity actors so I had to learn some of the rules involving dry cleaning, laundry, pre-sets and half hour rules. Mainly this meant that in-between shows we had to finish laundry, steaming, wig maintenance and notes before half hour. This forced me to learn the best and quickest way to accomplish these tasks. I began to understand how to track and set pieces from one scene to the next and the best way to carry out a quick change.

During my time at the Barter Theatre I was given the chance to design three shows with the junior company, The Barter Players. All of these productions were for a young audience and generally were only an hour long without an intermission. This was new to me as a designer due to the fact that I was faced with creating multiple characters with a small cast, on a low budget and small shop assistance.

These shows were taxing and required a lot of additional work but I was glad to have the opportunity to work on some original scripts and with some talented actors and passionate designers and directors. I was very inspired by each production; they were all unique re-tellings of classic stories. This gave me a lot of design freedom as far as creating a concept and artistically crafted world with a child-like perspective but with an underlying deeper message at heart.

I truly enjoyed my experience at the Barter. I believe it gave me assurance that this is what I want to do for the rest of my life, and it rekindled my passion for
costume design and theatre. I think I came away with more confidence, real-world experience and some networking opportunities that will better prepare me for my future career. My training at USC contributed to my success at the Barter and prepared me for a professional work environment. It also made me appreciate the experimental and unique production styles and dedication of my mentors and fellow students. In-turn giving me a new outlook and better preparing me for my final show at USC.

Figure 4.2 Little House on the Prairie Research

Figure 4.3 Laura Rendering

Figure 4.4 Laura, Mary and Pa
Figure 4.5 Mother Goose Color Pallet

Figure 4.6 Mother Goose Rendering

Figure 4.7 Mother Goose the Musical Production Photo
Figure 4.8 ‘Twas the Night Concept Research

Figure 4.9 Reindeer Headpiece Sketch

Figure 4.10 ‘Twas the Night Before Christmas “Reindeer Scene”
Alfred Hitchcock’s film *The 39 Steps* brought to life the suspenseful, spy thriller written by John Buchan. Recently, Patrick Barlow adapted *The 39 Steps* for the stage. This version evolved into a hilarious, fast paced comedy filled with Hitchcock
references, style, and a visual homage to his cinematic genius. The play consists of a cast of four players who play everyone in the show. It is set in 1935 London, pre-World War II, where a bored and lonely bachelor longs for some excitement after being abroad. The protagonist Richard Hannay soon gets more than he bargained for as he becomes exposed to a world of espionage and deception. The show follows him and the variety of people he meets, from all walks of life along the way. 39 Steps is reminiscent of Film Noir and detective thrillers as Hannay uncovers the meaning of the 39 Steps. This show proves that anything can happen during a performance and feeds off of the many, comedic hiccups of the cast. The audience is rolling-on the floor with laughter, and left with a sense of a contrived, Hollywood happy ending of comedic bliss.

![Alfred Hitchcock Portrait](image)

**Figure 5.2 Alfred Hitchcock Portrait**

Alfred Hitchcock was a famous British director and producer known for his cinematic thrillers and plot twists. He became a cultural icon and artist through his work, personality and cameo appearances in all of his films. I personally enjoy many of
Hitchcock’s classic films such as *Psycho, The Birds, Vertigo, Strangers on a Train, To Catch a Thief* and *Dial M for Murder*. These films show themes of murder and duplicity, and the idea of an innocent man on the run. Hitchcock had a talent for blurring the lines between right and wrong, reality and fiction and a unique way to develop a plot and story. Everything is nondescript gray and you are left wondering what the outcome of this journey will be. This is true also for his film *The 39 Steps*. The stage production of the show however, is more light-hearted and builds off known Hitchcock scenes and characters. They have been carefully put together throughout the script in such a way that it becomes a visual salute to Hitchcock and his fans. Like his films *The 39 Steps* stage adaption focuses on the psychological development of the main character and how he becomes transformed by his journey of self-discovery.

The costumes and style of this production are based on 1930’s fashion, with touches of Film Noir, mystery and espionage, mixed with ridiculous gags and laughter. During the 1930’s we see the return to a more feminine fashion for ladies and a natural waistline. Delicate features include butterfly sleeves and a silhouette that defines the female figure, unlike the boxy 1920’s shape. Hollywood movie stars also influenced fashion a great deal during the 1930’s and we see metallic lame fabrics, nylon stockings and bias cut dresses with embroidered detail, v-neck décolletage, and gathered detail at the shoulder and drapes that accentuate the waistline. The reemergence of daywear also became prevalent due to women in the workforce, where we see tailored suits with decorative collars, gauntlet gloves and plume hats.

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Men’s wear during this time is fuller and more relaxed “drape cut” with wide pleated trousers, loose cuffs, broad slopping shoulders and three button or double-breasted suits. Famous icons also influenced men’s fashion like Fred Astaire and Edward the VIII for evening wear coat and tails and athletic travelling attire. Ties were also wider and became textural and colorful like men’s suits. Men’s fashion emulated film noir mobsters and detectives with trench coats and snap-brim Fedoras in the same way that women’s wear copied famous actresses.

Figure 5.3 The 39 Steps Mood Board

Figure 5.4 The 39 Steps Production Research
5.1 DEVELOPING CHARACTERS

As a whole *The 39 Steps* is formula-driven as far as the conceptual world and plot. It is the variety of characters that forward the dramatic action. To begin my research for this production I created a mood board with imagery from the script and things that I felt defined the show. I then started looking at other productions to see how other designers depicted these definite characters. It was necessary to simplify these stereotypical characters so that each costume immediately identified that character to the audience. To break down the multitude of characters I identified what made characters unique by making a pieces list. This included hats, wigs, accessories and any other garments a character might need. By doing this I was able to make a “pull and shop” list based on articles of clothing and a style that defined each character or occupation: for instance, a uniform hat, whistle and jacket for a police bobby or a white jacket and white, brimmed hat for a milkman.

I decided I wanted the color pallet to build with the absurdity of the play and become more vibrant with each new scene. This can be seen in the contrast between London and the Scottish Countryside. For example, in the city the color pallete is made up of neutral tones of black, white, brown, gray and navy. Then as the characters find themselves on the Scottish countryside, we see brighter jewel tones of emerald, ruby and gold combined in patterns and textures such as plaid, tweed and knit.
The script describes Hannay as “approximately thirty-seven five-foot ten, good looking, with wavy hair, light brown hazel eyes and an attractive pencil mustache.” I decided Hannay needed to reflect a British sporting gentleman. Since he only plays one character throughout the show, unlike the rest of the cast we decided he would grow his own mustache for the role because it was crucial to create the character. For his costume I selected a wool suit and vest in a brown hue with sienna accents and a matching print tie. To complete his look I found a tan overcoat, brown fedora and reddish-brown dress shoes. I felt that this represented the typical 1930’s men’s silhouette and the prints and color palate screamed boring, middle class British society. This is where Hannay finds himself at the beginning of the play, bored with life, longing for adventure and change of scenery.

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4 Buchan, John, The 39 Steps. Adapted by Patrick Barlow. (New York: Samuel French; 2009.) Pg. 38
This show gave me the opportunity as a costume designer to show off the variety of style and dress of the 1930’s for both men and women in different classes. This can be seen in the three female character roles that are drastically different in personality, which is reflected in their style. The same actress plays these women so I wanted each costume to have a unique silhouette, fabric and drape.

Annabella is a mysterious and seductive woman in black who, like a siren, takes what she wants. She bluntly asks Hannay if she can go home with him, ensnaring him in a mysterious web of “The 39 Steps.” I wanted Annabella to be slinky, glamorous and revealing. In my design I saw her in a mid-calf length evening dress that was fitted like a wrap dress at the waist with a plunging v-neck, gathered detail over the chest and to the shoulder seams with sheer sleeves. I also, wanted the hem to have a rounded, mermaid flounce to echo the stunning fashion of the 1930’s. Annabella’s dress needed to be able to
support a knife rig that could quickly be set in and taken out which in part defined the design and construction of the garment. To account for the knife placement there needed to be an understructure to support the knife. We ended up using a merry widow with boning and shaping to attach the knife to securely. To complete Annabella’s allure we decided to put her in a short spit curl bob with a black hat and veil, T-strap heels, a feather stole and beaded clutch to hold her gun.

Pamela is not as daring as Annabella. She is immune to Hannay’s charms but soon finds herself entangled in a spy plot and on the run alongside the one man she hoped to never see again. Pamela is proper and conservative when it comes to social standards and behavior. To achieve this look she needed to look pristine and polished. I wanted her to be sophisticated and feminine and the embodiment of elegance and innocence. I envisioned Pamela in fashionable green day dress with a contrasting white ruffle collar. Her dress had loose tucks at the waist, full blousy sleeves that taper and gather at the
wrist with a narrow ankle-length hem. To complete her silhouette I added a matching clutch and oxford heels, a straw feather hat and white gloves. She also had pearl details in her jewelry and her buttons to complement her wispy white collar. I chose green as her color because it was striking against her platinum blonde wig; it was also a period color and fit the color scheme of the rest of the production. It was important for Pamela’s dress to be slipped on and off easily and for her to be able to remove her stockings on stage. To account for this I added triangular panel details or gussets in the skirt to create fullness at the hem. This allowed the dress to be fitted through the hips and slightly flare out to create an elegant line and period walk. We did have to alter the blousy tucks on her dress because the director preferred a more fitted silhouette. I believe this took away some of the period style of the dress but I was happy with the way the dress turned out with her demure collar it reflected the 1930’s fashion figures.

Figure 5.11 Margaret Research

Figure 5.12 Margaret Rendering
Margaret is a young, naïve, Scottish farm girl who longs for love. She is in an unhappy marriage to an older man. She sees hope and desire in Hannay and longs to help and protect him. For Margaret I wanted something textural, cotton and printed. I ended up pulling a gingham dress, knitted cardigan and floral apron to give her a girlish appearance along with worn frumpy rubber boots, braided pigtails and matching kerchief. She, in contrast with Pamela and Annabella, is lower-class and her layers and contrasting prints add to her homespun appearance. However, Hannay is drawn to her natural beauty and timid nature. He sees her desire to be like London women as bold and daring considering her circumstance. Although she longs to be glamorous she is self-conscious and fears her husband’s wrath, that he will view these desires as a sin of vanity. Margaret is trapped and watches as she lets her hope for a better life slip away into the night, suppressing her longing to be with another man. This I felt showed that Margaret was much tougher than she appeared and not as fragile and helpless as she seemed. I saw her as sweet and hardworking. I believe this was reflected in my costume design for Margaret because her outfit is practical for her work and simple with touches of feminine details like an eyelet collar, floral prints and knitwear. To accommodate for quick changes we ended up attaching all of Margaret’s layers so that they were one unit, with a cardigan covering her center back zipper.
The Clowns play all the other characters from all different classes, ages, genders and occupations. This play is unique in that instead of hiding the costume changes it exposes them to the audience, adding to the physical comedy of the play. In this sense the costumes are a significant part of the play and help the audience follow the different characters. Otherwise it might become confusing. So it was important that each look be distinct and reflect each character at a glimpse. When designing the various roles I went for simplicity and practicality. I decided the best way for the Clowns to transform to multiple characters was for them to have a base look that they would wear with everything. Then I added jackets, hats and accessories to help realize a character. I also thought of them as a unit and grouped them according to each scene so that they visually complemented each other as well as main characters.
Figure 5.15 The McGarrigle’s

Figure 5.16 The Jordan’s
5.2 PUTTING EVERYTHING TOGETHER

In my work on The 39 Steps I confronted some issues that I had not previously encountered. One being that the characters are so set and visually specific that it left little room for creative interpretation. As a designer the process seemed cut and dry. I felt I was just replicating what other productions had done. However, I did take some artistic license in developing some of characters in the play and owning them in a way.

Another obstacle that I had never had to address was creating reverse gender characters in a short amount of time. This can be seen for Mrs. Jordan and Mrs. McGarrigle and Mrs. Higgins. In order to accommodate for the quick change and imply that a man is an older woman we ended up developing a padded chest unit built and rigged into a skirt set for these characters. It was also interesting fitting and buying heels to fit men. In theory the size difference between men and women’s shoe sizes is about two sizes up but you can never be sure unless you fit them.

This show required a lot of paperwork to keep everything organized, and the foresight of rigging for quick changes. However, I believe my internship and past experiences really helped me to control and calculate the best way to problem solve the given situation. The 39 Steps was challenging as far as quick changes and rigging, but also because the show was produced in the round instead of a proscenium. The actors were constantly in motion. This affected most of my design choices, which were based on durability and how best to convey a character’s silhouette and style in the most effective manner. It became a collaborative experience with the production crew, which allowed our version of The 39 Steps, to run smoothly and successfully.
Figure 5.17 Annabella Rendering

Figure 5.18 Annabella and Hannay
Figure 5.19 Pamela Rendering

Figure 5.20 Pamela and Hannay
Figure 5.21 Highlander Rendering

Figure 5.22 Highlander Parade
CONCLUSION

BECOMING A CONFIDENT DESIGNER

“Style is a way to say who you are without having to speak.” - Rachel Zoe

I believe as a designer this is a very true statement. It is what a costumer does in theatre. We reveal the hidden character and personality through dress much like an artist paints a portrait. This thesis is an accumulation of my experiences and journey as a designer from indecision to assuredness. I will begin my career with the ability to visualize a show from paper to reality.

I believe this exploration of self and skill has made me a more confident designer and better equipped me for my future. I have learned to value my creativity and dedication. I can meet a show head-on with my refined, personal design process and have the ability to carry out my visions. By defining a play’s mood, conceptual world and characters through research, with good communication, organization and preparation anything is possible. A costume designer creates ideas by visually linking texture, line, color, silhouette and period style to sense memory. She creates an experience that is limitless without saying a word the costume speaks for itself. When a character is made material it is breathtaking and thrilling. Theatre is a way to transcend time by

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bringing the past to the present by capturing things in a new way. That is why I am a costume designer I can create the supernatural, exaggerated fiction or realism through conceptual fashion.
WORKS CITED


