

Winter 2007

From Dolls to Real Actors

Mardi Mileham
Linfield College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/linfield_magazine

Recommended Citation

Mileham, Mardi (2007) "From Dolls to Real Actors," *Linfield Magazine*: Vol. 3 : No. 3 , Article 6.
Available at: https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/linfield_magazine/vol3/iss3/6

This article is brought to you for free via open access, courtesy of DigitalCommons@Linfield. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@linfield.edu.

From dolls to real actors

Costume design is a perfect fit

Laurel Schultz '07 has come a long way from making doll clothes to creating all the costumes for a Linfield theatre production. She recently completed her first solo costume design for the play *Mother Courage*.

By opening night, she had designed and produced costumes for 15 actors, spending well over 100 hours from start to finish, including one entire night in the costume shop.

Although Schultz, an art major and English and theatre minor from Roseburg, has assisted with costumes for *Woyzeck*, *Macbeth* and *Antigone*, this was the first time she was responsible for an entire play. She has found that the theatre is the perfect outlet for her fascination with period costumes.

"With art, much of your inspiration comes to you in your studio," she said. "But with theatre, it's collaborative - you are working with the director, the lighting designer and the scenic designer. All of these people come together to create something. Everyone is bouncing ideas off each other, and I really like that."

Her designs for *Mother Courage* involved input from Kate Hawkes, the play's director, and Ty Marshall, professor of theatre arts and director

of theatre who was the scenic and lighting designer. Schultz did extensive research on World War I-era fashion and developed a color palette that she and Marshall used in both the set and the costumes. She initially produced sketches before completing her final renderings.

Then came the painstaking work of producing the costumes. Schultz purchased the fabric, made the patterns and supervised the sewing with three other students who helped produce the final costumes. She felt fortunate that she was able to rent most of the military uniforms, although she did design the military insignia used on the uniforms and on a rug in the set.

Some of the characters presented challenges in the design process.

"Some roles were harder to visualize because they didn't have a lot of lines, so it was difficult to get a feel for their character and what they looked like," Schultz said.

Making the patterns was also a challenge. With no formal training in pattern making, she used parts of patterns the theatre had in stock and made up the rest.

"I had never done it before, but it turned out pretty well," she said with a laugh.

Schultz has a good eye for the



Final sketches of two costumes from *Mother Courage*.

art, for design and for putting everything together, said Marshall, the director of the theatre arts program.

"She has the talent, the attention to detail and the artistic tools to not only design the costumes, but to make them become a reality," he said. "She understands the characters and what an actor needs to help bring those characters to life. She has patience and works very well with the actors and with other designers on the production team. I have great respect for her work and what she brings to the table as a designer."

Schultz got a taste of professional theatre last summer when she interned at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, working in both the rental and costume shops. In addition to working on the festival's web pages, she helped build costumes, spending two days hemming a giant cape for the production of *King John*.

Her designs for *Mother Courage* will be entered in the regional competition of the American College Theatre Festival, and this spring she will design the costumes for the Salem Repertory Theatre's production of Steve Martin's *Underpants*.

The work of costume design is challenging and can be stressful, yet



Laurel Schultz '07 takes another measurement before she begins pinning the pattern and cutting the fabric. She has been working in the costume shop since her freshman year, beginning with *The Crucible*. This fall, she created all the costumes for the Linfield production of *Mother Courage*.

all of it is fun, Schultz said.

“Seeing my pictures and the designs on stage as real costumes was really cool,” she said. “The renderings I have of *Mother Courage* and how Katie (Dolph '08 in the title role) looks on stage are really similar. It’s exciting because it looked just like I wanted it. The concept became reality.”

— *Mardi Mileham*



Laurel Schultz '07 tightens the corset on Jessica Bagley '09 in the dressing room. In addition to designing and building the costumes, Schultz also assisted as needed, fixing hair or helping the actors dress.