

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: A COSTUME DESIGN OF CARLO GOZZI'S
THE GREEN BIRD

Ana Marie Aguilar Salamat, Master of Fine Arts,
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Directed By: Professor, Helen Q. Huang, Department of
Theatre

The purpose of this thesis is to document and analyze the collaborative design process of the costume designer. The production of *The Green Bird* by, Carlo Gozzi, an original translation by Federica Deigan, and adapted by Leslie Felbain and Kristen Messer was performed at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, opening March 2, 2007. This thesis will provide an analytical approach to the Gozzi's script and detailed account of the design process with specificity to the costumes. This thesis is broken down into four chapters. Chapter 1 details the script of *The Green Bird*, inclusive of contextual information of Carlo Gozzi. Chapter 2 discusses the conceptual and collaborative design process. Chapter 3 details the production and rehearsal process. Chapter 4 is a reflection of the overall production, revealing issues and problem solving tactics. The appendices support the visual work of the design process.

A COSTUME DESIGN OF CARLO GOZZI'S *THE GREEN BIRD*

By

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Introduction

This thesis serves as a written account of the collaborative process of the costume designer, for the University of Maryland's production of *The Green Bird*, by Carlo Gozzi. *The Green Bird* by Carlo Gozzi was produced by the University of Maryland Department of Theatre, in conjunction with The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center. The production had its official opening on Friday, March 2, 2007 and ran through March 10, 2007.

The production was led under the directorial reigns of Leslie Felbain, Assistant Professor of the Department of Theatre. The team of designers included Ana Marie Salamat (Costume Design), Eric Van Wyk (Scenic Design), Larry Zoll (Lighting Design) and Andrew Conway (Sound Design). The assistant costume designer was Ivania Stack, along with the costume shop staff of drapers of Gertie Barden, Susan Chiang, Frank Labovitz, Carissa Huizenga, Heather Lockard and Alison Ragland. Additional costume shop support included craftspersons— Kristina Lucka, Debra Nash and Marie Schneggenburger. In supervision of *The Green Bird*, faculty advisement included Helen Q. Huang (Professor of Costume Design), Daniel Conway (Associate Professor of Scenic Design) and Misha Kachman (Assistant Professor of Costume and Scenic Design). The production coordinator was Tina Newhauser.

This thesis is divided into four main chapters. Chapter 1 details the script of *The Green Bird*, including historical accounts and contextual information of the dramatist Carlo Gozzi.

Chapter 2 discusses the conceptual and collaborative design process. It will detail the conceptual process starting with the research phase through the process of design.

Chapter 3 details the production and rehearsal process. This chapter will further discuss how the costume design was produced from draper meetings, the purchasing of materials and fittings. It will also discuss the evolution of the costume during technical rehearsals.

Chapter 4 is a reflection of the overall production, revealing issues and problem solving tactics. It will further explicate my process as a designer. The appendices support the visual work of the design process.

Chapter 1: Textual Analysis of Carlo Gozzi's *The Green Bird*

Commedia dell'arte

The 18th century in Venice was a time of great cultural progress. During this time, dramatists Carlo Goldoni and Pietro Chiari were leaders in producing theatrical work. Working with the grain of *commedia dell'arte*, they gained popularity by writing in a style that commented on the wit of the lower class as equal and even greater to the upper class.

Commedia dell'arte is a style of performance based on stock characters and rehearsed scenes called *lazzi*. Although *lazzi* were rehearsed, they were impromptu, and usually contained sexual and vulgar references. The stock characters became well known stereotypes ranging from the *Immorata*—the Ingénue, to the *Pantalone*—the all-knowing dirty old man. Most of the stock characters wore masks, with the exception of the *Immorata* characters. *Commedia* troupes would travel to perform in various open spaces like piazzas.

Carlo Gozzi

Count Carlo Gozzi was a member of a declining affluent family in Venice who was repulsed by Goldoni and Chiari's work. Goldoni and Chiari's style of writing sought preservation of the traditional form of *commedia dell'arte*. Born into an affluent but diminishing social family, Gozzi knew that at a young age that he wanted to become a dramatist. He knew that he had to attain a certain affluence in order to become one, so he held onto his title Count for the title's prestigious

recognition¹. His formative years were to be influenced by his family life, and played a major role in his writing. He was known to be a misogynist because of his failed relationships between him and his mother.

Carlo Gozzi's obsession with being in a higher social class influenced his writing to make clear separation of class distinctions. It is ironic that Gozzi who sought for the distinction of social class, sought to satirize and produce *fiabile*²-fantastical works. The feud that ensued between Goldoni and Gozzi remained to be one of the greatest conflicts of dramatists recorded. Some scholars argue that Gozzi's work may have not gained popularity if it had not been for that popular culture rivalry. In Carlo Gozzi's lifetime, he produced *The Love of Three Oranges*, *Turandot*, *The Serpent Woman*, *The Raven*, *The King Stag* and *The Green Bird*.

When Carlo Gozzi wrote *The Green Bird*, Venice was near the end of its cultural influence in theatre. *The Green Bird* marked the end of the popular era in commedia dell'arte, as political influence from France and Austria took control of the nation. Thus, *The Green Bird* was never fully produced to great acclaim as Gozzi's previous works.³

The Green Bird

The Green Bird was Carlo Gozzi's last play. In this *fiabile*, we follow the story of the orphaned twins Renzo and Barbarina, who are in the care of Truffaldino,

¹ P.3 DiGaetani, Carlo. Gozzi: Translations of The Love of three Oranges, Turandot, and The Snake Lady with a Bio- Critical Introduction. New York: Greenwood Press, 1988.

² *Fiabile*: Italian for fantastical work.

³ p.39 Barricelli, Franca R. "Making a People What It Once Was": Regenerating Civic Identity in the Revolutionary Theatre of Venice. *Eighteenth-Century Life* 23.3 (1999) 38-57 The John Hopkins University Press.

the sausage maker, and his wife Smeraldina. After Truffaldino denounces them as bastard children, Renzo and Barbarina leave their nest to search for philosophical truths while denying self-love. On their journey, they befriend the philosophical statue named Calmon who gives them a magical pebble to become rich. They throw the pebble into the façade of the old palace, become wealthy and turn against their philosophical principles.

Meanwhile back at the Palace, King Tartaglia returns home after 18 years of fighting in war. From his mother Tartagliona he learns that his wife Ninetta has died, along with his twin children. Little does he know that his mother secretly banished his poor wife in the drains of the Palace, and ordered the twins to be killed. Fortunately, Ninetta is kept alive by the Green Bird, who in turn is the transformed king of Terradombra.

As the story progresses, the wealthy Renzo along with his newly hired valet Truffaldino travel to the Ogre's Mountain to find the Green Bird, who's feather will reveal truth in their lives. In their journey they also encounter Serpentina, the snake-like fairy guardian of the singing Apples. The story ends with a revelation of truth by the main singing Apple.

Carlo Gozzi's personal experiences influenced his writing style, and it is seen in *The Green Bird*. Central themes that are consistent with his experiences in *The Green Bird* are the hierarchal order of society and misogyny. The feud between he and Goldoni ensued because he despised the fact that Goldoni's writing disrupted the order of social class. *The Green Bird's* distinct hierarchal order kept in line with Gozzi's philosophy.

The distinction of social class is seen with Tartagliona and Tartaglia as ruler of the kingdom. Truffaldino and Smeraldina are working-class characters, below the distinction of the members of the Palace. When Barbarina and Renzo transform into wealthy citizens, their status competes with the members of the Palace, and conflict begins. Truffaldino and Smeraldina, who once were the adoptive parents of Barbarina and Renzo, become their servants- further pushing the distinction of social class.

Gozzi's influence of misogyny is seen in *The Green Bird*. This is a direct influence of the relationship between him and his mother. As a means of "overpowering" women, he depicts his female characters as "dangerous and domineering."⁴ This is seen through the relationship between the King Tartaglia and his mother Tartagliona. Tartagliona has taken control of the kingdom, and she is a masterful manipulator. Tartaglia's constant conflict with his mother is reminiscent of Gozzi's maternal relationship.

This theme is also portrayed in the lustful entrancing of Truffaldino and Renzo by Serpentina and the Apples. Although Serpentina and the Apples are fantasy creatures, they hold female characteristics. In *The Green Bird*, Truffaldino and Renzo are mysteriously overpowered by the creatures with their manipulative singing and dance. Truffaldino and Renzo eventually "overpower" the creatures and retrieve the singing Apple. Carlo Gozzi's work is a catharsis of his personal experiences.

⁴ Ibid, 1.

Chapter 2: Design Process of *The Green Bird*

This chapter will detail the process of *The Green Bird* costume design from conceptual design to the final design presentation. A comprehensive account of the process will be broken down within each formal meeting phase. It will showcase the importance of each step in the design.

Conceptual Design

I quickly referenced dramaturgical notes online in regards to *The Green Bird* script, the dramatist Carlo Gozzi and commedia dell'arte, in order to prepare myself for the initial concept meeting with the director Leslie Felbain and the team of my fellow designers. I did this to get an overall feel of how the original script was intended to be portrayed. I made sure that this step was quickly referenced so that any preconceived notions of past historical productions would not hinder Leslie Felbain's directorial approach. I felt that this was an important step in the process, so that I could immerse myself in the world of the Gozzi adaptation.

I read the script a couple times. The first read through was to become acquainted with *The Green Bird* script. The second read through involved note taking directly on the script. The notes involved questions in regards to characters' mannerisms, movement and dialogue. I also sketched out costume and staging ideas in the script.

The passion and excitement that Leslie felt about the whole process was a delightful experience. Prior to being immersed into her vision of *The Green Bird*, she proceeded to emphasize the importance of community and ensemble in the

production—from actors, designers and everyone in between. She also wanted us as a team of designers to have free reign and design something spectacular.

Gozzi's *The Green Bird* was a commedia dell'arte style piece, yet Leslie did not want to perform in the true sense of commedia. There were two main reasons why she did this. For one, her version of *The Green Bird* is an adaptation of Gozzi's version, and she wanted to produce something different. Second, Leslie herself, extensively trained in the LeCoq school of movement, knew that students at their training level would not have the capacity to perform correctly in the style with the amount of rehearsals and training allotted. She knew the rigorous work that was involved in attaining the proper commedia dell'arte mannerisms—and knew that the students did not have the discipline to workshop extensive accelerated training.

Leslie stated that *The Green Bird* was a fairy tale in the spirit of commedia dell'arte. She emphasized the fact that she wanted a playground where the ensemble of actors could live and breathe, in that the world belonged to them. She also stated that she wanted the actors onstage the entire time of the show. Since the characters in the adapted *Green Bird* script did not have the traditional stock character names and mannerisms, Leslie wanted their mannerisms and attitudes to conceptually be reflected into what they were wearing. Specifically, she wanted creatures like Calmon to be larger than life—that he was 'a god-like' being watching over the characters.

In response to her concept, I posed the question of mask work since traditional commedia dell'arte used masks. Leslie decided that that would be eliminated due to the inexperience of the actors. I also questioned the movement of the transformation

scenes—if she had any specific ideas and visions for those moments. Leslie remarked that those highlighted moments needed to be emphasized because they are moments of revelation and change in the characters and in the script.

Leslie made sure that as a design team, Eric, Larry and I were able to have complete creative under the small constraint of a *commedia dell'arte* structure. The design faculty also placed strong emphasis on the design team's ability to design and produce *The Green Bird* without any inhibition. The labor force of the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center was also very supportive of the project.

Visual Design Research

The main factor of the research period was that we had one week to compile research for this project. The luxury of being in an academic environment helped Eric, Larry and I find research together effectively. I met up with Eric and Larry at the Art library at the University of Maryland. In the nature of theatre design collaboration, scenery and costumes took lead above the lights, so Eric and I worked closely together to efficiently gather research.

This was the most intense phase of our design. At first, we were unsure of where to start with finding research, due to the expansive parameters that have been set by the director. We knew that as a design team, we had to define our aesthetic to keep us focused into getting research that could be used in our project.

We focused our research on Italian art, artists and movements of the time period when Gozzi's original version of *The Green Bird* was written. We were convinced that the root of the research would be in the visual arts of Italy. The second phase of research involved specific ideas pertaining to our respective genres.

In costume design research, I kept in mind the personalities and nature of each character.

As a group we had several visual leads that focused us in the right direction. The foundational basis of our research was commedia dell'arte images—some of them depicting performance spaces of Italian piazzas, and stock character images. Paintings and renderings by Gianbattista Tiepolo also served as an important source of visual inspiration for us. Eric made a breakthrough in the research process when he found a couple books by the artist Dale Chihuly. Dale Chihuly is best known for his colorful glass blown sculptures in a variety of interesting shapes and patterns. Chihuly's work had *The Green Bird* spirit—so we used it as a major resource.

In preparation for the research meeting, Eric, Larry and I compiled our edited research into a concept board. We used the concept board as a reference to which all our design genres could relate. We gathered a lot we gathered a lot of work by Dale Chihuly, images of theatrical performance spaces, and transformative figures. At the research meeting, we presented the board together as a collaborative group.

In the realm of the research process, we developed a number of themes. The first theme was that the root of all design could be traced back to commedia dell'arte. The next theme was that the stage was a transformative playing space, in which images would have the ability to appear and disappear in a blink of an eye. The last theme that we played with was the ying and yang balance of the world of *The Green Bird*. When an idea was portrayed, it would counter balance with its opposite.

In addition to the main concept board, each member of the visual design team had supplementary research books to further extrapolate sources of inspiration. My

costume research book primarily contained images from stock commedia imagery by Gianbattista Tiepolo, Italian haute couture and children's book illustrations⁵. I made sure that my research images always correlated back to the root of commedia dell'arte.

The Design Process

The process of design was a major step in the creation of costumes for *The Green Bird*. It was through extensive organization of the characters and their mannerisms that I was able to design the show effectively. Since the show was highly character based, it was important that I depict the correct poses and gestures that the characters evoked into my renderings. Using the character poses as a basis for the design was vital to achieve the true nature of each character. The design team also worked extensively breaking scenes down in order to achieve a cohesive color palette.

During the design process, Leslie Felbain had an introductory workshop session based on commedia dell'arte movement. I observed the session, watched the actors' movement and was able to sketch their gestures. This was an important step in the process, because I was able to understand how the costumes would inhibit and/or support their movement. In addition, I was able to procure photographs of the actors in their particular character poses to further assist me in the design process.

To further organize the design of *The Green Bird*, I set the characters into groups. I separated the groups into areas that the characters were from, breaking them down into their particular worlds. The groups consisted of Palace, Nature,

⁵ See Appendix A: Research Images

Fantasy and Others. To distinguish each group, a certain aesthetic was set to keep consistency within the world of *The Green Bird*.

Palace

The Palace crowd consisted of characters Tartagliona-- the Queen Mother, Tartaglia-- the King, Brighella—the poet, and Ninetta—the Queen. These characters are highest in the social hierarchy of *The Green Bird*, yet within its structure this group is broken down even further. To emphasize the grandiosity of this grouping, I played with strong architectural shapes and sharp clean silhouettes. The color scheme was toward the royal purple, blue range, depicting an ice-cold, superficial environment.⁶

Nature

In juxtaposition of the Palace characters, the Nature world possessed a certain organic, earthen quality. The silhouettes of the characters are loose, soft and have a worn-in quality. The characters are Truffaldino—the sausagemaker, Smeraldina—his wife, Renzo and Barbarina—their adopted twins. The color scheme consisted of soft, warm earthen colors.⁷

Fantasy

The fantasy characters of *The Green Bird* are those with special traits who are unusual in some form or the other. They have a supernatural quality, unlike the Palace and Nature characters. These characters include the Green Bird—the transformed King of Terradombra, Calmon—the God-like statue, Pompea-- the

⁶ See Appendix B: Costume Renderings AB1

⁷ See Appendix B: Costume Renderings AB2

beautiful Roman statue, Serpentina—the snake-like fairy and the Apples—fruit creatures that can sing. The palette for the Fantasy characters is particular to their immediate environment. The statue characters of Calmon and Pompea take their color palette in direct correlation of their sitting and standing posts of a patina treated alcove, and a marbleized fountain, respectively.⁸

Others

The last group consists of characters that are left remaining in *The Green Bird*. The *Others* characters were never affixed to just one area of the stage. They constantly moved around, and it was vital that I used a neutral sensibility to the silhouette of their costumes. These characters include the Pantalonas—the narrators, Chorus—portraying statues and/or visual support and the Musicians. Since the Chorus and the musicians had no dialogue, I made sure that the Chorus and Musicians kept a neutral color palette that was consistent with the scenery as a whole. On the other hand, I made sure that the Pantalonas had a heightened look because they were narrating the story.⁹

At the preliminary design meeting, I presented sketches of the costumes. Leslie was generally satisfied with what she saw. Her only concerns were related to the Pantalonas and Barbarina. Leslie felt that the Pantalonas needed a tougher and rougher edge to them, and that my version was too jester-like and cute. Her comment on Barbarina was that she was more of a stoic character rather than the ballerina-like

⁸ See Appendix B: Costume Renderings AB3

⁹ See Appendix B: Costume Renderings AB4

Immorata that I designed. I revised the designs and applied color to them for the final design presentation.

At the final design presentation, the design team showed their work. I presented my designs in full color to the production support staff and faculty, with my revised versions of the characters Barbarina and the Pantalonas. Leslie approved the change yet she still was not satisfied with the Pantalonas. I revised the Pantalonas about a couple more times after the meeting, and eventually she approved the design.

Chapter 3: Design Realization and the Production Process of *The Green Bird*

Design Approval and Costing

Following the final design presentation, I worked with the costume shop manager Alison Ragland to devise *The Green Bird* budget. She used my costume piece list to cost the costumes of the show. As we were going through revisions, we realized that we were in need of more funding, due to the large cast. During the costing meeting, we were able to receive extra funds from the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center and from our faculty advisors' contingency budgets.

Draper Meetings

I had draper meetings with all of the drapers and craftspeople involved with the build of my costumes. Each draper was given a research packet that consisted of copies of my renderings, line drawings and supporting construction research. During the draper meetings, we would discuss in detail the construction aspects of each garment, inclusive of fabric type and weight, yardage amounts, style lines, fit and proportion. It was their time to ask questions regarding details to the construction of the garment.

Rentals

Although *The Green Bird* was primarily a built show, meaning that most of the costumes were build from scratch, I still had to rent costume pieces for the Chorus members and Musicians. I rented costumes at Arena Stage and at the Washington National Opera. I was fortunate that the Washington National Opera had a great stock of neutral shirts, breeches, jackets and vests in a plethora of sizes for the

Musicians and Chorus members. The casts' size range made it a challenge to find the items with the proper fit. The rental houses made it easy to find appropriate costume pieces.

Materials Purchasing

The major bulk of the materials budget was used to purchase fabric for the built costumes. We went to New York City to purchase the main portion of the fabric, due to the city's abundance in resources. Prior to the shopping trip in New York, I swatched for fabric locally in the area surrounding the University of Maryland, to see what options were available. The local fabric shops included Sarah's Fabric, Vina Fabric and G Street Fabrics. The fabric options in these stores were very limited to the color palette of *The Green Bird*. I was fortunate that I had the option of going to New York.

Accompanying me on the three day New York fabric shopping trip was my assistant Ivania Stack, along with fellow graduate students Marie-Noelle Daigneault and Carissa Huizenga for the first day of shopping. Advisor Helen Huang joined us for the first two days. Initially arriving in New York, we went to B & J Fabrics to start swatching. The extra sets of hands swatching the project was of great help. Although we were able to swatch many samples, it became frustrating because I did not have the time to think for myself, for the sake of constantly watching over and answering questions about the selected fabric choices. We proceeded to go to other stores located on 39th street. These stores had more fabric options and the prices were more affordable.

After taking a long break, my frustration, as well as Professor Huang's frustration started to surface. I came to the realization that in order to get the colors, textures and patterns in what I rendered—it would have taken me another week in New York to find all the fabric I needed for the production. Professor Huang knew this from the beginning and stated that I should buy fabrics and dye them to match the quality of my renderings. After much deliberation, I made a large purchase of dyeable fabric. The Nature characters were to be primarily dyed to evoke the quality of my rendering style, and to support the organic feel of the sector. We were fortunate to find the rest of the fabrics in New York for the Fantasy and Palace characters. The bought fabrics were shipped to the costume shop at the University of Maryland.

The decision to dye a large portion of the fabric was a major turning point in the design process of *The Green Bird*. It solidified the design by attaining the same quality of the costume rendering style. It also set the color palette and silhouette of the costumes. Dyeing fabric also meant that more labor was involved in the process. I knew that I had to absorb this labor, and my time working on the project would split further. It was a daunting task, but I knew that in the long run, the outcome of the costumes would make up for the hard labor.

Fabric Dyeing

Once the dyeable fabrics arrived from New York, they were prepped to be dyed. The prep work involved the process of washing the fabric and serging the raw cut edges. Each piece of fabric was allocated to a specific dye technique and pantone color chip.

The first round of dyeing involved craftsperson Marie Schneggenburger, as the point dye person. Although we were able to get a bulk of items dyed, Marie's method of dyeing was slow paced which reduced productivity. This was partially due to the fact that she was instructed by the Costume shop manager to 'teach' a workshop. We ended up dyeing several pieces of fabric during the workshop.

There was still a large amount of fabric that needed to be dyed. Since my time was limited, I made sure that I organize the dyeing efficiently. I decided to dye the larger pieces of fabric in the large dye vats first, because that would take the most time. I dyed the smaller pieces of fabric in pots and plastic bins next. I made sure that I dyed fabric of similar color ranges at the same time to speed up the process. The process of completing the dyeing took several days. When I dyed the fabrics on my own or with the occasional help of my assistant Ivania, we were able to dye several pieces of fabric in about a quarter of the time it took in the workshop. Good communication skills and space when dyeing fabric was key in getting the fabrics ready in time for the build to start.

The Build Process/ Fittings

During the build process, the drapers translated my two dimensional renderings into a three dimensional scale. Though the process of fittings, I was able to make my costumes as true to my renderings as possible. Adjustments were made to accommodate the actors' body proportions and mobility.

Prior to muslin fittings, the drapers draped muslin versions of the garments. These muslin mock-ups were fitted to each actor and adjusted accordingly. Muslin mock-ups were important in the process to get the correct fit and adjust proportion of

the costume to the actor. However, we did not make muslin mock-ups for the Apples. The costume shop did not have the same quality of stretch material comparable to the mottled velvet spandex that was purchased. So in order to save time and money, the Apples' base unitards were made from their actual costume fabric.

After the muslin mock-ups were fitted with the actors, the patterns were adjusted and cut into the actual costume fabric that was either dyed or purchased in New York. Once the garments were sewn to a point near completion, another round of fittings called fabric fittings took place. Adjustments still had to be made to some costumes, due to the fact that some draping fabrics did not have the same draping quality as the costume fabric.

The heavy emphasis was made on proportion and mobility. During the fittings, I asked the actors to do their most strenuous movements. This helped us to understand how much the costume could restrict the actor, and how the garment would actually look onstage. The actors got into character and moved around the fitting room to get a feel for their costumes.

Crafts

In addition to the costume builds, crafts people were hired to make headpieces and other specialty costume items for *The Green Bird*. The crafts people included Marie Schneggenburger, Deborah Nash and Kristina Lucka. Marie was in charge of creating most of the headpieces including the Apple chorus' branch headpieces, Serpentina's snake braided headpiece and Tartagliona and Tartaglia's crowns. Deborah created Calmon and Pompea's statue headpieces and Apple's vests. Kristina

was the textiles artist and treated the Apple Chorus' costumes and Calmon's coat.

Marie and Deborah were also involved in the fitting process, making adjustment to their builds to fit the actors correctly.

Wardrobe Crew Training

The wardrobe crew had specialized training in costume and make-up. They were considered to be in charge of both areas, due to the detailed specifications of the look of the characters. I began with training the wardrobe crew with different make-up techniques, from application of foundations to airbrushing. It was important that they knew these techniques, in case the designated special effects make-up crew ran behind on schedule, and needed assistance.

The wardrobe crew was trained in the maintenance and care of the costumes. They became acquainted with the various garments, and how they were supposed to look on each actor. I was fortunate that the crew members were competent and enthusiastic and they took responsibility for the look of the costumes once tech was completed.

Technical/ Dress Rehearsal

The technical/ dress rehearsal for *The Green Bird* was delayed one day due to inclement weather. This was in some way a God-sent because we had 'extra' time to finish up costumes. However, the costumes were however, the costumes were still incomplete despite the extra time we got.

To help Larry Zoll out with the lights, I pinned large swatches of fabric to actor's base costumes for those who did not have completed costumes. At least Larry was able to see the color and value range of the actors in their blocking.

The costume shop technically closes the weekend before technical rehearsals, therefore the work on costumes resumed on Monday night. Photo call for the production was slated for Thursday, so the costume shop made a huge effort to complete the garments for that performance.

Further adjustments were made to costumes during tech, due to the actors adjusting to their movements on stage. Rachel Menyuk, who played the character Barbarina, had a long, flowing transformation gown that made her trip. The gown almost got chopped in half. A compromise was made and sections of the garment were re-shaped to prevent her from tripping. Costumes were also painted and distressed to mold them into the world of *The Green Bird*.

Surprisingly, set pieces got cut from the show due to the fact that, in Leslie's opinion, the costumed characters sufficed as substitutes for scenery in certain scenes. The scenic Apple tree was removed during tech because the grouping of four singing Apple chorus members were able to carry on the idea of the Apple tree better as an amorphous body. In retrospect, the design that was left on stage was what was essential to the production.

Chapter 4: Conclusion and Reflection of *The Green Bird*

The Green Bird was a fantastic project to work on. The collaboration with the director, actors and fellow designers was great. I think we were fortunate that we were able to work well with each other. Otherwise, the project would have been disastrous. The collaboration was a vital component to the success of the design.

I have learned a great deal about the process of designing an overly detailed built production. The coordination of producing costumes is only a facet to the whole design. The amount of tedious labor that was involved in producing the garments showed its quality on stage.

Director

The collaboration with Leslie Felbain was extraordinary. She had strong trust in my aesthetic, ideas and intuition of characters in the production of *The Green Bird*. I became an integral part in the audition process, as Leslie would frequently ask for my opinion about casting. The ability for us to discuss ideas without any inhibition allowed me to stretch my design ideas, and work in a seemingly effortless way. The comfort level I had with Leslie allowed me to enjoy working on the production. Even with the amount of labor that was involved with producing *The Green Bird*, I was not overly stressed.

Leslie Felbain has a very open vision of what *The Green Bird* was about: let the visual design team have the freedom to create an imaginative world in which the characters could live in. It was a weird juxtaposition of excitement and nervousness

that I initially felt as an artist, because I have not had the opportunity to design with such creative freedom. I was nervous because I did not want to do a poor job either.

Designers

As a design team, Eric, Larry and I had to set parameters for ourselves to limit the Leslie's open-ended concept of *The Green Bird*. We knew that as a visual team, we had to stay focused in order to create a cohesive world. There were several costume and scenic elements that needed to be visually and stylistically compatible, so that the design would work. This is especially seen through the two statue characters Calmon and Pompea. It was important that in the design of Calmon and Pompea, that I collaborated with Eric in concern to size proportion and paint color treatment. The addition of Calmon's elevated platform boots gave him an extra height difference that needed the height adjustment of his sitting posts and alcove, so that the actor did not look disproportionate with the set. Calmon's costume paint treatment had to be repeated with his alcove to further push the design concept of a fused space. Likewise with the character Pompea, the proportion of the actress' natural size and height had to be taken into consideration with the design of her pedestal.¹⁰ The fabric paint treatment of her costume and make-up was further pushed to match the warm grey marbled paint treatment of the scenery.

The collaboration between Eric and I was extremely important for the visual aesthetic of the production to work. It was a major challenge when Leslie mentioned that she wanted all the actors present on stage at all times. The actors took real estate, and eventually became architectural forms. It was in this process that Eric and I had

¹⁰ See Appendix C: Production Photography AC6

to push and pull our designs to what was needed. In the long run, it was parts of his scenery that were cut from the show and not the actors and their costumes because they were needed on stage to carry the dialogue. In addition to the two statue characters, the queen mother Tartagliona and the Apples were major architectural costumes. Their silhouettes competed with the scenery and complemented it. The Apple Chorus in particular, had large branchlike extensions on their headpieces to emulate tree branches.¹¹ Together as a whole, they completed a full tree. The original design of the stable scenic Apple tree with the character Apples in combination to it became cumbersome to look at. I knew it was especially difficult for Eric to cut the tree from the show due to the laborious efforts used to produce it. It was even more difficult for me to admit that the tree was not needed. The amorphous shape of the Apple chorus did not blend well with the static nature of the tree. As we discovered on stage, the design of the character Apples and the scenic Apple Tree together did not support the conceptual idea of the fused look.

Tartagliona's costume was another idea that was teetering on the edge of a competitive streak between costume and scenery.¹² Tartagliona's architectural costume shapes were mimicked in the scenery. The spiral knobbing of the balcony's columns were reflected in the spiral lanterning of Tartagliona's sleeves. Conceptually, her costume was to reflect her greed and vanity in a way that she was consuming the beauty and wonderment of the palace into her costume. The palace was left unkempt and on the verge of being in shambles. The grandeur that was in the original palace transcended into Tartagliona's costume. I believe I was successful in achieving the

¹¹ See Appendix C: Production Photography AC7

¹² See Appendix C: Production Photography AC2

idea with the costume, although as a cohesive unit in the set, it faltered a bit. I do not think that Eric and I knew the impact of her silhouette. The proportion of the costumed actress was larger than what we expected, thus making the balance of the set a bit top heavy. It became a challenge for her to move around the balcony due to large scale of her skirt. Luckily the actress adapted well to the movement challenges.

One of the scenes in my opinion that was a major disconnect in design collaboration was the transformation scene in which the twins Barbarina and Renzo were to turn wealthy. In the design, each area was supposed to contribute to the fantastical quality of the moment. Scenically, Eric designed a metallic framed wall with Chihuly inspired sculptures attached to it, along with a chaise lounge on top of a palette that rolled in. I designed rich golden brocade over jackets adorned with metallic embroidery for Barbarina and Renzo¹³. Lighting fell short of this, and did not contribute any spectacular moment. If Larry enhanced the scene, the transformation of Barbarina and Renzo would have been more spectacular.

Actors

I was able to have an open dialogue between the actors and myself. I made sure that they felt comfortable in their costumes. It was important that they had appropriate shoes for movement. During fittings, I had the actors reenact their roles emphasizing on extreme movements. By having them do this in fittings, it allowed me to observe any issues that would prohibit their movement on stage. They gained trust in my judgment, which made the process of dealing with any fitting issues easy.

¹³ See Appendix C: Production Photography AC8

Drapers

Collaboration with the drapers was overall very good. It was particular to the each draper, but as a whole they strived to recreate what I had rendered.

Modifications in the design took place during fittings, mainly due to proportion issues, fabric choices and complication of the design. Some of the fittings were very complex and took up to 2 hours, as in the case of Tartagliona's bodice. It was important that extra steps were needed to fit the actress correctly, but in reflection of the moment, there is that saying-- 'too many cooks in the kitchen.' The costume shop manager did not allow the main draper to fully fit the actress herself and decided to jump in and fix the issues. This was problematic because she did not drape the costume herself, therefore she was not familiar with the construction of the garment. The fitting took twice as long as it should have. I felt that the shop was afraid to admit that they could not engineer some aspects of my designs. Although it was a valiant effort on their part, being more up front about various possibilities would have freed up a lot of time that could have been better used.

There was a couple over hire crafts people that did work on the *Green Bird*. It was an enriching experience having them on board. Deborah Nash, who built the statue headpieces and Apple chorus vests, brought her professional work ethic into the shop. She continuously brought in samples, and worked in the shop until the costume pieces were fitted correctly. On the other hand Marie Scneggenburger was more carefree in her work attitude. She has been used to working independently on the professional level, and it was difficult for her to adjust to the university costume shop work environment. It was difficult communicating with her due to her strong

opinionated viewpoints. There was instance in particular that I was offended by her comments. She insisted that because my design was so complicated, she should not have to build an aspect of the design she was assigned to do. She did not want to admit that she could not engineer the build, but rather she questioned my design in a rude offensive manner. In response, I made sure I proceeded with professionalism and stated that I needed the build done. Marie did great work on the production, and I strove to push my designs to a more sophisticated look than her usual crafty style. Overall, the craftspeople were an integral part in the process, and it was their work that finished the looks of the characters.

Advisor

As my main advisor, Helen Huang was an influence in my decision-making. She was an integral part in my decision with the process of dying. During the New York trip, we both realized that the fabric that we were finding was insufficient to the energy of my designs. She was there to pin point the most efficient way to get to the essence of the design. After that decision to go forward with the dying of fabric, the design process became clear.

Through Helen's advisement, she made me realize my design decisions with conviction. A major lesson that I learned through the process, especially after the issue dealing with the build of Tartagliona's breast contraption, was about the energy of the design. She stated that as long as you have the main idea of the character's design, you were successful in the process. I was able to modify costumes during fittings and tech with ease, keeping in mind the essence of the characters.

Challenges/ Issues

Producing a large production as *The Green Bird* came with issues. The cast was large, so most of my time was split between fittings. I could not do anything efficient and productive during business hours, since I was in fittings. I had to hold all productive activities either before or after fittings scheduled. Multiple fittings occurred, and at one point I was doing fittings for four different actors at the same time. If the costume shop manager did proper planning, this would not have occurred.

Another issue was the budget. I was over budget on the show. Funds that were specifically allocated to me to use was unknowingly depleted with hidden costs of materials with the costume shop. The costume shop manager did not inform me that this was happening, and I was surprised to find out the amount being spent. I know that I should have been more adamant about the costume shop's expenditures. It was difficult keeping balance of the production as a whole.

Communication with the costume shop was key in the production process. I felt that the costume shop has trust issues with the students. This was especially felt during the initial dye process. Although the overhire craftsperson Kristina Lucka and I had experience in dying fabric, the costume shop Alison Ragland insisted that we hold a workshop with Marie Schneggenburger. Marie herself admitted that she was not up to date with dyeing techniques, as she was not in practice for some time. This made the initial process lengthy, and not as productive as it could have been.

Final Thoughts

I felt that the design of *The Green Bird* was successful. I was able to capture the ideas of the characters in their costumes. I made sure that the actors owned the costumes rather than the costumes owning them. I tried my best to make the fantastical elements of the script translate into sophisticated details in their clothes. As a design team, I believe we were successful. The degree of success is not as high as I expected it to be; yet we were able to get the main idea portrayed on stage.

The design process of *The Green Bird* was an exciting experience. The collaborative nature of the project allowed myself as a designer to further develop my aesthetic. It gave me the opportunity to be creative and use imagination within the set constraint of the commedia dell'arte foundation. I feel confident that the costume design was successful.

The Green Bird was an arduous process that was integral in the development of my aesthetic and skill as a graduate student in design. It was a designer's dream to design this production. The possibilities were almost limitless to what could have been produced. The support of the teaching faculty, and the efforts of the employees of the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center was a major contributing factor to the outcome of the production. The costume shop team efficaciously rallied a heavy workload amidst a shorten timeframe due to inclement weather and scheduling mishaps. It may perhaps be a biased opinion that the costume shop was the most successful area in the production of the design—all to the effect of a high valued work ethic.

The costume design of *The Green Bird* was a demanding project. The design

was a fantastical piece of whimsy, with non-traditional construction ideas. This was a challenge for the costume shop, to push them into creating costume pieces that made them think outside the box. The professional over hire drapers and craftspeople involved with the production added an elevated level of professionalism. It was beneficial to see the methods of working professionals in theatre.

As a graduate student of design, I am indebted to the University of Maryland for the amazing opportunity to design *The Green Bird*. The amount of learning from the past three years of graduate school accumulated to this project. The skills I learned from costume design, figure drawing, construction, dye manipulation and set design classes helped me in the design and production of this project.

Through costume designing *The Green Bird*, I have learned that the characters in a production provide the energy of the script. When costume designing, as long as the same energy and ideas are present in the design—it is successful. In the design process, it is always important to be aware of what the world is doing around you especially with your fellow designers. The risk of being too focused can make one narrow-minded in the grand scheme of the production. The effectiveness of communication is always key when translating your work to others involved in the process. Last but not least, I learned that it is okay to have a good time working on a production.

In retrospect, costume designing *The Green Bird* was definitely the highlight of my costume design career at the University of Maryland. As theatre artisans, we are privileged to be doing something that can evoke and inspire positive influence to others, and have an enjoyable experience while doing so. I was fortunate to be part of

the collaborative efforts in producing *The Green Bird*, and it is in hope that I will have a similar opportunity in my future career.

Appendices

Appendix A: Research Images



Figure AA1: Research Image: Commedia dell'arte- Stock Characters



Figure AA2: Research Image: Commedia dell'arte (Tiepolo)



Figure AA3: Research Image: Commedia dell'arte (Tiepolo)



Figure AA4: Research Image: Concept Idea: Palace characters



Figure AA5: Research Image: Concept Idea: Tartagliona



Figure AA6: Research Image: Concept Idea: Ninetta



Figure AA7: Research Image: Concept Idea: Renzo and Truffaldino



Figure AA8: Research Image: Concept Idea: Exaggeration/ Smeraldina



Figure AA9: Research Image: Concept Idea: Truffaldino



Figure AA10: Research Image: Concept Idea- Calmon



Figure AA11: Research Image: Concept Idea- Calmon



Figure AA12: Research Image: Concept Idea- Green Bird

APPENDIX B: COSTUME RENDERINGS



AB1: Costume renderings:--PALACE: (Top- Tartaglia, Tartagliona, Bottom- Ninetta, Brighella)



AB2: Costume Renderings- NATURE (Top- Truffaldino, Smeraldina, Bottom- Barbarina, Renzo)



AB3: Costume Renderings- FANTASY (Top- Serpentina, Apples, Bottom- Calmon, Pompea)



AB4: Costume Renderings- OTHERS (Top- Pantalona, Green Bird, Bottom- Musicians, Chorus)

APPENDIX C: PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHY



Figure AC1: Ninetta (Leaynne Freeman), Tartaglia (Sam Mc Menamin) and Tartagliona (Dior Brown). Production Photo By: Stan Barouh



Figure AC2: Tartagliona (Dior Brown) and Tartaglia (Sam Mc Menamin).
Production Photo By: Stan Barouh



Figure AC3: TOP: Pantalonas (Maya Jackson and Kelly Mc Guigan). BOTTOM:
Smeraldina (Judith Ingber) and Truffaldino (Chris Wilson).
Production Photo By: Stan Barouh



Figure AC4: Renzo (Mark Halpern), Barbarina (Rachel Menyuk).
Production Photo By: Stan Barouh



Figure AC5: Ninetta (Leaynne Freeman). Production Photo By: Stan Barouh



Figure AC6: Smeraldina (Judith Ingber), Barbarina (Rachel Menyuk) and Pompea (Jessica Henry). Production Photo By: Stan Barouh



Figure AC7: Serpentina (Jennifer Ring), Apples (Kristina Friedgen, Liz Brown, Emily Boivie and Ora Fruchter). Production Photo By: Stan Barouh



Figure AC8: Green Bird (Noah Langer), Barbarina (Rachel Menyuk).
Production Photo By: Stan Barouh



Figure AC9: Ogre's Mountain—Whole Cast. Production Photo By: Stan Barouh

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