

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: A COSTUME DESIGN FOR BILL IRWIN'S
"SCAPIN"

Debra Kim Sivigny, Master of Fine Arts,
2004

Thesis Directed By: Professor Helen Huang, Department of
Theatre

The purpose of this thesis is to document and analyze the process of the costume design for Bill Irwin's SCAPIN as it was produced at the University of Maryland's Department of Theatre in November of 2003. The role of the costume designer is to support the conceptual vision of a director alongside a design and production team. Presented in Chapter 1 of the thesis contains information regarding the three creators: Moliere, Bill Irwin, and Mark O'Donnell, pertaining to the text and production of SCAPIN. Chapter 2 discusses the visual research for the production, in conjunction with scenic and lighting designers. Chapter 3 covers the execution of the design through each step of its realization. Chapter 4 completes the thesis with an analysis of the process and production in regards to the costume design. The appendices document the major visual sources used and illustrate the phases of the design.

A COSTUME DESIGN FOR BILL IRWIN'S *SCAPIN*

By

Debra Kim Sivigny

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts
2004

Advisory Committee:
Professor Helen Huang, Chair
Professor and Department Chair Daniel MacLean Wagner
Associate Professor Daniel Conway

© Copyright by
Debra Kim Sivigny
2004

Table of Contents

List of Figures.....	iii
Introduction.....	v
Chapter 1: Textual Analysis.....	1
Jean-Baptiste Poquelin and Molière.....	1
Commedia dell'arte.....	2
Bill Irwin: Performer, director, and Mr. Noodle.....	5
Mark O'Donnell.....	7
Irwin and O'Donnell's <i>Scapin</i> : from Seattle Rep to Off-Broadway.....	7
Chapter 2: Research Analysis and Design Process.....	11
Director's Conceptual Approach.....	11
Cast Gallery and Research.....	12
1950s and the "New Look".....	15
Men's fashions.....	16
Development of the "Teenager".....	17
Visual Research and Preliminary Design.....	17
Final design.....	21
Chapter 3: Design Execution.....	22
Fabric swatching and shopping.....	22
Collaboration with the lighting designer.....	24
Draper meetings.....	25
Shopping and found clothing.....	26
Fittings.....	27
Dress rehearsals.....	29
Chapter 4: Production Analysis.....	33
Communication: visual and verbal.....	33
Re-examining the concept.....	34
The "Regional Theatre" model: professional-level production.....	36
Conclusion.....	39
Appendix A: Research images.....	40
Appendix B: Costume plates.....	69
Appendix C: Production Photos.....	79
Appendix D: Supporting Paperwork.....	89

Bibliography.....93

List of Figures

Appendix A:

- Figure 1. Research images of Pantalone for Geronte
- Figure 2. Research images of Dottore for Argante
- Figure 3. Research images of Scapin for Scapin
- Figure 4. Research image of Mezzetino for Sylvestre
- Figure 5. Research images of innamorato for Octave and Leander
- Figure 6. Research images of innamorata for Hyacinth and Zerbinette
- Figure 7. Research image of Columbina for Nerine
- Figure 8. Research image of Jack Benny for Geronte. 1948
- Figure 9. Research image of Jack Benny for Geronte. 1954
- Figure 10. Research image for Jack Benny for Geronte
- Figure 11. Research image of Jackie Gleason for Argante
- Figure 12. Research image of Jackie Gleason for Argante
- Figure 13. Research image of Jackie Gleason for Argante
- Figure 14. Research image of Sid Caesar for Scapin
- Figure 15. Research image of Jack Lemmon for Sylvestre
- Figure 16. Research image of Art Carney for Sylvestre
- Figure 17. Research image of Art Carney for Sylvestre
- Figure 18. Research image of James Dean for Leander
- Figure 19. Research image of James Dean for Leander
- Figure 20. Research image of James Dean for Leander
- Figure 21. Research images of Ron Howard for Octave
- Figure 22. Research image of Debbie Reynolds for Hyacinth
- Figure 23. Research image of Lucille Ball for Hyacinth
- Figure 24. Research image of Sophia Loren for Zerbinette
- Figure 25. Research image of Gina Lollobrigida for Zerbinette
- Figure 26. Research image of Ava Gardner for Nerine
- Figure 27. Research image of Ava Gardner for Nerine

- Figure 28. Research image of Liberace for George
Figure 29. Research image of Liberace for George

Appendix B:

- Figure 30. Rendering: Geronte
Figure 31. Rendering: Argante
Figure 32. Rendering: Scapin
Figure 33. Rendering: Sylvestre
Figure 34. Rendering: Leander
Figure 35. Rendering: Octave
Figure 36. Rendering: Hyacinth
Figure 37. Rendering: Zerbinette
Figure 38. Rendering: Nerine
Figure 39. Rendering: George
Figure 40. Production photo: Jen Alexander as the Messenger with Sean Hoagland as Sylvestre.
Figure 41. Production photo: Mike Grew as Octave, Nathaniel Claridad as Scapin, and Kurt Chiang as Leander.
Figure 42. Production photo: Sarah Devillier and Tiernan Madorno as Hyacinth and Zerbinette.
Figure 43. Production photo: Brianne Cobuzzi as Nerine, Tyler Smith as Geronte, Mike Grew as Octave, Art Hall as Argante, Sean Hoagland as Sylvestre, and Sarah Devillier as Hyacinth.
Figure 44. Production photo: Nathaniel Claridad as Scapin with Tyler Smith as Geronte.
Figure 45. Production photo: Sean Hoagland as Sylvestre in disguise.
Figure 46. Production photo: Art Hall as Argante.
Figure 47. Production photo: John LaBombard as George.
Figure 48. Production photo: Brianne Cobuzzi as Nerine with Nathaniel Claridad as Scapin.
Figure 49. Production photo: The entire company.

Introduction

This thesis provides a written record of the costume design process and an analysis of the process and results that ensued from Bill Irwin and Mark O'Donnell's *Scapin*, which was produced by the Department of Theatre at the University of Maryland. The production took place in the Robert and Arlene Kogod Theatre in November 2003.

For this production of *Scapin*, Dr. Karl Kippola, a recent graduate of the Department of Theatre and a professor of Theatre at American University, was the director. The scenic designer was Alexander Cooper, the lighting designer was Andrew Guban, and the sound designer was Jason Cowperthwaite. The assistant to the costume designer was Kristina Lucka, and the costume shop drapers were Marilyn Deighton, professor of Costume Technology, and Laurel Dunayer. The faculty advisors involved in this production were Helen Huang, Professor of costume design, Daniel Conway, Associate Professor of scenic design, and Daniel MacLean Wagner, Chair of the Department of Theatre and Professor of lighting design.

Chapter 1 analyzes the text as it pertains to its authorship and initial productions. It provides background of both Molière and the collaboration of Bill Irwin and Mark O'Donnell in relation to the play.

Chapter 2 discusses the research process in relation to the director's concept and the subsequent meetings with the production team. It also provides

information about preliminary designs, final designs, and pre-production preparation.

Chapter 3 describes the execution of the design through dress rehearsals, continuing with the process as it passes through the costume shop and eventually to the stage.

Chapter 4 analyzes and evaluates the design in retrospect.

Chapter 1:

Textual Analysis

Jean-Baptiste Poquelin and Molière

Jean-Baptiste Poquelin was born on 15 January 1622 in Paris. The son of a well-known *valet de chambre tapissier* who attended to the king's upholstery, he was well schooled and had access to the king's court. His early years were heavily influenced by the proximity of the Pont-Neuf and the Hôtel de Bourgogne to his father's shop. These two theatrical venues had a large impact on the plays that he would later write. At the age of twenty-one, he changed his name to Molière and founded an acting troupe by the name of *L'Illustre Théâtre*, renting out a tennis court to use as a venue.

The little company did not fare very well, and empty houses forced the group to leave Paris in 1646. They then traveled around the countryside for twelve years honing their craft, and Molière began writing his first play, *L'Etourdi* (The Blunderer [1653]). Many more pieces followed, and the troupe re-entered Paris in 1658. Through the king's brother, the Duke of Anjou, they played to King Louis XIV in the Guard Room of the old Louvre Palace. Although the ensuing performance of Corneille's *Nicomède*, a tragedy, was not well received, Molière's own play *Docteur Amoureux* (The Lovesick Doctor) was. This performance gained them a place in the Hôtel du Petit Bourbon.

Molière began his career as a satirist, choosing Madame de Rambouillet's literary salon as a point of ridicule in his play *Les Précieuses Ridicules* (The

Pretentious Ladies). Though some were incensed, most of the gallants laughed at themselves and Molière was a success. Eventually, he did make enough enemies that the Petit Bourbon was shut down, but the king only moved them to the Théâtre du Palais Royal where Molière continued to write and star in his works. The years at the Théâtre du Palais Royal were his most successful, but he made many enemies as a result of his satires. During this time, his most exemplary plays were *The School for Wives* (1662), *Tartuffe* (1664, 1667, 1669), *The Misanthrope* (1666), and *The Miser* (1668).

Molière's *Les Fourberies de Scapin* holds a quiet place in his canon. It debuted on 24 May 1671, but only ran for seventeen performances. Unlike its commedia-inspired predecessors, *Les Fourberies de Scapin* "flaunted and mocked its own formulaic situations."¹

Commedia dell'arte

Many of Molière's plays were inspired by *commedia dell'arte*, which flourished in France during the 16th and 17th centuries.² Most scholars agree that commedia emerged as a form of entertainment in the Italian Renaissance and spread throughout Europe thereafter until the 18th century. Some draw earlier origins to Roman farces by Plautus and Terence. Whatever the source, the style combined improvised scenes, masks, exaggerated movement, and comedic stock

¹ Misha Berson, "Flirting with Farce," *American Theatre*, July/August 1995, 8.

² Commedia dell'arte can be defined as "comedy of artists," "comedy of the profession," or "comedy of art."

characters. By Molière's time, the stock characters were fairly well established by Italian companies who had created complicated lists of *lazzi*, or previously rehearsed sequences of physical action, which conveyed important character traits and relationships. Some names changed-- for example, Arlechinno became Harlequin--but the traits remained the same.

The tradition is prescribed. The sequences and situations were different from improvisation to improvisation, but because the stock characters were always the same, *commedia* had a somewhat relative predictability. In *Scapin*, Molière took *commedia* stock characters and constructed a situational comedy. His characters had different names, with the exception of Scapin, but all the types were represented, using two fathers, two male servants, one female servant, innamorato and innamorata (young lovers, male and female, respectively.)³

The two fathers, Geronte and Argante, represented the stock characters of Pantalone and Dottore. Pantalone was traditionally known as money-grubbing and stingy as well as lecherous. He leered and winked at any woman in close proximity. Dottore was a neighbor and friend of Pantalone who loved to talk. He spoke in long soliloquies and was parasitic by nature. Sometimes, he would try to convince people that they had ailments they did not suffer from--hence the name Dottore (doctor). In physical appearance, they were polar opposites. Pantalone was lean, wiry, and bird-like; Dottore was large, heavy, and sounded like a trombone. (Later French versions of Dottore were occasionally lizard-like:

³ For images of the stock characters mentioned below, see Appendix A.

thinner and more reptilian in movement—i.e. Molière’s *Tartuffe* was a version of Dottore.) Their masks emphasized the nose and had hair in some places.

Pantalone’s had a mustache, bushy eyebrows, and a hooked nose. Dottore’s mask only covered the nose and forehead, creating a bulbous, “drunk” nose.

Their servants, Scapin and Sylvestre, translate to the stock characters of Scapino and Mezzetino. Scapino’s name derived from the Italian verb, *scappare*, which meant “to flee” or “to escape.” He was traditionally a servant and a brother to Brighella, a scheming, witty servant. Unlike Brighella, Scapino was more bumbling and idiotic. Really, it was his impulsivity that tied him into unwanted situations. His clothing was loose fitting and featured green and white stripes. Mezzetino was similar to Scapino but had more singing and dancing talent. He was more of a performer and much gentler than Scapino in manner. His costume consisted of red and white stripes in contrast to Scapino’s green and white. Later 18th century paintings by Watteau depict Mezzetino in a floppy hat. They also traditionally wore masks that had long, phallic noses and furrowed brows.

To complement the male servants, a stock character called Columbina was introduced into the story. Columbina was seductive and sexy, like Molière’s Nerine. The maid of one of the innamorata (usually Isabella,) Columbina consorted with the male servants but was more refined in dress because of her relationship to Isabella. Although she showed her cleavage and attracted the men, she was usually the most lucid, rational character on stage. She used her

brain instead of her impulses. She was masked like the other servants, but in a more petite, attractive fashion.

The lovers, traditionally called the *inamorati*, were the heart of the scenario. Molière's Leander and Octave translated to Leandro and Ottavio, but all the lovers had similar traits, despite their names. They were always dressed in the latest fashions of the upper class, and wore makeup to emphasize their beauty. The character of Lelio probably had the most in common with Octave. A son of Dottore, Lelio was emotional but gallant. He was the more sensitive of the two male lovers, and carried a handkerchief as a signature prop. Leandro was more of a Flavio character type. Traditionally a son of Pantalone, Flavio was fiery, and the more masculine of the two *inamorato*. His gestures were grand and he was quick to strike with his sword.

Like the men, Molière's characters of Hyacinth and Zerbinette were based on Isabella and Vittoria. Isabella was known as a *prima donna* and the daughter of Pantalone. She was cute, sympathetic, and very emotional. In contrast, Vittoria played the orphan gypsy character. She was either part of the servant or the *inamorati* class depending on the scenario.

Because of the familiarity with and acceptance of *commedia* by the French theatregoing public, Molière's plays were quite popular (the exception being that some actual people in society took grave offense to the plays because they believed that Molière was criticizing them...which he was). The stock characters gave him a frame in which to place his most scathing plays.

Bill Irwin: Performer, director, and Mr. Noodle

Bill Irwin was not a newcomer to the wily criticisms of Molière—he played the title role of *The Imaginary Invalid* back in high school. A graduate of the theatre department at Oberlin College (Oberlin, Ohio) and the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey’s Clown College (Venice, Florida,) Irwin became a brilliant mime, dancer, and clown. Described by critics as “a genius of immediacy...always in the moment,”⁴ and “a love child of Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin, Marcel Marceau, and Danny Kaye, among others,”⁵ Irwin is truly one of the most talented performers of this generation. However, to simply call him a performer does not do him justice. He has also worn the hats of director, adaptor, performance artist, dancer, choreographer, producer, and even Mr. Noodle (a guest on the network television series *Sesame Street*.)

Before his Broadway career, Irwin worked with the Pickle Family Circus in San Francisco where he was one of the original cast members. He was also an original member of Kraken, a theatre company directed by Herbert Blau. By 1979, he was off creating his own clowning-inspired shows. His first Broadway bound creation was *The Regard of Flight* (1982). More shows followed, including *The Courtroom* (1985), *Largely New York* (1987), *Mr. Fox: Ruminations on the Life of a*

⁴ Nancy Vreeland Dalva, “Bill Irwin, dance clown: the postmodern funny man,” *Dance Magazine*, September 1989, 44.

⁵ Ben Brantley, “Mr. Molière, meet Mr. Irwin, he clowns around a bit, too,” *New York Times*, 10 January 1997.

Clown (1992), *Fool Moon* (1993), and then *Scapin* (1995). The 1995 production of *Scapin* was the first time that Irwin worked in three positions at once: playwright, director, and actor.

Since *Scapin*, Irwin has directed Georges Feydeau's *A Flea in her Ear*, at Roundabout (1998), and adapted and performed *Texts for Nothing* at Classic Stage Company (2000). Currently, he is the playwright in residence at Signature Theatre (New York) for the 2003-2004 season. Signature has produced his new creations: *The Harlequin Studies*, *The Regard Evening*, and remounted *Mr. Fox: A Ruminant*.

Mark O'Donnell

Although most critics considered the 1997 version of *Scapin* to be "Bill Irwin's *Scapin*," Mark O'Donnell was really the main adaptor behind the updated script, translating *Les Fourberies de Scapin* from the French. Most well-known in the theatre world for his book of the Broadway musical *Hairspray* (for which he won a Tony in 2003), he is also a humorist, translator, and author of several books including *Getting Over Homer* and *Elementary Education*. His essays and cartoons have been published in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, and *Spy*.

As a playwright, his most recent collaboration with Irwin was *A Flea in her Ear*, which he co-adapted with Jean-Marie Besset. Older projects include: *That's It, Folks!* (1982), *Fables for Friends* (1983), *The Nice and the Nasty* (1985), *Strangers on Earth* (1993), *Vertigo Park* (1994), and the book and lyrics for *Tots in Tinseltown*. His early plays were produced at Playwrights Horizons and Zena Group Theatre.

Irwin and O'Donnell's Scapin: from Seattle Rep to Off-Broadway

By 1995, Irwin was ready to revisit the cranky invalid of his high school performance days at some point during his three-year stint at the Seattle Repertory Theatre (courtesy of a Theatre Communications Group grant). Instead, he and Mark O'Donnell ended up adapting a new version of Molière's *Scapin*. Seduced by the vaudevillian patter of the text and the potential for physical gags, Irwin and O'Donnell made it their own creation, adding updated references such as Bullwinkle, DNA experts, and Seattle Rep subscribers in drag—all in the scathing spirit of Molière.

Both men worked on the script while Irwin was in New York working on *Full Moon*. O'Donnell translated the text from the original French, while Irwin tried to streamline the long speeches, “keeping one line for every eight in Molière...giving it a bright, clear rhythmic modern speech, with a spark of

topicality.”⁶ The resulting script was a fast-paced, mischievous, freewheeling, comic onslaught that nodded to Molière, but mostly to Bill Irwin.

Irwin was the quintessential Scapin. His signature “rubber-legged cavorting and tomfoolery” met with the loquacious scheming of Scapin and the result was that of a “half bumbling schemer just barely getting by.”^{7,8} The combination of traits made Irwin a loveable manipulator, but always the underdog servant scraping by. In contrast with the silent mime work in *Fool Moon*, *Scapin* had Irwin talking for the entire night, even after the streamlining of the “terribly wordy...long, expository speeches, and verbal repetitions.”⁹

Ultimately, the adaptors felt that Molière would have appreciated their approach. In interviews regarding the adaptation of *Scapin*, O’Donnell remarked that he’d “like to think that we’re in the same mischief conspiracy as Molière. Yes, we mock his play, but the play is mockery itself. It makes fun of the conventions of 17th century comedy, and we make fun of the conventions of our forbear Molière. It all comes from a desire to surprise and delight.”¹⁰

By 1997, the production traveled off-Broadway to the Laura Pels Theatre at the Roundabout Theatre Company. Opening on 9 January, it ran for eighty-

⁶ Berson, “Flirting with Farce,” 8.

⁷ Mel Gussow, “A Clown changes costume and, Presto: Playwright,” *New York Times*, 18 September, 2003, p. E3.

⁸Berson, “Flirting with Farce,” 9.

⁹ Ibid., 9.

¹⁰ Ibid., 9.

five performances before it closed on 23 March 1997.¹¹ Dramatists Play Service published the script, more polished and with Molière’s intentions, describing it as having “alterations—the play’s original structure.”¹² Irwin and O’Donnell chose to keep the period setting in their production—a Molière-inspired Italian Renaissance.

Douglas Stein, a longtime collaborator with Irwin (*Regard of Flight, Largely New York, Fool Moon, The Harlequin Studies*) designed the set, Nancy Schertler (*Largely New York, Fool Moon, Texts for Nothing*) designed the lighting, and Victoria Petrovich designed the costumes. The review in *Variety* stated the result of that collaboration best:

“A very smart cartoon...the machinations of “Scapin” are played out on a lovely black-and-white set designed by Douglas Stein as a pen-and-ink illustration of a 17th century village. Dressed in Victoria Petrovich’s costumes—a canny blend of period dress and born-in-a-trunk vaudeville garb—the cast careens through the farce with a precision that suggests the production isn’t as improvisational as it appears.”¹³

¹¹ Lucille Lortel Foundation, “Lortel Archives—the Internet Off-Broadway Database: Scapin,” <http://www.lortel.org/lla_archive/index.cfm?search_by=show&id=509>

¹² “Dramatists Play Service, Inc.” <www.dramatists.com>,1997.

¹³ Greg Evans, “Scapin,” *Variety*, 19 January 1997.

The production's light design and music are described as "quicksilver...with jaunty, silent movie-style music, which becomes a character in itself."¹⁴ The music, played live by Bruce Hurlbut in bright red top hat and tails, was written into the script as another Scapin-manipulated element.

Most critics praised the production, although one critic remarked that Irwin and O'Donnell "shortchanged both Molière and his interpreters" with the updating of the script.¹⁵ Her theory was that the audience's familiarity with the sources that Irwin and O'Donnell were alluding to (television, politics, etc.) took away the humor. In accord with his own body of work and opinions of society, Molière most likely would have loved the new adaptation if he were alive and familiar with contemporary pop culture, because that is exactly what he did.

¹⁴ Brantley, "Mr. Molière, meet Mr. Irwin, he clowns around a bit, too."

¹⁵ Elyse Sommer, review of Scapin by Bill Irwin and Mark O'Donnell, <www.curtainup.com> (January 1997.)

Chapter 2: Research Analysis and Design Process

Director's Conceptual Approach

The initial research of commedia dell'arte helped me interpret the concept conceived by Karl Kippola, the director. He wanted to take a "1950s America" approach to the play, having responded to the ideas in the script of rebellion and the teenager-in-love versus conservative, stodgy, conformist parents. He felt that the changing values of the 1950s resonated strongly with the play. As the baby boomers aged, the teenager was developing its identity as a distinct age group; children were no longer immediately becoming adults.

The 1950s also saw a transition from radio-based to television-based entertainment. Television enabled the average citizen to watch celebrities, versus only hearing them. In turn, celebrities became known not only by their voices, but their faces, as well as their way of dressing. Using this idea, Kippola wanted to cast his play with what he called "1950s stock characters." These archetypes from television were very similar to the commedia stock characters. He was also attracted to the idea of visually transitioning from a more traditional commedia style with mask to the sexy, playful 1950s world as part of the production. He envisioned the world of *Scapin* to be a bright, zany playground for actors, but wanted to keep a realistic tone with the costumes as well as the details of the scenery. Masks would only be used in the prologue, where Kippola would draw

contrast between the stodgy, stuffy world of heavy mask and cloak, and the light, whimsical world of the eventual play.

Cast Gallery and Research

The second round of research took a new direction shaped by Kippola's bold choice. With commedia stock characters in mind, I found research of 1950s personalities and actors that correlated with the characters in *Scapin*. Prof. Huang called this a "cast gallery," which is a compilation of faces that are appropriate to the characters in the text, as if a casting director were looking at headshots of actors.

Kippola shared his initial character ideas with me: Jack Benny as Geronte, Jackie Gleason as Argante, Art Carney/Jack Lemmon as Sylvestre, Sid Caesar/Milton Berle as Scapin, Richie Cunningham from *Happy Days* as Octave, James Dean as Leander, and a mix of women for the three female characters. We corresponded by email during the month of June to come to a consensus for each of the characters.

I found more information on each of Kippola's suggestions from reading biographies and autobiographies of the personalities. I also found a great deal of research from watching their movies and TV shows and listening to their radio shows. I tried to hone down the women to one or two representative personalities each, choosing Jayne Mansfield/Marilyn Monroe for Nerine,

Lucille Ball/Doris Day for Hyacinth, and Gina Lollobrigida/Sophia Loren for Zerbinette.

Meanwhile, both Kippola and I tried to identify a pop culture icon that would serve as the model for the character of George. Mickey Finn was considered for a while, as well as Jerry Lee Lewis, but I really wanted to find someone who had recognizable “star quality.” We thought of Elvis, but it bothered both of us that he was not a piano player. Then I thought of Liberace, and the idea took off. The multiple-layered synthesis of 17th century stock character to 1950s stock character to actor, took lots of organization. A table seemed to be the best way to illustrate this:

Character/Stock character	1950s equivalent(s)	What the commedia and 1950s have in common	Iconic visual idea	Actor’s role in emphasizing idea
Geronte/Pantalone	Jack Benny	Tightwad radio character	Glasses, straw hat	Hand gestures, voice
Argante/Dottore	Jackie Gleason	Blustery, loud talker	Belly	Stance, voice
Scapin/Scapin	Sid Caesar	Inventor of schemes, trickster	“Professor” hat	Accents, voices, rubber-limbed gestures
Sylvestre/Mezzetino	Jack Lemmon/ Art Carney	Knucklehead, slack jawed second in line	Vest, slouchy hat	Facial expressions, ability to change characters
Leander/Flavio	James Dean/Marlon Brando	Quick to strike, rebellious	Rebel fashion, leather jacket	Stance, quick reflexes
Octave/Lelio	Richie Cunningham from <i>Happy</i>	Good boy	Neat fashions, letter jacket	Over-exaggeration

	<i>Days</i>			
Hyacinth/Isabella	Lucille Ball/Debbie Reynolds	Perky, wholesome	Full skirts, lots of tulle, handkerchief	Changing emotions quickly
Zerbinette/Vittoria	Sophia Loren/Gina Lollobrigida	Italian, exotic	Lots of beads, wild hair, untamed	Wild, unafraid siren
Nerine/Columbina	Jayne Mansfield/Ava Gardner	Sexy, bombshell	Large bosom, low necklines	Walk, stance, voice
George/?	Liberace	Musician, piano player	Spangles and jewels	Performer

For example, the character of Geronte had much in common with Jack Benny's tightwad radio persona. Benny's personal show style, especially his vaudeville-inspired dress and signature glasses, was perfect for the character, as it spoke distantly to commedia and was distinctive. On the other hand, justifying choices for Sid Caesar as Scapin was more difficult. Caesar, a comedic actor on "*Your Show of Shows*" and "*Caesar's Hour*," played many characters in different sketches. Like Scapin, he was always changing characters, but I felt I had to choose one distinct look that evoked Caesar and represented Scapin. I finally settled on his Professor character, and the classic crushed top hat as an iconic symbol of Caesar. The Professor was "a Germanic expert scientist in everything and nothing," and felt like a good match with the scheming but impulsive Scapin.¹⁶

I found that identification of an iconic or stereotypical element for each character helped me combine traits for my preliminary sketches. From Benny, it

¹⁶ <<http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/C/htmlC/caesarsid/caesarsid.htm>>, Caesar, Sid.

was the signature glasses; for Nerine, the low cut neckline and cleavage of Jayne Mansfield; and George, Liberace's famous jeweled spangles and hair.

After defining the iconographic models, I began to look at fashion in the mid to late 1950s, when the television boom was at its peak. A central research resource was *Fifties Forever: Popular Fashions for Men, Women, Boys & Girls* by Roseann Ettinger. This book included photos of vintage pieces, as well as descriptions, advertisements from the period, illustrations, and everyday clothing. Other sources that helped me were *Surfers, Soulies, Skinheads, and Skaters: Subcultural Style from the Forties to the Nineties* by Amy de la Haye, and *The Man of Fashion: Peacock Males and Perfect Gentlemen* by Colin McDowell. I also looked at *Vogue Magazine* and *Bazaar* from the period to examine understructure advertisements and high fashion. From passages in fashion history books, extant clothing, and talking with people who lived through the 1950s, I compiled the following information.

1950s and the "New Look"

1950s fashion really began on 12 February 1947, when Christian Dior developed the "New Look."¹⁷ A return to more feminine, pre-war styles, the New Look had a boned, nipped in waistline, full skirt, and sloping shoulders. Dior stated in his biography: "I wanted my dresses to be constructed, molded

¹⁷ Douglas A. Russell, *Costume History and Style* (Boston: Pearson Allyn and Bacon, 1983), 453.

upon the curves of the feminine body, whose sweep they would stylize.”¹⁸

Strong undergarments were necessary to achieve this look. The “waspie” was a type of corselet reminiscent of the Victorians, made with elastic and feather boning. Dior also padded the hips to emphasize the smallness of the nipped-in waist. The crinoline consisted of layers of netting and horsehair to hold out the wide, circle skirts. A basque dropped the gathers of net to the high hip to retain the slim line of the waist. The “merry widow,” a type of long-line brassiere, also nipped in the waist and pushed up the bust into a cone or bullet shape.

The iconic, full circle skirt might be the most identifiable piece of the 1950s, but it was not the only style available. As the era went on, Dior produced the ‘H’ and ‘A’ lines. The ‘H’ line (1954) was a waistless dress that later evolved into 1960s style. As part of the evolution, the ‘A’ line (1955) gave women more of a slender outline. As Dior was developing the ‘H’ line, Gabrielle ‘Coco’ Chanel produced the now infamous “Chanel suit,” which had a boxy, three-quarter length sleeved jacket, generally in tweed or textured silk. A straight, slim skirt finished the look.

Men’s fashions

The “gray flannel suit” epitomized men’s fashion in the 1950s. A time of traditional values among the older generations, most suits were conservative, slim, single breasted, and had two to four buttons. Although sharkskin was a

¹⁸ Kristina Harris, “Vintage Connection—New Look,”
<<http://www.geocities.com/vintageconnection/VintageConnection--NewLook.html>>, 2003.

popular fabric, most suits were made from plain, muted color wools, and consisted of two pieces versus the previous decade's three. Lapels were moderate to thin in width, as were ties. However, sport jackets came in brighter colors, and featured plaids, striped, and printed designs and were worn without matching trousers. Shirts had smaller collars than their predecessors, and were often buttoned down.

There were also casual clothing options for men. T-shirts—seen during wartime on newsreels as outerwear—rapidly gained popularity among the rebellious after 1951, when Marlon Brando wore one as Stanley Kowalski in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Jackets, fashioned after flight jackets from the war, were commonly made from gabardine, nylon, and leather.

Hats were still in fashion among the mainstream. Fedoras and homburgs made from fine wools were the most desirable, but straw boaters and straw fedoras were popular in casual situations.

Development of the "Teenager"

By the middle of the decade, teenagers began to break away with their own casual, fun styles. The emergence of rock and roll and television affected young people in a profound way. Elvis Presley became a symbol of fashion for the younger generation, which up until then was seen and not heard. Marlon Brando wore jeans and leather jackets in *The Wild One* in 1954. Music, teen idols, and the styles of television/movie stars drove the rebellion.

For teenage girls, pedal pushers (calf length trousers) and blouses were a popular alternative to the circle skirt, cardigan, and blouse combination. Saddle shoes, ballet flats, and penny loafers were popular and more comfortable for casual events. Teenage boys were either “preppy” or influenced by Greaser styles, and wore looser versions of traditional menswear. Bowling shirts, Hawaiian shirts, and Western styled shirts were also popular.

Visual Research and Preliminary Design

The compilation of fashion history knowledge, the valuable photos of the personalities, and knowing my cast of actors led to my ability to draw a preliminary sketch. After immersing myself in the research, I collected the images that spoke to me the most about the play to prepare for the research/preliminary design meeting. Since the production schedule was slightly condensed, early meetings were combined to expedite the design process. I felt well prepared for the approaching preliminary design meeting because of the summer communication with Kippola. Since we were working from the same cast gallery of images, it was easy to remain in accord. I knew my primary goal would be to synthesize and reconcile the 1950s fashions with the play. This would mean taking the commedia stock character, pairing it with a 1950s stock character, dressing it in a distinct style that reflected both commedia and the current fashions, and dressing the actor playing the role in a flattering and fitting way.

My preliminary designs for each character were primarily based on the traits of the personalities. I began with the men and tried to find variations in their suit styles. I wanted Geronte to be in a single-breasted suit and Argante, double-breasted, to create the illusion of height in Geronte and the width of Argante. Sylvestre had no jacket, just a vest. Scapin's jacket was several sizes too large for him, as were his pants. I envisioned Scapin's pants held up by suspenders alone, like clown pants. Paired with the crushed hat and a goofy look, the design resembled Sid Caesar but suited Scapin.

For the boys, I combined casual clothing research of the 50s with the more iconic aspects of Richie Cunningham and Marlon Brando. Bowling shirts and the striped shirts of James Dean appealed to me as they had comedic value if taken a little out of scale with normal proportion. I drew Octave's shirt asymmetrically, with the stripe on one side—giving the inset stripe a diamond shape to evoke a harlequin pattern.

The designs for the two daughters went through several phases. At first, the drawings felt kind of standard—there was nothing about them that made me think of their commedia predecessors. Then I thought about their position in the show as *inamorata*, and decided that their visual role was to look as wild or as frilly as possible within the bounds of the play. So Hyacinth's costume became completely net and frills and Zerbinette's had stripes and exotic prints with beads and coins.

Nerine had several different necklines in several rounds of drawings. I wanted to emphasize her hourglass shape while keeping her in proportion. I tried bateau necklines, but the cleavage was hidden; v-necks only emphasized the cleavage but not the shoulders. Finally, the portrait neckline was the ideal solution.

Before 18 July, I showed my preliminary work to Prof. Huang, who made suggestions about the details I had picked. She questioned a few hairstyle choices and silhouettes on the women, but was satisfied with my work overall. She also encouraged me to paint small color renderings to start the color discussion with Alex Cooper, the scenic designer, and Andrew Guban, the light designer. After making the changes, I presented my designs at the preliminary design meeting.

I presented my most inspirational research alongside my preliminary designs and included a small color rendering to show my palette concept. 1950s advertisements in magazines inspired most of my color choices. I purposely brightened the intensity of the colors so that they would leap off the set.

Some of my most inspirational research included: Sid Caesar as “The Professor” (Figure 14), Jack Benny in his vaudeville trio (Figure 9), Jackie Gleason cleaned up in a suit (Figure 13), Ava Gardner in a filmy dress (Figure 27), and Liberace behind the piano (figure 29).

Cooper brought images of “Googie” style architecture, which mostly involved shops, bowling alleys, car washes, and motels in the Southern

California area. The style was in its prime in the 1950s. It was a gravity-defying, space-age style—highly graphic and patterned with bold shapes and colors. The architecture could be considered similar to the clothing—skirts and necklines seemed to defy gravity as well, and the colors and shapes of more adventurous clothing of the period fit with the energy of the eye-catching signs in the “Googie” style.

Guban brought images of neon signs that complemented the “Googie” style, and also images of light through translucent glass blocks. The effect was bright, but diffused by the architectural elements—just enough to illuminate and enhance but not dominate.

As a design team, we discussed the use of both pattern and color to delineate the two families. Stripes and circles denoted Geronte’s house, and diamonds and plaids denoted Argante’s house. This discussion resulted in Cooper and I unifying our designs not only with color, but with pattern as well. Kippola approved of all of my choices and Prof. Conway recommended that costumes should take the lead regarding color choices for the production’s palette. Since my chosen palette was similar to the colors used in “Googie” style, I was not worried about color compatibility. Cooper had produced several preliminary sketches of the set, but had not yet chosen colors. Cooper and I discussed color continuously as he developed his palette. I understood his challenges. He needed a palette that was subdued but not monochromatic and that served the comedic aspects of the script. I gave him copies of my renderings

in hopes that they would help him. Cooper incorporated similar hues into his set design, which contributed to the creation of a strongly unified color palette for the production.

Final Design

On 29 August, I presented color renderings, revised after the preliminary meeting, and also presented sketches for the porters/gendarmes and Scapin's drag dress. Changes from the preliminary design were minimal, but I had given more of my attention to detail in terms of the visual patterns of families. This helped tie the costumes more strongly to the set in both color and visual interest.

Chapter 3:

Design Execution

After final designs were approved, the execution, or practical production phase began in the shop. Knowing that some of the costumes would be completely built in the shop, I drew technical drawings, which were drawings of the basic pattern shapes and seam lines of the costumes in detail. Drapers used this information when making the patterns for the costumes. I also provided preliminary lists of the costume pieces for the show bible, which was a notebook of all the information related to the show. It included measurements of the actors, fabric samples, the costume renderings, fitting information, and lists of the costume pieces in the show. With that information, I was able to discuss the specific budget needs with Veronica Stevens, the costume shop manager. Using the renderings, she estimated the relative cost of the show and we discussed strategies towards achieving the realization of the design.

For *Scapin*, the realization of the design involved pulling and shopping as well as building various costume pieces. These measures completed the design with the most integrity to the original sketches. In this chapter, I will explain and elaborate on the approach to the costume execution, as well as the questions that arose and were answered during the process.

Fabric swatching and shopping

In order to achieve the goals set in the costing meeting with Stevens, my assistant, Kristina Lucka, and I proceeded to collect fabric samples throughout the Washington, DC metro area. This was called fabric swatching and was the first step in bringing the renderings to fruition. Equipped with my portfolio of color-photocopied renderings, a preliminary piecelist, a measurement summary, yardages from drapers, and budget numbers in my head, we went to G Street Fabrics in Rockville, one of the largest chain stores in the area. I felt it was wise to begin there because G Street Fabrics sold the largest variety of fabrics in the area.

We swatched fabrics over several days in the local areas of Langley Park (MD), Falls Church (VA), and in Washington DC. After an exhaustive search for swatches, I went to Prof. Huang and we discussed my choices. I made a few changes from the renderings, but I felt that the fabrics were enhancements of ideas in the research. For example, I originally envisioned Hyacinth in organza and net with “floats” of contrast organza flowers on the top layer. As I shopped, I found a perfect pink net with black velvet polka dots at Vina Fabric and Bridal. Placed over a pink silk with tiny paisley prints, the net had the dimension, sheen, and depth that I was looking for. Sometimes, the eventual fabric even made the draper’s job easier. I originally wanted a stripe to chevron in the front of Zerbinette’s bodice, to create the illusion of an hourglass figure. The fabric I found had pressed in pleats going in different directions. The jungle print of the

fabric masked the need for extreme body illusions because of the value contrasts within it.

Prof. Huang approved most of the swatches, then sent me out to find more effective choices for Nerine. I asked Prof. Huang how she might interpret the rendering of Nerine. She suggested an organza layered over taffeta—something crisp. At that point, that thought had never even crossed my mind. Armed with new inspiration, Lucka and I went back to G Street and collected almost twenty swatches for her two layers of skirt, belt/collar, and pants. We created a combination we loved, but I was very apprehensive to purchase anything. Finally, since we were buying other fabrics that Prof. Huang had approved, and the shop deadline for fabrics was approaching, we took a risk and bought three out of the four pieces. I sought her advice again about the pant fabric, showing her the six choices that I had chosen. She chose one and offered to buy it for me on her way home, pleased with the combination.

Collaboration with the lighting designer

The lighting designer, Andrew Guban, and I met to discuss the costumes after most of the main pieces were obtained. I was worried about the intensity of the colors as well as the potential brightness of George's silver disco dot coat under light. Guban assured me that it would work out and we chose colors together in the light lab using the color faders, which scroll through lighting gel colors one at a time. He scrolled through his preliminary color ideas, and we

discovered the nuances between certain colors. For example, one shade of pink brought out the vibrancy of all of the colors at once, whereas another shade only brought out the pink tones in the fabrics. In an hour, we agreed on a specific range of colors that we felt would enhance both the fabrics and the skin tones of the actors. I was grateful for the opportunity to have an advance look at the colored light on the costumes.

Draper meetings

After most of the fabrics were purchased, Stevens scheduled draper meetings. The nature of these meetings was informal, as I discussed my choices for each costume and answered questions from the draper. I had met with Prof. Huang prior to this meeting to ensure her confidence in my technical drawings. With her approval, I met with Deighton about her draping assignment: Hyacinth and Scapin's drag dress. The technical drawings accompanied the renderings and we discussed her questions and my various notes. Most of her questions regarded understructures, which she offered to build for Hyacinth. Scapin's "female" padding would later be an ongoing discussion. I also learned from Deighton that I needed to buy some other linings that I had not expected, especially in the case of skirts. I thought that the various under layers of Hyacinth's skirt would smooth the crinoline—but I deferred to her better judgment and later bought some taffeta linings.

My second meeting was over the phone with Laurel Dunayer, who works out of her home in New Jersey. We had a great conversation about Zerbinette, Nerine, Octave, and Sylvester. Her contract was to build the two women's dresses and shirts for the two men. Technical drawings really saved lots of time for both of us, as they were fairly clear to begin with.

Graduate assistants Angela Chavez and Yvette Ryan were scheduled to work on the show as well, doing alterations, millinery, and dyeing. I met with Chavez later in the process to discuss hats, as most were pulled and bought, needing only adaptation. Ryan and I consulted about garment color changes as needed during the process. Lucka and I took care of shoe painting and other accessories.

Shopping and found clothing

The other component of the process was shopping for the non-built costumes, including George, the two fathers, the porters/gendarmes, the male servants, and the sons. I focused on finding the suits for the two fathers first, knowing that finding the right colors would be a major challenge. My renderings allowed for a range of interpretations—many shades of green for Geronte and a range of pinks, salmons, and peaches for Argante.

My search began at Harold Pender, a shop catering to the well-dressed African-American man. Because of the season, the colors I had rendered were not readily available. Most of the options were on clearance from the spring and

summer. I purchased a few options, and moved on to Value City and several other stores that carried brightly colored men's clothing. After finding several viable options, I showed them to Prof. Huang along with the other items I had pulled from stock. She commented that the colors were still not vibrant enough. Next to the bright fabrics I purchased, the suit colors became dull. After consulting with Stevens about the resources she was familiar with, I went to Iverson Mall. The Harold Pender and Value City at Iverson were larger and had more past-season items in stock. Between the two stores, I was able to find the two suits as well as a pair of pants for Scapin.

With this task completed, I was able to continue shopping the rest of the show with more confidence. The vintage stores of Takoma Park provided the remainder of the clothes, which exhilarated me because of the one-of-a-kind feeling these stores held in my mind. I was delighted to find pieces that were so close to my renderings and in the correct sizes.

Fittings

Understructures were vital to the costume having the right fit and silhouette. Deighton and I conducted undergarment fittings before the first round of muslin fittings the week of 22 September. Deighton offered to build a one-piece understructure (connected bodice and crinoline) for Sarah Devillier, playing Hyacinth, because she wanted to experiment with a new pattern.

Naturally, I obliged. For the other three women, I pulled long line bras and petticoats from Maryland's costume stock.

First fittings were scheduled to take place the week of 29 September. These fittings involved Lucka, Deighton, myself, and occasionally Prof. Huang. With the information from the undergarment fitting, the mockup fitting with Devillier was nearly perfect. She only needed a belt. Even the velvet vintage shoes I found in stock fit perfectly. The men's fittings also were quite successful. Nathan Claridad, who played Scapin, loved his costume and it moved well with his body. Tyler Smith (Geronte) and Art Hall (Argante) looked dapper and somewhat like used car salesmen in their suits, but they too loved their new looks.

Overall the week's results were positive, leaving me with a fairly long list of accessories to find, and a costume for Leander. Of all of the actors, Kurt Chiang (Leander,) was the most challenging to fit. I spent a long time searching for the leather jacket, jeans, and T-shirt that would flatter his body the most. Originally, I bought a new leather jacket and paired it with a straight leg but looser-fit jean, with the hopes of giving his body a more muscular appearance. The structure of the jacket and the way the jeans hung off his waist countered my intentions. Prof. Huang suggested a slimmer pair of jeans and a long sleeved T-shirt to add bulk. A vintage leather jacket that followed and defined his form also proved to be a more successful choice.

Late in the week, Dunayer traveled down to fit her muslins for Brianne Cobuzzi (Nerine) and Tiernan Madorno (Zerbinette.) With the information from the previous underwear fittings, Dunayer's muslins fit extremely well. I was particularly pleased with the drape of Nerine's collar. Dunayer and I spoke about Cobuzzi's figure shape during our phone meeting, and I expressed my concern about balancing out her shoulders and hips. The collar was the perfect proportion and shape.

After the first round of fittings, Lucka and I set out to find the accessories and details that remained on the list. From a combination of stock and vintage/thrift shopping, we were able to find most of the jewelry, ties, and shoes. Some of the best finds were from vintage stores, which were gracious enough to let me take items "on approval," when most do not honor returns. One such item was Geronte's glasses, which were from Takoma Underground. I tried four pairs on Smith and we decided mutually which pair was best.

Meanwhile, Zerbinette's shawl was being dyed, and alterations were well underway. Visiting the shop was a welcome time for me and I tried to check in daily to answer questions and monitor progress. Because of these visits, I was able to catch a few minor errors before they were fixed into the garment. Originally, all of Hyacinth's layered skirts were cut the same size so that they would lie together as one unit. As it sat on the dress form, I noticed that the layer of net pulled too tightly around the silk layer. There was no "air," as Prof.

Huang calls it, between the layers. I spoke to Deighton the next day about it, and she willingly made the change, easing the net layer half an inch higher.

A design run took place on 18 October where I took notes about blocking and exaggerated movements that would concern the costumes. During the run, I learned that the quick changes that Scapin had to do were less than 30 seconds apiece. Although I knew these changes were fast, I was still surprised at the immediacy of the change. As we entered second fittings, I expressed my concerns to Deighton, who worked diligently with me to make Claridad's various changes work.

Second fittings were scheduled for the week of 20 October, just after the design run. I was grateful for this as now I was armed with the knowledge of quick changes and other stage business. I really loved the second fitting process because of the interactions I had with the actors who had been in rehearsal for two weeks and had input about their clothes. I was able to discuss their hand props and blocking with them as they experienced what their final costumes would look and feel like.

Dress Rehearsals

By the time dress rehearsals took place, I felt the costumes were in very good shape. Technical rehearsals began on Friday, 7 November. The previous Wednesday afternoon, Deighton helped the wardrobe team get acquainted with

the costumes and the maintenance of the show using the dressing lists that Lucka had drawn up earlier in the week.

Friday evening was an exciting time as the cast members saw each other for the first time in costume. It was also the first time for me to see everybody dressed together. Although no costume shop notes get executed until Monday, I took notes all weekend. Most of the notes were small, until I received a note from Kippola that he thought Scapin was too put together and clean for a servant. I told him I would ask Prof. Huang for her opinion and when she saw the show on Sunday afternoon, she agreed with Kippola. She suggested that we find another coat and make it look “servant-like.”

I met with the costume shop after the run, gave notes and figured out the priorities for the next few days. After that, Prof. Huang and I searched through stock for a jacket that we could modify. At first, I was not quite sure that I knew what she meant when she said, “smock,” because I kept picturing a loose, ill-fitting tunic; however, I think she might have changed her mind when we looked through the sportcoats. We found two coats: one was linen, the other wool. Prof. Huang and I ran back down to rehearsal to fit Claridad. We chose the wool. Prof. Huang threw it into the washing machine to soak and wash overnight. I was nervous about the potential turnout—that the coat would come out child size, or totally destroyed—but the next morning, the coat was only slightly smaller.

I spent the following morning dyeing swatches of muslin into combinations of green similar to the coat Claridad was originally wearing. The damp coat hung on a dressform full of pattern weights, hammers, pliers, and screwdrivers. Prof. Huang removed the inner tailoring and I dyed it green. As it dried, I weighted down the pockets to make the coat look lived in. After the wool dried, I sprayed paint onto the body of the coat to mottle the color and make it appear distressed. Deighton shortened the sleeves to an intentionally absurd degree and the lining was readjusted. I reserved the good, plaid coat for his tailored look at the end of the play and used the distressed one for the majority of the play.

Scapin's coat was certainly the most challenging and exciting task performed during technical rehearsals, but there were other compromises and changes that were made as well. On Saturday, Hyacinth's pink dress began to slide down her body as the fabric heated up and stretched. For the actress' security, I took some elastic and made a halter strap to compensate for the weight of the dress. Although the strapless bodice had been a great aesthetic idea in the beginning, the physicality of the show made it virtually impossible. Sylvester also underwent some changes during the later dress rehearsals. After making the change to Scapin's costume, Prof. Huang wondered if making Sylvester's vest shorter would make him appear more "servant-like." We took Sean Hoagland out in the hallway between acts to pin up some new hems. First we tried shortening the vest, then the pants. The shorter pants proved to be very

humorous and effective. To enhance the awkwardness, I gave him two different colored socks—a nod to the parti-coloring of Harlequin as well as a sign of absentmindedness.

The only thing that continued to worry me through dress rehearsals was the drag dress for Scapin. When it was in the planning stages, Deighton wanted me to sculpt a female chest for the front of the dress, which she would sandwich between layers of canvas and muslin. The sculpting became a low priority, as I really did not believe it would look very convincing. Prof. Huang suggested the simple solution: use a padded bra. I liked this idea much more and purchased a bra for the shape. Deighton did not seem convinced right away, but quickly latched on to the idea and constructed a two-layer bodice. The entire dress would overdress the pants and shirt.

When dress rehearsals came, the wardrobe team had trouble with Claridad's quick change into the dress. As much as they ran the change, I was never sure what would be coming out from behind the house each time. Sometimes it would be completely open down the front, other times pants would be falling down past the hem of the skirt. Some of the trouble stemmed from hooking loops on the pants to inner leg buttons, and other trouble came from the dressers not being forceful enough with the closures, which were Velcro. Eventually, Kippola found a happy medium in the timing of the chase, which gave the dressers 6-8 more seconds. I was glad he made this compromise, but I also felt bad that he was the one who had to make it instead of me.

By the time Major's Night came, I was very proud of the show and how much farther it had come in technical rehearsals. I really felt that the costumes were a very important part of the actors' journey and enhanced the concept greatly. I was grateful for the strong collaboration that the costumes had with the scenery and lighting designs. The efforts that Guban, Cooper, and I had contributed to the process resulted in a visual success.

Chapter 4:

Production Analysis

Looking back on my designs at the University of Maryland, *Scapin* was neither the largest nor the most complicated of my productions; however, as a culminating design, I feel that it was my most successful and enjoyable process. With the foundations of *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains it All For you*, *'dentity Crisis*, *Problem Child*, *Polaroid Stories*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, I was able to approach *Scapin* with more maturity and preparation. This led to a calmer outlook on my part and I was able to have fun and enjoy the process.

When I first began designing at Maryland, I accepted production concepts without question. As I designed more shows, I found myself needing more clarification about the director's concept and I learned to ask more questions. This questioning led me to explore my own ideas with the play, and I offered them up more freely in meetings with directors. With *Scapin*, Kippola and I had what I felt was a great collaboration, because of that open communication. I have learned that it is okay to question and express my own ideas about a play.

Communication: visual and verbal

Communication was my greatest challenge in the design process of *Scapin*. I needed to create clear, concise renderings that embodied the energy of the show. Although costume sketches have always been difficult for me, I have

always found alternative ways of communicating to the director, whether through collage, research, or numerous photos and conversations. In previous productions, I occasionally felt weak in my communication skills during some aspect of the production, whether with the shop, or with the director during the design phase. The slips in communication were never very detrimental to the process, but I always felt that I could do better. For *Scapin*, I chose to draw my figures (versus using collage) in order to keep working on my rendering skills, despite knowing that it was not my strongest means of communication. I also prepared extensive research and technical drawings for the costume shop. Digital photos and frequent visits to rehearsal kept Kippola informed with the results of fittings. All of these efforts made subsequent technical rehearsals less hectic and run more smoothly. I also owed credit to my very collaboration-conscious scenic and lighting designers, who checked in with me as regularly as I saw them between production meetings and the build period. I knew that cohesive colors, shapes, patterns, and lines resulted from our frequent conversations. The Special to the Washington Post published on 20 November 2003 stated, "Every element in the theater is exploited for comic payoff."¹⁹

Despite the successes of the show, I still had some reservations about my design process—things I want to improve and change. In hindsight, my reservations about *Scapin* stemmed from two issues—depth of character research

¹⁹ Michael Toscano, "Special to the Washington Post: Uninhibited Cast Creates Manic, Modern Moliere," The Washington Post, 20 November 2003, p T31.

on my part and its relation to audience reception, and effective communication and organization with my design assistant and the shop.

Re-examining the Concept

Kippola's original idea was that each character would be an amalgamation of various actors and personalities from the 1950s. This remained the core idea in the costume design, assigning a personality (or a few) to each actor in *Scapin*. It is this "few" that I now question. Would it have been more concise visually and conceptually if each actor had been attached to only one 1950s personality? Aesthetically, I wanted each actor's look to reference and resemble the clothes and attitude of the original star, sometimes combining another star's features to strengthen the visual idea. With a few actors, it was a simple transition towards channeling the "look"—a similar body type, hairstyle, or distinct feature—which augmented the reference. Those actors took on one personality, such as Geronte (Jack Benny) or Argante (Jackie Gleason). With others--especially the women--I compromised, using several personalities to justify the characters we needed to create. Zerbinette became a conglomeration of a few Italian divas; Hyacinth was Lucille Ball and Debbie Reynolds put together.

I can now see that the compromise truly originated from my fears that the look of the student actor related to the personality. If the looks did not match, I went elsewhere, adding on to the list of personalities. In retrospect, I should

have overlooked those personalities that had less than what I needed to create the character. I now believe that a stronger aesthetic for each character would have risen more effectively from one personality instead of three. I needed to be more persistent in researching singular personalities for each actor.

In relation to the creation of characters, I was always mindful of the audience response. This feeling may have risen from the fact that I was teaching “Fundamentals of Design” and was reinforcing the ideas of clear visuals to my students. Kippola’s target audience was students, specifically “Intro to Theatre” freshmen and sophomores. This is what brought out my skepticism. Because of the relatively young age of the patrons, I feared that characters might be inaccessible to the audience due to their associated personalities. The response was different than I had expected. I expected that students might completely miss the point of using the 1950s, confusing them in irreversible ways. I knew they had studied *commedia* as a masked performance art set in the 17th century. Would the 1950s be too much of a leap?

Reading response papers from THET 387 and THET 171 students intrigued me. I did not give students enough credit for their capacity to understand and accept different concepts. Although students mistook George for Elton John and Elvis, and thought Argante was Fred Flintstone as well as Cosmo Spacely from the *Jetsons*, the misinterpretation did not seem to get in the way of their understanding the play. I cannot blame them for misunderstanding the references to characters that are not part of their pop culture circles. To

accommodate the generational gap in recognition, they created their own interpretations of the characters. From this, I realized that although concept drives a director and design team, the resulting interpretation might not be of the same understanding. I also learned that a different reading of a concept was still valid—the most important aspect was that the initial conceptual collaboration was cohesive.

The “Regional Theatre” model: professional-level production

The costume shop at Maryland, alongside Prof. Huang’s method of training, strives to attain a model of a regional theatre shop. This model trains designers to work with many different people in various positions including drapers, design assistants, wardrobe heads, and crafts artisans. Because *Scapin* touched on all of these areas, I needed to organize myself more than I had during past productions. Despite my efforts, I still wish that I were more organized in my delegation of work to Lucka, my assistant. As I handed off duties to her each day, I learned to trust her more and let go of some of my control over the production. Admittedly, this kept me more level headed when it came to decision-making. The experience made me think about my own previous assistant jobs, and I hope it will improve my own work as an assistant in the future.

Overall, I really enjoyed working with the costume shop. I was grateful for the advice, experience, and excitement that the shop brought to the building

of *Scapin*. I was also thankful for Lucka, my assistant, who constantly kept me looking ahead in the process and helped to make my design a success.

One part of the design process that I felt was successful was my technical drawings for each draper. The drawings saved me many questions and helped me to organize and prioritize my thoughts. This was especially helpful when working with an out-of-town draper. The flaw in the technical drawings lay in the fact that I missed a few small details that wasted a few hours for Deighton, who had to readjust an overskirt, and add straps to counteract gravity on Hyacinth's dress.

Ultimately, the design was executed remarkably, with decisions that always suited the characters of the text. Although I was overtly concerned with character creation, the eventual look of each of the characters was successful. I was especially proud of Brianne Cobuzzi's costume as Nerine. Modeled after the likes of Jayne Mansfield and Marilyn Monroe, her costume was a combination of capri pants and a diaphanous overdress. I was aware of Cobuzzi's body type (wide set hips, narrow waist) as I designed, but seeing her in a mockup fitting allowed me to really enhance her form with the clothing. I asked Dunayer, the draper, to re-drape the collar as widely as possible on Cobuzzi's shoulders, thus balancing out her hips and giving her a perfect hourglass figure. The result, to quote Prof. Huang, was "the most successful and flattering costume [she has] seen Brianne in."

I was also happy with the way that the fathers turned out. Initially, I was wary of the colors of the suits I had designed, but Prof. Huang assured me that I would find them and encouraged me to be persistent and keep looking. In the end, I found them and was thrilled with the result. I felt that this design in particular was a leap in color usage for me. I really tried to not let any element or piece go forgotten, especially accessories.

I was especially thankful for Prof. Huang's careful guidance at the end of the process, when we discussed redesigning the first look for Scapin. I wondered why I had not given the servant idea more consideration. During design meetings, Kippola and I discussed Scapin's suit being oversized on him. When I found what I felt was the perfect coat, the fit was not gigantic on Claridad, as we wanted. I let the oversized idea go, because I felt that Claridad still had the essence of the character as well as Sid Caesar. In retrospect, I believe that I wanted to stay as true as possible to the character of the celebrity I had chosen (Sid Caesar) and worried about deviating too much from his look. Prof. Huang and Kippola's notes convinced me that this change was truly necessary, and as I worked, I began to believe it as well. When I finally saw the result, the choice made a lot more sense. Although it wasn't oversized, it was ill-fitting, which was truly the point of the "look." I believe we mutually had a lot of fun working towards that sad but funny servant image.

Conclusion

Evaluating the entire design by removing myself from the process is difficult to achieve. Despite knowing some of the audience response, without actually doing a formal survey, I will never know exactly how the characters were understood—but I do know that everybody had a good time watching *Scapin*. I felt that in conjunction with the scenic and lighting designs, the costume design helped shape the actors in their respective characters and gave them life and verve. I am thankful that *Scapin* was my last realized production at the University of Maryland. The process of creating this work with a great amount of freedom and good advice was a large step in my confidence as a designer. Self-evaluation also allowed me to examine my work and my growth as an artist toward which I believe I have achieved much. I know that I will continue to grow and learn from subsequent projects during my professional career as a costume designer.

APPENDIX A: RESEARCH IMAGES



(a)



(b)

Figure 1: (a) Research image of Pantalone for Geronte. (b) Mask



(a)



(b)

Figure 2: (a) Research image of Dottore for Argante. (b) Mask.



(a)



(b)

Figure 3: Research images of Scapin for Scapin.



Figure 4: Research image of Mezzetino for Sylvestre.



(a)



(b)

Figure 5: Research images of innamorato for Octave and Leander.



(a)



(b)

Figure 6: Research images of innamorata for Hyacinth and Zerbinette.



Figure 7: Research image of Columbina for Nerine.



Figure 8: Research image of Jack Benny for Geronte. 1948.



Figure 9: Research image of Jack Benny for Geronte. Benny, George Burns, and Bing Crosby portraying a vaudeville trio, "Goldie, Fields, and Glide" in 1954.



Figure 10: Research image of Jack Benny for Geronte.



Figure 11: Research image of Jackie Gleason for Argante. "And awaaay we go!"



Figure 12: Research image of Jackie Gleason for Argante.



(a)



(b)

Figure 13: Research images of Jackie Gleason for Argante.

(a) From William Saroyan's *"Time of Your Life."* (b) Publicity photograph.



Figure 14: Research images of Sid Caesar for Scapin.
(a) The "Professor" crushed top hat from "Your Show of Shows"
(b) A classic dance move.



Figure 15: Research image of Jack Lemmon (and Walter Matthau) for Sylvestre. "The Odd Couple" (1967)



Figure 16: Research image of Art Carney for Sylvestre.



Figure 17: Research image of Art Carney for Sylvestre.
Carney as Ed Norton from "The Honeymooners."



Figure 18: Research image of James Dean for Leander.
Rebel Without a Cause (1955)



Figure 19: Research image of James Dean for Leander.

Rebel Without a Cause (1955)



Figure 20: Research image of James Dean for Leander.



(a)



(b)

Figure 21: (a) Research image of Ron Howard as Richie Cunningham from *Happy Days* for Octave.

(b) The boys from *Happy Days*.



Figure 22: Research image of Debbie Reynolds for Hyacinth.
Reynolds as Melba Robinson in *Two Weeks with Love* (1950.)



Figure 23: Research image of Lucille Ball for Hyacinth. (Ball with Desi Arnaz.)



Figure 24: Research image of Sophia Loren for Zerbinette.



Figure 25: Research image of Gina Lollobrigida for Zerbinette.

Hunchback of Notre Dame (1957.)



Figure 26: Research image of Ava Gardner for Nerine.



Figure 27: Research image of Ava Gardner for Nerine.



Figure 28: Research image of Liberace for George.



Figure 29: Research image of Liberace for George.

APPENDIX B: COSTUME PLATES



Figure 30: Costume rendering: Geronte



Figure 31: Costume rendering: Argante



Figure 32: Costume renderings: (a) Scapin



Figure 33: Costume rendering: Sylvestre

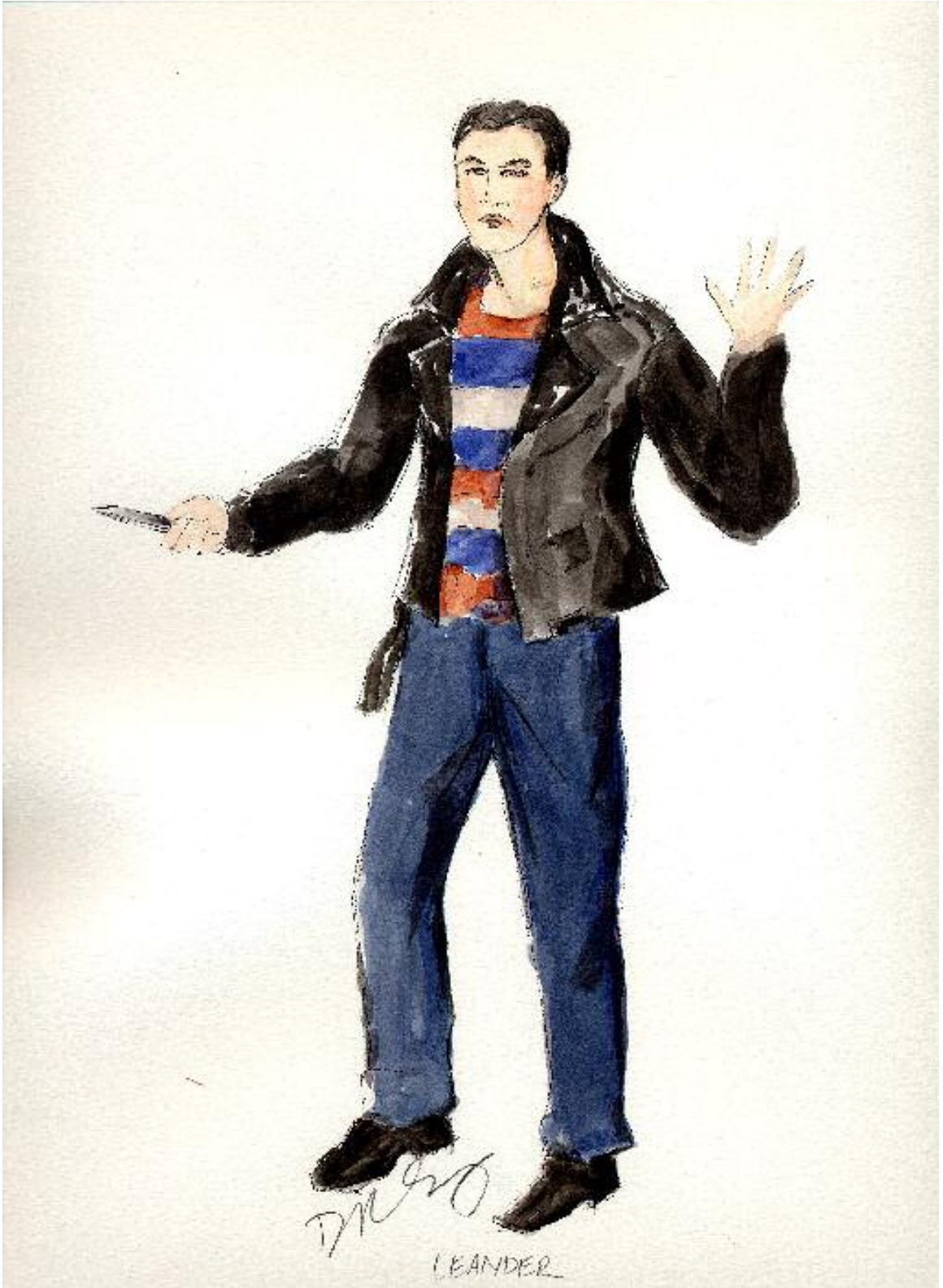


Figure 34: Costume rendering: Leander



Figure 35: Costume rendering: Octave



Figure 36: Costume rendering: Hyacinth



Figure 37: Costume rendering: Zerbinette



Figure 38: Costume rendering: Nerine

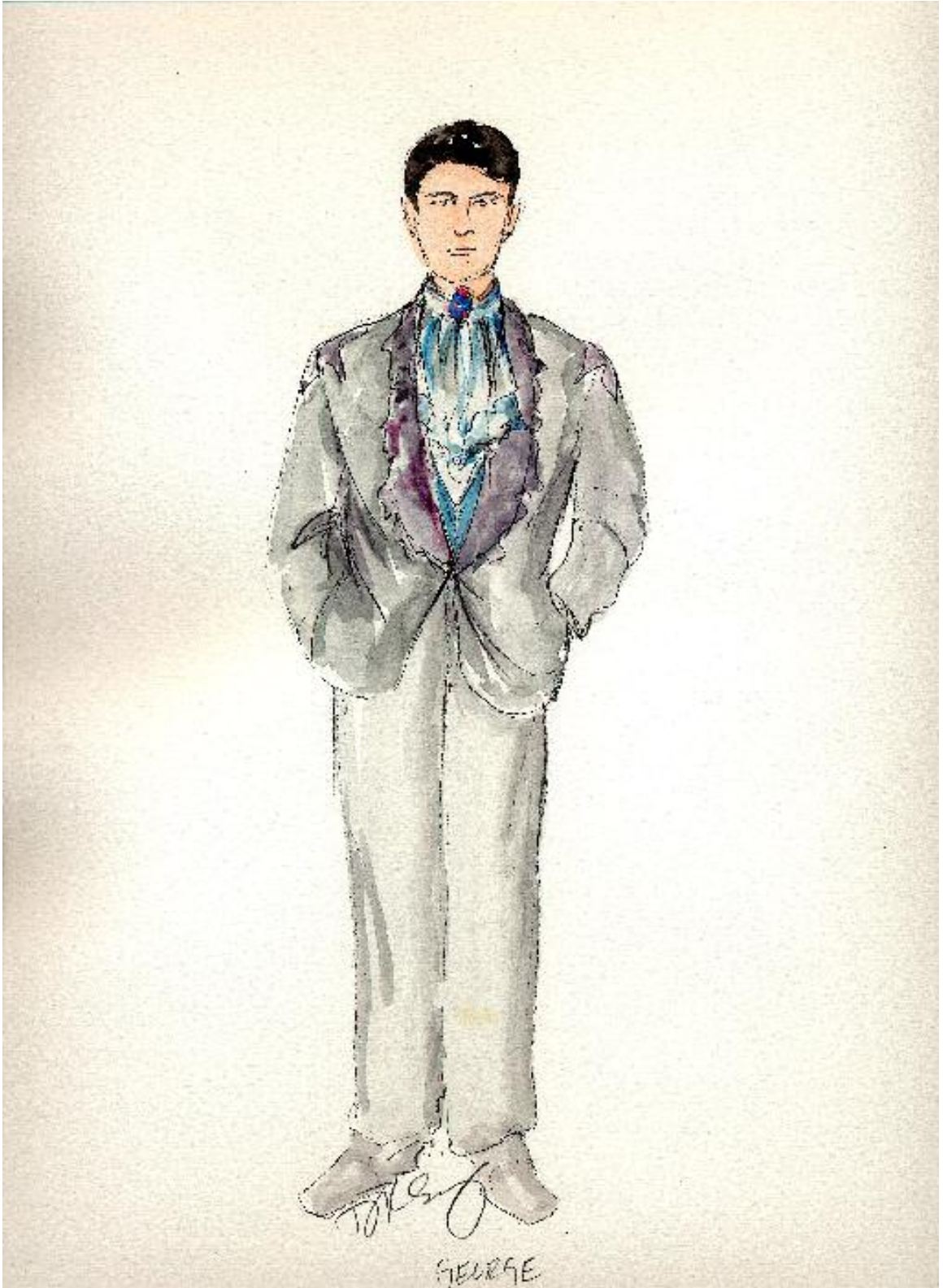


Figure 39: Costume rendering: George

APPENDIX C: PRODUCTION PHOTOS



Figure 40: Jen Alexander as the Messenger with Sean Hoagland as Sylvestre.
Photo by Stan Barouh.

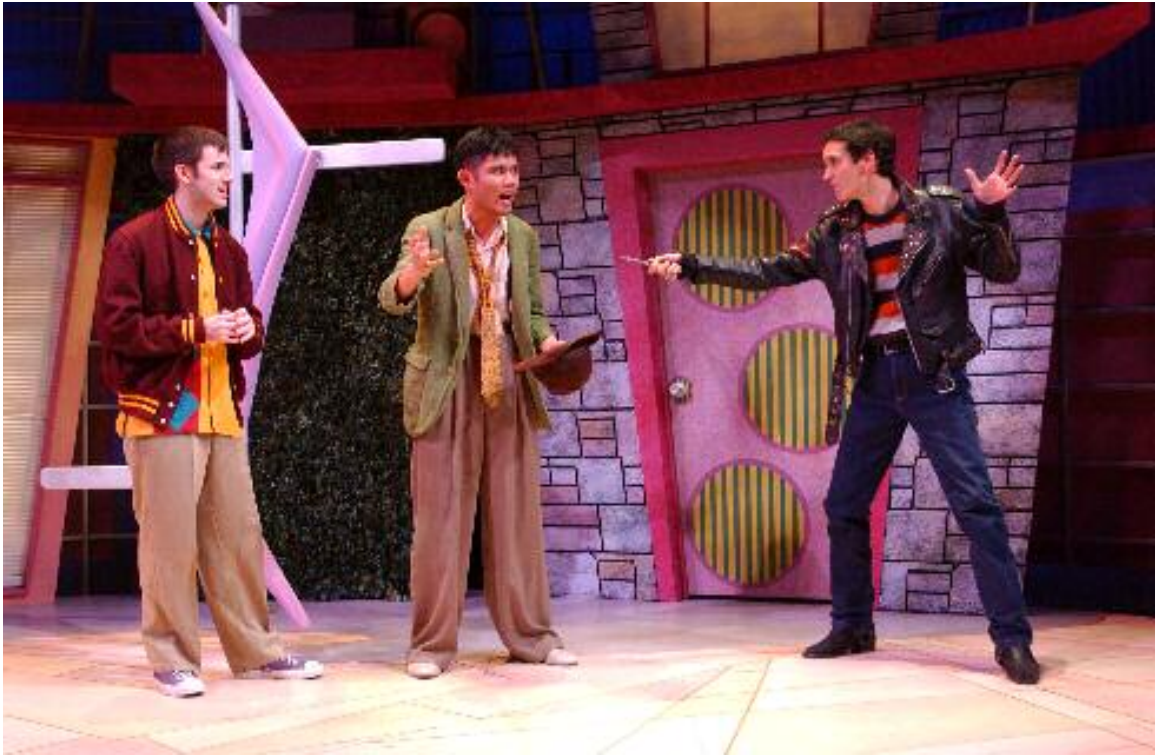


Figure 41: Mike Grew as Octave, Nathaniel Claridad as Scapin,

and Kurt Chiang as Leander. Photo by Stan Barouh.



Figure 42: Sarah Devillier and Tiernan Madorno as Hyacinth and Zerbinette.
Photo by Stan Barouh.



Figure 43: (L to R) Brianne Cobuzzi as Nerine, Tyler Smith as Geronte, Mike Grew as Octave, Art Hall as Argante, Sean Hoagland as Sylvestre, and Sarah

De villier as Hyacinth. Photo by Stan Barouh.



Figure 44: Nathaniel Claridad as Scapin with Tyler Smith as Geronte.

Photo by Stan Barouh.



Figure 45: Sean Hoagland as Sylvestre in disguise. Photo by Stan Barouh.

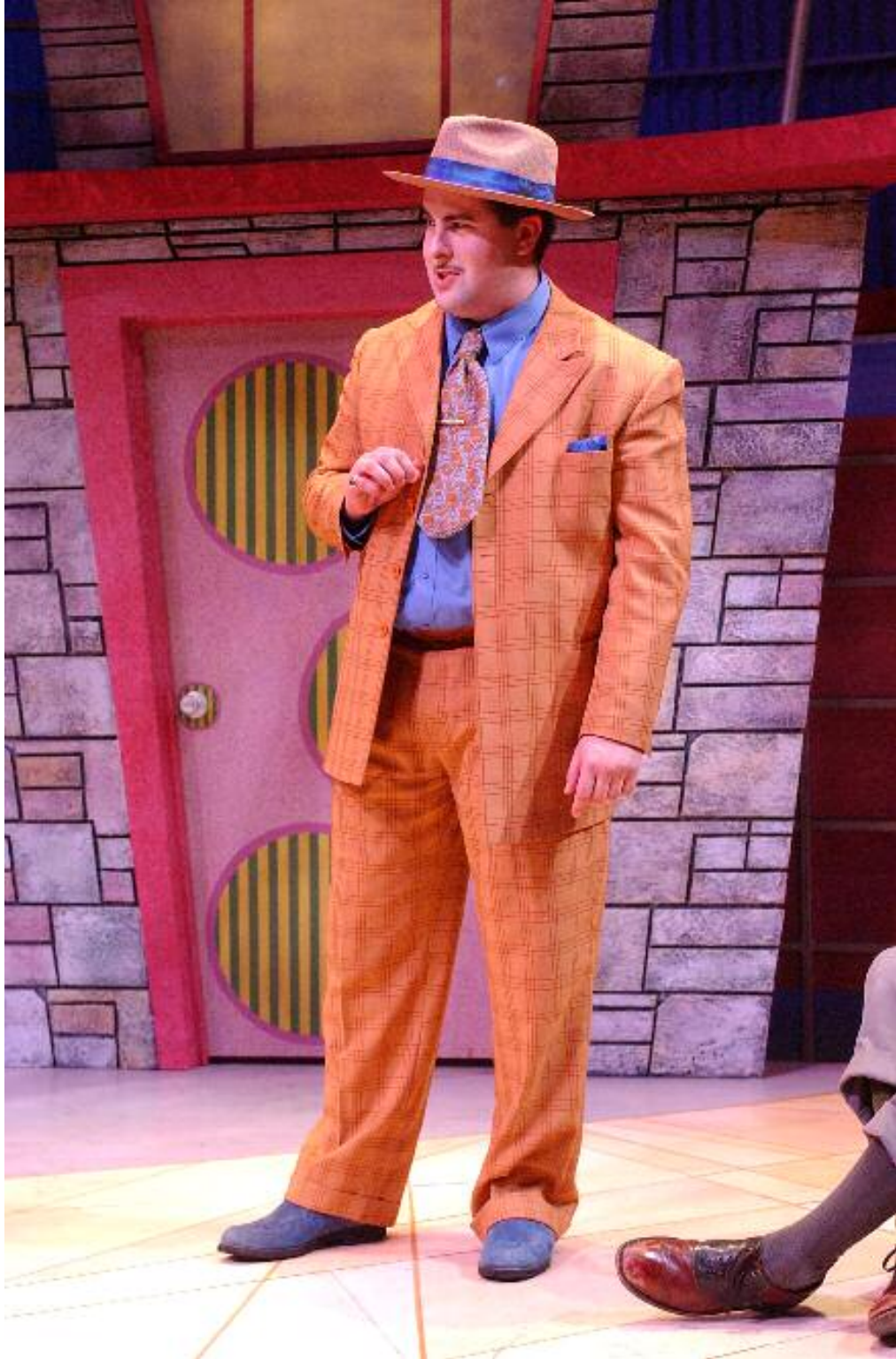


Figure 46: Art Hall as Argante. Photo by Stan Barouh.



Figure 47: John LaBombard as George the piano player. Photo by Stan Barouh.



Figure 48: Brianne Cobuzzi as Nerine with Nathaniel Claridad as Scapin.

Photo by Stan Barouh.



Figure 49: The entire company. Photo by Stan Barouh.

APPENDIX D: SUPPORTING PAPERWORK

SCAPIN FALL 2003		
COSTUME LIST		
ACTOR	PIECE	COSTUME DESCRIPTION
CHIANG, KURT	jacket	black leather motorcycle
Leander	sweater	orange and navy stripe
	boots	black motorcycle
	socks	thick gray athletic
	belt	black leather
	jeans	dark blue
	undershirt	white
CLARIDAD, NATHANIEL	top hat 2x	brown felt crushed crown
Scapin	pants 2 x	green (one bright, one less bright)
	shirt	white w/orange plaid
	suit jacket 1	distressed green
	suit jacket 2	green plaid w/ yellow flower
	cape	shiny green w/ hood
	mask	brown commedia dell'arte
	shoes	gray/green
	tie 2x	yellow/brown(one is quick rigged)
	drag dress	green polka dot
	heels	off white
	petticoat	green built into dress
	suspenders	green
	socks	green argyle
	knee highs	nude
	ladies hat w/ blond wig	white horsehair with green trim
	scarf	orange w/ black dots
GREW, MICHAEL	pants	khakis
Octave	shirt	yellow with blue/pink diamonds
	letter jacket	maroon and yellow

	shoes	purple converse
	undershirt	white
	socks	gray
	underwear	maroon boxer shorts
	handkerchief	cream
HALL, ART	suit	two piece peach plaid
Argante	shirt	blue buttondown
	tie	blue and peach
	shoes	blue suede slip ons
	suspenders	cream
	undershirt	white
	socks	gray
	hat	cocoa fedora with blue band
	handkerchief	blue in his jacket breast pocket
HOAGLAND, SEAN	pants	gray with wide cuffs
Sylvestre	sweater vest	maroon with diamonds
	shirt	green and blue houndstooth check
	hat	dark brown fedora
	shoes	black and maroon two tone
	trench coat	gray
	priest robe	black
	socks	one green, one blue
	suspenders	blue w/ red dots
	undershirt	white
	fake beard	brown, on ear loops
	mask	commedia dell'arte
	cape	shiny black w/ hood
LABOMBARD, JOHN	pants	off white
George	shoes	white
	jabot	blue and silver
	suit jacket	silver disco dot with beading
	shirt	white
	5 rings	
	handkerchief	blue/purple shiny
SMITH, TYLER	pants	brown twill
Geronte	suit jacket	green four button
	shirt	yellow brown zig zag weave
	tie	orange/green stripe
	hat	straw boater w/ orange band
	shoes	brown two tone

	sock garter	brown
	undershirt	white
TOWNSEND, BEN	jacket	blue with red trim
Gendarme	shirt	white
	pants	striped blue
	tie	red and blue
	socks	dark blue
	shoes	red lace up
	undershirt	white
	policeman hat	navy
Porter	pill box hat	red/blue
	vest	navy
ALEXANDER, JENNIFER		
Messenger	dress	yellow/green diner style
	roller-skates	white (actress' own)
	hair bow	orange
Porter	suit	two piece navy skirt suit
	shoes	maroon
	hat	pillbox red/blue
	stockings	nude
	earrings	gold studs
	scarf	red
Gendarme	policeman hat	navy
	hair bow	red
COBUZZI, BRIANNE	dress	rust/salmon split front
Nerine	shoes	light brown
	necklace	light pink stone
	matching belt	rust silk
	pants	brown capris
	knee highs	nude
	underwear	long lined bra with cookies
DEVILLIER, SARAH	dress	bright pink with black dots
Hyacinth	shoes	black sandals
	stockings	nude
	necklace	silver/pearl
	hair ribbon	pink w/ black dots
	earrings	pearls
	belt	black velvet

	underwear	long lined bra
	petticoat	yellow net
	shawl	black lace with fringe
	handkerchief	cream lace
MADORNO, TIERNAN	dress	orange/red jungle print
Zerbinette	shawl	purple fringed
	bead necklace 3x	brown/beige
	wrist jewelry 3x	glass stones
	earrings	reddish wood
	shoes	maroon/tan diamond heels
	belt	red vinyl
	hair band	tan suede
	petticoat	orange
	stockings	nude

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bacon, James. *How sweet it is: the Jackie Gleason story*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985.
- Baudot, Francois. *Fashion; the twentieth century*. New York: Rizzoli, 1999.
- Berson, Misha. "Flirting with Face." *American Theatre*, July / August 1995.
- Bold, Stephen C. "'Ce neud subtil'": Molière's invention of comedy from *L'Etourdi* to *Les Fourberies de Scapin*." *Romantic Review* 88 (1997): 67-89.
- Brantley, Ben. "M. Molière, meet Mr. Irwin, He Clowns Around a Bit, Too." *New York Times*, 10 January 1997.
- _____. "A Subversive Servant and the Debt Comedy Owes Him." *New York Times*, 22 September 2003, sec. E.
- Caesar, Sid. *Where Have I Been?* New York: Crown Publishers, 1982.
- Cheunoune, Farid. *A History of Men's Fashion*, trans. Deke Dusingberre. Paris: Flammarion, 1993.
- Dalva, Nancy Vreeland. "Bill Irwin, Dance Clown: The Postmodern Funny Man." *Dance Magazine*, September 1989.
- de la Haye, Amy, and Cathie Dingwall. *Surfers, Soulies, Skinheads and Skaters*. Woodstock, New York: Overlook Press, 1996.
- Ettinger, Roseann. *Fifties Forever: Popular Fashions for Men, Women, Boys and Girls*. Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 1998.
- Evans, Greg. "Scapin." *Variety*, 19 January 1997.
- Gussow, Mel. "A Clown Changes Costume and, Presto: Playwright." *New York Times*, 18 September 2003, sec. E.
- Lovett-Smith, Lisa, and Patrick Remy, ed. *Fashion images de mode No.2*. Göttingen: Steidl, 1997.
- McDowell, Colin. *The Man of Fashion: peacock males and perfect gentlemen*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1997.

Schlachter, Trudy. *Millennium mode: fashion forecasts from 40 top designers*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.

Sims, Caitlin. "A Meeting of Like Mimes." *Dance Magazine*, March 1998.

Toscano, Michael. "Uninhibited Cast Creates Manic, Modern Molière." *Washington Post*, 20 November 2003, final edition, sec. T.