ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: INTIMATE APPAREL: AN EXPLORATION OF COSTUME DESIGN IDEAS AND PROCESS FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND’S DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE, DANCE AND PERFORMING STUDIES, 2015 PRODUCTION

Marchlena Jovan Rodgers, Master of Fine Arts, 2016

Thesis Directed By: Professor Helen Q. Huang, Department of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies.

The following thesis navigates the primary artistic concept, design process and execution of Marchlena Rodgers’ costume design for the University of Maryland’s production of Intimate Apparel. Intimate Apparel opened October 9, 2015 in the University of Maryland’s Kay Theatre. The piece was written by Lynn Nottage directed by Jennifer Nelson. The set was designed by Lydia Francis, Lighting was designed by Max Doolittle.
INTIMATE APPAREL: AN EXPLORATION OF COSTUME DESIGN IDEAS AND PROCESS FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND'S DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE, DANCE AND PERFORMING STUDIES 2015 PRODUCTION.

by

Marchlena Jovan Rodgers

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 2016

Advisory Committee:
Professor Helen Q. Huang, Chair
Associate Professor Misha Kachman
Associate Professor Faedra Chatard Carpenter
Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to God because if it were not for him giving me the desires of my heart, I would still be lost. To my parents, Mammie, Marshall and my sister Cynthia, I wake up and work hard for the three of you, because you believed in me from day one. Reggie Ray, my guardian angel: you saw the light in me, and you brought it out so I could share it with the world. I wish you could be here, but I know you are with me when you are not costuming shows in heaven.

Lastly, my mentors Helen Huang and Misha Kachman: I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything you have done for me while I attended this program. You have no idea how much of an impact you have had on my life within the last two and a half years; I will forever be thankful for your, time, tutelage, patience, and faith in me.
Acknowledgements

To Lynn Nottage, thank you for writing a graceful and uplifting sonnet of words that speaks to any and everyone that comes in contact with it. *Intimate Apparel* not only spoke a story similar to my own but through the character of Esther I was able to accept time, which has its plan, we just have to trust it.

To my fellow designers, Lydia Francis and Max Doolittle, thank you for being apart of the design process with me. It was truly a pleasure.
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Chapter 1: Statement of Design Concept and Process

About the Play

*Intimate Apparel* is a theatrical by Lynn Nottage. Esther Mills, the main character, migrates from North Carolina to New York City to seek work at the age of seventeen. Esther is currently living in a Victorian-styled boarding house located in New York set in 1905 owned by Mrs. Dickson and her late husband Mr. Dickson with several other women, where she sews intimate apparel (handmade undergarments) for her clients. Because of her expertise and skill, Esther has developed a committed clientele over the years: women ranging from upper-class Caucasian women to lower class African American women. Esther comes in high demand, partially due to her excellent skills as a seamstress and level of discretion. Two of her clients mentioned in the play are Mayme, African American prostitute and Mrs. Van Buren, the wife of a white millionaire.

Throughout the years, Esther has managed to save a large sum of money, which she has put away in a quilt with hopes of one day opening a beauty salon where African American women will be treated as high-class citizens. Although Esther is working hard to design and create intimate apparel for her clients, time is passing away and she is starting to realize that she may never marry.

During the beginning of the play, one of Esther’s housemates will be wedded off soon, and Mrs. Dickson is trying to convince Esther to attend the nuptial festivities. Already reluctant due to her introverted personality, Esther is unenthusiastic about attending the engagement party due to her growing jealousy of
seeing her housemates wedded off. Also, in the same breath, Mrs. Dickson is trying to convince Esther that she should take a liking to Charles, a male suitor that frequently attends Mrs. Dickson’s social events. Although Charles may be the “perfect man” according to Mrs. Dickson’s standards, Esther declines the idea of courtship with him. It is at this moment we see Esther’s pride as a woman, as she remains hopeful for “true love” yet standing firmly on the belief of not selling herself short just to be married. Mrs. Dickson is finally able to convince Esther to attend the party. Deep down inside Esther wishes the celebration was for her instead her housemate.

As fate would have it, a handsome Caribbean man from the Barbados named George, who is working in Panama, starts to court Esther through his beautifully written letters. Esther is immediately excited for new love, but she can not fully enjoy the experience of exchanging love letters because she is illiterate. So she has her clients, Mrs. Van Buren and Mayme, read and respond to the letters from George. Over time the words that are exchanged through the letters birth intimacy between Esther and George, and never having seen Esther in person, George asks for Esther’s hand in marriage. Esther hastily accepts George’s proposal, as she feels she is running out of time to get married.

On the contrary, Mr. Marks, a Hasidic Jewish shopkeeper from whom Esther buys her fabric, is also falling in love with Esther. However, there is no possibility of love for an African American woman and a Jewish man. It was simply not sanctioned by the social standards of the time. The love between Mr. Marks and Esther could only be shared when she visits his shop and through the fabrics with which they express their affection.
When George arrives in New York from Panama, the couple gets married, and Esther’s dreams of being a wife have finally come true. Shortly after their wedding, however, strife makes way for their marriage. George’s role of being a provider and his manhood are handicapped due to racism and immigrant bias, both of which prevent him from finding work. As a result, his ego is damaged and through this frustration, he starts to take advantage of Esther’s love for him and their marriage quickly unravels. In a confrontation between Esther and George it is revealed that the words written in the letters sent by each of them were fabricated. George has become reckless with money, frustrated by his lack of work and independence, and increasingly agitated in his interaction with his new wife, Esther.

Additionally, we learn that George is being unfaithful to Esther and has become intimate with Esther’s client, Mayme, who also has fallen in love with George. Esther is aware of George’s vast change in attitude, yet her yearning to be married has afforded her to turn a blind eye to his erratic behavior. During this unfortunate time in their marriage, George also ends up telling Esther a fabricated story of investing in a new business, claiming that he needs Esther’s entire savings. Esther gives the money to George, and he gambles away all the money and then abandons her. Intensely pained by the betrayal, but still prideful, Esther returns to the boarding house determined to use her gifted hands and her sewing machine to refashion her dreams and make them anew from the whole cloth of her life's experiences.
My Process

After familiarizing ourselves with the *Intimate Apparel* script, the design team met with the director, Jennifer Nelson. The design team’s first conversation with Jennifer Nelson began at our initial design meeting last spring, where Ms. Nelson gave feedback on her point of view on the play. One thing Jennifer mentioned during tech that resonated with me was “Lynn Nottage was telling a story about women during a moment of history in which our country was changing, and the effects of the great migration subsequently birthing New York’s melting point.” Additionally, she spoke a lot about the Panama Canal and the effects it had on the beginning of the American empire. While concluded her presentation, she explained that she placed great importance on how the world should be established, and the metaphor of the quilt (which represented New York). Jennifer’s expectations for costumes were straightforward. The characters’ costumes should reflect the proper time period and, most of all, each character’s social status. What I took away from the initial design meeting was to dive more into research on the Panama Canal and New York City social classes in the early 1900s. The design team presented preliminary research to Jennifer, and we all were given the task to “dig a littler deeper.”

After meeting with the production team and getting the directors expectations of the show, it was now my job to do more research. With that being said, I immediately took a step back and thought about how this process should begin. The key was to find out what exactly made each of the characters different, and how could I visually communicate each character’s personality and economic status. In doing so,

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1 In-person design meeting/interview at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
I started to do more dramaturgical and historical research in the early 1900s to help further inform the design I would create. In particular, I watched “Rag Time” a movie set in the early 1900s. While doing so, I paid attention to the clothing style of the men and women in the African American culture. Additionally, I watched a documentary on PBS entitled *Panama Canal*, where I learned more about the migration of immigrants to Panama to find work.

At the design team’s second meeting, we gathered to share our more refined research and ideas. Lydia Francis (set designer) presented research images of a world in which all of the characters would share. To merge the worlds of each character, a picture of New York City would grace the stage metaphorically in the background. Max Doolittle (lighting designer) presented research that would shape the emotional landscape and mood for the show. Concurrently, I showed my updated research, which included more refined selections of images of corsets and intimate apparel from the early 1900s; in addition to more photographs of clothing worn in the early 1900s. As well as, images of African American women and men in clothing during that time with corresponding preliminary costume design renderings.

After gathering all of my notes from previous design meetings, I presented updated research and final costume renderings at the final design meeting. Each character was designed to mimic the keywords given, as well as fit within the world of the play. Additionally, I simultaneously created stylized versions of the intimate apparel in which Esther would have designed/made for her clients. I assigned keywords to each character, which allowed me to conceive their costumes for the stage. For Esther (a woman with fortitude, a survivor, and one that move beyond
pain), I wanted to design a costume that would show her strength and conservativeness. Mrs. Dickson, a middle-class socialite, would be well groomed and appear overly dressed. George would start off as a “field” worker with distressed clothing, but when he reaches New York City and marries Esther, she would eventually start to dress him. Mr. Marks, an orthodox Jewish man, would wear a traditional black suiting and prayer shawl to represent the fact that he was always trying to pay homage to God.

Following sketching, the next step was to paint the line drawings. With that being said, I used art inspiration from Alphonse Mucha to inform the color palette of the show. Mucha was a Czechoslovakian Art Nouveau painter, known best for his distinct style and use of pastel colors. His color palette was perfect for the show because it helped distinguish the characters and the visual texture helped set the visual aesthetic and mood for their costumes. Even during this process, it was critical that I paid close attention to the color palette and that I correctly related it to the silhouettes/design of the costumes. The goal was for the color renderings to inform my decision-making process when I would go to fabric swatch.

At the final design meeting, I presented my color renderings with corresponding research to the director and the design team. Jennifer was pleased with the information presented by the three designers. Now I was tasked with moving forward with shopping and pulling costumes for the show. Prioritizing what costumes to shop for, as well as, pulling/renting and building costumes.

As autumn fell, I had Draper meetings with each Draper at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center’s Costume Shop to discuss the construction of the costumes,
specifically all of the corsets and costumes for Mrs. Van Buren, Mayme, and Esther. The draper meetings were very informative as it gave me a better understanding as to how much yardage would be used to make each garment and what types of fabric and trim to purchase.

As we swiftly moved into production, I was given the incredible opportunity to swatch and fabric shop in New York City’s garment district for the costumes that would be built by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center’s Costume Shop. My esteemed mentor, Professor Helen Huang, supervised me and gave me suggestions on choosing fabric that would give visual interest to the costumes and overall design of the show. Reflecting back, the fabric chosen added great detail to the overall design. For example the fabric for the twin corsets, which were visually appealing and upheld the playwright's color wishes at the same time. Having the “right” fabric for the built costumes was an essential element to the design of the costumes. Through Professor Helen Huang’s guidance, we spent an entire afternoon thoroughly comparing swatches collected, and thus chose the most appropriate fabric for the builds. The fabric trip to New York was an extremely fruitful experience and was imperative to my learning process because it allowed me to see how a colored rendering informed the fabric selection process. Ultimately starting the birthing process of bringing my design to life, it was magical.

Once the fabric was purchased it was time for the construction of the costumes. As the costumes were being built and incorporated into the fittings, I was then able to see the design in a mockup form. During several of the mock up fittings I was able to identify differences in what I intended the design to look like and what
the Draper had constructed. For example, the pink corset I designed for Mrs. Van Buren was not the same garment constructed by the Draper. Having my research and renderings present during the fittings allowed me to quickly identify what I intended to have designed for the stage and because of this I was able to recognize any issues in during the mock up fittings. Concurrent to the mock up fittings, I would have fittings for costumes that were pulled, rented or purchased.

One interesting example of research that helped me in the fitting process was for Mr. Marks. My fellow designer, Max Doolittle, who is of Jewish decent and gave me a quick workshop on how one should properly wear the tallit (prayer shawl), as well as the proper hat, which depended on what Jewish tribe he descended from. I was enlightened and intrigued after learning more on the proper protocol of dress for Jewish men.

The most rewarding moments during the fitting process was when I saw several of the characters come to life in the fitting room. My costume renderings were just a vessel to bring the costumes to life. It was a truly a dream come true.

**The Dress Parade and Tech**

During the dress parade, admittedly, I was overly frustrated with the costume shop as my hope was that the costumes would be complete and the designs be as close to fully realized as possible during the dress parade. However, the costume shop ran out of time and what could be shown that evening during the parade was presented to my mentor Helen Huang, and the director, Jennifer Nelson. At that time, I received a plethora of notes to change some of the costumes from my advisor,
Professor Helen Huang. Particularly the choices I made for Mrs. Van Buren’s shoes, which initially were gold, and during the parade, it was decided to change them to black so her costume could fit better in the world. Another note I received was to make the costume George arrives in America in less formal.

After receiving my notes from the parade, I took the next morning to reflect on how I could quickly improve the designs and make them better. With that being said, I changed Mrs. Van Buren’s shoes to fit in the world of the other characters. For George, the guidance from my mentor professor Helen Huang was immensely helpful during the dress parade. As she advised me to think about what costume would best represent his social and economic status when arriving in America. I was able to create a costume that best supported the arch of George’s costumes starting from the Panama Canal to after he marries Esther.

Finally, the wig choices for the female characters were another note I received during the dress parade. The choice of hair for the African American characters was incorrect. The chosen hair for the wigs read more toward “Caucasian” hair versus kinky/curly or “afro hair.”

With the dress parade being on Thursday and the faculty run on Sunday, I made a major push and dedicated myself to completing all the costumes so that my Professor Helen Huang could see my entire design. In doing so, Friday night through Sunday right before the faculty run, I vigorously worked on the costumes that had notes to show a complete design, which was a successful attempt to show that I was able to adjust under any circumstance, while still holding on to the integrity of my design.
During tech week, I received notes on how we could further improve Esther’s third costume. The director presented the idea of Esther having a costume change to a new corset. The new proposal caused a major challenge as the scene required for the change of costume to happen on stage. With that being said, I was able to convince Jennifer to allow Esther to keep on her wedding corset throughout the run of the show. For this scene, in particular, I presented a red shawl for Esther to wear, and my justification was to show the parallel between Esther and Mayme’s costumes in the Second Act.

Additionally, there were concerns from the director in regards to the lighting of African American skin tones and how the light was washing out the costumes, particularly for George’s first look and Esther’s everyday look. I received several notes on distressing George’s top of the show costumes. I relayed this information to the costume shop and our craftswoman, Lisa Burgess, graciously worked with me in trying to further develop this look. We were able to get the distressing to a respectable point without comprising the integrality of the design.

Jennifer gave me the opportunity to sit next to her during the tech process, and I believe that this allowed our collaboration to develop, ultimately evolving the design of the production as a whole. Having this opportunity and trust in me was such an honor and helped my confidence as a designer.
Chapter 2: Character and Costume Research

The following pages contain research plates presented at the design meeting(s). The images were selected from a larger pool of research gathered throughout the process and arranged in compositions expressing my thoughts about each character.
Intimate Apparel ... Esther
Intimate Apparel... Esther
Intimate Apparel... Esther
Intimate Apparel... Mrs. Van Buren
Intimate Apparel... Mrs. Van Buren
Intimate Apparel... Mrs. Van Buren
Intimate Apparel... Mr. Marks
Intimate Apparel ... Mayme
THE WAR ON MOSQUITOES. III.
Spraying the brooks with larvicide

THE RELAXATION OF PAY DAY
Intimate Apparel

George
Intimate Apparel

George
Intimate Apparel... Art Inspiration
Intimate Apparel ... Art Inspiration
Chapter 3: Costume Renderings

The following pages contain the final costume renderings submitted to both the Director, Jennifer Nelson and the Costume Shop. The renderings were also used to guide in the selection of fabric and/or alteration of purchased or rental items.

Final Rendering for Esther
Final Rendering for Esther
Final Rendering for Esther
Intimate Apparel

Esther
Act 2, Scene 4

Final Rendering for Esther
Intimate Apparel

Mrs. Dickson
Act 1, Scene 1

Final Rendering for Mrs. Dickson
Final Rendering for Mrs. Dickson
Final Rendering for Mrs. Van Buren
Mrs. Van Buren
Blue Pale Beaded Corset

Final Rendering for Mrs. Van Buren
Final Rendering for Mr. Marks
Intimate Apparel

Mr. Marks
Act 2, Scene 5

Final Rendering for Mr. Marks
Intimate Apparel

Mayme
Pale Blue Beaded Corset

Final Rendering for Mayme
Intimate Apparel

Final Rendering for Mayme
Intimate Apparel

Final Rendering for Mayme
Final Rendering for George
Intimate Apparels

Final Rendering for George
Intimate Apparel

Final Rendering for George

George Act 1, Scene 6
Final Rendering for George
Chapter 4: Fitting Photos and Fitting Process

The following images document the fitting process for each performer. As noted in the caption(s) below are the photos of the built costumes by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center. In addition to the items sourced and altered to fit the design of the production.
Esther
Summer Brown
Fabric fitting for Wedding Corset

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
Esther
Summer Brown
Mock up fitting for Wedding Corset

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
Esther
Summer Brown
1st Mock Up
Fitting for Wedding Dress and Wig

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
Esther
Summer Brown
2nd Mock Up
Fitting for Wedding Dress

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
Esther
Summer Brown
1st Mock Up
Fitting for Wedding Veil

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
Esther
Summer Brown
Wig Fitting

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
Esther
Summer Brown
Fabric Fitting for Wedding Dress

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
Esther
Summer Brown
Fabric Fitting for Wedding Dress and Wedding Veil

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
Esther
Summer Brown
Mock Up Fitting for Shirt Waist

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
(Shirt Waist Only)
Esther
Summer Brown
Fabric Fitting for Shirt Waist with Skirt

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
(Shirt Waist Only)
Esther
Summer Brown
Mock Up Fitting for Shirt Waist

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
(Complete look with built Shirt Waist)
Esther
Summer Brown
Fitting for Outerwear
Esther
Fitting for Corset, Act Two
Esther
Summer Brown
Fitting for Alternative Act Two Costume (Shawl)
Esther
Summer Brown
Wig Design
Mayme
Agyeiwaa Asante
Mock Up Fitting for Twin Corset

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
Mayme
Agyeiwaa Asante
Mock Up Fitting for Twin Corset (SIDE VIEW)

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
Mayme
Agyeiwaa Asante
Mock Up  Fitting for One Piece Chemise and Bloomers

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
Mayme
Agyeiwaa Asante
Costume Fitting for Act Two
Mayme
Agyeiwa Asante
Wig Design
Mayme
Agyeiwaa Asante
Mock Up Fitting for Piece Chemise and Bloomers (two piece)
Fabric for Twin Corset

Mayme
Agyeiwaa Asante
Mock Up Fitting for Piece Chemise and Bloomers (Two Piece)
Fabric for Twin Corset with Robe

Built Costume(s) by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
Ms. Van Buren
Rachel Grandizio
Mock Up Fitting for Twin Corset, Piece Chemise and Bloomers

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center

Ms. Van Buren
Rachel Grandizio
Mock Up Fitting for Twin Corset and Underwear

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
Ms. Van Buren
Rachel Grandizio
Fabric Fitting Twin Corset, Chemise and Bloomers

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
Ms. Van Buren
Rachel Grandizio
Mock Up Fitting for Kimono

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
Ms. Van Buren
Rachel Grandizio
Mock Up Fitting for Kimono (SIDE VIEW)

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
Ms. Van Buren
Rachel Grandizio
Fabric Fitting for Kimono

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
Ms. Van Buren
Rachel Grandizio
Fabric Fitting for Corset, Chemise and Bloomers

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
Ms. Van Buren
Rachel Grandizio
Corset Fitting
Trim for Twin Corsets
Mrs. Van Buren
and Mayme
Mr. Marks
Noah Israel
Mr. Marks
Noah Israel
Mock Up Fitting
Smoking Jacket

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
Mr. Marks
Noah Israel
Fabric Fitting
Smoking Jacket

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
Mr. Marks
Noah Israel
Fabric Fitting
Smoking Jacket

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
George
Philip Kershaw
Mock Up Fitting for Suit and Matching Vest

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
George
Philip Kershaw
Mock Up Fitting for Suit Pant

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
George
Philip Kershaw
2nd Fabric Fitting for Suit

Built Costume by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
George
Philip Kershaw
Costume Fitting for Top of Show
George
Philip Kershaw
Costume Fitting for Top of Show
George
Philip Kershaw
Costume Fitting for Top of Show
George
Philip Kershaw
Hair Design
Mrs. Dickson
Korinn Walfall
Costume Fitting for Top of Show
Mrs. Dickson
Korinn Walfall
Costume Fitting for Top of Show
Mrs. Dickson
Korinn Walfall
Costume Fitting for End of Act One
Mrs. Dickson
Korinn Walfall
Wig Design
Chapter 5: Production Paperwork

The following pages contain various forms of paperwork generated during the design and production of Intimate Apparel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Costume Piece</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Pull/Buy/Build/Rent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summer Brown</td>
<td>Esther</td>
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<td>Shirt Waist</td>
<td>Patterned</td>
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<td>Lace</td>
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<td>Pull</td>
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<td>Boot</td>
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<td>Rent/Pop</td>
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<td>Corset</td>
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<td>Build</td>
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<td>Stockings</td>
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<td>Build</td>
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<td>Gown</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rent/Pop</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wedding Gown</td>
<td>Lace with detail</td>
<td>Build</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wedding Coat</td>
<td>Lace with detail</td>
<td>Build</td>
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<td>Wedding Shoe</td>
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<td>Raw</td>
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<td>Veil</td>
<td>Lace</td>
<td>Raw</td>
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<td>Petticoat</td>
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<td>Rent/Pop</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wig</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Dark Solid Color</td>
<td>Pull/Buy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hat</td>
<td>Dark Solid Color</td>
<td>Pull</td>
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<td>SAME AS LOOK 1 AND 2</td>
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<td>Stockings</td>
<td>Dark Solid Color</td>
<td>SAME AS LOOK 1</td>
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<td>Wig</td>
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<td>SAME AS LOOK 1 AND 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dress Panties</td>
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<td>Pull</td>
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<td>Corset</td>
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<td>Build</td>
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<td>Stockings</td>
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<td>Wedding Gown</td>
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<td>Rent/Pop</td>
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<td>Wedding Coat</td>
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<td>Wedding Shoe</td>
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Intimate Apparel Production Piece List 3 of 3
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**Intimate Apparel Costume Plot**
Chapter 6: Production Photos

All Photos taken by Stan Barouh

George (Philip Kershaw)
Mrs. Dickson (Korinn Walfall) and Esther (Summer Brown)
George (Philip Kershaw) and Esther (Summer Brown)
Mrs. Dickson (Korinn Walfall) and Esther (Summer Brown)
Esther (Summer Brown)
Mrs. Van Buren (Rachel Grandizio) and Esther (Summer Brown)

George (Philip Kershaw) and Esther (Summer Brown)
Esther (Summer Brown) and Mr. Marks (Noah Isreal)
Mayme (Agyeiwaa Asante) and Esther (Summer Brown)
George (Philip Kershaw)
Mayme (Agyeiwaa Asante) and Esther (Summer Brown)
Mayme (Agyeiwaa Asante) and Esther (Summer Brown)
George (Philip Kershaw) and Esther (Summer Brown)
George (Philip Kershaw) and Esther (Summer Brown)
Mayme (Agyeiwaa Asante) and Esther (Summer Brown)
Mayme (Agyeiwaa Asante) and Esther (Summer Brown)
Mrs. Dickson (Korinn Walfall) and Esther (Summer Brown)
Chapter 7: Conclusion

A large amount of the design work for *Intimate Apparel* was carried out from the months of February to early September. Prior to the end of school, the design team was able to meet a few times to discuss the general concept of the play and determine seasonal changes. Admittedly, the design team did not keep in contact during the summer months, and thus when we arrived in tech some decisions had to be made in a hast in regards to props for the set. For example, choosing the right bolts of fabric for Mr. Mark’s Boudoir. In addition to, prop costumes for Mrs. Van Buren’s closet. Had their been better collaboration between myself and the set designer, I believe our choices would have been more strategic.

Constantly integrating the choices I made regarding the costumes and how they would look together as well as stand apart helped me maintain my true intention of the design. As I spent more time with the design, I found myself referring to the pictorial research I presented at the design meetings, which informed the core elements of the design. In doing so, I was able to make strategic choices on trim and fabric that would help solidify my design. Although the set turned out brown, which was an artistic decision on the set designer’s part, admittedly, I assumed that the different “living quarters” of the characters would be more “buoyant.” I do, however, feel the costumes brought color to the stage and painted a beautiful storytelling moment with lighting.

In regards to the costume design as a whole, I feel I was particularly successful in maintaining the integrity of the color palette and original spirit of the design once it transitioned to stage. Had there been more collaboration with the set
designer and lighting designer, the costumes could have had the opportunity to stand out more in silhouette, especially for Esther. Perhaps having more discussion on what color palate would be chosen for the set or even props that would be used particularly in the board housing.

Less successful elements of the design included the facial hair for one of the male characters. The lack thereof came in part from the actor not being acclimated to wearing facial hair, he ended up not wearing facial hair during the first act. Facial hair for George was intricate to my design, and although the end result looked great, I acknowledge I could have introduced this option to wear it in rehearsal sooner.

I believe the creative team was successful at designing the play. I will say, I tried my best to collaborate and welcomed any feedback from my fellow designers. To conclude, I am extremely honored and privileged to have designed the costumes for *Intimate Apparel*. From the moment I read the play, I immediately connected to Esther on so many levels. One example is that I am a woman of color who has decided to follow her dreams of being a costume designer just as Esther decided to follow her dreams of moving to New York and finding love. While doing so, keeping endurance through life’s lessons with hopes for the best outcome. If I had to write a short letter to Esther it would say, “Dear Esther, because of you I have been able to grow not only as a woman, but as a designer.” As Dwight Yoakum eloquently put it, “We share something in common with the fabric of the whole universe that connects us.”

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Despite its struggles, designing *Intimate Apparel* was a gratifying artistic journey, which led to beautiful nights of live performance. I sincerely believe the show was a cherished credit to the School of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies; the Design Area; my mentor Helen Huang and to myself as a Master of Fine Art.
Bibliography
