ABSTRACT

Title of Document: HOTEL CASSIOPEIA: A COSTUME DESIGN

Franklin Elliot Labovitz, Master of Fine Arts,

2010

Directed By: Professor Helen Q. Huang, Department of

Theatre

This thesis serves to document the concept and process for the costume design for the Department of Theatre's production of *Hotel Cassiopeia* by Charles Mee at the University of Maryland in February of 2010. Contained herein are the paperwork, research, renderings, fabric samples, fitting photographs, and other supporting documentation relevant to the creation and execution of the costume design. Also included are archival production photographs representing the design in its completed state.

HOTEL CASSIOPEIA: A COSTUME DESIGN

By

Franklin Elliot Labovitz

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

2010

Advisory Committee: Professor Helen Huang, Chair Associate Professor Daniel Conway Associate Professor Heather Nathans © Copyright by Franklin Elliot Labovitz 2010

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Chapter 1: The Design Concept and Conception

When we began design discussions in August of 2009, the director, Blake Robison, stated that he did not want the play to take place in a box. Given Joseph Cornell's chosen means of expression, three dimensional collage, or assemblage, within the frame of a box, a box could have been a natural choice. Other than this dictum, the other designers and I were afforded almost complete autonomy.

As Daniel Pinha, the set designer, and I began to think about the overall look of the show, we discussed the idea that, box or no box, both Cornell's work and Charles Mee's play suggested the use of characters/actors as objects within the frame of the set. We both felt strongly that Cornell's art should influence the physical world of the play, and mix with the reality of a man who lived most of his life in his mother's basement. With this as a starting point, I began to think about the overall approach that I would take to the costume design.

The costumes serve two distinct functions in this production. Cornell lived from 1903 until 1972, so the events occurred within a particular time frame. Though not explicit in the text, or perhaps because of this, the time period is represented primarily through the costumes. The time period for the show is set by the events of his life, with clues being given within the text such as the death of his brother Robert in 1965. The costumes serve to identify the period, and delineate the passage of time.

The second function of the costumes is to support the tone of the show.

Charles Mee's play is non-linear and disjointed. The audience is presented with a series of fragments; some feel like specific events, and others like partially formed impressions. There is a poetry to the language and structure of the writing that led me

to understand that the visual world needed a language beyond that of accurately recreated period fashions.

My initial design inspiration came while shopping for fabric for another production. At a fabric store in New York I found a bolt of off-white silk covered in handwriting. I realized then that I wanted the character of Marianne to not only be the woman who speaks to Joseph about the letters she wrote, but to be seen as the letters themselves. She would be both the character and the object that Joseph associated her with. More broadly, I realized that, as seen through the eyes of Joseph, many of the characters were representative of objects as well as people. The Artists would become not only historical figures, but also visual representations of the work that they had created.

This approach allowed for variations on the theme, with certain characters being more explicitly connected with an object, and others being suggestive of an event or location. Allegra is dressed in a light, floral, chiffon dress to give the impression of the garden that Joseph tells the scientists is where he sits with the girls who come to visit. The costume suggests the garden, though the scene was staged in the area that the audience associated with the basement in which Joseph lives.

In the scene where Joseph describes to Robert the people that he saw that day through the Bickford's Cafeteria window, I used an opportunity afforded by this kind of approach to create a sense of memory and idealism. The ensemble, dressed all in cream, brings a feeling of unreality to the scene that separates this moment between the brothers from the surrounding scenes. This allows the viewer to see the way in which Joseph chooses to present the world to his house-bound brother.

Chapter 2: Research

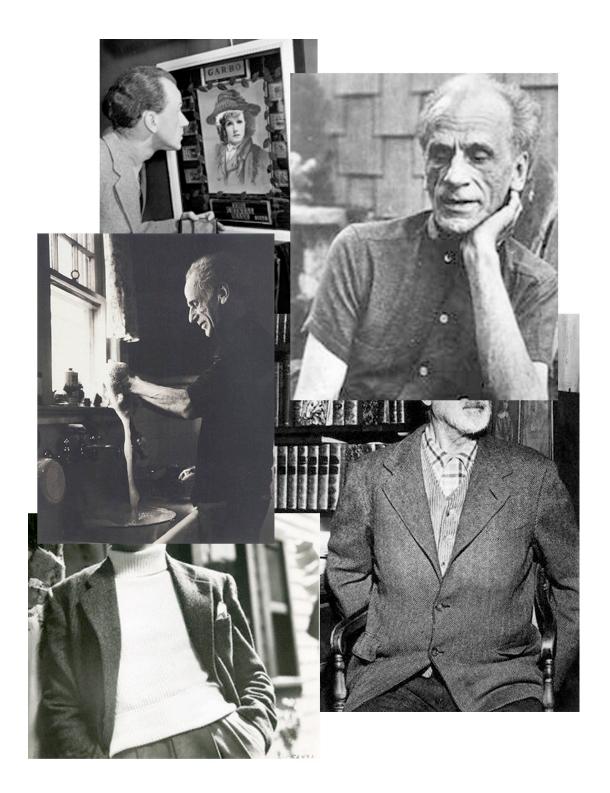
I presented my research to the director in the form of collaged images. The initial research focuses on the time period of the 1950s in general. Research related to the specific looks for the costumes of the show are presented by character on the following pages.











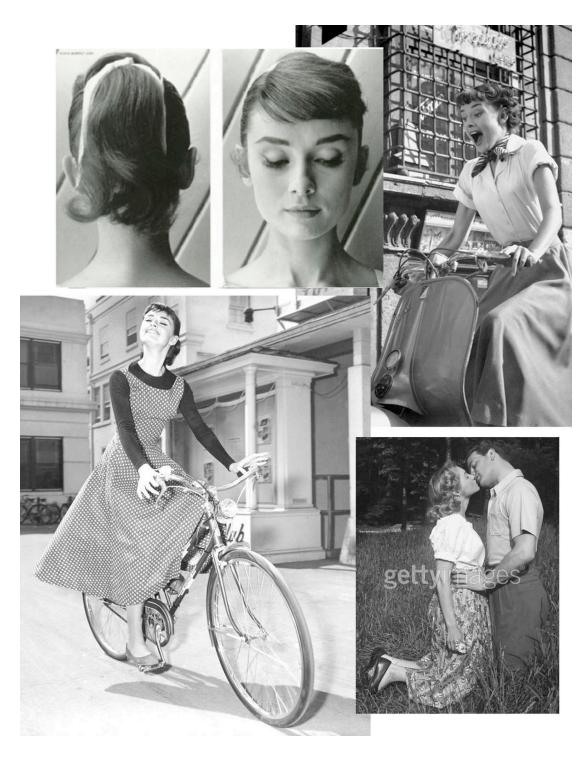
I wanted a look that could feel both casual and dressed up for Joseph. I chose to avoid putting him in a tie since so much of the action of the play takes place in his own home. It also served as a subtle difference between him and the scientists. Additionally, I wanted a layered look, allowing for simple costume variation without the need to leave the stage.



I felt that it was important that the Ballerina remind the audience of the iconic idea of a ballerina. The pancake style tutu was chosen over the softer romantic style because it was more reminiscent of a ballerina on a jewelry box. The romantic style tutu was incorporated into a fifties style party dress for the tea party because it meshed the style of ballet and the shape of fifties dresses in an elegant way, allowing me to have a look that made both statements.



The Waitress look was also chosen for its iconic feeling. I wanted her to be in a uniform, but one that was pushed farther than would feel entirely real. She is the first character that Joseph meets, and I wanted her to pop visually from the set. The look also needed so speak strongly to the period, since she is introduced so early in the text.



The Girl on a Bicycle is seen only very briefly. I wanted the look to be young and sweet, and have a sense of innocence about it. Putting her in a skirt on the bicycle also made it feel distinctly not contemporary.



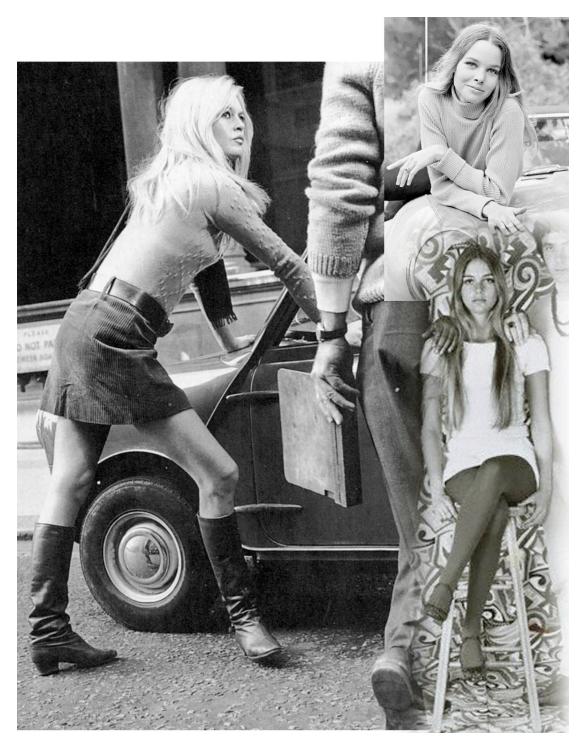
For Allegra, I wanted a very feminine, soft look. I also knew that I wanted something light and floral, to give the sense of a garden. Exposed skin, or at least the appearance of exposed skin was also important.



Since video footage of Lauren Bacall is playing when the character Lauren enters, I wanted to dress her in a way that mirrored the look in the film. After general research on Bacall's look, I focused specifically on film stills from "To Have and Have Not".



My research for Marianne focused on a very feminine iconic silhouette of the fifties. Having determined that the dress would be covered in writing, I also knew that I wanted the dress to have movement and softness to the skirt. Ultimately, I cut the high heels that I had paired with the dress to heighten the overall sense of softness, and to aid the actress in her movements during the choreographed dance piece that was added during the rehearsal process.



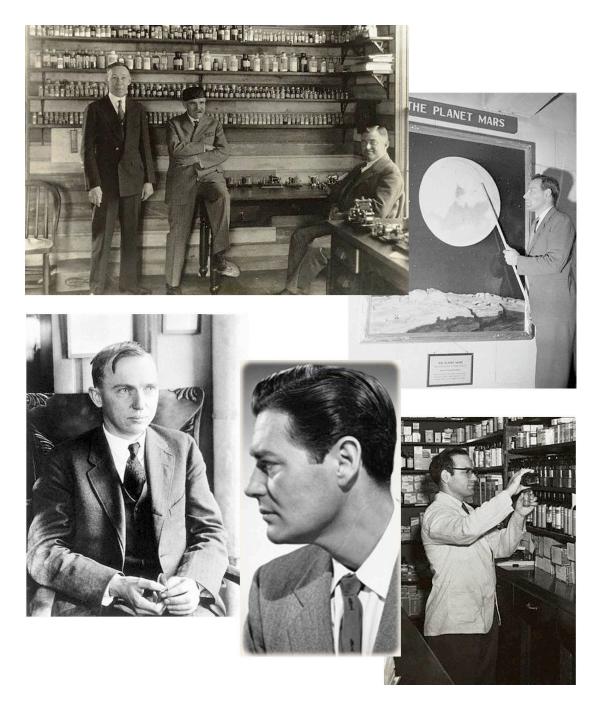
Girl is referred to by Joseph as a person of a different generation, and shows up just before the death of Robert. I wanted a look that felt iconic of the sixties, so I looked to celebrities of the period.



When I found this image, it expressed exactly what I wanted for Mother. I wanted the feeling of everyday clothing, something someone would choose to wear for an average day. I also felt that it should be unflattering and matronly, but without looking like it was trying to be.



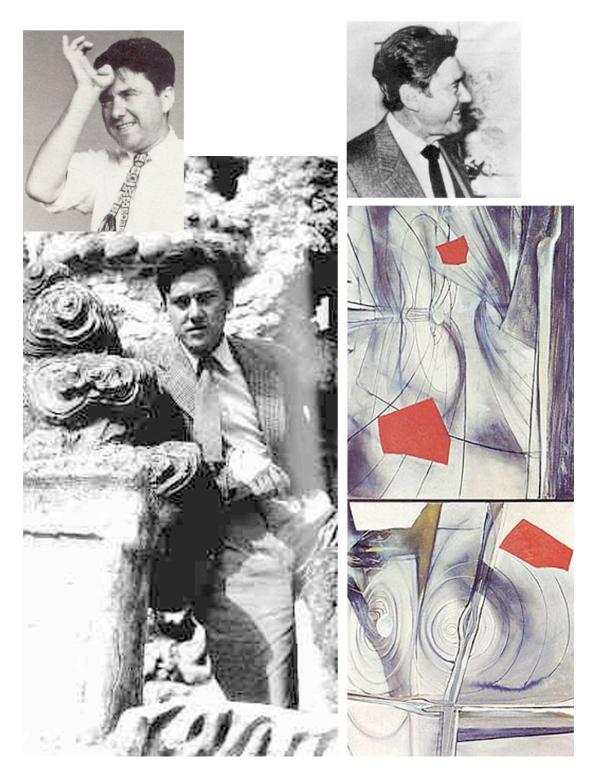
Robert is only seen within the house, and in all but one scene he is in bed. I chose a simple pajama look for him, reinforcing the idea that he is house bound. In terms of color, I was drawn towards white because of the sense of purity with which Joseph views his brother. I also wanted to suggest a sense of loneliness, and ultimately chose a very pale off-white tinted with blue.



The scientists serve as a sort of chorus. After discussions with the director, I decided that they should all dress in a similar manner, but with slight variations. I chose to root them firmly in the fifties, and to have all three in a vested suit look, because it allowed for variation not only in the pieces each wore, but the way they would be worn from scene to scene. The three appear in full suits, without their jackets shoes and socks, and without their jackets and vests, depending on the scene they are in.



My focus for each of the three artists was to research both their personal style, and an iconic piece of their artwork. For Duchamp, I chose *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* because it was both a seminal work, and visually interesting as a texture and style.



Matta changed painting styles at various points in his career, so I focused on the work he created in the late forties in the United States. I chose *Redness of Lead* because of the visual contrast it offered with Duchamp.

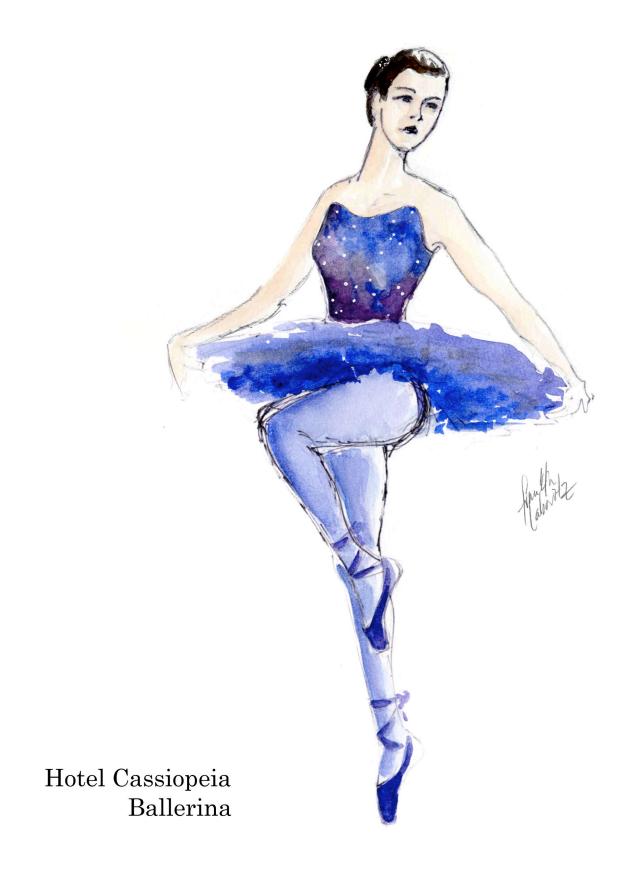


I found the photograph of Gorky sitting, wearing the neck brace near the end of his life, and chose that as the start of the look. Since the paintings I chose were projected on the wall, there was a poetic cyclical suggestion to the use of a clothing look from the damaged and tragic end of his life, and a self-portrait of him as a child. For that reason, I chose *The Artist and His Mother* as the work to represent Gorky.

Chapter 3: Color Renderings



Hotel Cassiopeia Joseph





Hotel Cassiopeia Waitress



Hotel Cassiopeia Girl on a bicycle



Hotel Cassiopeia Allegra



Hotel Cassiopeia Lauren

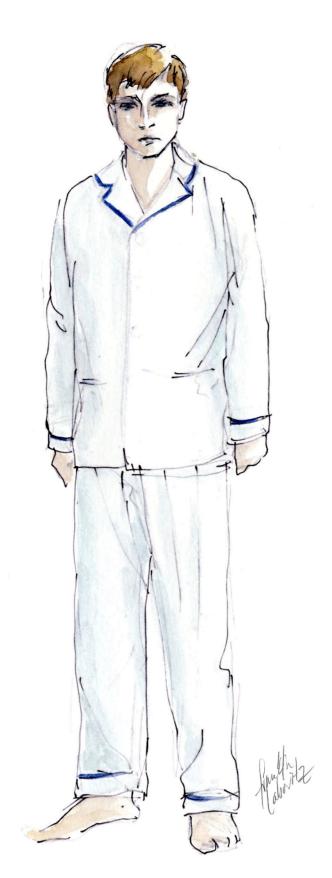




Hotel Cassiopeia Girl



Hotel Cassiopeia Mother



Hotel Cassiopeia Robert



Hotel Cassiopeia Herbalist



Hotel Cassiopeia Astronomer



Hotel Cassiopeia Pharmacist



Hotel Cassiopeia Corkmaker



Hotel Cassiopeia Duchamp



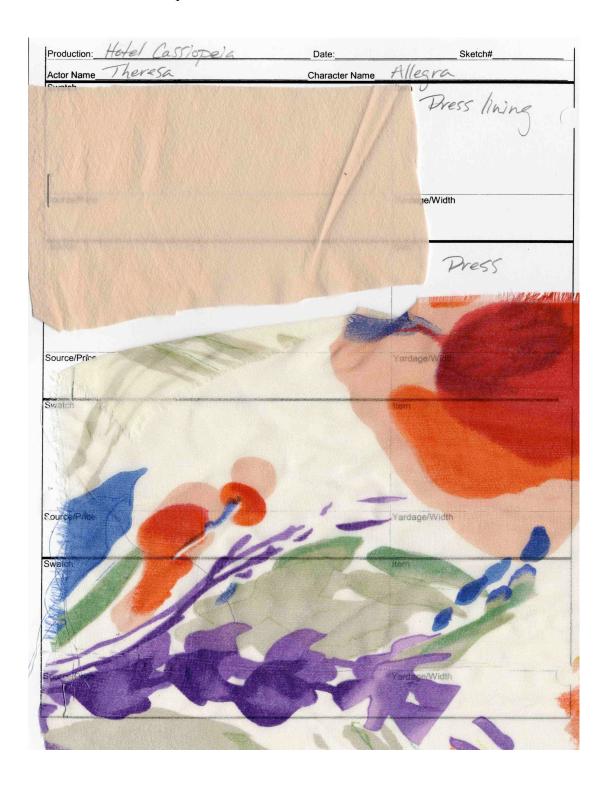
Hotel Cassiopeia Matta

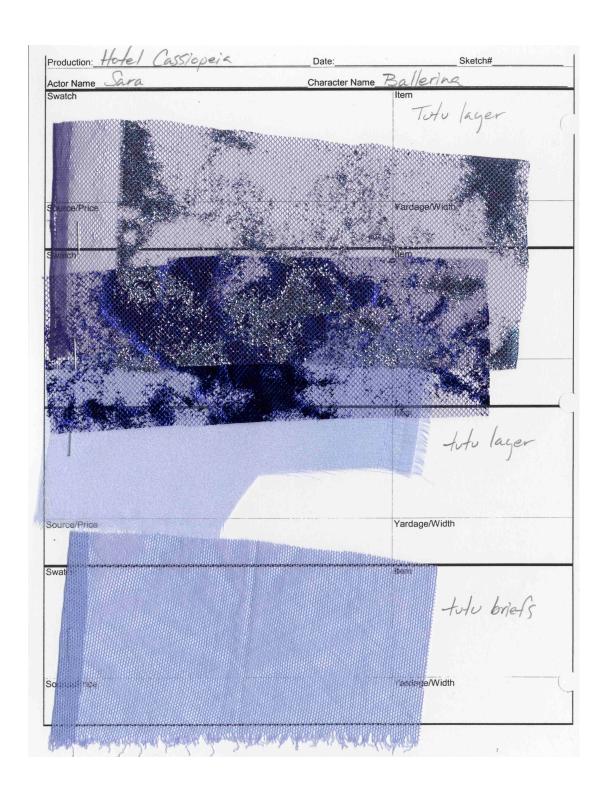


Hotel Cassiopeia Gorky

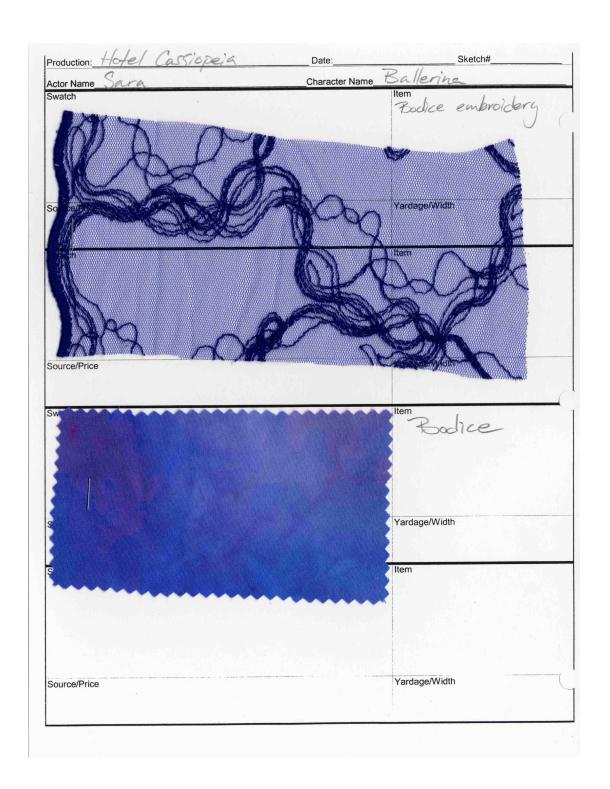
Chapter 4: Fabric Swatches

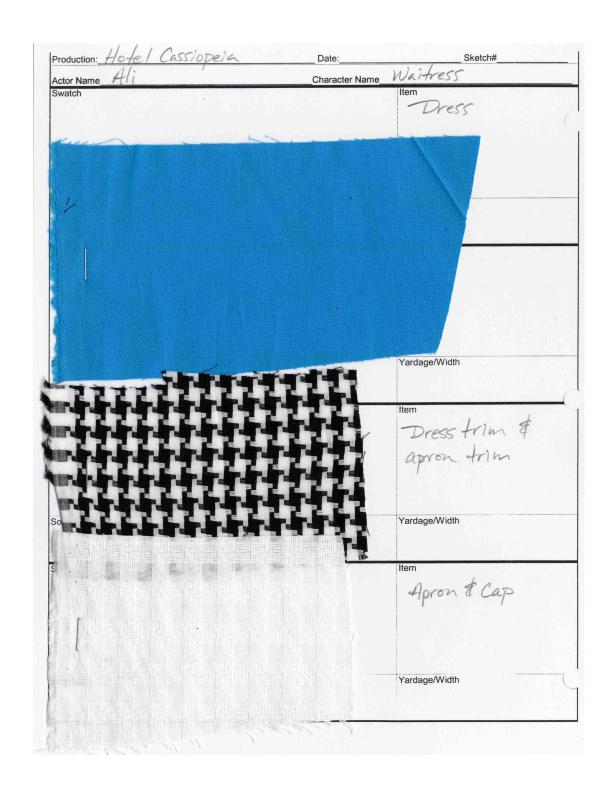
The following pages show the swatch cards with the fabrics chosen for the costumes that were made for the production.

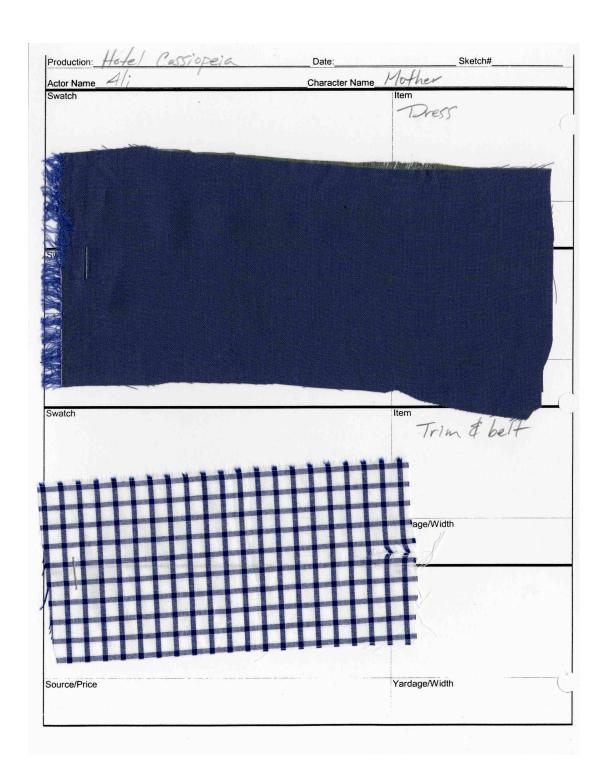




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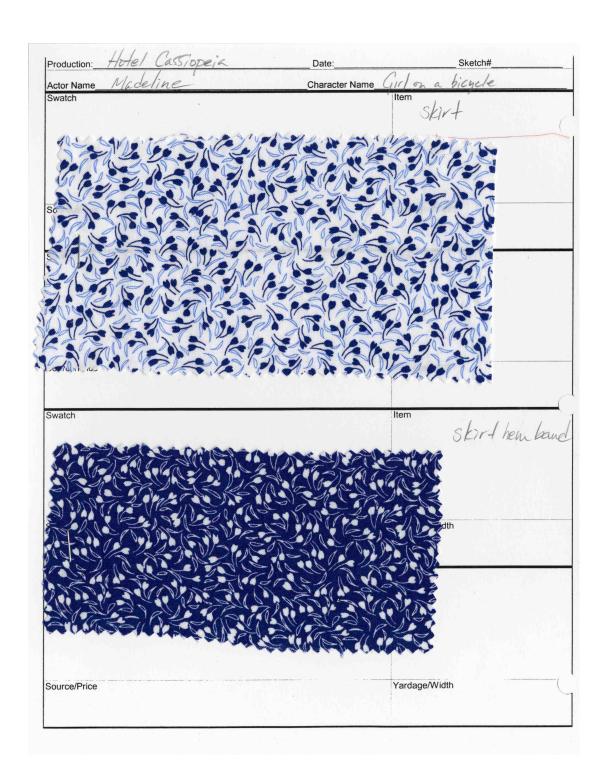






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Production: Hotel Cassiopeia Actor Name Sebastian	Character Name Robert
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Chapter 5: Costume Plot

The costume plot serves as a visual representation of the actors' entrances and exits by page number, as well as the role that they are playing on each page. Given the multiple roles played by all actors except Scott Sedar (Joseph Cornell), the plot also served to inform me regarding the amount of time that each actor had between their appearances as different characters, indicating when the approach to the design required that the level of ease with which the change from one costume to another be considered. The plot then served as the basis for the quick change chart created by the costume shop and used by the members of the wardrobe crew to indicated length of time for a given change and the location where that change would occur.

Actor	Character	1	2	3	4	5	9	7	8	6	10	11	12	13	14	15]	16 1	17 1	18 1	19 2	20 2	21 2	22 23	3 24	4 25
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Sarah Wright	Ballerina											Н	Н	Н	H		H	H	\vdash						
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	Passer-by																								
Theresa Buechler	Lauren Bacall					П	П	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	\vdash	Н	Н	Н	Н	Н	Н	Н		
	Allegra																								
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Ali Grusell	Mother													\vdash			H	\vdash							
	Waitress																								
	Duchamp																								
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Madeline Whiting	Leila							П				Н	Н	Н	H		H	Н				Н			
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Jonathan Berenson	Herbalist			Н			р					е												
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ס	a 3 Scientists wear costume without coat or vest (James, JB and Jason)
Р) Ballerina appears in her tea dress (Sara)
U	: Robert wears robe for this scene (Sebastian)
ס	d 3 Scientists wear costume without coat, shoes or socks
	pants and sleeves are rolled up (James, JB and Jason)
υ	Herbalist wears costume without coat, wears apron instead, sleeves are rolled up (JB)

Chapter 6: Piece List

The following piece list contains an inventory of the garments and accessories used in the production, organized first by actor, and then by character.

Actor	Character	Costume piece	Description
Scott Sedar	Joseph	shirt	white with maroon/ navy windowpane pattern
		vest	maroon sweater vest
		jacket	taupe small check
		pants	thin wool, taupe colored
		socks	tan
		shoes	brown cap toe
		suspenders	burgundy with small tan squares
James Waters	Astronomer	2 piece suit	light brown
		sweater vest	dark blue v-neck
		shirt	white dress shirt
		socks	brown
		shoes	cordovan cap toe
		suspenders	tan/navy small herringbone
		tie	blue/brown diagonal patterned stripe
	Passer-by	shirt	cream and off-white stripe button-up
		pants	pale tan and white stripe
		shoes	cream nubucks
		suspenders	cream leather
Jonathan Berenson	Herbalist	3 piece suit	dark brown pinstripe
		shirt	off-white dress shirt
		socks	brown
		shoes	brown dress shoes
		suspenders	mustard
		tie	green with diagonal stripes, brown/orange/blue
		apron	tan full apron
		glasses	horn rimmed
	Gorky	undershirt	sea foam green, waffle-knit
		jacket	leather, painted as The Artist and His Mother
		pants	brown trousers with white paint splotch
		socks	brown
		boots	black and flesh colored painted two-tone
	1	1	

		belt	brown wide leather
		neck brace	sea foam green suede
		wrist brace	painted cream w/buckles
	Passer-by	vest	cream sweater vest
		pants	off-white cotton
		shirt	repeat off-white Herbalist shirt
		shoes	cream nubucks
		tie	tan silk diagonal stripe, quick rigged
Jason Philips	Pharmacist	two piece suit	tan wool, double breasted
		vest	cream and tan small triangles
		shirt	off-white and pale yellow dress shirt
		socks	brown
		shoes	brown two-tone
		suspenders	brown/tan
		tie	red with yellow, green, brown, cream stripe
	Corkmaker	pants	repeat tan wool Pharmacist pants
		vest	multi green textured houndstooth
		shirt	repeat Pharmacist shirt
		socks	repeat Pharmacist socks
		shoes	repeat Pharmacist shoes
		suspenders	repeat Pharmacist suspenders
		glasses	tortoise frames with no frame above glass
		tie	burgundy with navy clocking
	Passer-by	shirt	repeat Pharmacist shirt
		pants	cream linen with pleats
		sweater vest	off-white short-waisted v-neck
		shoes	tan suede two-tones
Sebastian Delta	Robert	pajama top	cotton, white with blue piping
		pajama pants	cotton, white with blue piping
		slippers	brown leather, slides
		robe	red, green, blue, cream plaid wool with belt
	Matta	2 piece suit	off-white linen with painted as Redness of Lead
		shirt	white dress shirt
		socks	white thin socks
		shoes	black dress shoes
		suspenders	black
		tie	red
	Opening look	pants	khaki
	Ĺ		

		shirt	orange plaid
		sweater	pale yellow cable knit
		socks	repeat white socks
		belt	brown with silver buckle
		shoes	reddish brown/tan two tone suede and leather
Sarah Wright	Ballerina	bodice	blue/purple with applied rhinestone star map
		tutu	blue and purple tulle/net
		briefs	periwinkle blue
		briefs	nude
		hair ornament	2 clear plastic picks with rhinestone sprays
		tights	ballet pink
		ballet slippers	ballet pink
	Ballerina look 2	dress	purple vintage tulle dress with flowers on bodice
		hair ornament	7 bobby pins with blue/purple ribbon flowers
		briefs	repeat both pairs
		tights	repeat ballet pink
		shoes	repeat ballet slippers
	Opening look	dress	pink vintage with matching jacket
		stockings	thigh highs with seams
		shoes	black heels with cording detail
	Passer-by	dress	cream faille dress with matching belt
		stockings	repeat thigh highs
		shoes	tan suede heels with cording detail
Ali Grusell	Waitress	dress	turquoise, white collar and cuffs
		apron	white cotton, border of contrasting print
		stockings	nude
		shoes	black and white two tone heels
		сар	white small cap with black edging
		all-in-one	nude
	Mother	dress	greyish blue with contrasting insets and collar
		belt	blue and white windowpane print
		stockings	repeat Waitress stockings
		shoes	navy oxford heels
		glasses	wide blue grey at top and wire at bottom
		all-in-one	repeat Waitress all-in-one
	Duchamp	shirt	brown mottle-dyed v-neck t-shirt
		jacket	blazer, painted as Nude Descending a Staircase

1	I	pants	linen painted as Nude Descending a Staircase
		socks	dark brown
		shoes	dark brown Cole Haan oxfords
		belt	dark brown
		scarf	green, thin, woven square pattern w/fringe
		beret	black wool
		glasses	wide black at top and wire at bottom white stretch fabric with Velcro
	Danasa has		
	Passer-by	dress	cream with small diamond pattern, full skirt
		belt	cream with small diamond pattern, matches dress
		stockings	repeat Waitress stockings
		all-in-one	repeat Waitress all-in-one
		shoes	dark cream colored peep toe sling backs
Madeline Whiting	Marianne	dress	cream colored with writing, sweetheart neck
		petticoat	multi layered tricot
		bra	nude
		bust pads	clear gel
		spanx	nude
	Leila	shirt	white with brown windowpane pattern
		underwear	white cotton lined in nude cotton
		spanx	repeat Marianne spanx
		bra	repeat Marianne bra
	Girl on a bicycle	skirt	blue and white floral
		blouse	white short sleeved with peter pan collar
		shoes	white flats with blue bow off center front
		stockings	repeat nude with nude back seams
		hair ribbon	yellow grossgrain
	Opening look	dress	yellow cap sleeve knit
		stockings	repeat nude with nude back seams
		shoes	brown heels
	Passer-by	dress	off-white dress with bow details
		jacket	off-white open weave, matches dress
		stockings	repeat nude with nude back seams
		shoes	cream fabric peep toe heels
	Girl	sweater	light blue cable knit turtleneck
		skirt	brown corduroy, above knee
		belt	brown leather with rectangle brass buckle
		boots	caramel suede knee high
I		<u> </u>	1

Theresa Buechler	Allegra	dress	water color floral chiffon over silk lining
		belt	reddish orange woven
		all-in-one	white
		stockings	nude with nude back seam
		bracelets	3 thin orange bangles with gold painted swirls
		heels	off-white peep toe with stacked heel
	Opening look	dress	tan dress with cream embroidery at neck
		slip	off-white
		stockings	repeat nude with nude back seam
		shoes	heels
	Passer-by	dress	white with self fabric details at shoulders
		stockings	repeat nude with nude back seam
		shoes	two tone cream cap toe sling backs
	Lauren Bacall	2 piece skirt suit	grey 40s suit with 3/4 sleeves
		camisole	black with lace at top and bottom
		stockings	nude with black back seams
		heels	black peep toe patent leather sandals
		all-in-one	repeat Allegra all-in-one

Chapter 7: Fitting Photographs





The first photograph was taken during the initial fitting for the Ballerina. The second photograph shows the costume's progress at the next fitting.





Seen here are two additional looks for Sara. The pink dress was used for the opening moments of the show. The tan gingham look was considered for the Bickford's Cafeteria scene.



Theresa is pictured here in the costume for the character Allegra. The photographs represent the initial mock-up fitting, and the final dress fitting.







The top two photographs show
Theresa in her look for the opening
moment and a look that was
considered for the Bickford's Cafeteria
scene. The lower picture is of a suit
that was considered for the character
of Lauren.



Ali's initial fitting for the role of Duchamp focused on reshaping a men's suit jacket to fit her. After the jacket was reshaped, the second fitting brought the rest of the pieces together.





Shown here is the final version of the painted suit (pictured here on the understudy, Gabriella Yacyk).



The dress for Mother is shown here in both the preliminary fitting and the final fitting.



Ali is shown here in the mock-up for the Waitress costume.



Shown on the left is the fitting photograph of Madeline as Girl. On the right, Madeline wears her costume for her last character, Leila.



This photograph shows Madeline's fitting for her role as Girl on a Bicycle.





Three looks that were considered for Madeline for the opening moments of the show are shown here.





In these two photographs Madeline is seen first in the mock-up of the dress for the role of Marianne, and then in the dress as it appeared in the final fitting.



This vintage dress required only minor alterations and was used in the production on Madeline for the Bickford's Cafeteria scene.





Pictured here are the looks for the three scientists.





On the left are two jackets that I considered for Gorky. The full length shot shows the Gorky costume in its prepainted state. The neck brace has been altered to include the chin piece, and is ready to be covered with suede.



Sebastian wears the white pajamas I built for the role of Robert. The photograph above shows the first fitting, at which the hem and cuff length were marked. The photograph to the right shows both the completed pajama set and the wig for the character.





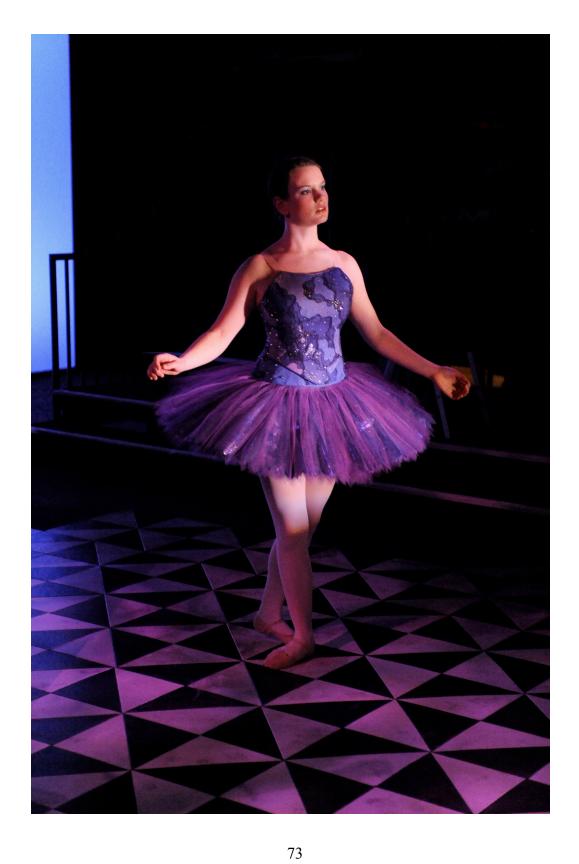
Sebastian wears the suit that is to be painted for his role as Matta.

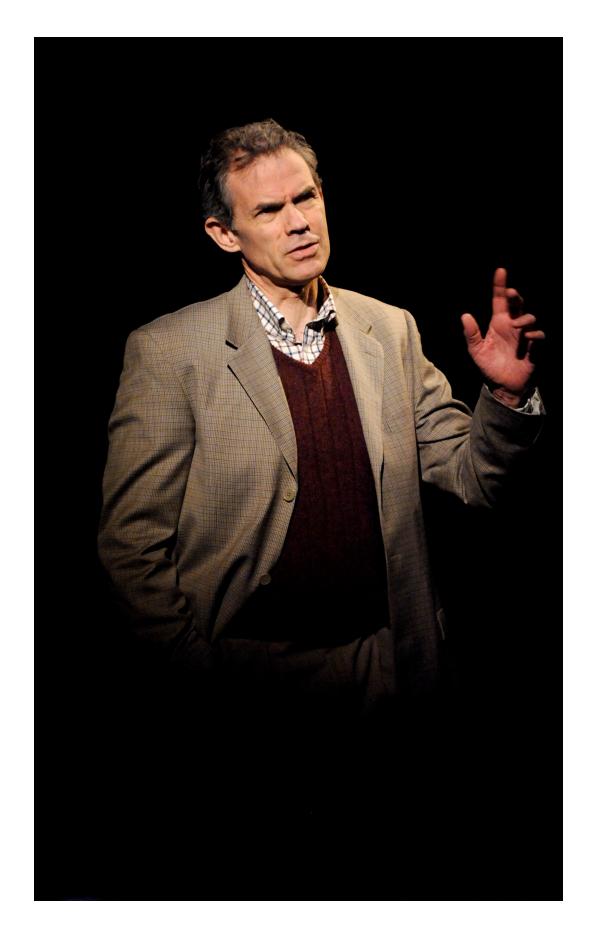




These are two options for Sebastian for the opening moments of the production.

Chapter 8: Production Photographs



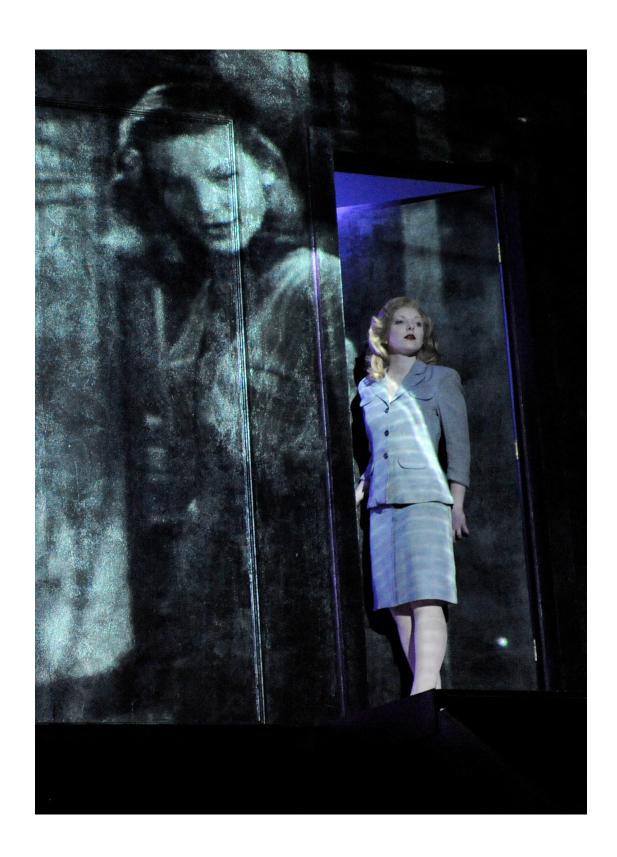






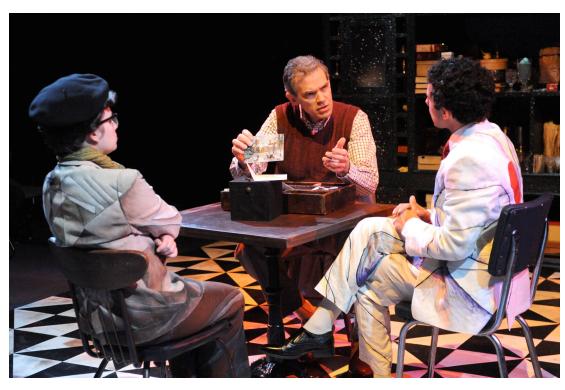


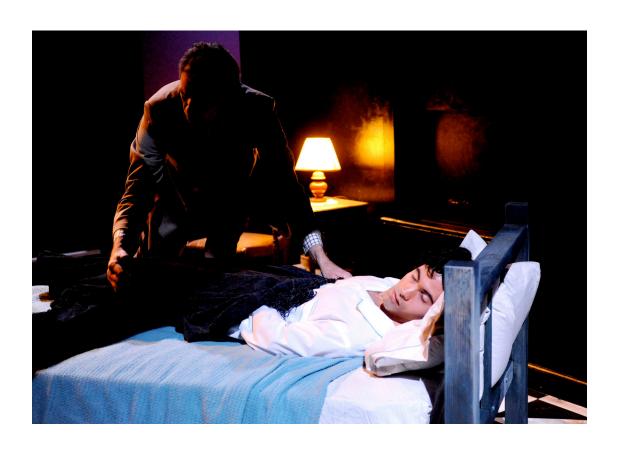












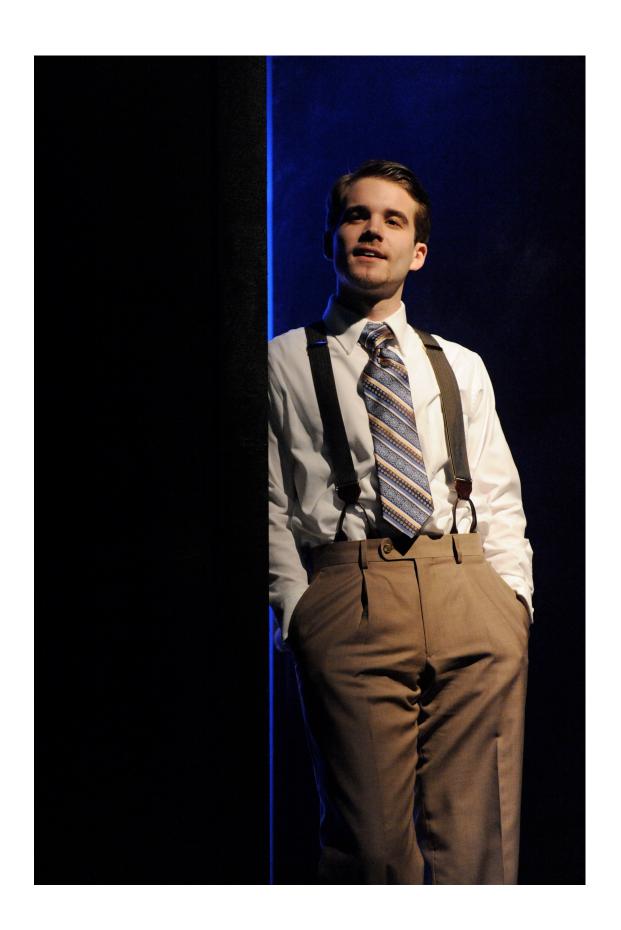


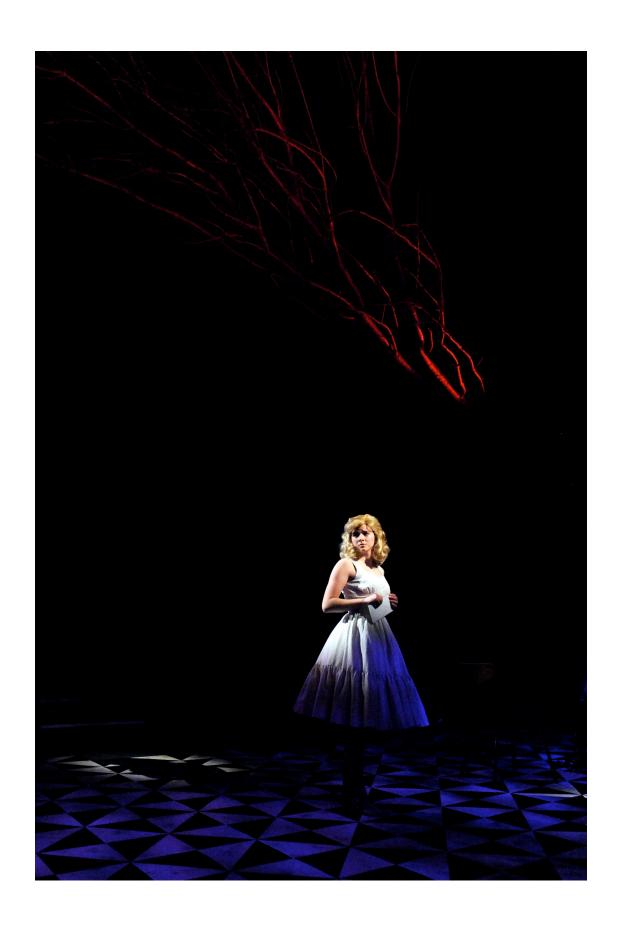










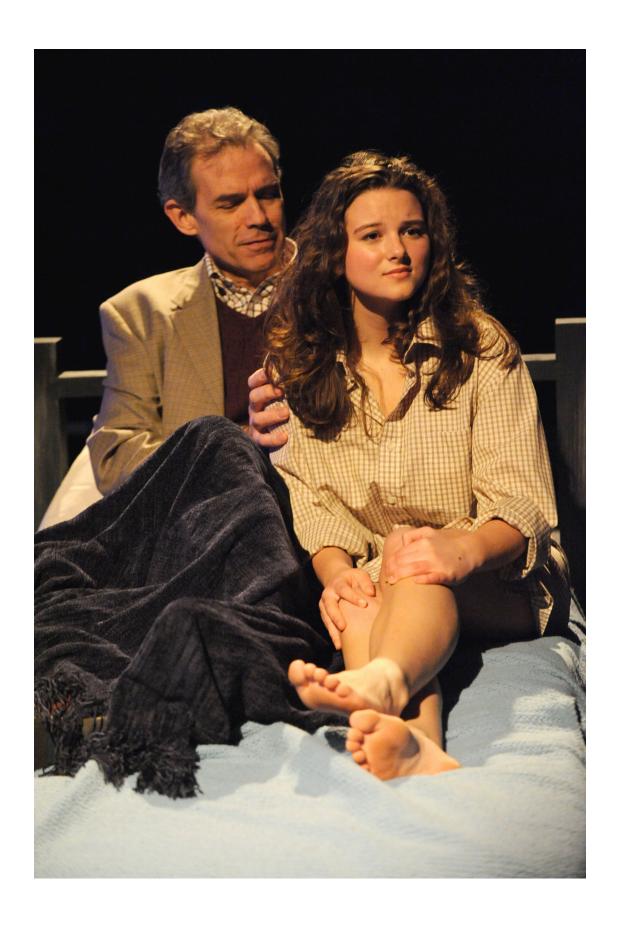














Appendix

Production Staff

Director
Scenic Designer
Lighting Designer
Costume Designer
Assistant Costume Designer
Sound Designer
Designer
Sound Designer
Des

Sound Designer Matthew Nielson Projections Designer Tarythe Albrecht Movement Coach Leslie Felbain

Dramaturgs Jessica Holman, Matthew Shifflett

Production Coordinator Cary Gillett

Stage Manager Maribeth Chaprnka*
Assistant Stage Manager Shana Ferguson

Cast

Joseph Cornell Scott Sedar*
Herbalist, Gorky Jonathan Berenson
Allegra, Lauren Bacall Theresa Buechler
Matta, Robert Sebastian R. Delta
Duchamp Mother Waitress Ali Grusell

Duchamp, Mother, Waitress
Corkmaker, Pharmacist
Astronomer
Girl, Leila, Marianne
Ballerina
Janes Waters
Madeline Whiting
Sara Wright

Understudies

Jayme Bell Juliette Ebert Devin Mahoney Gabriella Yacyk

The Costume Shop, the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center

Costume Shop Manager Stephanie Shaw Costume Shop Foreman Susan Chiang

Drapers Lisa Burgess, Susan Chiang, Addy Diaz,

Emily Hoem

Stitchers Angela Campbell, Shana Ferguson,

Brianna Forseth, Chelsea Kerl, Peter Park, Alyson Parker, Roland Smith, Lindsey Walters, Allison Weaver

Costume Crafts Lisa Burgess

^{*}Member Actors' Equity Association

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