Costume Design and Production for *O Pioneers!*, by Darrah Cloud

THESIS

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By

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to document the costume design and costume production process for Darrah Cloud’s *O Pioneers!*, as produced by the Department of Theatre at The Ohio State University and directed by Associate Professor Jeanine Thompson. The play was presented in the Thurber Theatre at Ohio State, February 25 through March 6, 2010.

*O Pioneers!,* based on the novel of the same name by American writer Willa Cather, tells the story of a community of European immigrants as they settle in Hanover, Nebraska at the turn of the twentieth century. Research and designs for the production were derived from photographs, historical resources and illustrations of immigrants, both in the costumes of their native countries and in American frontier clothing. The scenic design was an abstracted and stylized interpretation of the prairie, necessitating that the costume design be accurate to the time period in order to create a realistic world for this historical drama.
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Vita

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Production History CHECK ORDER

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Costume Designer- TTU

2005 .......................................................... *The Unexpected Guest*
Costume Designer- TTU

2005 .......................................................... *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)*
Costume Designer- TTU

2006 .......................................................... *BecauseHeCan*
Costume Designer- TTU

2006 .......................................................... *Three By Charms*
Costume Designer- TTU

2006 .......................................................... *The Servant of Two Masters*
Costume Designer- TTU

iv
2008..............................................Wild Stages: Kabarett MFA!
    Costume Designer- OSU

2008..............................................Pangea
    Costume Designer- OSU

2009..............................................Godspell
    Costume Designer- OSU

2009..............................................Palmer Park
    Costume Designer- OSU

2010..............................................O Pioneers!
    Costume Designer- OSU

Fields of Study

Major Field: Theatre
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Chapter 1: The Producing Situation

Darrah Cloud’s *O Pioneers!* was produced by the Ohio State University’s Department of Theatre in the winter quarter of 2010. Performances ran from February 25 through March 6 at the Thurber Theatre, located in the Drake Performance and Event Center at OSU. The story of this sweeping musical drama, featuring twenty three actors and five musicians, spans the sixteen years between 1890 and 1906, requiring sixty one costumes which were provided with a costume materials budget of $3,000.

Associate Professor Jeanine Thompson directed the production. Jarod Wilson, a second year lighting design emphasis graduate student designed the lighting, and Victor Shonk, a third year scenic design emphasis graduate student designed the set. This was the second time I had collaborated with all three artists.

The costumes for *O Pioneers!*, as envisioned by Thompson and myself, were designed as historically accurate and realistic, grounding the play and story of the Bergsons and their neighbors as they emigrated from Europe to Nebraskan farmsteads. Because *O Pioneers!* is essentially an immigrant story, the costumes reflected this through extensive use of folk costume followed by the adoption of American-ized clothing over time. All clothing was distressed and weathered to show class, occupation and the effects of significant passage of time.

The production situation for *O Pioneers!* was influenced greatly by the academic nature of the producing organization. The facilities and staff of the OSU Department of
Theatre, the labor and skill available to produce the costumes, the schedule demanded by
the university academic calendar, as well as the budget, all affected and influenced the
quality of the realized costume design.

The Thurber Theatre is a proscenium arch performance space which seats six
hundred persons at normal occupancy. It is the larger of the two stages in the Drake
Performance and Event Center, a facility on The Ohio State University’s main campus,
which also houses classrooms, offices and production studios for the Department of
Theatre.

The costume studio at OSU is a large workspace, featuring four cutting tables,
eight sewing machines, three sergers, numerous dress forms of varying size and gender,
and a complete and extensive array of sewing tools and notions. The costume studio also
boasts a broad collection of modern, vintage and historical patterns, a wide selection of
fabrics, as well as a costume stock of men’s and women’s clothing and accessories which
spans most time periods.

The costume studio at OSU is very busy. Creation, construction and alteration of
costumes are done by the Studio Manager, the Resident Designer, three costume design
graduate teaching associates (including myself), two work-study stitchers and numerous
undergraduate students who work in the lab a few hours a week for course credit. O
Pioneers! was the third of three shows to open in the winter of 2010, and with one work-
study student and two graduate students designing simultaneously, the available skilled
labor was thinly spread. To compensate for this, an over-hire stitcher was employed for
four weeks.
Production work for *O Pioneers!* began in December of 2009, before the winter break between quarters, although the bulk of construction did not happen until students returned for classes on January fourth. With first dress taking place on February eighteenth, that left about five weeks to build and fit the show, with the last week reserved for distressing and aging. Five days during the technical rehearsal period were also used for notes and detailed revision.
Chapter 2: The Production Concept and Design Scheme

*O Pioneers!* began its history not as a play, but as a novel. The second novel of hailed American writer Willa Cather, *O Pioneers!* was published in 1913. The story is a passionate and celebratory reflection on immigrant farm neighbors of Cather’s childhood in Red Cloud, Nebraska. At a time when most novels written by and about women were romantic and gender-normative, *O Pioneers!* stood out as being different, offering alternatives for female characters. The story of the heroine, Alexandra Bergson, is “a rewriting of the traditional male story of independence and heroism” (O’Brien, ix-xv). Upon publication, Cather’s novel was well received by critics. *O Pioneers!* represented something new in American literature, and it was applauded for being truly American and full of hope (xvii).

Darrah Cloud’s dramatic adaptation of *O Pioneers!* was written in 1989 under commission for The Women’s Project, a theatre company whose mission is to produce and promote theatre created by women in conjunction with Seattle Repertory Theatre. The world premiere was produced in 1990 by the Huntington Theatre Company at Boston University and directed by Peter Altman. It debuted with a lukewarm review from the *New York Times*, which reported that “Ms. Cloud has been unable to find a substantial dramatic equivalent for Miss Cather’s prose,” and that as a result, the play suffers a shallowness of content as compared to the novel (Gussow).
Jeanine Thompson’s director’s concept for the 2010 Ohio State production of *O Pioneers!* strove to address the feeling of vastness that the story conveyed to her. There was, firstly, the physical vastness of the setting: the prairie of Nebraska in the late nineteenth century. Secondly, there was the enormous personal sacrifice and struggle of the immigrants who gave up their lives in “the old country” to become farmers in America. The profound difficulty of that life, particularly as it pertained to Alexandra, the heroine of the story, as she struggles to cope with the responsibility of her inherited homestead, was something Thompson hoped to express in this production. For Thompson, the “landscape is cast as a character” which never fails to take center-stage (Thompson). The design team and I knew we had to focus on the land firstly, and secondly how the characters related to it.

Under the guidance of Thompson’s director’s concept, Shonk and I worked together to emphasize the land as a significant motif. The scenic design was comprised of a series of platforms and groundrows, all constructed to resemble the worn, wooden planking that is ubiquitous to the barns and outhouses found in rural Nebraska. The planks received a paint treatment which colored them in various earth tones, with the downstage platforms predominantly golden.

The costume design worked in symbiosis with the scenic design in order to reveal which characters were “of the land” and which were simply living on it. I wanted the characters who had an emotional connection to their homesteads to physically look like a part of it in order to reinforce or clarify this relationship. Therefore, those characters were costumed in warmer tones and favored striped fabrics, relating them to the planked
representation of the land which Shonk had provided. Those characters who were not connected to the land were clothed in cooler colors that would contrast with their surroundings, rather than harmonize, making them appear to be less in sync with the stage picture of the warm, linear earth.

The play contains many characters representing differing degrees of loyalty to tradition, family and the pioneering spirit of their forefathers who founded the original Nebraska homesteads. The division between the connected and the unconnected is crucial to understanding the relationships between many of the characters. Furthermore, the somewhat episodic nature of the play limits the time available to development these relationships and characters. Under such conditions, the costumes acted as shorthand for quickly describing the association each character had to the land.

The lighting design for the production also reinforced the characters’ relationships with the land. The majority of the show was lit with side light for a look that was more reminiscent of dance-style lighting rather than traditional theatrical lighting which would have included more front and back light. The effect of the side light was a reduction in the amount of shadows the actors cast on the stage floor, making them appear to float on the land. This effect was further aided by the choice in shoe color. Earthy characters wore brown shoes and blended more seamlessly into the land, while non-earthy characters wore black shoes, stopping the visual blend between character and environment.

Because the scenic and lighting elements were more representational, the costumes served this production of *O Pioneers!* by being a realistic element. In order for
the audience to identify the world of the play as being a part of their own world, it was
necessary and fitting for the costumes to communicate a specific time and place without
abstraction. Furthermore, the temporal setting of the story had to be rigidly adhered to
because of the specificity of the script, in terms of plot, dialogue and lyrics. For example,
the opening number, “Immigrants Song,” in which characters take turns describing their
journeys to Nebraska, contains this travel-log style stanza:

    April 1875
    Thought coming here would make us free
    Got so free we nearly starved
    Lost our youngest babe and lost my mind (Cloud, O Pioneers! 9)

The song that marks the passage of sixteen years, “Transformation Song,” also
contains specific temporal references. The subject of the song and the scene during
which it is performed is the transformation of the land, specifically by the new
technology of the telephone. Lyrics such as “wires strung from tree trunks” (31) and
Ivar’s line, “Telephone pole. They’re all over the place now” (29) indicate the specific
period at the turn of the century when the technology of the telephone was reaching the
prairie.

Scenic designer Shonk and I had several conversations at the outset of the design
process about how we could incorporate textures as an additional means by which we
could unify our two designs. The effects of time on the world of the play and the people
who inhabit it were important to us aesthetically. We felt that the weathering of the
physical world around the characters spoke to the difficulty of their lives and their inability to control the land or the elements.

Drawing not only on my own research of farming families, but also on Shonk’s research of farm buildings, I decided that the texture of flaking, worn paint was also important to the look of the costumes for *O Pioneers!* I liked its surprisingly delicate nature, and felt that it related to the tenuous, fragile experiences of these pioneer immigrants. The weathered paint expressed for me both the harshness and the frailty of life on the prairie.

The look of flaking paint was not one that I incorporated literally in my design; rather, I focused on the use of lace and crochet trim as an expression of that delicacy. Additionally, the worn and weathered look was incorporated into the design with heavy distressing to age the clothes and make them look as if they were worn frequently and for a long period of time (see Figure 10).

As noted previously, the costume design incorporated linear patterns as a way of distinguishing the ways characters related to the land. However, there were an abundance of other textile designs within the show beyond stripes and solids, providing visual variety amongst a large cast. Lines were utilized mostly as actual lines in the form of trim on garments which functioned to reveal and enhance the figure and silhouette of the actor.

The shaping and creation of a proper silhouette was key to the design. Each period in costume history has a distinct silhouette, and it is this, even more so than textiles, styles and trends in dress, which conveys period costume. The characters in *O
*Pioneers!* had two different, opposing silhouettes: one for their immigrant costumes and one for their pioneer costumes.

At the top of the show when all actors were in folk-wear costumes, the silhouettes were bulkier, squatter, and consisted of more layers. As time passed and the characters left behind their old-world folk costumes, and they dressed in more up-to-date clothes of the time which might have been procured in a larger town or by ordering from a Sears and Roebuck catalogue. The result is the assumption of a more sleek and streamlined Victorian silhouette. The men’s new clothing fit fairly closely to the body, enhancing their choreography and showcasing their movements as they worked in the fields; Thompson wanted to draw attention to the physical labor of these men who worked on the farms.

The women in the show adopted the Victorian norm of a corseted waist and long skirts with fullness in the back only. However, the women did not wear traditional corsets, but rather modern corselets that stretched. These corselets provided improved posture and a controlled waistline, but did not impede movement. The female characters’ labor was also addressed with shortened hemlines which would have been practical for farm work while still retaining Victorian modesty. This also provided practical safety and showcased footwork as they danced.

*O Pioneers!* is a drama with musical elements, but it is not a musical in the traditional sense. According to Wilson and Goldfarb in their book *Living Theatre: A History*, musicals are “dramatic entertainment in which music and lyrics (and sometimes dance) are integral and necessary” (G6). For example, in the Rodgers and Hammerstein
musical *Oklahoma!*; the characters Curly and Laurey share a duet called “People Will Say We’re in Love” after Laurey agrees to attend the town social with Curly. Through this song, they discuss their decision to keep their date a secret from their neighbors, lest the people confuse their intent with one another. This song is essential to the continuation of the spoken dialogue that precedes it and also provides ample exposition.

The musical content of *O Pioneers!* is not integral to the development of the plot or the characters. It serves to enhance the show’s themes or provide mood, but the plot would be delivered without the songs, making the show first and foremost dramatic literature. As such, it is a story about longing, loneliness, dreams chased, dreams deferred, and the integrity of the human spirit at all odds. This is not to say that it does not contain light-hearted moments, but for the most part, the subject matter is weighty. Therefore, the costume design closely emulated realism and naturalistic color in order to honor the gravity of the story and to help the audience enter the world of the play with serious intent.
Chapter 3: Character Analysis

As discussed in previous chapters, *O Pioneers!* takes place at the turn of the twentieth century in Hanover, Nebraska, an immigrant farming town on the vast Western Prairie. The majority of characters are poor at the beginning of the show, having emigrated from Europe. They bring few possessions and most have little or no money. Some have been there longer than others and are struggling less, but are still poor because the land is experiencing a period of low productivity. The cast was dressed to represent their various countries of origin, and as noted in the design scheme, they wore traditional folk garb.

When the play jumps ahead to 1906, the people are more firmly established in their new country and are generally doing well. Most are still farmers, but a few represent other occupations or a distancing from this lifestyle. They wore utilitarian clothing that supported their labor-intensive occupations. The following content of this chapter will examine the individual qualities of each character and his or her costume more thoroughly.

The heroine of the play, Alexandra, is the eldest child of the Bergson family. The Bergsons are from Stockholm, Sweden, and they are a tight-knit family (Cloud, *O Pioneers!* 13). In order to reinforce their familial relationship and feature these characters within large ensembles on stage, I costumed the family in a way that would make them relate to one another visually. Based on research of traditional Swedish folkwear, I
costumed all the Bergsons in bold red at the top of the show. They were the only characters to wear such large amounts of red, and it worked well to both tie them together and draw focus to them.

Mrs. Bergson, the matriarch of the family is in her forties, but has lived a hard life. And though the family is not well-off, having struggled for many years since emigrating, she is well cared for, especially by Alexandra. Because the majority of her children are older, she does not have to work the land anymore, allowing her the privilege of staying inside to tend to the home.

As a member of the older generation in *O Pioneers!*, Mrs. Bergson was costumed in a very traditional Swedish ensemble, including a dark green dirndl skirt, cream peasant blouse, red corduroy jacket and embroidered floral apron. Her costume was accessorized with a lace headdress and an external waist pocket. Her dark, full skirt gave her a bulky, matronly appearance. Furthermore, the extra mass of a full jacket as opposed to a bodice lent her some authority.

Mrs. Bergson does not have a dynamic role in the script. She dies sometime before the flash forward to 1906 in scene nine, and her character experiences no change during this time. She consistently displays qualities of a concerned mother and a stubborn woman. She is fiercely loyal to her roots and her husband, and though he is deceased, states that she would rather be taken in by neighbors than leave the homestead where he is buried (25).

Mr. Bergson, the patriarch who begins the play in ill health, is also in his forties. He is a poor, but proud farmer who is very concerned about his family and his land. In
order to distinguish Mr. Bergson as the patriarch of the family, I costumed him in an older, more traditional style than his sons. He wore fall front breeches, a peasant shirt, a red vest and a black broad brim hat. Additionally, the actor grew an impressively large beard, which helped age him.

He dies in the third scene, just after relinquishing control of the household to Alexandra. When he crawls out of his grave in scene nine to look around, his character is unchanged. In order to show that he is still the same character, but different in some way, I dressed him in a paler version of his initial costume for a look that was dubbed “Ghost Father. He wore paler breeches, a cream vest and a cream hat.

The oldest Bergson child and the heroine of the play, Alexandra is the most developed character in the script. She is firstly her father’s daughter and a dutiful child. After his untimely death, she assumes the role of head of household. After the passage of time, she becomes a successful business woman, although one in need of companionship. Her relationship with childhood friend Carl Linstrum is the cause of most of her inner turmoil as it is the only issue with which she struggles. In contrast, she handles disputes with her brothers about how to manage the homestead with absolute authority and confidence. Her inability to establish a relationship with Carl throughout the play is symptomatic of a larger difficulty within her personality. Alexandra, perhaps due to the weight of the responsibility she inherits, or perhaps out of a Victorian ideal, has repressed her emotions to the point that it makes her unable to see the passions of others.

Ultimately, this flaw blinds her from seeing the romantic turmoil brewing between her youngest brother, Emil, and their mutual friend, Marie. Her repression is a
shortcoming for which she blames herself, perhaps unfairly. Only when she is able to accept her own powerful emotions is she able to recognize the passion of others. This allows her, in the end, to forgive Frank, Marie’s murdering husband, forgive herself, and accept her feelings for Carl, allowing that relationship to finally grow.

Darrah Cloud, in an author’s introduction to the first edition of the dramatized version of *O Pioneers!* says that she wanted to “create a female hero and yet not betray what is intrinsically female about her.” She also says that it is “easy to give a woman male traits and easy for Americans to appreciate masculine women” (Playwrighting *Women* 53). I took Cloud’s intent with her treatment of Alexandra as my own. Therefore, my goal in designing Alexandra was to reinforce the idea that she was female, regardless of her occupation, success or relationship status. I wanted to never deny Alexandra her femininity because it is her greatest defining quality. Even as she works the land, runs the homestead and demands the respect of the males around her, she is still a woman with woman’s intuitions, emotions and needs.

Ultimately, Alexandra’s strongest relationship is with the land. Even at the end of the play when Carl returns, she asks him “You would never ask me to go away from here for good, would you?” showing her priorities, even as the man she loves comes to be with her (Cloud, *O Pioneers!* 82). With the aim of demonstrating this relationship and her essential femininity, I consistently dressed Alexandra in wallpaper florals, a textile pattern which mimics the appearance of Victorian wallpaper with floral patterns which are arranged in vertical columns (see Plate 2). The use of this pattern allowed me to combined Alexandra’s feminine nature through the delicate flowers and the striped motif
I employed to identify characters who had a bond with the land through the linear arrangement of the pattern.

At the top of the show when Alexandra is nineteen, she wore a costume consisting of a red striped bodice, a cream blouse, a yellow wallpaper skirt and a pale apron. The look was one part traditional Swede and one part rural Victorian. In order to distinguish between generations, characters of Alexandra’s age group and younger dressed in a way the demonstrated a slight departure from the extremely traditional dress of their parents. Alexandra also wore a long linen duster over her clothes at the top of the show to demonstrate the season as winter and to establish her scene on the wagon with Carl as being outside and traveling. The duster was a rental item which I was therefore not allowed to distress at all, so in order to obscure the good quality of this garment, a patchy, ratty red shawl was worn over it. That shawl, along with her bodice, were her red garments that identified her as a Bergson.

The lace-front bodice had much less mass than her mother’s jacket, which I had hoped would make her appear younger, although at nineteen she was well within a matured and marriageable age. In fact, even before Mr. Bergson dies, she is already acting in an authoritative fashion within the family. For example, Mr. Bergson has her call her brothers, Lou and Oscar, to his bedside, and they obey.

The changeover into 1906 does not see a huge change in Alexandra’s demeanor. In order to support her new role as head of household and successful businesswoman, I dressed her in a walking suit made of a green and rust wallpaper fabric. The suit gave her a more mature look, helping to age her and show some passage of time. I was careful,
however, to style the suit in a way that was not masculine. By giving the jacket very full 
leg o’ mutton sleeves, using curved style-lines and cutting some pieces on the bias to 
soften the rigidity of the linear pattern, Alexandra’s suit remained feminine.

Alexandra spends most of the play in this suit, and I wanted it to remain a flexible 
costume so that she could wear it in a variety of ways in a variety of situations. She wore 
the same blouse as that at the top of the show, but now it was dressed up a bit with a 
cameo pin at the collar. She also wore a brown belt over the skirt which helped create a 
polished look when she did not wear the jacket in more intimate or casual situations.

When winter comes to Hanover, Alexandra has tea with Marie and Old Mrs. Lee. 
Much is made in the dialogue about the cold and the snow, so her costume for this scene 
needed to support this. I designed a richly patterned, quilted skirt and a wool topcoat 
which she wore with a scarf and winter bonnet, based on period research of a party of 
rural ice skaters (see Figure 9). The skirt was covered in a large paisley-like pattern 
which was colored in various golden and brown colors which continued Alexandra’s 
color palette of warm earth tones. The jacket, again, was feminine and emphasized her 
womanly shape.

Spring comes to Hanover in the next scene so Alexandra changed once again, this 
time into a peach and green dress which she would wear for the remainder of the show. 
Her spring dress saw the return of the wall paper floral pattern. Its dusty peach color 
looked beautiful on the actress and I considered it a fine choice for her final costume 
because it was the one she wore when she is reunited with Carl. The dress had been cut 
in such a way that the lines of the pattern emphasized her curves and her small waist.
The dress had been cleverly constructed with the lighter parts of the pattern darted or seamed out at the waist, visually whittling her waist by leaving only the darker peach in that area (see Plate 4). This effect made her spring dress the most feminine of any of her costumes, which was fitting for Alexandra’s experiences during the final scenes of the play during which she finally acknowledges her emotions.

Alexandra’s brothers, Lou and Oscar, always share their scenes and function as a unit. They are “the brothers.” They work together, resist together and defy together. They represent discord and betrayal of tradition, family and roots. They often function as the foil to Alexandra’s loyalty and steadfastness. Where she is levelheaded, they are brash and argumentative, even between each other. At the top of the show, both are in their teens and share in the poverty of the Bergson family.

As Lou grows up and establishes a life for himself, we see him sixteen years later, in his thirties. He has married Annie Lee, who announces that he is running for county clerk or going into business. Having been resistant to the back-breaking work of farming since his youth, this is not surprising, although the malice with which he makes his exit from the farm and the accusations that he makes against Alexandra regarding her management of the land are harsh. Even still, he sticks up for Alexandra by scolding Oscar when he makes a derogatory, snide remark about her age.

Lou does not change throughout the play. He seems constantly dissatisfied with his life. Even when he leaves the farm and is married, he does not seem to have a particularly happy home life and continues to lack direction. When Annie Lee says that
Lou plans to quit farming and go into business he replies, “that’s what she says,” indicating that he is not fully sold on the plan.

Lou is firstly a Bergson and part of a two-some with Oscar, with whom he shared a similar costume plot. At the opening of the show, he wore a blend of folk and period costumes, similar to Alexandra: a red vest, a cool-colored button down shirt, and navy cotton twill work pants. During scenes in which he is working the land, he added a newsboy cap to distinguish those scenes as out of doors.

After he is married to Annie Lee, Lou’s costume indicated some maturation and distancing from his agricultural background. His second costume was comprised of navy slacks, a dark vest, white shirt and a dark grey jacket. He wore a tie to Sunday dinner, but remained casual with no jacket, showing he was not a career politician or businessman just yet. The addition of the jacket and hat for the scene during which Lou and Oscar formally leave the family land behind lent the actors an urban and severe aesthetic, not in keeping with the warmth of those connected to the land. Lou and Oscar wore urban homburg hats which were the only ones in the show, marking them as decidedly different from the practical, wide-brimmed farmer hats, which their characters have decidedly rejected.

Oscar is the older of the two brothers and the one with a less developed storyline. Unlike Lou, who we know gets married and makes some preliminary decisions about his career post-farming, Oscar is not provided with an overt life story. The script does make it clear that he never liked farming, so we presume he does not continuing in that vein later in life.
Darrah Cloud, in her initial descriptions of the characters says that Oscar is slow and ox-like. This is supported by Lou frequently acting as the instigator, though Oscar may support Lou’s initial arguments. The actor and Thompson developed some backstory that Oscar (perhaps based on actor resemblance) wants to be like his father. Perhaps this helps explain why he lets Lou take the reins. He is just as unhappy farming as Lou is, although he has a cheerier disposition, being generally less argumentative.

Oscar’s costume progression was almost identical to that of Lou, though he did not wear a tie to dinner and did not button his suit jacket when they go to confront Alexandra about leaving. These touches reinforce that he follows Lou’s lead and isn’t as physically or mentally composed as his brother.

Emil is the youngest of the Bergson children; he is only five years old when the play begins. Cloud calls him intense and morose, presumably referring to when he is older because he is a quiet, mild and curious five-year-old in those early scenes. He goes through the search for self that most young men do, and in many ways the play is a coming of age story for Emil. Alexandra has worked very hard to give him the opportunities that she, Lou and Oscar did not have (28). Yet despite going to the university, he still is not sure what he wants to do. He is restless for something bigger than Nebraska, bigger than school. His “restlessness” may have less to do with wanderlust, however, and more to do with unfulfilled desires directed towards Marie.

Emil is emotionally complex, and his costumes reflected his broad variety of moods and personal changes. On the one hand, he is the Bergson son most connected to the land, often seen tending the over-growth in the cemetery or farming with his friends.
He represents the epitome of the farmer, sensually connected to the earth. His farming costume, therefore, was the most overtly striped of any in the show except for perhaps Alexandra’s suit. His cotton work pants were a bold green and tan stripe which blended beautifully with the scenery. His shirt was a warm-colored stripe with a button-front placket opening which revealed his bare chest, a request from the director in order to reinforce his role both as a romantic lead and as a robust foil to Frank’s somber demeanor.

When Emil came home from the university, he wore a three piece sack suit, a style of suit popular at the time, characterized by a looser jacket that buttons high on the chest with four buttons. The suit was much more cosmopolitan in appearance than the clothing of the rest of the characters. His suit was accessorized with a straw boater which especially stood out because it is completely impractical for manual labor. His well dressed manner is an indication of his desire to please Alexandra who has clearly directed him into the academic life. He is dressing to impress and please her.

It is only after Emil makes a stand and leaves Nebraska and the United States altogether that we as an audience obtain a clear picture of who Emil really is, or at least who he wants to be. He decides that he doesn’t want to go to law school, and that he would rather go to Mexico City and work with a friend on an engineering site there. His letter home from Mexico is extremely romanticized, as is his appearance when he returns. Emil’s costume in the second act when he comes back in order to attend the Catholic fair was exotic. He wore a tooled leather vaquero jacket and a wide brimmed gambolero hat decorated with conchos. It gave him a mysterious, traveled and international flair.
In all truthfulness, Emil is most at ease with himself when he is working the land as a farmer. These are the times in the play when he is at his most vulnerable and most relaxed and intimate. Therefore, I chose for him to spend his final moments of life with Marie while wearing his striped work pants.

Marie Tovesky/Shabata is exuberant and full of life. If Alexandra is the picture of repression, then Marie is the expression of all the passions and emotions a person can have. She is led by her emotions and whims, even into the mouth of folly. In order to play into her flirtatious, feminine behavior, I dressed her, even as a young girl, in fluffy, feminine attire. As a girl, this meant a pink apron with large flowers and a pastel “milk maid” style dress which made her look like a doll. As an adult, this outfit translated into a vibrant peach jacket with a large bow in front and a full peach and turquoise plaid skirt. The colors were unlike anyone else’s in the play. Thompson and I had discussed in a very early meeting that Marie represented something “other” in the world of the play. She is neither “of the land” nor “not of the land.” Instead, she is a breath of something different in Hanover. She is enigmatic, quirky, mysterious, and enchanting. In accordance, her color palette did not coordinate with any other character.

One way in which she did relate to another character was to wear a costume to the Catholic fair which was just as outrageous and exotic as Emil’s. As indicated in the script, Marie wore a gypsy costume which was supposed to resemble that of a doll she had as a child in order to look the part as she told fortunes from a tent at the fair. This costume helped support the continuing story of her romance with Emil by singling them
out from the rest of the ordinary pioneers as both different from everyone else and the same as each other.

During Marie’s last scene, she is seen wandering in the orchard before Emil finds her there. I wanted her to look enchanting and ethereal for the climax and demise of their love story. To achieve this, I costumed her in a vintage dress, heavy with white-work embroidery. The skirt also had a lot of fullness at the hem, which moved beautifully and pillowed around her and Emil as they made love in the orchard. It was also reminiscent of a wedding dress, though not overly so, which served as commentary on the tragic irony that this was as close to wedded bliss as the ill-fated lovers would ever come.

Marie is an emotionally complex character. Nowhere is this more apparent than during her effort to reason out her feelings for Emil. She makes a change from “we can never be alone together again” to finally giving into her love for him, even though she knows that it is morally wrong on some level. Because of this struggle, there is a sadness which is always about her, and sometimes it is revealed. For example, while reading a letter from Emil, she is unable to control her sadness that he has left Hanover and moved to Mexico. But in general, I think she wants to be a good person and do the right thing. She shows concern for her husband, Frank, when he has a headache which shows that even though their marriage is flawed and mismatched, she does strive to make it work. Her problem is that she is bigger than her own life. She wants more out of life than being a proper wife in sleepy Hanover, Nebraska, but frustratingly knows that that is all she will ever have. She too has that sense of wanderlust that Emil expresses. She wants more and ultimately makes a decision to give into her passions, for better or for worse.
Her clothing represented her constant attempts to put her best face forward and push back the negativity in her life. She dressed as the best version of herself - the young, flirty, vivacious side. Her priorities in life are ones that are emotional, not practical. As such, her clothing was not suitable for helping Frank with the farm. This does not go unnoticed by him, and it is a source of struggle between them. He accuses her of being more interested in visiting with friends than attending to the physical business of maintaining the farm.

Cloud calls Frank Shabata, the thirty-something Bohemian husband to Marie, out of place and angry, but I find this rather reductive. Something that Thompson and I talked about as early as November was that we wanted to find a way to make Frank a sympathetic character. The cards are stacked against him in the script. He kills the romantic leads, almost all his lines are spoken in anger, and no overt reason for his unhappiness is ever given. I felt that in order to fully explain Frank’s behavior and personality as we see him in 1906, we had to better understand what he was like before that time.

Emil has a dream about Frank meeting Marie and the beginning of their courtship which sheds some light on this time in Frank’s life. He is presented as a suave, desirable dandy. My design concept for him was that he would be dressed in a suit and bowler, along with a very flashy brocade vest during this first time we see him. Then, we see him flashed forward in time as a jaded farmer; he would wear somber, worn clothing, including that same vest, but now dirty, old and ratty. The object was to make it seem like Frank was holding on to the last vestiges of his former self. I wanted to induce a
sense of pity for Frank so that the audience would be sympathetic towards him, even when he killed his wife and her lover.

His last costume was his prison uniform for when Alexandra visits him in jail in Lincoln. This costume was prescriptive and historically accurate. However, in order to continue my pursuit of pity on Frank’s behalf, I costumed him with his jacket open, revealing a dirty long underwear shirt. The first time the audience saw him, he was revealing a fancy vest, whereas the last time we saw him, he was revealing an old prison-issued shirt. This costume showed he had lost all his pride and his whole life in America.

The final romantic lead in *O Pioneers!* is Carl Linstrum, the long-time friend of the Bergson family, particularly Alexandra. The Linstrums, a neighboring German family, have been in Hanover for a longer time than the Bergsons, and are therefore better established. However, as Carl claims, the Linstrums are not very good farmers or neighbors and they move early on in the play. It is Carl in particular who is not terribly interested in farming. So, although he wore the cotton work pants that all the other men did, his were not dirtied. He wore them with a sack coat, a well-fitted tan suede vest and a striped gold and purple shirt. He is more polished than the other farmers because he does not labor with the same intensity and tenacity that they do. He also wears a brown, broad-brim hat. In these early scenes, he is seen with an omnipresent sketchbook, taking down his surroundings. He has an artistic side that sets him apart from his agricultural surroundings. The purple color in his shirt was one that I would return to again for Carl
because it spoke of his artistic nature. It is because of this unique flair that he leaves Nebraska to find work as a metal engraver in New York City.

   Carl has a very gentle and humble spirit. His clothing does not suggest a boastful or prideful character. I tried to keep his attire simple and let his honest personality speak for itself. For his return from New York, he wore a burgundy, wool frock coat, a grey vest with a pocket watch, and a white button down dress shirt. The longer frock coat made him appear distinctive and sophisticated, but without make a production of his travels as Emil does with his vaquero jacket. The burgundy wool also played nicely next to Alexandra’s green and mauve suit, coordinating subtly to create a harmonious stage picture. Like her suit, this costume was also flexible for Carl. He wore it both with and without the jacket as was suitable for different locations and events.

   Carl leaves again to seek his fortune in the gold fields of Alaska. For his second and final return, he wore the same shirt and vest he had worn at the beginning which were not highly featured because of the grey sack coat. The purple and tan of his costume coordinated neatly with Alexandra’s peach dress.

   Annie Lee, Lou’s wife, has a very strong presence in the one scene in which she appears. In her thirties, she is eager and brash, often pushing and leading the conversation at Sunday dinner, always striving to impress those around her with the quality of her family. She brags about everything from the recent acquisition of a bathtub, to Lou’s dabbling in business, to the multitude of skills and talents of their daughter Milly. The way in which she brags gives her a somewhat nouveau riche quality. Her need to impress is over the top, especially in comparison to Alexandra’s understated
appreciation for her wealth. When Annie Lee first enters for dinner, she explains that Alexandra has so many nice things, to which Alexandra replies that it is others, not she, who seem to enjoy and appreciate them. She also apologizes, facetiously, to Carl for the plainness of her dress, though she in wearing a brilliant, loud shawl. Ivar also mocks her fussy, curly hair as an appropriate place for a buzzard to nest. She is a comically annoying character. Her character does not evolve as she is not given stage time to do so. She serves the play by providing exposition concerning Lou and Alexandra’s financial standing.

Milly, Annie Lee and Lou’s teenage daughter, represents the first generation born in America. While setting the table with Alexandra, she demonstrates that tradition is being lost on the young. She says that Swedish is impossible to speak and that she doesn’t see any point in taking the time to set the table since it’s “just old us coming to dinner.” Alexandra tells her that it is important, even in rural Nebraska, to maintain tradition and appropriate manners. She is a sweet girl in need of guidance. Milly is a product of her mother, Annie Lee. As a result, they were costumed in a similar palette of wine and pink combined with floral prints. Furthermore, her costume was a little dressier than many of the other characters in the show because she is Annie Lee’s proof of their up-and-coming status. She is dressed to impress others, especially young men, because she is to be presented to company in the near future.

Ivar is an eccentric, mystical old Norwegian. He has supernatural-seeming powers to heal animals and to predict the future of the land’s output. He calls Alexandra “daughter” and looks after her as such. He is her confidant and friend. They are reliant
on each other, something they both acknowledge. She would not have been successful if it weren’t for his advice, and he would not be able to live outside of the asylum if it weren’t for her protection.

Ivar does not change throughout the play. He is always the wise and wizened advisor. He wears the traditional clothing of his homeland, Norway, throughout the entire play. This folk costume consisted of navy blue fall front breeches, a peasant shirt and a grey and navy cropped jacket called a *bunad*. Whereas most characters made a change in costume during the transition to 1906, Ivar stayed in his original clothing, expressing both his stubborn fondness for “the old ways” and his religious caution against creature comforts. In an effort to demonstrate both his poverty and his eccentric nature, Ivar was costumed without shoes. Instead, he wore thick woolen socks with holes through which many toes peeked out. The actor did an excellent job of acting with his feet and utilizing the opportunity to “speak” with his toes. Ivar, who lives in a hole in the ground until Alexandra invites him to live in her barn, is poor, but is so mostly by choice. He lives meagerly, like a hermit, out of religious humility. He has basically taken a vow of poverty.

Old Mrs. Lee is another character who is not thoroughly explored in the script; she has very few lines. What can be gleaned from the script is that she is brash, bordering on rude. She seems to have the attitude “I’ll do whatever I want because I am old.” She mocks Lou in Swedish, knowing he can’t understand her, she takes her shoes off at the table and even falls asleep during tea.
She, along with Ivar and Mr. and Mrs. Bergson, is representative of the steadfast traditions of The Old Country. She wore a traditional, bulky dirndl skirt and an embellished Swedish *bunad*, or lace-front bodice. Combined with her elaborate aprons, she looked every bit a Swede. She never changed her costume in order to remain a strong reminder of the immigrant status of all those present. She maintained her strong accent and her traditional dress.

Angelique, one of the smaller ensemble characters, is Amedee’s charming and affectionate sweetheart. She dotes on him and brags about all of his outstanding qualities. Angelique represents what Emil’s life might be like if he weren’t in love with a married woman, an alternative of which he is constantly reminded by Amedee who eggs him about finding a wife and starting a family. She is straightforwardly kind and simple. I costumed her in a blue and white, plaid blouse and a brown skirt not unlike those of her contemporaries, but tried to make her as unfussy as possible, as she is not flirtatious, but happily settled with Amedee. Later in the play, when she is a mother, she wore a darker blouse to show her maturation. Lastly, she wore a black caplet to Amedee’s funeral as an outward expression of her mourning and in order to adhere to customs of the time.

Amedee and Marcel are best friends, probably from childhood back in France. They are some of the most serious farmers, as demonstrated by Marcel helping Amedee when he gets his new thresher machine. They wore broad brim hats, signifying a greater priority to their occupation, since those would have been most suitable of any head covering for doing manual labor in the sun. Both wore striped, cotton twill work pants
and vests, with button down shirts and suspenders. This was the same sort of aesthetic and result as discussed for Emil’s farming costume.

*O Pioneers!* also contains a somewhat super-natural character: the Man in Dream, who is Alexandra’s dance partner when she falls asleep and dreams of a mysterious paramour. Though allusions are made that he might be Carl, he is more accurately simply the embodiment of all her suppressed longing for love and passion. As a mysterious figure, the Man in Dream wore dark clothing that fit close to the body, revealing his movement during the dances with Alexandra. During the last dream in which he appears, he represents death. In order to illustrate this, he wore a cloak with a hood, which not only had a period aesthetic, but also connoted traditional images of a grim reaper.

Another small role is that of the protestant preacher who presides over father’s funeral during the third scene. He is never seen again in the play. He plays a necessary part in moving the plot along by providing the funerary business for Mr. Bergson’s death, but he also introduces a theme about the land and the cycle of life. He speaks the lines, “And so we consecrate this body to the cruel earth which is the stuff of this body, ashes and dust, ashes and dust” which are echoed later when Ivar says of Emil and Marie that the earth will “give them back again in the billowing wheat, and the bursting corn…” His costume was prescriptive for a protestant clergy member of the time. He wore black trousers and a black cassock frock coat.

During the second act, there is a simultaneous baptism and funeral. The Bishop comes to Hanover to preside over the baptism. He wore a black cassock with red piping
and a stately gold stole and cross pendant necklace. I decided to forgo full vestments for the bishop, despite his high rank, because of the rural nature of the community. There was also very little time for the actor to change into the costume because he appeared as a farmer in the scene preceding the baptism.

Last of the clergymen in Hanover is Father Duchesne, the parish priest. He is featured in the Catholic Fair scene and also presides over the funeral. He is a light-hearted character, joking and dancing with his parishioners at the fair. In order to set him apart from the bishop and to play into his jovial nature, I put him in a grey cassock, rather than a black one. His look was completed by a tabbed cravat.

A guard also appears in the prison scene to bring Frank in and out of his meeting with Alexandra. Based on historical research, he wore a navy blue bobby coat, a style of uniform common to turn-of-the-century law enforcement, and a shako hat, which is a cylindrical hat with a small visor. To lend him some authority and severity, he also wore a Sam Browne belt. This accessory, historically meant to hold a sword and scabbard but now used only for aesthetics, is a thick leather belt with a second belt worn diagonally over one shoulder.

O Pioneers! is a show about the evolution of an entire community of immigrants over sixteen year’s time. As such, a large ensemble provides the milieu of Hanover, though specific details about these townspeople go undefined. At the top of the show, they were costumed as representatives of a handful of European nations. They were dressed in old-world ethnic costumes resembling those of Norway, Sweden, Bohemia, France and Germany. The multitude of textures, patterns, and colors found in their
clothing helped to convey the diversity of the community. Their bulky silhouettes and mismatched clothing also provided strong contrast for their appearance later in the show.

After the jump to 1906, the ensemble members were dressed in an Americanized style, having abandoned their folk-wear for garments that might have been available for purchase in a catalogue. Furthermore, rather than mixing and matching patterns and colors, the ensemble now appeared more sophisticated and streamlined with coordinated outfits. Because they were farmers, they wore utilitarian clothing, despite their recently increased refinement. Men generally wore cotton work trousers, collarless shirts, vests, suspenders and boots. The women wore dresses or skirts and blouses with aprons. Visually, these chorus people provided a variety of textures and colors to complete and enhance the stage picture.
Chapter 4: The Process

The script for *O Pioneers!* that I read in September of 2009 as I began my design process was not the version that was ultimately used for the show. In early November, the design team was informed that the revised version of the script or some combination of the two versions would be used. The first version contained several dream sequences which provided a magical, ethereal quality to portions to the play which I and the other designers were very interested in preserving, feeling that it added even more grandeur to the already sweeping tale. The second version lacked these dreams, but added a few songs. After Thompson, myself and the other designers took some time to discern the differences between the two scripts, it was decided that combing the two scripts would serve the production best, keeping the dreams and the extra music for this production.

The only other change was the loss of two characters, Signa and Ilsa, two Swedish housekeepers. This change did not drastically affect my work because the transition to the new script came before the costume designs were turned over to the Costume Shop Manager, Jan Woods. Structurally, this changed the play slightly because those characters’ songs and lines were redistributed to other characters, but it did not impact my design in the end because it was a change of omission.

Before winter break in December, I met with Woods to spec the show- the process of discussing each character’s costumes and deciding what will be built, rented, pulled or purchased and estimating how much everything will cost. At the time of
specing, we agreed to build a total of twenty one items (see Table 7), with the understanding that I should still look for these garments while I was pursuing my rentals.

Many garments in the show were procured through rentals from The Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, the Cleveland Play House and the Contemporary American Theatre Company (CATCO), area theatres with whom Ohio State has a rental history. Rentals were an important part of fleshing out my options for costuming such a large cast as the stock at OSU is simply not extensive enough to accommodate dressing that many people for that specific time period, especially in folk costumes. When I visited Cincinnati and Cleveland in December, I was looking both specifically and generally (see Table 4 for full list of initial rental goals). I knew there were garments, such as Alexandra’s traveling coat and a dress for Marie’s finale, that I should look for in particular, but I was also pulling items more generally. My goal was to build a “shopping mall,” stocked from all the theatres, from which I could pull, knowing that all the items had been pre-selected for period and aesthetics.

The creation of an *O Pioneers!* shopping mall was a big challenge. Renting from multiple theatres carries the risk of a final product that appears disjointed and inconsistent because all the garments have been designed and produced by different hands. Making a cohesive show that still reflected my vision as a designer while piecing looks together from so many different sources was a complexity that I revisited with every single fitting.

During specing, Woods and I also decided that some garments would be purchased, especially men’s clothing which takes more time and skill to create from scratch (see Table 5). Woods was also interested in purchasing these items, as opposed
to renting them, in order to expand OSU’s stock of men’s wear from this period. A bulk of the purchasing, particularly fabric for build items was done before Winter quarter began January fourth (see Table 6). Purchasing continued throughout the build period as the need for trim, notions, and unexpected items arose from fittings.

As work began, the build list underwent some alterations, based on what I was able to rent or pull over the break. For instance, the initial intent was to build the entirety of Marie’s first outfit, but I was able to rent her blouse, and I found a plaid skirt in OSU’s stock that was similar in fabric to something I had been looking for (unsuccessfully) at the fabric stores in Columbus. Excitingly, a large scrap of the plaid fabric was being stored with the skirt, so we were able to perfectly coordinate her built jacket to match the pulled skirt.

The build list for Alexandra also received some changes. A passably Swedish bodice was found in stock that was reduced in size to fit the actress, and Cincinnati Playhouse provided a blouse in the actress’s size, negating the need to build either. Additionally, I had pulled a wall-paper floral dress which was handsomely designed, but was much too small to fit the actress who played Alexandra. Upon further investigation, it was decided by Woods, Kristine Kearney, the resident costume designer, and myself that it could be rebuilt to fit the actress. Extra fabric was procured from the underskirt of the dress and inserted in the bodice to make it larger. A new collar and yoke piece were added to improve the fit as well. This redesign and refitting, while challenging, took less time than building a new piece from scratch, as originally intended on the build list.
Other items like Marie’s turban and the aprons were pulled from stock and retrimmed or purchased.

A few more minor issues came up during the build. Firstly, there was not enough fabric to complete Alexandra’s quilted skirt for the winter scene out of the fabric I initially purchased for the project, and there was no more to be found for sale in order to cut all the pieces from the same fabric. This resulted in the skirt being constructed of two different fabrics. As a solution, I bought fabric from the same collection of quilted fabrics in a similar range of colors. The skirt still looked good and the difference was hardly noticeable from the house of the theatre. Also, a pair of pants I ordered from a text-only catalogue arrived a much brighter blue than I anticipated. They had to be dyed several times in order to darken them sufficiently.

Lastly, I rented a dress from the Cleveland Play House for Marie to wear at the end of the play when she dies. It was a beautiful vintage dress from around the turn of the century, but it needed some repairs. Gravity and the stress points of hangers had done significant damage to the shoulders of the dress, and the fabric was shredding itself as it hung. The entire area had to be reinforced and patched to make it wearable again. Furthermore, the dress had already undergone some major restyling in order to make it larger than it was originally. Coordinating panels had been inserted between each gore of the skirt, and a completely non-matching panel had been poorly added in the back. With the permission of the shop manager in Cleveland, we removed the offending panel and replaced it with fabric that was dyed to match in a style that was more in keeping with the rest of the dress.
The opportunity to re-do the back of this dress was very beneficial because the actress who played the part of Marie had an extensive tattoo that covered her entire back and continued up her neck and onto her shoulders. Replacing the back panel allowed us to create a little more coverage than the dress originally had. The tattoos were further obscured by a lace capelet that she wore over the dress at all times.

Fittings also produced a few changes. One was a re-design of the style line on Alexandra’s winter coat. Initially, it was designed to be slightly cut away from the center front line (see Plate 3), but during the fitting of the muslin for the coat, a new style line was drawn because it looked more flattering on the actress to have the front edge of the coat swoop backwards.

I also made a change to Marie’s jacket in the fitting. I originally rendered her peach jacket with cropped sleeves, but looking at her costume in the fitting, I could see that she needed the full length of the sleeves in order for her character to not appear awkward (see Figure 12). I felt that if six inches of blouse sleeve were sticking out of her jacket, she might look comical or sloppy, even though it was a common style for the period. The character of Marie is already somewhat flighty and whimsical, and the costume did not need to emphasize that personality trait.

I also decided during a fitting that Carl did not need two different hats. I had planned to have him wear a bowler hat when he came back from New York, hoping this would give him a metropolitan feel, but his wide-brim western style hat was so flattering on him, I wanted him to wear it all the time. The actor was very good at working with
the hat, and in my eyes it became a visual signature for Carl. I think it also helped tie him to Nebraska and Alexandra, despite his travels.

During the build period, I also had the time to let my original designs gestate, grow and change. One example of this was my rethinking of the mourning attire for those attending Amedee’s funeral. I had thought that there would need to be a more pronounced adherence to funereal and mourning traditions than ultimately resulted, especially for Alexandra, who was hardly seen in black at all after Emil’s death, despite her devastating grief. If that scene had been treated with complete historical accuracy, all those attending, and probably even those not attending the funeral, but rather the baptism, would have been wearing all black, as was the social and cultural custom at the turn of the century. However, there was not time for actors to make that complete a change, and more importantly, it was not necessary. As a solution, the women wore black capelets and the men traded their farmer vests for black vests. Alexandra wore a long, black cape to the funeral, and again in the cemetery when she mourned Emil. I thought for a while that Alexandra should wear the cape to Lincoln when she visits Frank because she is still in mourning, but Thompson rightly felt it was too somber a way to end the play. Instead, Alexandra wore her linen duster to Lincoln.

Another adjustment to that scene was Frank’s hat. He was drawn in my rendering with a wide brim hat to go with his jail uniform, but did not end up wearing one. I was not sure at the time of final renderings how that scene was going to be staged. If the guard were to have led him in from outside, the hat would have been appropriate. Instead, it was staged as a completely interior scene, and the hat was cut.
One major, and welcome, amendment to my original design was a decreased need for distressing. I knew I wanted the clothing to look muted, worn and even dirty in some cases. This would require hours of tearing, painting and dying. And while I did spend a considerable amount of time doing these things, the need to do so was less than I had anticipated, mostly because of the generally dim and dramatic lighting which allowed the clothing to remain subdued. I was also pleased to find that the textiles and garments I chose were in such a muted pallet already that many costumes looked worn even without additional distressing. This was fortunate because it meant that large amounts of stock did not have to be damaged, which would have rendered them nearly unusable.

Practical constraints like budget, time and labor also affected the costume design. During specing, it was estimated that I would only need to purchase a small number of men’s boots, because there were so many in stock already. However, the sizes in stock did not align with enough pairs of feet. At this point, it became a budgetary issue. To purchase more period-looking ankle boots would cost between sixty five and one hundred dollars for each pair, and I needed nine pairs of men’s shoes. I also needed three more pairs of women’s boots, but was able to find those on eBay for around thirty five dollars. I knew I did not have the budget to purchase nine pairs of men’s boots at the hundred dollar rate, so I purchased four pairs of more modern-looking ankle boots for ensemble members and Lou, and the expensive period-looking boots for Carl because he was a leading character. The four other pairs I still needed were generously rented to me by Cleveland Play House, even though shoes are generally not rented out.
Money was not the only resource that affected the final outcome of my design. Time and labor also determined another choice. About two weeks before first dress, I was told in a fitting with the actress who played Alexandra that Thompson was considering using a dressing gown or robe of some sort for at least one of the scenes in which Alexandra is in her bedroom and then falls asleep and dances with the man in her dreams. One of these dreams is written to be staged with Alexandra in her underclothes.

I had no problem with Alexandra being seen in her petticoat and camisole, but the issue was always how she was going to get undressed when she never really leaves the stage. Thompson and I had discussed back in October that one solution might be to have Signa help undress her, since the maid appeared in those scenes anyway as a servant and confidant. However, the arrival of the new script made that impossible since that character was cut. Interestingly, the dialogue was retained, but it was reassigned to Ivar. Thompson and I agreed that Ivar could not be the one to undress Alexandra because it would be completely inappropriate.

We left the discussion in December in agreement that she would work it out during rehearsals, and that if she needed a garment to let me know as early as possible. I told her I would look around at the rental houses in case I found something in the actress’s size, but that it was doubtful my search would be fruitful. In fact, I was not able to rent such a garment, and so when Thompson asked for a robe two weeks away from first dress, I had to tell her that it was not possible, as neither time nor labor existed to fulfill that request.
I offered a solution that perhaps the man in Alexandra’s dream could help undress her as part of the choreography. The necessary garments were sent to rehearsal, and the choreography was adjusted to accommodate this action. Luckily, this dream sequence happened just before intermission, so there was no concern about redressing Alexandra on stage after the dance.

Another need Alexandra’s dream dances generated during rehearsal was specific footwear. Thompson requested that both Alexandra and her partner have an additional pair of shoes with flexible soles for smoothness of movement. For Alexandra, these did not need to be dance shoes, and it was agreed that a pair of suede-bottomed Isotoner slippers would be suitable. For the male dancer, it was suggested that he needed proper dance shoes. These would have been an unpredicted and costly purchase, but the actor, who was a graduate dance student, decided to make the purchase on his own.

Alexandra was not the only character who disrobed on stage. Marie and Emil’s lovemaking scene also produced issues about what clothing was removable and how that would happen. The actors were given all their costume pieces to work with during rehearsal. It was decided that Emil would remove his own shirt and take down his suspenders. Marie could not undress because of her tattoos; instead, Thompson requested roll-top stockings so that Emil could roll one down, revealing her lower leg. Combined with pushed up bloomers, this exposed enough skin to give the impression of undress.

First dress was scheduled for Thursday, February eighteenth, but due to inclement weather earlier in the week, first dress was pushed back to the nineteenth. However, in order to not waste the eighteenth, Marie and Alexandra dressed because they had the
most changes. The rehearsal was mostly a cue to cue for lighting, but it still provided a chance for the costume crew and actresses to practice making their changes.

Through this rehearsal, I discovered that the belt that Alexandra wore with her green suit needed to be tacked to her skirt so that it would be easier to quick-change into this costume. I also realized that the white blouse that Marie wore with her first outfit, the peach jacket and plaid skirt, looked very bright and uninteresting when worn without the jacket. The blouse actually had a very pretty double collar with embroidery, but all of that detail imperceptible under the bright stage lights. To restore the definition in the blouse, I dyed a small lace trim a rich salmon color and a work-study student applied it around both collars. This helped to pop the style lines in the blouse and visually divide the expanse of white.

The first real dress rehearsal with the entire cast occurred on Friday the nineteenth. This rehearsal gave me a chance to see all the clothes together on stage, on the scenery and under theatrical lighting. Rather than looking at a single actor at a time as during fittings, I could see the entire cast simultaneously. As I watched the opening song for the first time with the whole cast on stage in costumes, I was looking for garments that stood out in a negative and unintentional way. I decided that most of the pale aprons needed more dirtying and/or trim to break up the large areas they created on stage. They were visual hot spots that were drawing unnecessary focus. Other items that pulled focus were shoes and belt buckles that were too shiny. These were roughened up a bit to reduce reflection.
I also noticed that several pairs of men’s pants, particularly those which were solid colors, looked very new, which in fact they were. The shop manager washed these to soften them, and then I distressed them even more, adding “dirt” to the hems, thighs and seats of the pants to make them look more worn.

One costume in particular did not look like I had expected it to when I saw it on stage for the first time. Annie Lee’s costume was a plaid skirt with coordinating belt and an obviously striped, floral blouse. When I saw her on stage, she looked extremely washed out in most scenes. Neither the plaid nor the stripe showed up well from the house, and furthermore, it made the actress appear heavy.

In a first attempt to solve this problem, I checked stock for another skirt or blouse that would fit the actress. When I found that there were not alternatives available, I dyed the belt a dark wine, hoping it would add a pop of color and also better define her waist. I also added two rows of large trim at the hem of the skirt to break it up. In a continued effort to bring more color and definition to her costume, I also added a darker trim to the front button placket, cuffs and collar of her blouse. The costume still looked pale during some scenes even after these modifications, but without completely starting over, it was a good compromise.

I decided that another one of Marie’s costume pieces also needed some additional contrast after seeing it under stage lighting. Marie wore a large, straw sunhat with ribbons that tied under the chin. The ties were white with a peach stripe, but on stage, the color in the stripe was not discernable, blending into her blouse. As a solution, the white ribbons were removed and replaced with ties made of peach fabric. The added color
helped to enliven her outfit, replacing some of the color that was lost when the ensemble was worn without the jacket.

Another item that was affected by the lighting on stage was the handkerchief that Marie pulled from her bodice when she was shot. The scene, which takes place at night, was lit dimly, and the blood on the handkerchief was not going to be visible to all audience members throughout the house. Kearney and I agreed that the easiest solution would be to use a solid, red handkerchief to make sure that it read as blood.

During first dress, I was also looking at the cast’s hair and taking notes. Alexandra wore a half-wig that was styled in a low bun with a prominent braid across the top of her head. During this first dress, I discovered that the braid was much too small for good audience visibility. Shiree Houf, a second-year MFA candidate with a costume emphasis, was the wig master for this show, and she corrected the problem by the next dress rehearsal, making the braid much larger.

Marie’s hair also needed attention. The actress had bangs which she styled with a center part for this dress. And while that would have been a period-appropriate choice, it was not flattering to the actress and it appeared to age her. To create a more youthful appearance, she styled her bangs back with much more fullness at the hairline and crown. This choice was much more fitting for a young ingénue.

The last character to undergo hair-styling scrutiny was Ivar. The actor who played this part had naturally very curly hair which he wore in an afro style, comprised of many corkscrew curls. For this show, he wore a false full beard. Straight out of the box, the texture of the beard was wiry, but not curly like the actor’s hair.
For first dress, a costume crew member helped the actor straighten his hair some, in order to match the texture of the beard. It was clear when the actor was on stage, though, that this attempt at texture matching had failed, resulting in the beard looking obviously false. As a solution, the beard was curled by the shop manager for future shows, making the texture of the beard more believable as the actor’s own.

Between the first dress and the second dress, many of the actors were given notes in order to attempt to resolve dressing notes I had taken during the first rehearsal. In most cases, the actor had had one fitting, maybe over a month earlier, leaving ample time to forget how to wear all their costumes. With little time to speak with each actor individually during dressing time before rehearsals began, it was unsurprising that I had notes to give regarding how actors were wearing their costume pieces. For the most part, all actors were wearing the correct garments at the correct time, so the notes I gave were about the way they wore them. These included notes like when to roll up sleeves, wear a hat or belt, or how to tie a bandana around the neck. These kinds of dressing notes continued throughout the rehearsal process, with the number of notes given dwindling each night.

Because I had taken and addressed so many notes from the first rehearsal, I spent most of the second rehearsal observing those changes on stage, checking to make sure the improvements had worked or been sufficient. I also took a few new notes.

One of these new notes was the need for Marie to have a head covering during the winter scene. After consideration and watching the song “Roll Over Me Snow” again, I decided that Marie needed a winter accessory. The rest of the cast was on stage in knitted
scarves, and it looked odd for Marie to be standing center stage with snow falling on her without something to keep her warm. She had made a change in costume to reflect the season, but I still felt she needed something to keep all the snow off of her head. There were no appropriate hats or bonnets in stock, so one had to be made. A chorus member was wearing a scarf with a hood, so I used it as a pattern to create one for Marie which would coordinate with her outfit.

I also decided to address a lingering dissatisfaction with the cape that Alexandra’s dance partner wore in their final dance. During this scene, the man is supposed to represent both her desire and death. To solve that conundrum, Thompson and I had agreed in a much earlier meeting to use a great cloak with a hood in order to create a look that was both somewhat in keeping with the period and reminiscent of a grim reaper cloak.

I had sent to rehearsal several choices of cloaks from which the dancer could choose. I wanted him to have input in the decision because I had watched his dance in rehearsal, and I was concerned about him becoming entangled in the fabric. He ultimately chose a grey cloak with a burgundy lining. I felt the lining might be too flashy, but I had been counting on the lighting being dim in that scene. As it turned out, the lights were reflecting off the lining more than I wanted to see, and I felt that the cloak would also be better if it were darker. Before third dress, I attempted to dye the cloak, but the hood turned out a different color than the body of the garment as it had been added later. Both Thompson and I were dissatisfied with the results and a new cape was pulled from sock.
The last major change to come out of dress rehearsals was an omission to the script. The scene in which Emil has a dream about Frank and Marie beginning their courtship was cut. This deletion did not physically affect the costumes of any actors other than decreasing the number of changes that Frank had. What it did impact was the meaning of Frank’s costumes. He was to appear in the dream as a dandy, wearing a suit and looking like he was in the prime of his life. This was important because it contrasted with Frank as he is seen later in the play, disheveled and unhappy. I had had two identical vests made of fancy brocade; one was to be worn with his suit, and the other was heavily distressed and worn as his farming vest. The vest still read as a dirty work vest, but it had lost some of its significance without the counterpart of its twin in the earlier dream scene.

The following night, Wednesday February twenty-fourth, was preview, and technically the last dress rehearsal. However, due to obligations to another show in Cleveland, I was not in attendance. I left my last few trimming and dressing notes with the costume shop and considered the show completed.
Chapter 5: Evaluation of the Design

*O Pioneers!* was by far the largest show I have ever designed, both in terms of cast size and number of costumes. Preparing the show for opening was a long journey which contained both highs and lows, all which gave me a greater understanding of myself and the way I approach design.

Designing the costumes for *O Pioneers!* brought me much closer to fully trusting myself as a designer. The production schedule for creating and altering all the costumes for the show was arduous. Some of the constraints on time could have been eased had I trusted my initial instincts and made decisions more quickly. First dress brought me very few surprises, and I found myself shocked at how good the show looked. I think in the future I will further trust myself as an artist, which will help both to speed my work as a designer and to speed the work of the costume shop.

A common practice of mine as a designer is to spend much of my research and preparatory stage concentrating on developing a thorough and textually-supported understanding of the characters in the show. This remained true for *O Pioneers!*. The time that Thompson and I took to discuss the characters and how we each saw them functioning, both individually and with in the world of the play, was time well spent. The dexterity with which I was able to handle the script and speak dramaturgically about how I saw each scene and character functioning was very helpful when speaking to the director. It gave us a common place to stand and figuratively pace around for a while,
which might not have been possible if the discussion had turned directly to clothing choices. Coming to a common understanding and agreement early on about the direction Thompson was going to take the characters helped me design with fewer changes and surprises. When Thompson would come down to the costume shop to see costumes in progress, she was never unhappily surprised and never asked for changes, thanks to our unified vision.

This was also my first show that relied heavily on rentals. As discussed in Chapter Four, creating a cohesive show from so many different stocks can be challenging, but I think that too was a successful component of this design. I was deliberate about which items I put together, mixing and matching items from all the rental locations. I also made sure to visually spread out the truly unique and interesting costume items amongst the cast members. By doing so, I was able to make the entire group look distinctive, even though some additional costume pieces were somewhat generic or nondescript.

The collaboration between Shonk and myself to produce a solid visual theme with the planking and stripes was also very successful. In some characters, the effect was more subtle, but I believe that for Emil and Alexandra, the stripes in their costumes were bold enough that the association between set and costume was undeniable. Despite its stylized movement and musical elements, *O Pioneers!* was still rooted in realism. Therefore, to have successfully implanted a symbolic vocabulary into the costumes without detracting from the realistic nature of the piece, I think was a design success.
Looking back on the production, there are two characters I wish had had different outcomes. The first is Frank. As previously mentioned, Emil’s dream in which the audience is first introduced to Frank, was cut, mostly due to pacing issues. The dream was deemed superfluous, and cut for time. And while the plot did not drastically suffer for having lost this part of the story, I believe Frank’s character, my design for him and the audience’s perception of the character did experience negative side effects. The character of Frank Shabata is one with whom it is difficult to sympathize. I felt that the gruff and murderous Frank needed some explanation, which is why I built an obvious contrast into my design between Frank as a charming, young man and Frank as a bitter adult.

When the dream was cut, Frank lost the juxtaposition between his personality as a youth and his personality as an adult. Having never seem him as a happy young man, the audience did not have the opportunity to understand the magnitude of how far he had fallen. Furthermore, as mentioned in Chapter Four, the vests he wore did not have as great an impact when not seen in relationship to one another. As a direct result, I believe the audience’s ability to sympathize with him was decreased. In turn, I believe that without the audience’s sympathy towards Frank, the forgiveness which Alexandra extends to him was also less understandable and relatable.

The other character which I might treat differently were I to design the show over again, is the Man in Dream, Alexandra’s dance partner. It was my understanding that he represented Alexandra’s sensual desires and emotional longing, but was not an embodiment or the spirit of Carl. I believed this was a good thing because the actors
looked nothing alike, and I did not think that I could draw that association clearly enough to make it effective. Additionally, it would have been difficult time-wise for the actor to change into “Carl” clothes for the dances. Remaining in those clothes the entire time would not have been an option either as the actor played other parts in the ensemble.

Instead, I dressed the actor in darker clothing which I hoped would make him seem mysterious as he emerged from the darkness of the stage. My intent was that he would seem to come from the depths of her mind. In the end, I think his identity was too unclear. I still do not know what the best solution for treating this character is, but perhaps it is telling that in the second version of the script, the dreams are cut out, and so, therefore, is this character. This omission leads me to believe that the trimming out of the dreams in the updated script was very purposeful, and in fact an improvement. It is also my personal hypothesis, based on this edit, that ours was not the only production that struggled with this issue.

Reviews from both the Columbus Dispatch (see Appendix B) and The Other Paper (see Appendix C) cited weakness in the script and the pacing, but found promising depth, artistry and ingenuity in the acting and movement. Neither article commented on the costumes, though compliments directly from audience members and colleagues point toward a favorable reception of my work. Thompson herself shared with me that I captured the spirit of O Pioneers!. I have been commended for my attention to character as well as detail. One audience member told me after seeing the show opening weekend that the costumes “definitely surpassed what I ever would have thought of as 'pioneer clothes,' and enriched my experience of the show immeasurably” (Bierschenk).
References

Bierschenk, Michael. E-mail to the author. 27 Feb. 2010.


APPENDIX A DIRECTOR’S CONCEPT
Jeanine Thompson’s

Director’s Concept

For

O Pioneers!

By Darrah Cloud

Based on the novel by Willa Cather

The World of the play:

Nebraska

1890’s

Nothing……

but land and sky.

…and like a sunrise, Aaron Copland’s Appalachian Spring (numbers 1, 2, & 3 on the CD I compiled) comes up softly and slowly. (Not that this music would actually be used in the play; it is here to give you an idea of my sensibility.)

O’ Pioneers is a story about individuals who had the courage to leave everything they knew as “home” behind: their houses, jobs, friends, families, communities, churches, familiar foods, landscapes, all - but what they could carry, in order to pursue a dream.

They moved to Nebraska from Norway and Sweden in the 1800’s to an unsettled state in the middle of this new country. With hopes of prosperity they bought large plots of land at very low costs in exchange for developing the land by planting crops, trees and herding animals.

No matter what job they might have done before, this was their future. If they were lucky. If they survived the trip, the freezing winters and scorching summers. If their soil rooted their seeds. If their animals survived. If they had enough steadfast determination, vision, and learned the land. The land would eventually unfold its life to them, their seed, their families, and produce their dreams.

The Homesteading Pioneer Spirit:

(opening song from the play)

DIRECTOR’S CONCEPT
“March 1873
Left my home and walked two days.
Boarded ship and crossed the sea.
Taking only what I could carry.

Left the city, took the train.
When the track ran out
I walked
to the shores of the Prairie.

Thought coming here would make us free.
Got so free we nearly starved.
Lost my youngest babe
and lost my mind.

Fourth of July
Made it here, and all alive.
Send us what you can
and write ---
What we’d give to hear from our own kind…

Boat across the ocean didn’t kill me.
Slums of the city didn’t kill me.
Journey west, the cold and no food
didn’t kill me.
So I should feel no little disappointment in dying now we’re here.

“Cause there’s Gold in the riverbeds,
Silver on the Plains,
Salt inside the mountains.
And diamonds in the rain!”

All that possibility
running to the sea.
And not another homestead
between that sea and me.

Why does winter come
when it’s not wanted here at all.
No one ever prayed for ice.
Or needed snow to fall.

DIRECTOR’S CONCEPT (CONTINUED)
And why did I come here
when it’s too hard to be alive?

Because I’m just as cruel as winter
too cold not to survive.”

I love this play and the novel it is adapted from. I love that the landscape is cast as a character.

_Prairie Spring_: a poem by Willa Cather that is the epigraph to the novel _O’ Pioneers_.

“Evening and the flat land,
Rich and somber and always silent;
The miles of fresh-plowed soil,
Heavy and black, full of strength and harshness;
The growing wheat, the growing weeds,
The toiling horses, the tired men;
The long empty roads,
Sullen fires of sunset, fading,
The eternal, unresponsive sky.
Against all this, Youth,
Flaming like the wild roses,
Singing like the larks over the plowed fields,
Flashing like a star out of the twilight;
Youth with its insupportable sweetness,
Its fierce necessity,
Its sharp desire,
Singing and singing,
Out of the lips of silence,
Out of the earthy dusk.”

This play deals with:
The strength to stay.
The strength to go.
And the losses and gains in both choices.

This play is a beautiful reflection of the array of what happens to people when they adhere to a dream and when they let go of their dream. It is a story whose central character is a female hero. She survives in a “man’s world, doing manly work” without being “manly.” She is feminine. She is honoring her dying father’s wish to take care of the land and the family. And she does so. She is observant, patient. She learns from those who have been there before her. She is smart at business. She succeeds at taking care of the land and her family. Yet holding on to her dream has cost her and her family. In the

DIRECTOR’S CONCEPT (CONTINUED)
end she realizes that cost, and forgives – others, and most importantly, herself.

**Music and Sound:**

My take is that *O’ Pioneers* is a play with music more than it is a traditional musical. Samples of the music are not available and I will soon be hearing the score played for me to get a clearer idea of the style and tone of the music. For me it seems as if it would sound like folk music. (I may be wrong, it may sound like *Cats*. Not that there’s anything wrong with that.)

The play calls for live instrumentation. It is my understanding that the music can be performed in a range of options: from a quintet to an accordion. The play calls for singers who move in and out of the action. Sometimes being a part of the action, while at other times commenting on it.

The play specifically calls for four singers: a soprano, alto, tenor and a baritone. Additionally, it calls for eleven out of nineteen characters (not including the four singers) to sing specific roles. I will need a music director to assist me in making choices about the music, and to teach and direct the music.

I find that music often expresses more clearly what I am thinking about than my words can express. Therefore I have included a CD with songs on it that reflect my sensibility for certain aspects of the play. I am NOT recommending that we use these songs in the play; I have only included them as points of reference. When I think about the vastness and beauty of the landscape and sky -- I hear in my mind selections from composer Aaron Copland, specifically from *Appalachian Spring* (numbers 1, 2, & 3 on the CD I compiled). When I am thinking about the severity of the landscape and weather -- I imagine harsh, deep instrumental music. I imagine sounds from nature throughout the environment such as birds, grasshoppers, wind, etc. When I think of all that the characters have lost, compromised, and longed for, I hear the song “I’m Calling You” from the movie *Baghdad Café* (number 4 on the CD I compiled).

The play refers to the singers and Ivar singing native folk songs. I have been listening to a lot Traditional Norwegian and Swedish Folk and Dance music. I really like the “old world” melodies and switches in rhythm. (I have included selections on my CD. They are numbers 5, 6, 7, & 8.)

**Scenic:**

I envision vast landscape and sky, and essential, sparse suggestions of buildings, place and time.

**DIRECTOR’S CONCEPT (CONTINUED)**

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It can be as abstract as The Lion King with a plot of grass “growing” from a performers head (then I guess it would be a collaboration of scenic and costumes) to being actual dirt and structures on stage. The novel mentions that the only buildings that stood out on the land were windmills. Their homes, for the most part, were huts that were built partially into the earth.

Most important to me is the vastness of the landscape. The rest of the scenic elements I am open to exploring options that will evoke the specific locations and season changes.

Costumes:

I envision historical choices for characters, and costume changes that reflect their financial and/or emotional/psychological gains and loses. I imagine their clothes having been lived in for a long time in the Nebraskan earth: the red clay, black soil, and brown dirt.

Lighting:

I envision shifts in landscape, sky, season, time, mood, and psychological tensions.

Casting:

The script calls for nineteen characters, including a ten year old girl and a five year old boy – both of which sing soprano, plus the four “singers”, for a total cast of twenty-three. I can envision handling the casting and singing requirements in a variety of ways. But first I need to hear the music and hear from the music director what options the music will allow us. The cast consists of four singers, musicians, eight women, nine men, a ten year old girl and a five year old boy. A total of twenty-three people.

Dramaturgy needs:

Information about Norway, Sweden and Bohemian: their cultures, music, food, values… Information about pioneers who came to our country from those countries. What Nebraskan farming life was like at that time: crops, animals, clothing, tools, equipment, etc. What food did they eat and drink, recipes, shopping lists, etc. What were the native plants and flowers? Photos of the Nebraskan landscape and sky. The Homestead Act of 1862.

DIRECTOR’S CONCEPT (CONTINUED)
APPENDIX B COLUMBUS DISPATCH REVIEW
Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!* is a quietly radical novel. Spanning decades and stubbornly refusing to conform to a conventional plot, it moves doggedly through the life of Alexandra Bergson.

In the 19th century, she is handed ownership of the family farm on the Nebraska prairie. Her dying father thinks she will be more committed to it than will her unstable younger brothers. Two thwarted romances add poignancy to the story.

With its long descriptive passages and intermittent bursts of melodrama, Cather's novel isn't an obvious choice for a theatrical adaptation. Darrah Cloud's moody, respectful take on the story, staged by the Ohio State University Theater Department, is tenaciously faithful to the book's structure and spirit. But sometimes the production suffers from a surfeit of earnestness and a deliberate pace. At 21/2 hours, the two-act play could use variations in tempo.

Yet the work also has moments of magic: when the patient Alexandra (Ashley Kobza) falls asleep and finds herself dancing with a handsome stranger (Maungsai Somboon) or when a sickbed descends into the ground and emerges as a casket or when snow falls against a star-filled sky much bigger than the human characters onstage.

Kobza captures Alexandra's larger-than-life determination and her weaknesses. She's radiant and thoroughly grounded. Also effective are Ibsen Santos as Alexandra's beloved and troubled younger brother, Emil; and Jack Menkedick as town mystic Ivar. Menkedick adds welcome touches of humor to a role that could have been ponderous.

Less convincing is Charlesanne Rabensberg as Emil's married soul mate, Marie. She sometimes comes across as more silly than enchanting.

Director Jeanine Thompson successfully uses stylized movement to convey a sense of the many actions involved in the day-to-day life of a farming community without getting bogged down in naturalistic props. But it might have also been wise to apply equal restraint to a misguidedly explicit and badly paced scene involving the consequences of a love triangle.

Victor Shonk's weathered wooden set shows the effects of wind and weather on the community with minimal strain. This is a world in which the interiors are off to the side.
of life and the forces of nature and Earth dominate most of the action.

Although stretches of dialogue alternate with musical numbers, *O Pioneers!* is not so much a musical as a play with choral commentary. Most of Kim Sherman's music is sung by the townspeople as a group, and they're not generally a toe-tapping bunch. The tone, if occasionally hopeful, is hardly lighthearted, and, as graves mount in the town cemetery, dirges become the norm.

If *O Pioneers!* is on the whole more admirable than pleasurable, it's fair to say that the play ably mirrors Cather's work.
APPENDIX C THE OTHER PAPER REVIEW
They should have called it Nebraska!

By Richard Ades

Published: Thursday, March 4, 2010

Like Oklahoma!, O Pioneers! is a musical that’s set on the prairie and builds to an act of violence. Also, both works have names that begin with “O” and end with an exclamation point.

That’s where the resemblance ends, however.

While the music in Oklahoma! is an organic extension of the story, its counterpart in O Pioneers! is more like an occasional digression. It can’t be called an extension of the story because it seldom has much to do with it.

Written by composer Kim D. Sherman and lyricist Darrah Cloud, the tunes mostly focus on the lives of first- and second-generation Americans who work to cultivate the inhospitable Nebraska prairie in the late 1800s. But the story, adapted from Willa Cather’s 1913 novel, is far more specific.

Its central figure is Alexandra Bergson (Ashley Kobza), who’s left in charge of her family’s struggling farm after her father’s death. Brothers Oscar and Lou (Chris Ray and Liam Cronin) chafe under her leadership but mainly let her follow her instincts—which is fortunate for them, because she turns out to be a smart businesswoman who turns their fortunes around.

From this point on, the story is more about the personal lives—or lack thereof—of Alexandra and younger brother Emil (Ibsen Santos). Alexandra is too busy minding the family’s financial affairs to think about romance, and Emil’s first love marries another when he goes away to school.

All of this plays out in an involving way in the novel, but here the story is told in a kind of solemn shorthand that strips away its ability to move us. Emotions are excised to make room for Sherman and Cloud’s songs about life on the prairie.

Though the script isn’t the best, director Jeanine Thompson and her cast and crew bring it to the stage in an admirable way. From Victor E. Shonk’s stylized set to Jarod Wilson’s lighting and Thompson’s choreography, all of the elements blend together to create a graceful, respectful portrait of rural life.

THE OTHER PAPER REVIEW
Acting-wise, Kobza’s dignified turn as Alexandra is the hub around which the rest of the first-rate cast revolves. Other standouts include Charlesanne Rabensburg, whose frantic energy as Marie reflects not only the character’s high metabolism but her determination to make the most of a bad marriage.

The songs are serviceable, if not memorable, and the choruses, soloists and musicians generally deliver them well. The most effective numbers are those that accompany the repressed Alexandra’s fantasy dance duets with an unidentified lover (Maungsai Somboon).

_Oklahoma!_ heroine Laurey also has a fantasy dance scene, of course, which suggests that Cloud and Sherman were as much inspired by Rodgers and Hammerstein’s musical as they were by Cather’s novel. They probably would have been better off limiting their influences to one or the other.
TABLE 1: COSTUME PLOT
A. PRINCIPAL MEN:
1. Carl Linstrum I- Old-world immigrant costume
2. Carl Linstrum II- better dressed farmer. Winter coat, hat
   (remove coat for Scene 4)
3. Carl Linstrum III- fashionable New York City dress
4. Carl Linstrum IV- Change. Different coat, etc.
   (enter with traveling coat, put on for exit in 17)
5. Carl Linstrum V- traveling attire (same coat as before)
6. Lou I- poor immigrant costume
7. Lou II- better Americanized clothing
8. Lou III- change? Passage of time
9. Oscar I- poor immigrant costume
10. Oscar II- better Americanized clothing
11. Oscar III- change? Passage of time
12. Emil I- Americanized, “city” garb
13. Emil II- work clothing
14. Emil III- well dressed man with international flair
   (no jacket, more casual for Scene 22)
15. Emil IV- mourning garb; scarf
16. Frank Shabata I- Old-world immigrant costume
17. Frank Shabata II- farmer, tattered vestiges of former self
18. Frank Shabata III- winter; even more miserable looking
19. Frank Shabata IV- prison uniform
20. Ivar- Old-world Norwegian costume

B. SECONDARY MEN
21. Amedee I- Old-world immigrant costume
22. Amedee II- better American clothing
23. Amedee III- older, a father now
24. Amedee IV- work clothes
25. Man in Dream- neatly dressed, non-farmer
26. Marcel I- Old-world immigrant costume
27. Marcel II- better American clothing
28. Marcel III- work clothes
29. Father I- poor, old-world immigrant costume
30. Father II- night shift, cap
31. Father III- grave clothing

TABLE 1: COSTUME PLOT
32. Young Emil - poor immigrant costume  
33. Priest - cassock  
   (add jewelry and or sash for Scene 20)  
34. Bishop - clerical garb  
35. Guard - uniform  
36. Little Emil - old work immigrant child

C. PRINCIPAL WOMEN
37. Alexandra I - poor immigrant costume (overdressed)  
38. Alexandra II - Winter cloak, hat  
   (remove cloak inside in Scene 3)  
   (add apron for Scenes 5-7)  
39. Alexandra III - better Americanized clothing  
   (add jacket for Sunday dinner Scene 11)  
40. Alexandra IV - change. different skirt/bodice from 11  
41. Alexandra V - House coat/wrapper  
42. Alexandra VI - winter dress  
43. Alexandra VII - more colorful overskirt  
   (finish transition. Lighter bodice for Scene 22)  
44. Alexandra VIII - mourning garb  
   (and traveling coat, hat for Scene 28)  
45. Marie I - feminine American girl, cloak and hat  
   (remove cloak and hat for Scene 14)  
   (add boots Scene 15 only)  
46. Marie II - winter dress  
47. Marie III - “gypsy” doll yellow turban, colorful skirt and vest  
48. Marie IV - somber dress

D. SECONDARY WOMEN
49. Angelique I - Old-world immigrant costume  
50. Angelique II - better American clothing  
51. Angelique III - older now; colorful overskirt  
52. Angelique IV - mourning garb  
53. Young Marie - poor immigrant costume  
54. Annie Lee I - Old-world immigrant costume  
55. Annie Lee II - better Americanized clothing  
56. Old Mrs. Lee I - Old-world immigrant costume  
57. Old Mrs. Lee II - winter shawl w/apron  
58. Milly I - Old-world immigrant costume  
59. Milly II - better Americanized clothing  
60. Mother - Poor, old-world immigrant costume  
   (add apron for Scene 6 only)

TABLE 1: COSTUME PLOT (CONTINUED)
61. Little Marie - old world immigrant child

Scene 1

TABLE 1: COSTUME PLOT (CONTINUED)

69
# ACT ONE

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<td>Cream blouse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>Winter dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>White-work dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Dandy suit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Barn jacket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lou</td>
<td>Red immigrant vest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lou</td>
<td>High-waisted, cotton work pants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lou</td>
<td>Sack coat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>Folk wear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>Winter coat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female ensemble</td>
<td>Folk wear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male ensemble</td>
<td>Folk wear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male ensemble</td>
<td>High-waisted cotton work pants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male ensemble</td>
<td>Collarless shirts</td>
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**TABLE 4: RENTAL LIST**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTER</th>
<th>ITEM</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Boots</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Cotton work pants</td>
<td>Gohn Bros.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Early western hat</td>
<td>Gentleman’s Emporium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Prison suit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lou</td>
<td>Cotton work pants</td>
<td>Gohn Bros.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lou</td>
<td>Embellishments for vest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oscar</td>
<td>Cotton work pants</td>
<td>Gohn Bros.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oscar</td>
<td>Embellishments for vest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcel</td>
<td>Striped pants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angelique</td>
<td>Embellishments</td>
<td>Antique mall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Mrs. Lee</td>
<td>Embellishments</td>
<td>Antique mall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Mrs. Lee</td>
<td>Shoes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annie Lee</td>
<td>Boots</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Shoes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Fold hat</td>
<td>Gentleman’s Emporium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivar</td>
<td>Waiter jacket (to be altered)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivar</td>
<td>Embellishments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivar</td>
<td>Beard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Shoes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Doily for waist pocket</td>
<td>Antique mall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Shoes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandra</td>
<td>Boots</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>Cotton work pants</td>
<td>Gohn Bros.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>Sack Coat</td>
<td>Gentleman’s Emporium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>Frock Coat</td>
<td>Gentleman’s Emporium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>Early western hat</td>
<td>Gentleman’s Emporium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emil</td>
<td>Brown sack suit, 3 piece</td>
<td>Gentleman’s Emporium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emil</td>
<td>Striped work pants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emil</td>
<td>Vaquero jacket</td>
<td>Wild west mercantile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emil</td>
<td>Gambolero hat</td>
<td>Gentleman’s Emporium</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**TABLE 5: PURCHASING LIST**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTER</th>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>PULL</th>
<th>BUY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old Mrs. Lee</td>
<td>Folk stripe, dirndl skirt</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Mrs. Lee</td>
<td>White eyelet, blouse</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Mrs. Lee</td>
<td>Navy wool, bodice</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>White linen, blouse</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Green stripe, skirt</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Red corduroy, jacket</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandra</td>
<td>Wallpaper stripe, suit</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandra</td>
<td>Quilted fabric, winter skirt</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandra</td>
<td>Brown wool, winter coat</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandra</td>
<td>Immigrant skirt</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>Peach fabric, jacket</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
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**TABLE 6: FABRIC SOURCING LIST**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTER</th>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>Part of final build</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Folk wear Blouse</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Dirndl Skirt</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Apron</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Waist pocket</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Swedish Jacket</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Headdress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandra</td>
<td>Swedish bodice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandra</td>
<td>5 Gore suit skirt</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandra</td>
<td>Suit jacket</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandra</td>
<td>Quilted skirt</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandra</td>
<td>Winter coat</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandra</td>
<td>Spring skirt or blouse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>Plaid skirt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>Coordinating jacket</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>Blouse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>Turban</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Two vests</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Mrs. Lee</td>
<td>Dirndl skirt</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Mrs. Lee</td>
<td>Folk wear blouse</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Mrs. Lee</td>
<td>Apron</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensemble</td>
<td>Two Aprons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 7: BUILD LIST**
FIGURE 1: RESEARCH FOR SWEDISH FOLK-WEAR
FIGURE 2: RESEARCH FOR NORWEGIAN FOLK-WEAR
FIGURE 3: RESEARCH FOR CZECH FOLK-WEAR
FIGURE 4: RESEARCH FOR PIONEERS
FIGURE 5: RESEARCH FOR FARM FAMILIES
FIGURE 6: RESEARCH FOR YOUNG PIONEERS
FIGURE 8: RESEARCH FOR WOMEN AT WORK
FIGURE 9: RESEARCH FOR WINTER CLOTHING
FIGURE 10: RESEARCH FOR TEXTURES
FIGURE 11: RESEARCH FOR ALEXANDRA
FIGURE 12: RESEARCH FOR MARIE
FIGURE 13: RESEARCH FOR FRANK
FIGURE 14: RESEARCH FOR CLERGY
FIGURE 15: PRELIM FOR EMIL III
FIGURE 16: PRELIM FOR LOU/OSCAR III
FIGURE 17: PRELIM FOR FRANK I
FIGURE 18: PRELIM FOR EMIL II
FIGURE 19: PRELIM FOR MOTHER
FIGURE 20: PRELIM FOR OLD MRS. LEE
FIGURE 21: PRELIM FOR IVAR

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FIGURE 22: PRELIM FOR ENSEMBLE I
APPENDIX F PLATES
PLATE 1: RENDERING OF ALEXANDRA I
PLATE 2: RENDERING OF ALEXANDRA II
PLATE 3: RENDERING OF ALEXANDRA III
PLATE 4: RENDERING OF ALEXANDRA IV
PLATE 5: RENDERING OF CARL I

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PLATE 6: RENDERING OF CARL II
PLATE 7: RENDERING OF MARIE I
PLATE 8: RENDERING OF MARIE II
PLATE 9: RENDERING OF MARIE III
PLATE 10: RENDERING OF MARIE IV
PLATE 11: RENDERING OF FRANK I
PLATE 12: RENDERING OF FRANK II
PLATE 13: RENDERING OF FRANK IV
PLATE 14: RENDERING OF EMIL I
PLATE 15: RENDERING OF EMIL II
PLATE 16: RENDERING OF EMIL III
PLATE 17: RENDERING OF FATHER I
PLATE 19: RENDERING OF LOU/OSCAR I
PLATE 20: RENDRING OF LOU/OSCAR III
PLATE 21: RENDERING OF OLD MRS. LEE
PLATE 22: RENDERING OF IVAR
PLATE 25: PRODUCTION PHOTOS I
PLATE 26: PRODUCTION PHOTOS II
PLATE 27: PRODUCTION PHOTOS III
PLATE 28: PRODUCTION PHOTOS IV

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PLATE 29: PRODUCTION PHOTOS V