THE SCARLET LETTER: A COSTUME DESIGN PROCESS FOR A PRODUCTION OF PHYLLIS NAGY'S ADAPTATION OF THE NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE NOVEL.

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by
Linda M. Pisano, M.A., B.F.A.

* * * * *

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Master's Examination Committee: Approved by:

Dennis A. Parker
Mary Tarantino
Rex McGraw

Advisor
Department of Theatre
NOTE

A complete illustrated copy of this thesis is located in the Jerome A. Lawrence, Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute at the Ohio State University.
VITA

October 20, 1967 .................. Born - Logan, Utah


1989-1991 ...................... M.A. Theatre

1992-1993 ...................... Advanced Studies in Costume Design for the Theatre at The University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music

1993-Present.................. Advanced Studies in Costume Design for the Theatre Ohio State University

FIELD OF STUDY

Major Field: Theatre
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INTRODUCTION

It is the intent of this paper to serve as a documentation of the design and production process of the costumes for Phyllis Nagy's adaptation of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. This play was the opening production for the 1995-1996 theatre season at The Ohio State University. The production was presented in the University's Stadium II Theatre October 25 through November 12, 1995.

Comprised of five chapters and necessary addenda, this document will describe the costume design and production process from conception through the strike. The following chapters will describe the challenges, evolution and final product as it pertains to the costume design and the collaborative process. Chapter I will detail the theatre space, costume studio, the staff size and skill level, the production budget and schedule.

Chapter II will define the director's production concept and identify the challenges associated with the modern staging of Nagy's adaptation. This chapter will also focus on the design concept, and research required to achieve that concept, while integrating an overview of the collaborative efforts of the entire design team.
Chapter III discusses the character analysis which helped to formulate the final design choices. This chapter focuses on information found in the script, ideas from the director and actors, as well as design research. It will explore the effort to utilize Hawthorne's own narrative as a through-line in the character analysis which evoked the visual images.

In Chapter IV, the total design process is described, covering such issues as changes from preliminary to final design choices, availability of fabrics, budget limitations, and resources. Changes made during the construction process due to casting choices, skill level of labor and scheduling constraints will also be discussed in this chapter.

Critical feedback and self-evaluation comprise Chapter V. Focusing on those elements which worked and did not work as expected, this chapter provides an evaluation of the final design.

Following the final chapter is a research bibliography of selected references. At the conclusion of this document is a series of appendices which include composite renderings, color plates, production photos, accessory sketches and selected patterns in eighth inch scale. Also included are the costume plot, action chart and budget chart for this design.
CHAPTER I
THE PRODUCING SITUATION

The Scarlet Letter was the first of six mainstage and two studio productions during The Ohio State University Department of Theatre's 1995-1996 season. Performances of the production ran from October 25 through November 12 in the University's Stadium II Theatre.

The facility was designed as a versatile black-box space and, although the seating was created to be manipulated into several types of configurations, a standard thrust position has been permanently established. This was an intimate and highly flexible space which offered designers, directors and actors a stage exposed to an audience on three sides.

When producing the costumes for a production it is imperative to have access to an adequate construction space and beneficial to utilize resources appropriate for the demands of the design. For most of the design requirements of The Scarlet Letter, the costume studio at The Ohio State University Theatre Department was more than adequate.

The studio is extremely well-organized and is regularly stocked with the necessary construction supplies for a period production. Housed in the bottom floor of the theatre department, the costume studio is centrally located to
several areas of costume storage, an elevator leading directly to the backstage of the Stadium II theatre as well as a large make-up and dressing room area. The studio is equipped with five domestic and three industrial sewing machines, and three 45" x 75" cutting tables. This was more than adequate for the size and caliber of the production. Also available were a fully-equipped dye room, costume stock, millinery, wig and make-up supplies.

Since the bulk of the work force in the costume studio is comprised of Graduate Teaching Assistants and work study students, the staff is employed according to the academic year which is late September through early June. Since the production of The Scarlet Letter entered its costume build period on August 28, only one staff member was working for almost four weeks. The costume supervisor is contracted through the summer season and was therefore responsible for the major portion of the build. The designer devoted her labor during this time to required practicum hours which would be retroactive when the academic year began. These design hours assured that dyeing, shopping and craft work would be completed early in the construction phase.

Although the construction was relatively small for a period production, very little major work began until the end of September when the new staff arrived for the fall quarter. These difficulties should not be attributed to scheduling a costume build period during staff down time, but rather
the lack of initiative to job in qualified staff to under-take
the beginnings of the construction, such as initial mock-ups
and basic patterning.

Because of the delayed entry of a work force during the
build period, no one person was assigned a specific piece to
build, instead projects were distributed on a daily basis
according to skill level. This not only wasted time repeating
instructions continually but garments were overhandled and
many steps vital to creating the custom fit garments were
overlooked or completely eliminated. Despite the scheduling
difficulties, the production offered several challenges for
different skill levels and exciting detail work for both
graduate and undergraduate students.

Although rehearsals had not yet began for the actors,
several were available for fittings throughout September.
This was invaluable, especially since several of the garments
were fitted, period pieces that required corsets as
understructure.

The budget allotted for costumes was $2,500.00. All but
one garment were constructed. Each costume averaged $250.00
and several fairly expensive fabrics were utilized through
careful budgeting. Many accessory items such as collars,
cuffs, hats, shoes and hose were already available amongst
the costume stock. Furthermore, most underpinnings such as
corsets and petticoats were also pulled from stock leaving
further funds available for trims, period buttons, linings
and a wig. Although the budget was responsible for any dry-cleaning after strike, it was not responsible for the salaries of the costume studio staff.
CHAPTER II
THE DESIGN CONCEPT

The Phyllis Nagy play adaptation of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* is contemporary in language, mood and action. Although Nagy's work is set in the mid-seventeenth century, it is unlike Hawthorne's original in that it is more accessible to a late twentieth-century audience. Nagy uses contemporary issues and narrative. Her choice of language is stylized to evoke a sense of late twentieth century dialogue. In changing the dramatic narrative from Hawthorne's Victorian prose, Nagy creates a nuance of modern poetic symbolism. This choice of language is especially accessible to the younger or less-experienced audience member.

Nagy describes her work with phrases such as: "deep sensuality", "repressed sensuality", "seethes with sex and darkness in every line." She goes further to describe specific characters as; "maddeningly sexy" and "sexy and rather capable." The similarity within all of these phrases and Nagy's character descriptions (included in the introduction of her script), validate her desire to develop a contemporary perspective on a narrative set in a time which repressed any expression of sexual or sensual emotion.
Nagy has taken dramatic license in interpreting the characters of Master Brackett and Mistress Hibbins. Master Brackett becomes an awkward, apparently younger man. Hibbins is feisty, promiscuous and very sexy. She has also made a point of portraying Pearl as an adult figure, going so far as to say, "She must be played by an actress in her late 20's, who at no time attempts to play her as a child." These character choices, especially Pearl, establish a dynamic juxtaposition to the actual personality type that these characters would be if this were a realistic period portrayal. An adult Pearl as narrator epitomizes the contemporary public perspective, one which is mature with a lifetime of experience, but completely vulnerable and idealistic to the gossip, slander, and scandal of the public persona. Pearl has become jaded and cynical not through direct personal experience, but rather through a keen observation of those events, relationships and personalities she witnesses.

The director makes a specific point about the accessibility of this production. He asks each of the designers to assist in creating this work for a modern audience.

"It is about sex, violence, the religious right, the public face vs. the private one and all the things that make headlines in today's newspapers and scandal sheets."

The following is the directorial concept concerning the costume design: it asks questions, poses potential
problems and challenges the audience views on what the Puritan actually did wear. Through use of the concept and various meetings with the director it became clear that the costume design must evoke the very essence of the fundamental quality in each of the characters. That is, the one adjective or phrase which describes the character would be the foundation upon which their garment was designed. For example, Hibbins is "maddeningly sexy", therefore, her design begins from that image and incorporates period silhouette, social status, age and contemporary interpretation. The director's main objectives were as follows.

"The characters could wear the same costume throughout; however, there are some suggestions of change in the text; examples, Hibbins needs to dress down for the scene with Pearl (her bosom is mentioned), she and Bellingham dress for bed, they also dress up for the parade; Hester may change her outfit since the play takes place over a period of seven years. At one point, she dresses for travel, one of her dresses needs to catch burrs, Hester also dresses Pearl in scarlet (in the novel). And what does one do about the dirt scenes, where the characters sit in it? Of particular note, the A needs to be attached and detached. In one of the articles about the novel, the critic states that the Puritans did not all dress in black, brown and gray, but in "Cavalier-style," which became the subject of some sermons of the time. Another problem, what to do with the hair? And the feet?"

The first priority toward this design was the playwright and the director's concern over the issue of accessibility. In order to create costumes that both reaffirm the modern viewer's idea of "sensuality" while challenging their
stereotypes of Puritans. Because of the perspective and genre of the script, it was important to focus on the evocative mood of the piece as opposed to creating real clothes of the era.

In the seventeenth century, Henry IV issued sumptuary laws to prevent foreign manufacturers from importing expensive fabrics. This political move did dictate some change in dress during the seventeenth century. Women's costume however, remained elaborate with silk and embroidery but became more fluid and natural rather than artificial and awkward as the century prior. This in mind, coupled with general observations of contemporary fashion and modern interpretation of style, it served the design best if the focus of the costumes was on color and texture. In particular a palette foundation color of black seemed the most appropriate choice for the intentions, mood and style of the text.

Historically, Puritan's costumes were derived from the traditional dress of Holland. This influence is prevalent in the paintings of Vermeer. An artist whose work often focused on the middle-class or working class social life. Van Dyck's work also evidences this influence but his works focus more on portraiture of the Bourgeoisie.

Although conservative in color and cut French influence on Puritan dress was inevitable. Thus, lower decolletage and intricate detail in trims and lace retained their
significance among even the simplest of costumes. In The Cut of Men's Clothes, Norah Waugh discusses some of the political influences on the fabric industries of the time, which in turn influenced the fashion of the era.

"Fashionable seventeenth-century suits were made from silk materials—satins, damasks, velvets, etc., as well as gold and silver cloths. These as well as the best laces and braids came from Italy. The financial situation in both England and France was such that the cost of importing these materials was prohibitive and many edicts were passed against their use, edicts which, however, the extravagant taste of the period contrived to ignore....This may explain why these plainer silks were often enriched by embroidery worked in an all-over design, or in wide bands, and the great use of narrow braids and ribbons which could be of local manufacture." (Waugh 16)

Ultimately black and darker hues were prominent. Close attention to evocative research, achieved through a survey of fashion design and celebrity dress, concluded that the contemporary eye relates sensuality with raw, organic and bare features, such as tussled hair, cleavage, and full lips. Aside from cleavage, these attributes apply to men as well as women. Both genders in contemporary society incorporate an intentional dishevelment and adornment into their costume, much like the Cavalier fashions.

The modern audience often associates black, darker hues, metallic and earthy tones with rich intensity as strong statements of sensuality. The texture must be layered, varied and soft to achieve a look of sensuality and seductiveness like what one might find in a sultry music video. In an attempt to challenge the audience's ideas of
Puritan dress, the design focuses on these aforementioned elements, while utilizing actual "Cavalier" silhouettes.

For example, the use of a metallic colored overskirt on a black dress for Mistress Hibbins was the epitome of the viewer's stereotype of a "maddeningly sexy" and "sensual" female character. However, the metallic skirt was softened by a heavy, textured layer of black lace. This not only reinforces the period look but challenges the audience to view the Puritan dress beyond the stiff, plain black fabrics and solid white collars often associated with them. Norah Waugh, in her acclaimed text, The Cut of Women's Clothes, describes the woman's dress from the mid-seventeenth century.

"...made from damask, velvet, silk, etc., and seems invariably to have been black, with the underbodice, sleeves and petticoat made usually of a light-coloured contrasting material....The back was shaped as before with two back side seams starting at the armhole, curving to within an inch each side centre back and continuing in parallel lines ending in a blunt point which by 1660 was very long....Sometimes the boned bodice stopped at the waist, when small tabs or a short basque would be added. (Waugh 29-30)

The accent-color palette consisted of muted colors in the yellow, olive and rust range. Although the play is set in the hot, sultry and passionate summer season, these colors will relate to the dark mood of the text and the heated subtext in the narrative. Furthermore, these colors are appropriate for the "Cavalier" style and silhouette.
The use of black as a base color on all of the characters except Pearl is to identify her as someone distinct amongst the other characters. In his novel, Hawthorne makes direct reference to the use of scarlet and/or crimson in Pearl's costume. As narrator, the use of a diverse color on Pearl was a practical choice as well. She needed to stand out and always be the focus of the audience, leading them from moment to moment.

Several design elements were incorporated into the costume detail, such as lace overlay, ornate brocades, rich velvets and a lot of decolletage on the women. Although waistlines were set above the anatomical waistline, "bodices extended into points below the waistline; breasts were squashed flat." (Payne 356) This would be an identifying factor of the evolution of the female dress between 1640 and 1650. Men also wore the higher waistline. Breeches began to diminish in size, especially among the more conservative and older generation.

"When the waist of the doublet rose the balance of design was kept by reducing the fullness in the breeches, especially round the bottom which now came below the knee, a length more in keeping fashionable short boots. The slight fullness below the knee was gathered into a very narrow band." (Waugh 15)

Male costume retained darker colors and conservative cut as well as the intricate embroidery and lace work found on the women's clothing. The costumes were not only set to the general "Cavalier" silhouette between 1640-1650, but
incorporated the detailed descriptions of costumes described in Hawthorne's novel. For example, as discussed previously, Pearl was dressed in decadent scarlet clothing. Governor Bellingham wears a stiff ruff and Arthur Dimmesdale had a hair extension added to create a pony tail fastened with a small, silk, black ribbon. Further descriptions are detailed in chapter three of this document.

Perhaps the most obvious character statement is represented in the costume of Chillingworth. Living in the backwoods, studying what the Puritans would call 'witchcraft', and dwelling among the 'savages', Chillingworth was deliberately crafted in an old leather jerkin and breeches. His clothes were distressed and hand laced at every seam and closure. He was haggard and old, used an old carved cane and carried bags full of herbal medicines. He was cloaked with a cape which the actor utilized to assist in evoking the mysterious mood of his character.

One of the distinct, identifying element of the Cavalier costume is its horizontal silhouette. Both men and women's garments are made up of lines which add width and depth to the human body. This feature was utilized within this design quite readily. The women have a horizontal line at the decolletage which is repeated at the waist and hip lines. The men are given strong shoulder lines and often appear shorter because of the straight cut at the bottom edge of a jacket or waist. The horizontal silhouette was more subdued within
this design through softer fabrics and incidental pleating as opposed to box pleating. Diminishing the harshness of the line enhanced the essence and sensuality of the design while still retaining the integrity of the silhouette.

In conclusion, strong line, texture and color choices in the costume design for the Nagy play version of, The Scarlet Letter focused on creating a challenging and contemporary vision of Hawthorne's commentary in the late twentieth century.
CHAPTER III
CHARACTER ANALYSIS

As described in the previous chapter, each of the costumes designed for this production was based on some particular image described by Hawthorne in the original Scarlet Letter novel. Although Nagy has taken some dramatic license in her interpretations of the characters she has retained the integrity of each character's essence.

Just as the actor and the director create a three-dimensional image from the written word, so must a costume designer evoke the physical interpretation of that character. Working with a text which was already an interpretation of another text created challenges while also providing an abundance of source materials from which to design. The following discussion will describe the foundation of each character upon which the costume designs were based. These images are a compilation of both Hawthorne's original work and Phyllis Nagy's interpretation.

As Hawthorne describes the Puritan's growing desire for Hester Prynne's handwork, he not only makes a keen observation of the people themselves but of Hester as well.
In the following paragraph, Hawthorne describes the detail and perfection with which Hester creates her work that the township acknowledges. Yet ironically she is the very creature they scorn for imperfection and sin.

"Here, indeed in the sable simplicity that generally characterized the Puritanic modes of dress, there might be an infrequent call for the finer production of her handiwork. Yet the taste of the age, demanding whatever was elaborate in compositions of this kind, did not fail to extend its influence over our stern progenitors, who had cast behind them so many fashions which it might seem harder to dispense with. Public ceremonies, such as ordinations, the installation of magistrates, and all that could give majesty to the forms in which a new government manifested itself to the people, were, as a matter of policy, marked by a stately and well-conducted ceremonial, and a sombre, but yet a studied magnificence. Deep ruffs, painful wrought bands, and gorgeously embroidered gloves, were all deemed necessary to the official state of men assuming the reins of power; and were readily allowed to individuals dignified by rank or wealth, even while sumptuary laws forbade these and similar extravagances to the plebeian order....there was a frequent and characteristic demand for such labor as Hester Prynne could supply...

By degrees, nor very slowly, her handiwork became what would now be termed the fashion.... Vanity, it may be, chose to mortify itself, by putting on, for ceremonials of pomp and state, the garments that had been wrought by her sinful hands. Her needle-work was seen on the ruff of the Governor; military men work it on their scarfs and the minister on his band; it decked the baby's little cap; it was shut up, to be mildewed and moulder away, in the coffins of the dead." (Hawthorne 74-75)

Later Hawthorne describes Hester's work as Oriental in style, ornamental and detailed in fashion. The previous narrative creates a strong image for particular
ornamentation and accessory in the costumes for the
townspeople and main characters. It also identifies the
Governor as one who wears a deep stiff ruff and the minister as
having ornamentation on his clerical band. Nagy translates
rather than interprets this image, giving stage directions
that on election day Hibbins is "...dressed rather grandly."
The same implication is given to Governor Bellingham. Nagy
also directly translates Hester and Pearl's tastes for dress
from Hawthorne's descriptions. Nagy's interpretation of
Hester is that she, as a woman, is exquisite and voluptuous.
Many of the characters continuously comment on this, but she
explains that Hester's fashion of dress is very plain. She
states that Hester is a "...stunning young seamstress who is a
master of irony. She is neither sentimental nor self
pitying." Furthermore she describes the irony in Hester's
appearance.

"The scarlet letter itself should be a dazzling
bit of costume. The scarlet letter is Hester's
one luxurious accessory, and she wears it well.
While she clothes herself quite austerely, she
makes incredibly beautiful, indeed decadent,
clothing for her daughter." (Nagy 23)

In the script, Dimmesdale comments: "That letter is
extraordinary", while the other male characters on stage
refer to Hester's beauty and attractiveness. Hawthorne
refers to the scarlet letter as a, "brilliantly embroidered
badge." He also describes Hester in the following
paragraph.
"Hester sought not to acquire any thing beyond a subsistence, of the plainest and most ascetic description, for herself, and a simple abundance for her child. Her own dress was of the coarsest materials and the most sombre hue; with only that one ornament, the scarlet letter—which it was her doom to wear. The child's attire, on the other hand, was distinguished by a fanciful, or, we might say, a fantastic ingenuity, which served, indeed, to heighten the airy charm that early began to develop itself in the little girl." (Hawthorne 75)

Therefore, in this production Hester's dress was a deep olive, brown and rust brocade fabric, with a heavy brown corduroy stomacher and skirt border. Her decolletage was open and revealed the milky white flesh of the actress. She wore a simple white cap and retained her red hair which closely resembled that of the actress portraying Pearl. Hester's costume was designed in an early and rather basic cavalier silhouette so as to not create an appearance of being too stylish. Her dress included a black under skirt and removable sleeves. This offered some variety in scenes which were both seven years later and supposedly hotter in temperature.

Perhaps the most significant character is that of Pearl. In both Hawthorne's work and Nagy's interpretation she is the physical representation of that sin which reveals the forbidden relationship between Hester and Arthur, but further reveals the compounding of that sin by the implied hypocrisy of the township in which they live. So when Hibbins asks Pearl why her mother wears the scarlet letter, Pearl's reply is, "Because it's red. And red is gorgeous." The of
power this irony is evidenced in that Pearl is costumed completely in red.

Hawthorne makes continual references to the decadent way in which Pearl is dressed throughout her childhood. This narrative coupled with Nagy's insistence upon the extravagance in Pearl's dress created a solid and symbolic foundation on which to base this character's costume. These costume choices assisted in differentiating Pearl from the other characters on stage, making her easily identifiable as the narrator of the story.

As cited earlier, Nagy describes Pearl's dress as, "...incredibly beautiful, indeed decadent." What is juxtaposed against this physical appearance is the continual comments made by the characters both within the novel and the adaptation concerning Pearl's odd personality and morbid behavior. She is often found playing in the graveyard and Chillingworth describes her as "Perceptive for her age." Pearl herself begins a monologue, "I'm fond of decomposition. Transformation." Her own mother states: "Sometimes I shudder at the thought of you, Pearl." With these continual comments about Pearl and the consistently odd behavior she exhibits, it was important to make her as attractive as possible. It seemed vital to create a physical image that would communicate that she is not a demon, but rather the product of silenced passion, unforgiven sin and a social hypocrisy. Therefore the fabrics chosen for Pearl were soft, full and cut
in the more youthful, high waisted silhouette of the cavalier period. Her hair was left natural and wild, while her face was free of make-up. Since the character is not to be portrayed physically as a child, no attempt was made to bind her mature breast measurement, nor confine her adult waist and full hips. Pearl's Act II costume was based almost fully on this description taken from Hawthorne's narrative.

"Her mother, in contriving the child's garb, had allowed the gorgeous tendencies of her imagination their full play; arraying her in a crimson velvet tunic, of a peculiar cut, abundantly embroidered with fantasies and flourishes of gold thread. So much strength of coloring, which must have given a wan and pallid aspect to cheeks of fainter bloom, was admirably adapted to Pearl's beauty, and made her the very brightest little jet of flame that ever danced upon the earth." (Hawthorne 90)

Governor Bellingham's character was not only interpreted by Phyllis Nagy as a rather pompous, but was further exaggerated through the actor and directorial interpretations. The character actor playing this role was rather tall and heavy set. His size in comparison to the 5'2" actress playing Mistress Hibbins influenced certain design choices. Because of the flamboyant personality of the character it was important to make him more well-meaning than he is necessarily written. Therefore, special efforts were made to incorporate the rigidity of the character as written by Hawthorne, the pompous nature as written by Nagy and balance it with the animated quality characterized by the actor. By utilizing more animated shapes and colors on
Bellingham, it achieved a more accessible symbolic metaphor of a contemporary politician. In modern American society politicians are the object of humor and comedy, they are often portrayed as pompous, bumbling fops that know just what to say on election day. In a more modified form this was the essence of Bellingham's costume. Through use of a Judge's wig, which identified the social status of the Governor as well as bright yellow and crimson linings to identify his eccentricities, the design solidified the hypocrisy of the character. Yet at the same time it created the comic relief the audience needed in the midst of such sinister and maddening behavior. Several sexual innuendoes were made between Bellingham and his sister, Mistress Hibbins. This was both on the part of Nagy and the directorial concept. The effect of the behaviors on these apparels were most notable in the costumes of Mistress Hibbins, which will be detailed later.

There is no specific narrative in Nagy's script which implies what Bellingham wears except a small stage direction which states he must dress "rather grandly" for the election day parade. However, Hawthorne's text refers to the Governor's "stiff, deep ruffs" and his desire for exquisitely embroidered accessories, such as his gloves "which she had fringed and embroidered to his order, and which were to be worn on some great occasion of state." Although Hawthorne refers to Bellingham several other times, they are only hints to further the description of his physical characteristics.
such as his age and this comment, "...his King James collar fastened askew." (Hawthorne 135)

Mistress Hibbins is younger in Nagy's interpretation. She was not the stuffy old witch described in the novel, but rather a robust, voluptuous and "maddeningly sexy" woman. The actress, who was extremely petite, was physically very different from those playing Pearl and Hester. She had waist-length black hair and very dark skin. Her features were enchantingly exotic. With this contrast several design choices were made. Utilizing the novel's descriptions the design was formulated from the eccentricities identified in her dress by Hawthorne and the wit and strength defined in her personality by Nagy. For example, in the novel she is described in the following passage. Incidentally, this passage was the basis for her Act II election day costume.

"She made a very grand appearance; having on a high head-dress, a rich gown of velvet, and a ruff done up with the famous yellow starch, of which Ann Turner, her especial friend, had taught her the secret, before this last good lady had been hanged for Sir Thomas Overbury's murder." (Hawthorne 195)

In the script, Nagy's written dialogue identifies a much younger, more contemporary woman with great intuition misinterpreted as madness. In the graveyard scene with Pearl, Hibbins appears to be seducing the young girl, trying to convince her to reveal secrets that she has repressed. Her intrigue and intelligence manifests itself when she states, "I'll tell you a secret. I have a letter, too. So do you
...but you can't see them." She later reveals the hypocrisy of the society when she reveals she too may have been born of she has Pearl look in the mirror. "Look Pearl: What do you see?" Pearl replies that she sees herself and Hibbins states, "And me. You see me. We are the same. We are from the same place, Pearl. Let's be friends." "Knowledge Pearl. I will give you knowledge."

Hibbins' insight into the reality of the people around her is not the only thing revealed by Nagy. As stated previously the male characters, including her brother, often discuss how voluptuous and buxom Hibbins is, and how mad. Perhaps she more than any of the characters symbolizes the oppressed face of the late twentieth century, therefore to physically portray her as seductive and mysterious must be balanced with intelligence and empathy. The textures in Hibbins' costumes were layers of lace, velvets and brocades. She wore rich color combinations of rust, burgundy, black and olive green. She was given a large bum role, a breast shelf in her corset and three inch heels to increase her petite frame. So as not to create an awkward and potentially comic look there was no attempt to overdo her shape beyond what was still feasible as realistic for her body type. Instead, color, texture and leaving the actress' hair long and full were the key in keeping her natural and real.
CHAPTER IV
THE PROCESS

Prior to the designs entering the studio for construction, there were several meetings between the designer and the costume studio supervisor. The first of these meetings was a preliminary examination of each garment in detail and its construction demands. This meeting provided an opportunity to discuss work load and a few particular details as some of the costumes were rather complex and elaborate.

The second meeting followed soon afterward and included a detailed review of budget sheets and required supplies. This discussion finalized decisions concerning yardage amounts, trims and items which were not available in the costume stock. At the time of this meeting the production was cast and some items had already been purchased by the designer.

The process for this production was somewhat unconventional due to unusual scheduling of studio labor. As mentioned earlier there were no staff for the first four weeks of the build, therefore particular care was taken by both the designer and studio supervisor to simplify the garments.
As the Graduate Teaching Associates had not yet arrived, the shop supervisor was responsible for drafting, draping and construction of all preliminary mock-ups. The designer assisted as time permitted but found it was necessary to spend time prepping fabrics, dying, shopping and pulling.

With limited staff and few actors available for fittings the work schedule was inconsistent and varied in productivity. It appeared that several mock-ups were unnecessary and could probably have been directly cut in fabric since the studio had recently updated all of its measurement charts. These items included women's skirts and several pairs of men's breeches.

At the end of September and four weeks into the build period, the Graduate Teaching Associates arrived for employment. The associates were varied in skill level, thus work was distributed according to the students' own admission as to what they felt confident building. One first-year graduate was more advanced and confident in her skills and assigned several more complicated projects. Two others were assigned projects suitable to their skill levels. Several weeks into the build one part time stitcher was hired but her skill level was not advanced and she performed more basic hand stitching projects as did several work-study students.

Each member of the studio team was assigned new tasks as they completed their previous projects. This method was
productive in that it distributed work according to the skill level of the individual. Unfortunately this slowed down the process because no one was given a deadline on their projects. This process also created complications because several garments were completely finished before others had been cut.

The scheduled construction period ended four weeks before the first dress rehearsal; this was a positive factor in completing the work. The shop supervisor continued to distribute unfinished work among studio personnel during these four weeks, as the next design under construction was quite small and required less of a labor force.

With the time extension in the studio the designer was able to attend to details with the assistance of the studio personnel; therefore the costumes were well-prepared for first dress.

To organize the construction process, several meetings were held to familiarize the new students with the production requirements as well as track the progress of the build. As construction progressed and more actors became available, the studio began fittings of the mock-ups. These fittings assisted in determining certain design choices in line and silhouette as well as fit and comfort for the performer. Final fittings were held to assure fit, comfort and acquaint actors with their garments.

The designer also maintained a production notebook which included a collection of research, budget sheets,
meeting minutes as well as shopping lists, action charts, costume plots, calendars and other paperwork.

After the initial meetings with the studio supervisor the designer set out to purchase fabrics for the garments. Although some choices had already been made through the process of swatching, there were still several fabrics yet to be determined. Some desired fabrics were unavailable due to cost or limited amounts of yardage. However, suitable alternatives were discovered and often these were better choices than the original intentions. The process of shopping for fabrics became quite exciting in that there was an abundance of choices. The autumn and winter fabrics were just arriving and this was fitting to the dark, rich color and texture palette designed for the production. With only ten full costumes, one completely pulled, coupled with a tremendous amount of trims, shoes and accessories in stock, several high-cost fabrics were available within the allotted budget. This attention to quality and detail in fabric choices, alongside well-constructed pieces from costume stock, assisted in creating the full, rich vision intended by both the director and designer.

Few changes were made in design during the process. The director was regularly invited to view the costumes under construction and was satisfied. At one point there was discussion about adding another costume for the character of Hester Prynne. The change was to occur at the point in
which Hester first appears in the forest. However, this change was disregarded and it was decided that Hester would simply remove the sleeves from her bodice to reveal a lacy under-blouse. This proved to be quite effective and the actress felt very comfortable with this choice. Also, due to the scale of the stage space and the required movement, the designer chose to remove Hester's bum roll and just retain the fullness from the gathered skirt and petticoat. It was also determined in a preliminary fitting that Pearl would not need a bum roll, since her skirts gave her the scale of fullness needed in the scenic space designed.

One challenging aspect of the process was determining how to create the scarlet "A". There were a number of requirements that had to be met. The letter had to be large, exquisitely embroidered (it is less than two feet away from the audience at times) with gold flecks, rigged with velcro so that thorns would stick to it, and finally it had to be taken on and off with pins throughout each performance. Several options were presented. Finally the designer determined to embroider the A from large stitches of thick scarlet floss. This was then placed on a matte black velvet oval and the edges were embroidered in red. To create the gold flecks, small, glass beads with gold thread were hand sewn throughout the A. Some gold metallic fabric marker helped to enhance the edges. After working with the scenic designer in developing the thorns, the black velcro was stitched into the inner
triangles of the scarlet "A". Since the background was matte black it was impossible to see the velcro even from a distance of a few inches.

Some unusual accessories had to be created such as the thorn necklace for Pearl. The necklace had to look as though a child made it, yet it had to be comfortable for the actress to wear and easy to put on and take off of several characters on stage. The thorn necklace also had to have the shape of an "A" which was readable from the audience. Two dozen small plastic snowflakes were painted burnt umber and textured with sculpt-or-coat to create the thorns. They were soft and flexible yet durable and since they were ornaments they had small hooks and could be woven on a string together. The "A" was formed about 3½" tall from friendly plastic to look like thick twigs and painted red. This ornament was highly visible from the audience, very realistic looking, comfortable for the actress, and extremely durable.

There had been no changes in color or texture because the lighting and costume designers had collaborated from very early on in determining the effect that would be achieved on stage. This collaboration had included demonstrations in the lighting laboratory as well as on the actual set. This effort proved effective to both designers in that they felt confident of their final product before it was viewed by the director during the first dress rehearsal. There was also some collaboration with the scenic designer to assure the
tints and shades of selected hues since both the costumes and set utilized the same palette.

Dress rehearsals brought about only minor changes, mostly notes on hems, accessories and make-up. Some minor problems were worked out; for example, the removable skirt on Pearl's first dress was changed to skirt hooks rather than snaps, thus making it less likely to come off on stage, as the character's movement was quite erratic.

Ultimately the process moved remarkably well considering the production circumstances. Although the craftsmanship of the construction was low the final product was effective visually and true to the design.
CHAPTER V
EVALUATION

Overall the aesthetic quality of the design was effective and quite beautiful. Not only the costumes, but the scenic and lighting designs achieved the contemporary perspective and somewhat abstracted world established in concept by the director and playwright. It did indeed evoke an appropriate and attractive composition from all vantage points on the thrust stage of the Stadium II Theatre.

Gauging the responses from audience members, local critics, advisors and the designer's own perspective, the costumes evoked the essences of a modern staging of an old story. The rich tones, textures and cavalier silhouettes established the world, time, place and characterizations while retaining accessibility for an audience, who had probably never encountered The Scarlet Letter staged from this perspective.

Although the total costume design created a fluid aesthetic, evoking picturesque images, as intended by the designer, there were some minor individual choices which might have worked better. For instance, Pearl's first costume is created from a rich, flowing velvet which is carried into a second costume in Act II. The choice of lace to
be worn as an overskirt in the first costume might have been more appropriate if it had been a more richly textured and colored fabric. The cotton eyelet, although expensive and beautiful by itself, seemed stiff and rigid over the velvet beneath. The bodice vest, also made from the eyelet, worked better because it was over a richly beaded taffeta and the two textures complemented one another in movement.

The only other design choice which might have proven more effective is to have pursued the designer's first intention of Prussian blue velvet as the accent feature on Pearl's second dress. Having searched for the appropriate rich velvet in this unusual color, the designer settled on dying a very expensive, embroidered silk. Although the color was achieved the silk lost its effectiveness through dying and overworking, therefore it became dull and stiff compared to the plush, Italian velvet of the underskirt and bodice.

Following the close of the production there were area talk-backs scheduled for all of the actors and production teams. During this individual meeting between the costume designer and area faculty advisors, both specific and general comments were made. Positive comments were made about the collaborative process between the designers, specifically in lighting and costume. There were also positive remarks concerning the total costume design composition. More specifically most comments were constructive input on fabric choices, as mentioned above, and an evaluation of the
scheduling and labor difficulties. The latter allowed for constructive ideas with the studio supervisor on how to improve future schedules and better utilize the labor provided.

The director seemed pleased and thoroughly satisfied with the design choices, overall and individually. The costumes were appropriate for character type and conveyed several conceptual and textual ideas to the audience. The detailed attention to color and texture according to specific character types was perhaps the most effective and popular element of the design. That was also the response from the local critic in *The Columbus Dispatch*.

In retrospect, there is little that the designer would change or alter in the design or process experience. The collaborative efforts between designers, from the lighting on Mistress Hibbin's lamé and lace overskirts to troubleshooting the velcro thorns which stick to Hester's scarlet letter, created a positive and productive design experience. The collaborative process was important, effective and ultimately beautiful as evidenced in the final design composition.
SELECTED SOURCES


### Table 1: Action Chart: Act One

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<th>CHARACTER</th>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>AGE-MIUS JACKET PROGR</td>
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<td>/X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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**Legend:**
- X - costume
- X↓ - change of costume
- X/ - subtract from costume
- X+ - add to costume
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**LEGEND:**
- X - costume
- X - change of costume
- X - subtract from costume
- X+ - add to costume

**TABLE 2-ACTION CHART: ACT TWO**
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<th>CHARACTER</th>
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<td>DIMMESDALE 1</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>1. Breeches, waistcoat, coat, hose, hair extension, shoes, gloves, chemise,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIMMESDALE 2</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>2. REMOVE coat, CHANGE chemise to distressed version, ADD chest scar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHILLINGWORTH 1</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>3. Breeches, chemise, jerkin, hose, ankle boots, cane, hat bag, cape, handkerchief, hump</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHILLINGWORTH 2</td>
<td>I/26</td>
<td>4. REMOVE cape and hat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELLINGHAM 1</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>5. Striped breeches, waistcoat, jabot, collar, cane, rings, hose, shoes, wig, black coat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELLINGHAM 2</td>
<td>I/29</td>
<td>6. ADD hat and gloves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELLINGHAM 3</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>7. Black satin breeches, blue waistcoat, gold coat, chemise jabot, collar, falling ruff, embroidered gloves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRACKETT 1</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>8. Corduroy coat, matching breeches, chemise, hose hat, wig, ankle boots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHARACTER</td>
<td>ACT/PAGE</td>
<td>COSTUME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRYNNE 1</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>9. Olive bodice, skirt, brown stomacher, scarlet letter, 2 pearl stick pins, black hose, petticoat, corset, camisole, bonnet, hair-clip white chemise, black slippers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRYNNE 2</td>
<td>I/27</td>
<td>10. REMOVE sleeves from bodice</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRYNNE 3</td>
<td>I/36</td>
<td>11. ADD sleeves to bodice, add cape and red gloves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEARL 1</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>12. Crimson skirt, lace overskirt crimson brocade bodice, lace sleeves, black slippers, hose corset, chemise, camisole, petticoat, lace bloomers, hair clip</td>
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<tr>
<td>PEARL 2</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>13. EXCHANGE to crimson velvet bodice and remove lace overskirt</td>
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<tr>
<td>PEARL 3</td>
<td>II/36</td>
<td>14. ADD cape, lace bonnet, brown kid gloves</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIBBINS 1</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>15. Black underskirt, copper and lace overskirt, black hose, boots, gold bodice, lace chemise, corset, bum role, camisole, hat, choker, gloves neck ruff, wrist ruffs, petticoat</td>
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<td>HIBBINS 2</td>
<td>I/26</td>
<td>16. REMOVE sleeves, hat, ruffs, gloves, ADD shawl and mirror</td>
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<td>HIBBINS 3</td>
<td>I/31</td>
<td>17. ADD black cape with hood, lace bonnet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIBBINS 4</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>18. Burgundy underskirt, gold and lace overskirt, matching bodice, choker, gloves, hat, jet earrings, collar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITEM</td>
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FIGURE 1—PRELIMINARY SKETCH: Mistress Hibbins Act I
FIGURE 2 - PRELIMINARY SKETCH: Mistress Hibbins Act II
FIGURE 3-PRELIMINARY COMPOSITE SKETCH: Governor Bellingham
FIGURE 6—PRELIMINARY COMPOSITE SKETCH: Chillingworth, Master Brackett
FIGURE 7—PRELIMINARY SKETCH: Arthur Dimmsdale
SCALE: 1/8" = 1"

NOTE: No button closures at Side Seam needed. Reduce number of CF buttons by half
SCALE: 1/8" = 1"

NOTE: Modify Tassets to create one piece with decorative beaded edge. Bring CF bottom to point.

A. Front-no bones (cut on fold)  
   Flex-bone only where needed

B. Side Front & Side Back (Cut 2)

(Hunnisett 109)

C. Tassets (seen note at top)

FIGURE 9-SCALED PATTERN: Pearl’s Act I Bodice
FIGURE 10—COSTUME ACCESSORY: Hester's Scarlet Letter
APPENDIX C

PLATES
PLATE III-RENDERING: Roger Chillingworth

SCARLET LETTER
ROGER CHILLINGWORTH
MR. DAVE HYLAND
DESIGN BY: LINDA TICLANO 1967
PLATE IV-RENDERING: Pearl Act I

SCARLET LETTER
PEARL COSTUME
MISS FREDYCA STONE
DESIGN BY: L. DEAN 1945
PLATE V-RENDERING: Pearl Act II

SCARLET LETTER
PEARL 2nd COSTUME
MISS REBECCA SINE
DESIGN BY LINDA D. AND O'G.
PLATE IX-RENDERING: Mistress Hibbins Act I
SCARLET LETTER
MISTRESS HIBBINS II
MISS AUTOSA BAGORFF
DESIGN BY: LINDA YIRGANC
PLATE XII—PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPH: Hester, Pearl Dimmesdale (Pose)