

EVOKING TIMELESSNESS: BRIDGING THE OLD IRISH AND CONTEMPORARY  
THROUGH CONTROLLED DESIGN

A COSTUME DESIGN FOR *THE OLD MAN AND THE OLD MOON*

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BY

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Samantha Elizabeth Johnson

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

Jennifer Jacobs, M.F.A.

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Victor Holtcamp, Ph.D

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Monica Payne, M.F.A.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES .....	v
INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER 1. The Producing Environment .....	2
1.1 The Costume Shops and Production Team .....	2
1.2 The Play .....	4
CHAPTER 2. Pre-Production .....	5
2.1 Going through the script .....	5
2.2 Initial thoughts .....	8
2.3 Adding the Irish element .....	12
2.4 Evolving Ideas and Rendering .....	16
2.5 The Old Man and The Old Woman .....	20
CHAPTER 3. The Production Process .....	24
3.1 Sourcing and delegating projects .....	24
3.2 Evolving expectations of builds .....	25
3.3 Change in shop dynamic .....	28
3.4 Issues with builds .....	29
3.5 Changes to the original design .....	33
CHAPTER 4. Rehearsals .....	37
4.1 Tracking and problem solving period garments .....	37
4.2 Tech week and dress rehearsals .....	40
CHAPTER 5. Evaluation and Conclusion .....	43
APPENDIX .....	53
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	66
BIOGRAPHY .....	67

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Research Image: Sailors .....	8
Figure 2. Research Image: Woman in overalls .....	9
Figure 3. Research Image: Women in coveralls.....	9
Figure 4. Research Image: Hipster Outfit .....	10
Figure 5. Research Image: Hipster Woman .....	10
Figure 6. Research Image: Hipster Couple .....	11
Figure 7. Research Image: Graveside. <i>Christine Chichester</i> , c.1910 (Sexton, 111).....	13
Figure 8. Research Image: Dublin Docks. <i>Payne Jennings</i> c.1860s (Sexton, 42).....	13
Figure 9. Research Image: Irish Hawkers. <i>Unknown</i> c.1900s (Sexton, 103) .....	15
Figure 10. ACTOR ONE Rendering: Opening Look .....	17
Figure 11. ACTOR ONE Rendering: The Old Man .....	17
Figure 12. ACTOR SIX Rendering: Base Costume .....	19
Figure 13. Production Photo: The Young Man .....	22
Figure 14. Production Photo: The Old Man and The Old Woman .....	23
Figure 15. Production Photo: J. Goudsmit and N. Hazzard in the belly of the fish .....	26
Figure 16. Production Photo: ACTOR TWO, Katarina Blakeslee .....	27
Figure 17. Research Image: Sailors, Hat reference .....	31
Figure 18. Production Photo: The Old Man and Sailors .....	32
Figure 19. ACTOR TEN Rendering .....	34
Figure 20. Fitting Photo: N. Stoner .....	34
Figure 21. Production Photo: The Old Man, Dog Puppet and ACTOR TEN .....	36

Figure 22. ACTOR THREE Rendering: Base Costume .....	38
Figure 23. Tracking card for ACTOR THREE .....	38
Figure 24. Production Photo: The Old Man, ACTOR NINE, ACTOR TEN .....	39
Figure 25. Production Photo: Full Ensemble .....	42
Figure 26. Production Photo: Opening looks .....	45
Figure 27. Production Photo: ACTOR TWO and ACTOR FOUR .....	46
Figure 28. Production Photo: Sailors .....	47
Figure 29. Production Photo: The Young Man and The Young Woman .....	48
Figure 30. Production Photo: Finale Looks .....	49
Figure 30. Production Photo: Finale Looks .....	49
Figure 31. Production Photo: The Old Man filling the moon .....	52
Figure 32. ACTOR ONE Rendering .....	53
Figure 33. ACTOR TWO Rendering .....	54
Figure 34. ACTOR THREE Rendering .....	55
Figure 35. ACTOR FOUR Rendering .....	56
Figure 36. ACTOR FIVE Rendering .....	57
Figure 37. ACTOR SIX Rendering .....	58
Figure 38. ACTOR SEVEN Rendering .....	59
Figure 39. ACTOR EIGHT Rendering .....	60
Figure 40. ACTOR NINE Rendering .....	61
Figure 41. ACTOR TEN Rendering .....	62
Figure 42. Additional Pieces Renderings .....	63

Figure 43. Additional Pieces Renderings .....	64
Figure 44. Additional Pieces Renderings .....	65

## Introduction

I have always seen costume design as an opportunity to visually exude the heart of storytelling. The elements of art through the vessel of costume are a vital piece in the construction of the world we are creating on stage. *The Old Man and The Old Moon* laid the groundwork for an abundant amount of opportunity for my artistry. Like any tall-tale, this world belonged to no exact time, but rather existed through all time. Though time and style remained fluid, the story called for a curated design with a tight color palette, thought-out statement pieces, and costume changes that supported the story and stayed reliable. Each decision made was crafted with the whole of the production in mind. This aided me in my research and allowed me to conceptualize the exact way the clothing would add depth and establish the story. It was also important for me to explore and invite a sense of “play.” I wanted my designs to give movement and freedom so that “play” was at the forefront, while effortlessly allowing change through transformation pieces. This process was challenging, enlightening, and all-together invaluable to me. The execution of something grand must be supported by a supportive and controlled foundation.

The purpose of this thesis is to discuss the process of cultivating a transformative costume design that captured the essence of a tall-tale, but in a way that could hold the attention of a contemporary, young audience.



## **Chapter 1. The Producing Environment**

### **1.1 The Costume Shops and Production Team**

*The Old Man and the Old Moon* by Pigpen Theatre Co. was produced by Tulane University's Department of Theatre and Dance in November of 2019. All costumes were procured, constructed, fit and/or altered in the Tulane Theatre Department's costume shop or in the Tulane Summer Lyric costume shop. Most of the tools, thread and notions were part of the existing stock of both costume shops. Tulane also has a twelve-person capacity dressing room that was utilized for the run of the show for the females in the cast. An additional temporary two-person dressing room was built in the adjoining scene shop to accommodate the male cast members.

Assistant Professor of Costume Design, Jennifer Jacobs is the advisor for all graduate costume design students. She directed and advised in all stages of the design project. Additionally, she distributed the draping projects. Professor of Practice in Costume Technology Michelle Hathaway managed the Tulane Summer Lyric Costume shop. Hathaway also took on three draping projects. Material and budget management, fitting schedule, and other shop management in the Theatre and Dance Costume Shop were overseen by Hope Bennett. She also trained and directed the wardrobe crew during the run of the show. First year graduate student Stephanie Dixon was my assistant. Dixon managed the show bible, maintained documentation, assisted in fittings and rehearsals. First year graduate student Jaime Silverman received a draping project. Third

year graduate student Chris Arthur was responsible for managing alterations. Senior BFA student Naomi Detre would be responsible for painting and dying.

The budget for the show was set to \$2500. This was to cover costumes, fabrics/materials, notions and any hair or makeup products needed.

Official pre-production began at the beginning of September and ended on September 26, 2019 when final costume renderings were presented to the director.

During this time the costume shop was in production for *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Kate Bergstrom that opened on October 15th, 2019. The production period for *Old Man* was roughly five weeks and began after the strike for *The Yellow Wallpaper*. The rest of the design and production team included Tulane University faculty, staff and students:

Director: Monica Payne, Musical Direction: Michael McKelvey, Stage Manager: Johanna Vreeland, Scenic Designer: Myrna Padilla, Lighting Designer: Jasmine Williams, Technical Director: Christopher Givens, Properties Designers: Emmalie Hall and Christopher Rodriguez, Puppet Designer: Ellen Bull, Assistant Stage Manager: Sarah Peeler, and Assistant Director: Jordan Phillips.

## 1.2 The Play

*The Old Man and the Old Moon* was conceptualized, written and produced by Pigpen Theatre Co. in 2012. The show is billed as what's called "a play with music" which is a play with musical numbers or where the actors also sing but not to the scale or quantity of a musical. The original production included seven male actors, 27 named roles, instruments (including piano, accordion, banjo, guitar/violin/dulcimer, drums/percussion, with optional bass) and puppets.

*The Old Man and the Old Moon* is a tall tale about The Old Man, who abandons his duty and routine of filling the moon each night with liquid light to follow his wife on an adventure around the world. The Old Man has been the caretaker for the moon for as long as either of them can remember, so when The Old Woman leaves in the night to search for their forgotten past, he must choose between following her or staying in place. He leaves his routine, goes on a perilous adventure to sail around the world with a band of wayward sailors to face a war, giant sea monsters, the belly of a fish, a disagreeable ghost, and the end of the world.

The show is fun and playful. It very much feels like an old folk tale with folksy, Celtic inspired music. New York Magazine said, "Every once in a while, a new group of absurdly talented young performers band together and show us how delightfully uninhibited, how effortlessly inventive, how unapologetically and unpretentiously playful theater can be (Brantley)." Our cast and production team would obviously be different, but the goal would be the same: to tell a story effortlessly and playfully.

## Chapter 2. Pre-production

### 2.1 Going through the script

Prior to working on the show, I had been a part of the play selection committee for this season. Many shows were proposed and most were vetoed quickly, but ultimately it made it through the selection process. *The Old Man and the Old Moon* was a show that I attached myself to rather quickly. I had hopes that it would work out that I would be able to design it, but I also felt like this was a show worth doing at Tulane regardless of me being the designer. When it was being discussed, I was adamant that the transformational nature was very exciting and something we should be doing for the designers and the performers.

As I approached the design process for this show, I wanted to keep several things in mind: preserving the nature of the show, the limitations of the costume shop, and avoiding unnecessary additions. In my first year as a grad student, I was the assistant costume designer on two thesis productions. Both shows were already large in scale, but the designers felt it was imperative to push for exaggerated and complicated designs. In both cases the costume shop was overworked and many elements were overcomplicated, ineffective, had to be redesigned, or even cut from the production. Having already experienced this, it was important to me that I did not make the same mistakes. I did not want to strain the shop or muddle the show simply because it was my thesis and force a concept that did not belong in this production.

Going through the script from a technical perspective, two things were made very clear: tracking each actor's changes would be very important and that the actors would need their full range of motion. For this production, the casting was adapted to ten actors: eight women and two men. Within the script there are only two characters that are specifically stated as being women: The Old Woman and The Fine Lady. The Fine Lady is a very brief part, leaving The Old Woman as the only major female character. This meant that all of the female actors would be playing almost exclusively men and the language would not be changed. There was some brief consideration on what that meant for the costume design and how it would be addressed. It was decided between Monica and myself that it was not necessary to force the actors to look more masculine, or to dress them as boys. We were both confident that the actors would have no problem asserting that some of these characters were intended to be men. We also agreed that none of their initial costumes should or could be skirts or dresses, but this was partially from a practical approach since they would be moving almost constantly.

During my initial conversations with Director Monica Payne, she really focused on ways to preserve the nature of the show. With the use of puppets and deceptively simple scenic changes, *The Old Man and the Old Moon* relies on a whimsical quality, not unlike what one would expect from children's theatre. This reinforced to me how important it was that nothing the actors were wearing or changing into should be or feel fussy or complicated in any way. Another thing I wanted to keep present was that while it may be The Old Man's story, but *The Old Man and the Old Moon* is a true ensemble

piece. The performers all function together and that was something I wanted to really showcase through their clothes.

When discussing the overall feeling of the show, the word that Payne impressed upon the designers was “timelessness.” There was discussion on what this meant and how we could accomplish this visually. One way of doing this was to avoid making everything of the same period and to combine periods. Another element was that they should look a bit tough and edgy, with boots and perhaps pieces of leather. Payne described it as that they should feel like “they would all hang out in the same bar” and like “friends all telling a story.” My main take away from this conversation was that they should feel unified, without being uniform.

Designing an ensemble piece has different considerations than a standard play. There are many characters but they are not as fleshed out and require the actors to change very quickly. Accomplishing this does not need a full costume change and relies on the audience being willing to accept them immediately. This type of show aims to strip out the ideas of realism and resort back to the core of storytelling. I approached this design process with that understanding in mind.

All of these considerations reiterated to me that this design needed to be very controlled and highly curated. Each element was important but none of the individual elements could overpower the others. The only way to preserve the nature of the show and create the desired effect was to attempt to seamlessly blend the components together using a limited number of pieces.

## 2.2 Initial thoughts

My initial thoughts were more focused on what the actors would be doing in the clothes and the feel of the show and less concept driven. The first iteration of ideas that I had were based on fisherman, sailors, and vintage style workwear, primarily that of women in the 1940s and 50s, such as overalls, wide leg pants, coveralls. I felt that these pieces had contemporary counterparts and were recognizable enough without looking too modern.



Figure 1. Research Image: Sailors



[Left] Figure 2. Research Image: Woman in overalls, [Right] Figure 3. Research Image: Women in coveralls

My instincts were on the right track but lacked an overall direction and left the costumes with nowhere to really go from there. When talking this through with Payne, she felt the same way and suggested finding a way to integrate and call to the Celtic and folk quality of the music with the costumes. We decided that this meant looking at Ireland in the 1910s and incorporating this element. My challenge was to effectively combine contemporary edgy styles with 1910s Irish, and make it feel timeless. At first, the thought of this was very daunting and overwhelming. Finding a way to seamlessly blend each component could be tricky and on a surface level there were a lot



of glaring differences between them. Thankfully, this did not last very long as I realized that my access point was hipsters, specifically vintage styled hipsters. This style already combined many of the elements as well as mixing textures and patterns.



[Left] Figure 4. Research Image: Hipster outfit [Right] Figure 5. Research Image: Hipster woman

When searching for images of hipsters, I thought that this would be a way to begin linking the early 1900s Irish and contemporary styles. Although this rabbit hole did not lead to anything that truly called to this 1910s Irish element, the search proved to be very useful in cultivating an overall style for the performers. As I was searching, I found one image of a hipster couple that called to all of the elements I was searching for: a

vintage feel, with a bit of edginess and leather made from familiar pieces of clothing. Using this image as the jumping off point helped culminate the opening looks for the ensemble. This image also became a critical piece of research during this process and really helped me to visually communicate the direction with the director and my advisors.



Figure 6. Research Image: Hipster Couple

### 2.3 Adding the Irish influence

Although I had a clear preliminary vision for the base costumes, this still did not solve the problems of the transitional pieces and did not integrate the Irish element. What pieces would change as the show progressed and the actors moved from character to character visually? How to incorporate the 1910s Irish styles?

Jennifer Jacobs suggested using the built-in character changes as a way to transition the costumes into Irish 1910s inspired. Instead of trying to completely meld the Irish element into the costumes in the beginning, allow it to build off of a base style that would become more 1910s Irish as the show progressed. This seemed like a great solution to the problem and something that she, myself and Payne all agreed would be the way to go.

Researching early 1900s Irish clothing, took me down a rabbit hole of incredible imagery of the period. Jacobs had several books of turn of the century Ireland that were helpful to look at but the best one for my purposes was *Ireland in Old Photographs* by Sean Sexton. As the title suggests, the book contained a wealth of photographs.





Figure 7. Research Image: Graveside. *Christine Chichester*, c.1910 (Sexton, 111)

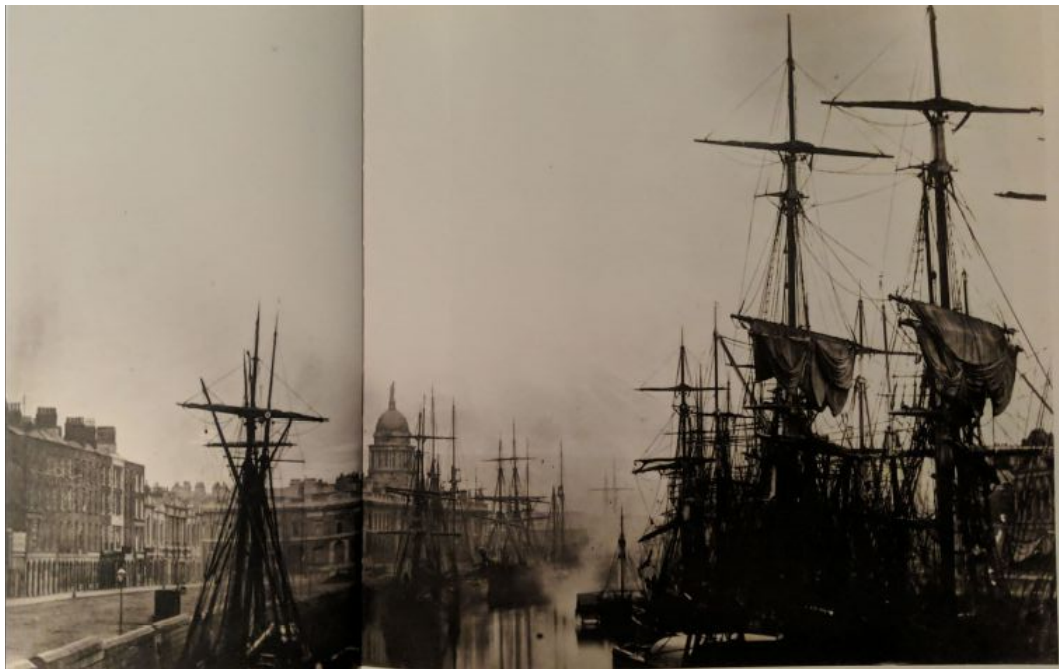


Figure 8. Research Image: Dublin Docks. *Payne Jennings* c.1860s (Sexton, 42)

There were many examples of clothing, but more importantly the photographs served as a great piece of inspiration. There were incredible images of the people, the landscape, the docks, and what communities might have produced a similar tall-tale. Having these photographs helped to communicate more of the feeling I was looking to evoke, rather than direct examples of clothing that I would put the actors in. I knew that some exploration in the room would be needed to figure out what the pieces would be. I also knew that there would only be so many opportunities for each actor to change and the majority of those changes would be visible to the audience. I would not be able to just design entirely new costumes that the actors could change into, each actor would be limited by the number of character changes they had and if there happened to be any gaps in their track. Although, I did not have a clear vision for what this would ultimately be, I had a concept and a direction.

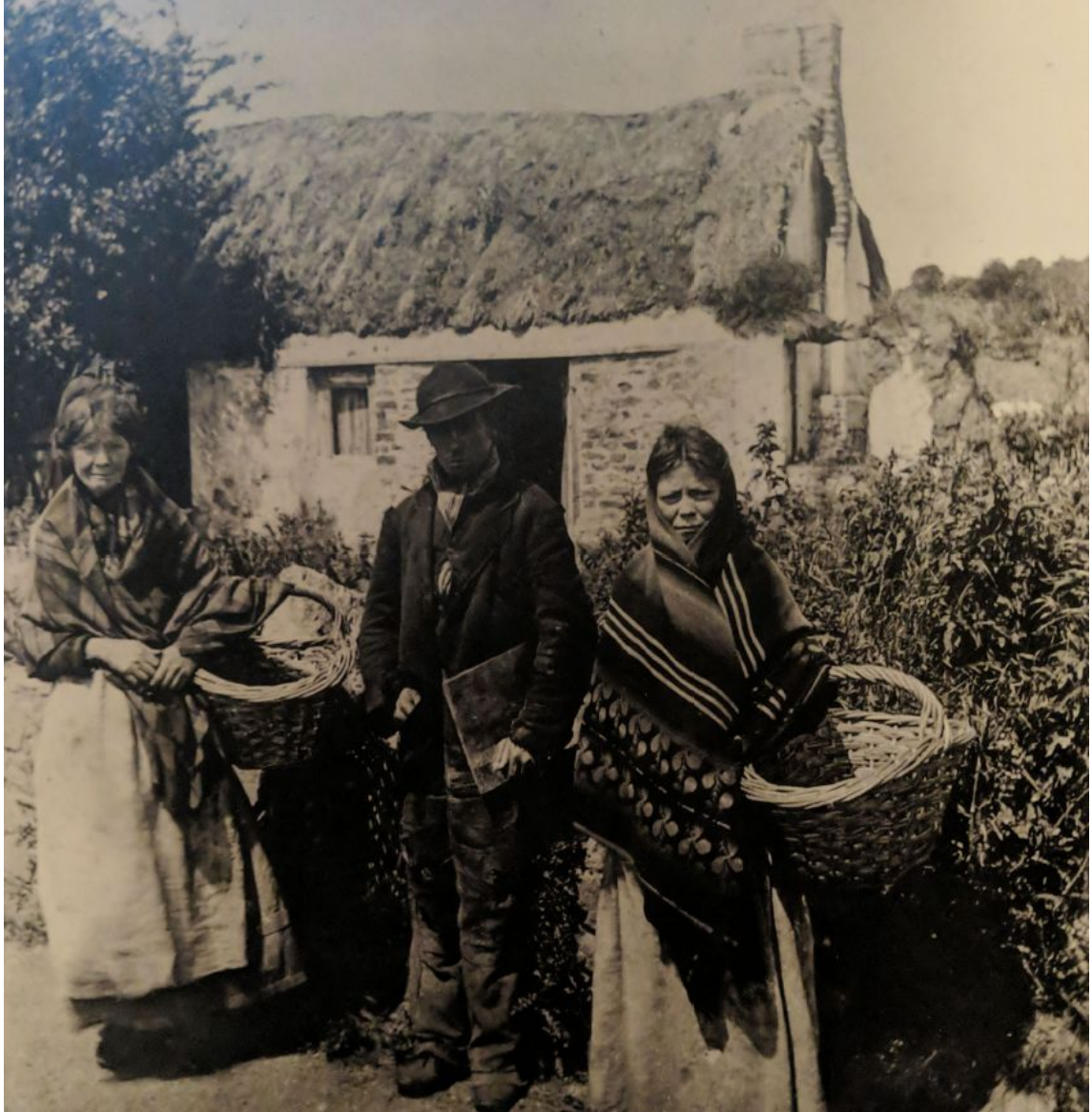


Figure 9. Research Image: Irish Hawkers. *Unknown* c.1900s (Sexton, 103)

## **2.4 Evolving Ideas and Rendering**

With a concept in mind, I began cultivating those ideas into actual decisions and articles of clothing. It was important that this base style was not generic, street-wear recreations of any hipster outfit I found, but highly curated. The drawing process went surprisingly fast as these silhouettes were fairly easy for me to piece together conceptually. I was already familiar with many of the actors and wanted to design outfits that were interesting and cool but also flattering to each of them. I only rendered the base costumes since the final costumes would be evolving as the production process continued. But since the actors would be layering on top of these costumes, I had to keep that in mind and have some idea of what those additional pieces might be. The opening look had to be distinct and give the characters a place to evolve from.



[Left] Figure 10. ACTOR ONE Rendering: Opening Look, [Right] Figure 11. ACTOR ONE  
Rendering: The Old Man

Since I had chosen to limit how I would be working on the transitional garments, and had chosen to only render the opening looks, I decided to use magnets to help communicate how the changes would happen to the director and the cast. Each of the renderings for the base costumes had a thin magnetic layer behind them. I made separate magnetic pieces with the renderings of examples of possible additional garments that could layer on top of the base renderings like paper dolls.

Once the initial sketches were approved by Monica, I had to add color to the final renderings. I was excited and proud of the renderings up until that point, but when I went



to add color to them, I absolutely panicked. I had a clear idea of what I wanted: warm browns, tans, bits of dark purple, rusty orange, small threads and twinges of pastel blues and pinks, balanced out with a bit of black and leather. Yet, every time I started to fill in the color, I was convinced it was horrifically wrong. Adding color to renderings normally goes by rather quickly, however this set took me two whole days of locking myself in a bedroom. I believe I was cautious that I would not be able to find pieces that were exactly what I drew, even though I was doing my best to draw from research. Perhaps, I was also a bit unsure of how to balance out that many colors and textures when the actors would be constantly shifting. Having a certain level of attachment to the show itself also left me with a lot of concern that I would not be able to create costumes that did it justice.

There was one thing I knew I wanted to maintain with color: the actress playing The Old Woman would be the only major deviation from a fairly tight palette. ACTOR SIX, Genevieve Corkery, was playing The Old Woman, The Young Woman and a few other characters. Corkery's base costume featured a long green cardigan that she was to wear in every role, save for the Captain and The Young Woman. While *The Old Man and the Old Moon* is The Old Man's story, The Old Woman is the driving force behind his adventure. He relies on the help of the sailors he meets along the way, but she has an unseen adventure all on her own. She does not hesitate to leave while he is trapped in routine. The green color chosen for Corkery was similar in tone to the rest of the cast, but was enough of a difference to subtly call back to her, even when she was not The Old Woman.



Figure 12. ACTOR SIX Rendering: Base Costume

## 2.5 The Old Man and The Old Woman

I had some ideas on how each actor would transition into all their characters and the period garments, but most of those could not be fully explored until they were in rehearsals. The only two characters that I had solidified changes for were The Old Man and The Old Woman. Jared Goudsmit played ACTOR ONE, who was The Old Man and The Young Man. Unlike everyone else who alternated several characters, he only played The Old Man and briefly The Young Man, which is The Old Man inside of a memory. Genevieve Corkery played ACTOR SIX, where she was The Old Woman, Captain, Bartley, a Sketchy Pedestrian, and The Young Woman. Corkery had a lot more changes than Goudsmit so her transformation into The Old Woman needed to be very clear.

Since Goudsmit would have no changes throughout the show, he would need to look a bit different than The Old Man for the introduction of the show. Prior to the start of the show, the actors roamed the stage, talked with the audience and tuned their instruments. I decided to put him in an undershirt (this was later changed to a gray henley shirt), with old fashioned suspenders hanging down during this meandering and during the first song he would put on his fisherman sweater, pull up his suspenders and transform into The Old Man. Throughout the story, he gains an insignia hat which becomes a major plot point and results in mistaken identity. He remained The Old Man for the majority of the show, but once they find the City of Light, he enters a memory as the younger version of himself. Like all the other costume changes, this transition happened very quickly and in full view of the audience. There was no time, nor was it

necessary, to make any real changes to his costume. Goudsmit simply removed the insignia hat and relied on a change in posture and demeanor.



Figure 13. Production Photo: The Young Man

Corkery, on the other hand, had more time to change and had been seen as other characters frequently throughout the course of the story. As stated earlier, I wanted her to be a reminder of The Old Woman even when she wasn't playing her. Her base costume was a pair of wide leg pants, a deep purple speckled sweater, and the extra long green cardigan. When she was The Old Woman, I knew I wanted her in a skirt and that she would likely be in a skirt as The Young Woman. During the initial design process, we had anticipated that there would be several transformative costume pieces and I thought that The Old Woman's skirt could be one of them. The skirt would be reversible and serve as the skirt for The Old Woman and The Young Woman since Corkery would also be changing on stage. The idea was that it was the same fabric, but one side was faded and worn. As The Old Woman, she would put the skirt on over her base costume and a schmata in her hair, and as The Young Woman, she would remove the schmata, remove her cardigan and flip the skirt around to reveal a brighter side of the same fabric all in full view of the audience.





Figure 14. Production Photo: The Old Man and The Old Woman

## **Chapter 3. The Production Process**

### **3.1 Sourcing and delegating projects**

The process began with deciding what would be sourced, pulled from stock or built. For the sake of my personal organization, I separated the costumes into three categories: their opening looks, their finale looks, and the in-between pieces. The stock was limited on options for the opening looks and nearly all of the pieces would need to be sourced. A few items would be built, and the remainder would be pulled.

Because the opening looks were so specific, the show required a large amount of sourcing. The designs were completed by early September and shopping was in full effect by early October. By the time sourcing began, commercial retailers had begun putting out their clothes for fall. This turned out to be extremely beneficial. Almost all of the pieces that I had been unsure of finding were suddenly readily available in the color palette for affordable pricing.

Knowing what pieces were to be sourced, Jennifer Jacobs and I talked through what projects and builds should go to each person within the costume shop. First year grad student Stephanie Dixon was my assistant and did not receive a draping project. The reversible skirt was given to first year grad Jaime Silverman. Third year grad student Christopher Arthur was to be responsible for alterations, while Michelle Hathaway would supervise any tasks needed of the practicum students and Jaime's build of the reversible skirt. Hathaway was also responsible for draping a pair of wide legged pants and a hat. Naomi Detre received several painting and dying projects.

### **3.2 Evolving expectations of builds**

Within the design process, it was anticipated that bigger costume elements would be needed as rehearsals progressed. Anticipating that the shop's resources would be needed elsewhere, it was decided that our initial build list would be kept quite small. The initial build list consisted of only the reversible skirt and wide leg pants. I also actively chose to limit what I used for the period pieces to items found within stock. I chose to do this to help control the available options and maintain that found feeling of the show. I also did not want sourcing or building those garments to take away and become a bigger priority than the larger transformative pieces.

We all had thought that there would be at least one huge transformational costume piece, such as a skirt that extends to become the ocean or something with a similar effect. It was thought that the need for this moment would arise throughout the rehearsal process and the costume shop was prepared for whatever that might be. At one point, the idea was thrown out that this might be a hoop skirt that is flipped and turned into the inside of a fish. A hoop skirt was provided for the actors to rehearse with, but was too small for such a long scene and wouldn't have allowed any blocking to be possible. The solution for this was to potentially build a hoop skirt that telescoped out and opened up to create the same effect, but also allow the actors to have room. The costume shop toyed with the idea of how to make it work. I attended the rehearsal where actors Noah Hazzard and Jared Goudsmit were working through this scene with Monica Payne. After watching the



scene and trying a few options, ultimately Monica decided that having a costume piece that big would be cumbersome and unnecessary for the show and I agreed.



Figure 15. Production Photo: J. Goudsmit and N. Hazzard in the belly of the fish.

When the belly of the fish was cut, there was discussion about if another large transformational costume piece would be possible. Nothing stood out and I felt that trying to force a piece in that did not belong went against the nature of the show. Despite

not having a large transformational garment, as the process went on we added another non-reversible skirt, hat and a vest to the initial build list.



Figure 16. Production Photo: ACTOR TWO, Katarina Blakeslee

### **3.3 Change in shop dynamic**

Last semester had an additional obstacle that the costume shop had never really encountered before: the labor was divided between two separate shops. Michelle Hathaway, the Costume Technology Professor, had difficulties working in the Theatre and Dance costume shop due to her hearing needs and an ongoing issue with facilities. She opted to work primarily out of the Summer Lyric costume shop, which she manages during their season. With Michelle working in the other shop, it meant that both her classes and the practicum students would be in the Lyric shop, as well as any draping projects either being completed or supervised by Michelle.

For me, this made the day to day communication between tasks and fittings a bit more difficult. It was also harder to catch any mistakes or miscommunications earlier in the process. The change in shop dynamic also affected how and when alterations were getting completed since things were operating in two separate rooms and on two separate paces.

However, not having the practicum students in the Theatre shop every day freed up a lot of space, time, and any unnecessary distractions when it came to completing fittings, paperwork and daily tasks. Typically, practicum students are beginners and finding tasks that they can complete for the show's purpose, particularly with a show of this nature, can be difficult and time consuming. By having the practicum students in a different shop, Hathaway was better able to teach them and I was able to really focus on the show.

### **3.4 Issues with builds**

There were several problems with the few builds that we had. The first mockup for the reversible skirt was completely wrong and had to be rebuilt. The supervising draper had received a technical drawing and she and I had walked through how it was intended to function. The idea was that the skirt would wrap around the actress, fasten with snaps and she would be able to unsnap it and wrap it the opposite way to show a different fabric. It was decided that she and the draper, Jaime Silverman, would start with a 2:1 ratio of gathering for the mockup, with an additional 10” panel that remained flat to overlap. The actor’s waist was 34”, and the hem should have been at least 78” around plus the extra 10”. When we went to fit the first mockup, the bottom hem measured to only about 56” and did not fully wrap around the actress. There was also an issue where the gathering did not extend far enough to meet the overlapping side and made an odd gap in the drape of the skirt. When this was addressed with Hathaway, there was some pushback. A second mockup was required so that the actor could have a piece to use in rehearsal and so that I could see what the final product would be before Silverman cut into the final fabric. I don’t think Hathaway was happy about needing a second mockup, and there was a bit of a compromise having Silverman make the second one out of a different fabric that could be used elsewhere in the show.

The first mockup was still sent into rehearsal for Corkery to use and get used to. I attended the rehearsal where she started to use it and saw her remove it approximately 10 minutes after putting it on and returning to her previous rehearsal skirt. I am still unsure

what happened or why the first version was so off, but ultimately I felt like it was a waste of everyone's time and was useless to the actor. The second version was a significant improvement and was actually able to function in rehearsal, before the final piece was constructed.

Hathaway was also responsible for the construction of a hat. The hat is a major point in the show, resulting in mistaken identity and attention is called to it frequently. A lot of discussion about what the hat should be took place. The challenge was that four different actors, of varying head sizes had to wear the same hat. Jared Goudsmit, who was playing The Old Man, was to wear it for the majority of the show. Goudsmit was given a rehearsal hat and had a bad habit of completely eclipsing his face with his hat. Being a critical piece of the story, having him wear a hat was necessary and could not be cut. All of this was considered when deciding what the hat should look like. I wanted something similar to a Greek fisherman, but with alterations made to be more functional for our purposes. I referred back to a research image of sailors with hats similar to a Greek fisherman, but with a much shorter brim and less full in the back.





Figure 17. Research Image: Sailors, Hat reference

Similar to the first mockup for The Old Woman's skirt, the first version of the hat was completely wrong. The brim was twice as wide as a Greek fisherman, and the back of the hat was large, poofy and very distracting. This version went into the first dress rehearsal and was very obviously not going to work. Having the failed first version, and referring back to the reference image, I chose the third man as the primary reference for the new version of the hat. The second one was significantly better, and with minor alterations went on to be the final piece. It did not look quite as intended but functioned well enough.



Figure 18. Production Photo: The Old Man and Sailors

### **3.5 Changes made to the original design**

In any production, some changes are to be expected throughout the process. For this show, I intentionally did not design the transitional pieces in advance and allowed those to evolve naturally throughout the process. The base designs had very minimal adjustments from the renderings.

When the designs were finalized, the base design for ACTOR TEN, Naomi Stoner, was the only one that Payne and I agreed might need to change. As I was designing, I was actively trying to source and integrate those pieces as I was working. During this process, I found an oversized sweater dress that I felt could fit in the general aesthetic of the show. Because this piece would be difficult to add on to and change into a period look, I put it on a character that would not be changing. When presenting the final designs, Payne and I discussed that this look was less layered than the others and that it might not work. I kept this in mind as I continued sourcing, but once I actually met Naomi Stoner, I realized that this garment would not work on her. When designing, I had only seen a picture of Stoner and did not realize that she had a much smaller frame than I had originally thought. An oversized garment would have swallowed her and would have been distracting.

As I continued sourcing, I purchased additional items like a striped shirt and a batwing cardigan. Pants were purchased for her, but there was a mix up and the wrong size was ordered. This was discovered in her fitting, so Hope Bennett quickly went into stock and found the perfect pair of window pane plaid pants. After putting these pants on



her in the fitting, her new outfit was a much better look and helped unify her with the rest of the ensemble.



[Left] Figure 19. ACTOR TEN Rendering, [Right] Figure 20. Fitting Photo: N. Stoner

One of the other changes made to the original design was The Old Man's sweater. Maintaining a specific color palette was a priority of mine, but finding the perfect sweater for The Old Man proved to be more difficult than I thought. The sweater I had dreamed

of was a fisherman style in a blended warm tan/brown, with speckles of other colors, mainly a tiny hint of green. I wanted a very subtle thread of green to help anchor him and The Old Woman throughout the show, even when she was not present. I spent a very long time trying to source this. I searched through many online retailers and physical stores with no luck. I also turned to authentic Irish fisherman sweaters that had the exact look I wanted, but the rather specific color didn't seem to exist. This search continued for a few weeks and it came down to needing another plan.

A big consideration on this was the cost, as a wool sweater can easily top the \$200 range. There was some shop discussion on the price of an authentic Irish fisherman sweater and if that was a good place to invest our budget. Jennifer Jacobs, Hope Bennett, and I all agreed that anything over \$150 was really too much to spend on a single sweater. My options were limited by the style, budget and desired color.

Eventually, I got lucky again and found an unusual sweater, within my price range. The dandelion color was different from other Irish fisherman sweaters and from what I was looking for, but it was rather striking and seemed to be the best possible option. The sweater was purchased from an Irish woolen mill for \$130. This sweater ended up being one of my favorite pieces in the entire show. The color was a greenish sort of yellow, which worked well and complimented the mossy green cardigan worn by The Old Woman. The color also shifted beautifully between bits of yellow, green and brown under the stage lights.



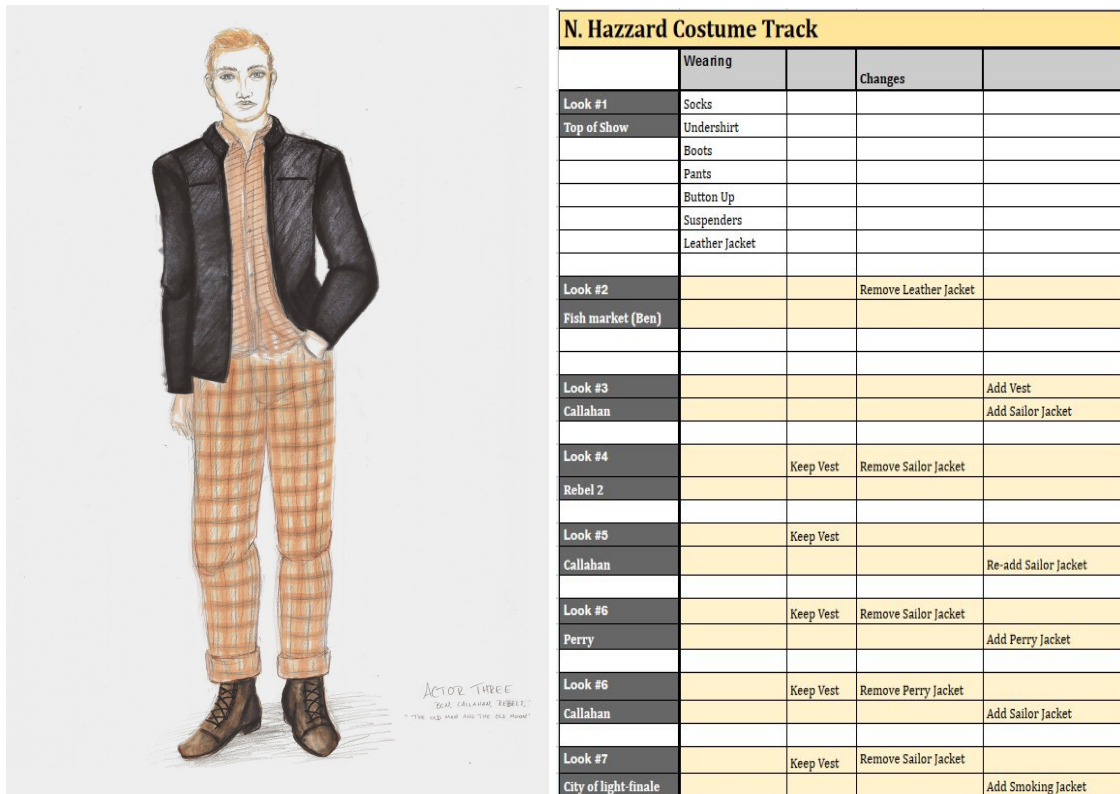
Figure 21: Production Photo: The Old Man, Dog Puppet and ACTOR TEN

## **Chapter 4. Rehearsals**

### **4.1 Tracking changes and problem solving the period garments**

Spending time in rehearsals was critical to my ongoing process and problem solving. When I was initially going through the script, each actor was color coded and I had started to track their transitions, but seeing it in process was paramount to making the transitions function. On the first night of rehearsals, the actors were given a rack of clothes to play with and be a part of the process in figuring out what those changes would be. The idea was that since there would be so much exploration happening in the room and when I couldn't always be present, that it would be beneficial for the actors themselves to explore options. There were some great moments that came from this, but not long into rehearsals it became clear that with all the props, instruments and scenic changes, they were at their capacity for also being costume designers.

I spent a lot of time in rehearsal meticulously tracking each actor, who they were playing, and how to purposefully signal those changes through their costumes. As this progressed, I slowly swapped out the rehearsal rack with specific stand-in garments. I tried to walk them through the changes verbally, but it also became evident that there were too many moving pieces for them to keep track of. My solution was to create tracking cards for each actor in rehearsal. The cards had their rendering on the one side, to remind them of their opening look, and a full track of their costume pieces. Doing this seemed effective in helping the actors understand their transitions and what to keep in mind. It also helped me solidify the shift into period garments and the character changes.



[Left] Figure 22. ACTOR THREE Rendering: Base Costume [Right] Figure 23. Tracking card for ACTOR THREE

Madi Bolin (ACTOR EIGHT), Emma Ragsdale (ACTOR NINE) and Naomi Stoner (ACTOR TEN) were all meant to stay in their top of show costumes, and function more on the sides. They were meant to serve as a grounding and reminder that this is a tall tale. For Madi Bolin and Naomi Stoner, this worked since they were working more on the sides of the stage as musicians, puppeteers and foley. Emma Ragsdale ended up being more in the forefront of the action of the story. As the show progressed and the primary players around her slowly appeared old timey, she looked completely out of



place. Her entire track went from adding and removing an apron to a full costume change. New garments were pulled for her and there were a couple of versions of her track throughout the remainder of dress rehearsals before landing on a final one.



Figure 24. Production Photo: The Old Man, ACTOR NINE, ACTOR TEN

## 4.2 Tech Week and dress rehearsals

Just as the production went into tech, Director Monica Payne had a family emergency and had to leave. Since she would not be present, she left the remainder of the full show in the hands of Michael McKelvey, the musical director. McKelvey took charge swiftly and effectively, but had not been involved in the design process prior, and I received almost no feedback from him.

On the night of 1st Dress, a principal actor, Kat Blakeslee, was nowhere to be found. As ACTOR NUMBER TWO, and MATHESON, Blakeslee served as the narrator and one of the lead musicians. Despite multiple attempts to contact Blakeslee by the stage manager, acting director, and other cast members, no one could reach her. Concern spread throughout the production team and the actors, but it was decided to proceed with rehearsal without her. Her lines were called off stage by stage management, while the other actors improvised as best as they could. First Dress is normally the time for the designers and director to see the entire show and solve any potential design or functional issues for the costumes. Because Blakeslee was not in attendance, Michael McKelvey spent the entire rehearsal trying to figure out how to restructure the show without Blakeslee if she were to be dropped and was not really able to provide me with feedback on the rest of the design.

Assistant Director Jordan Phillips was confident that she could learn the lines and fill in for all the acting purposes. McKelvey had devised a plan to fill in all the musical needs. Meanwhile, Jennifer Jacobs and I went through the possibilities for

costuming. Jordan Phillips was similar in size and shape to Blakeslee and an appointment was set for Phillips to try on the costume the next morning. The Costume Shop Supervisor, Hope Bennett and I stayed to speak with McKelvey after rehearsal. Around 11p.m., Blakeslee called the stage manager and briefly spoke with her before speaking with McKelvey. She had allegedly overslept. McKelvey was frustrated but decided to keep her in the production, with the understanding that she could be dropped at any point if she was even a moment late for the remainder of tech and the run with Phillips ready to step in.

The costume shop and I proceeded with fitting Phillips and developing a contingency plan if Blakeslee was dropped from the production. Phillips came into the shop the next morning and all of Blakeslee's costumes were tried on her. She fit into all of the clothes and an additional pair of shoes were pulled and placed into the dressing room for her. Blakeslee was not dropped from the production, but it was something that we had to keep in mind and be prepared for at any moment during the remainder of rehearsals and through the run of the show.

No major cast changes occurred but as we entered rehearsals there were a lot of issues with the puppets. Ellen Bull was brought on quite late as a puppet designer, and was only responsible for a few of the bigger puppets. Many of the shadow puppets were late and did not enter rehearsal until partially through tech. Because the actors and directors had not had time to work with these pieces and choreograph who would be operating which puppet. McKelvey decided the best option was to throw in an additional puppeteer. He pulled Zelda Kimble from the run crew, who was familiar with the needs



of the show. Adding Kimble as a puppeteer required also costuming her since she would be seen on stage throughout the show. Using leftover pieces from sourcing that had yet to be returned, this proved to be fairly easy. By putting her a long brown cardigan, a textured jumpsuit and a pair of leather boots, she blended right in with the rest of the ensemble.

After those changes, there were almost no other adjustments made. The actors easily switched over from their rehearsal pieces to their actual costumes. Hair and makeup was introduced on the second dress rehearsal. Simple hairstyles were chosen with each actor in mind. It was important that they were not uniform and either the cast or wardrobe could easily execute.



Figure 25. Production Photo: Full Ensemble

## **Chapter 5. Evaluation and Conclusion**

Unfortunately, there were a lot of disruptions to other departments during production and the run of the show. Scenic designer, Myrna Padilla, had several unforeseen circumstances that made it impossible for her to be present during the first few weeks of the design process. Because Padilla was unable to be present during this initial process, I had to proceed without her and it changed how I worked. This meant I was working from what I recalled from the first conversation we had about it and from what Payne knew of the scenic design. I would have liked more opportunities to work with Padilla, particularly on things like color and how we could have come up with a complete look together. The overall design came together, in my opinion. However, I think that things like color could have been further developed to create a more dynamic vision.

When designing, I chose a lot of colors based on the backdrop being a large piece of sailcloth. Sailcloth is typically a warm, off-white color, so I stuck with warm, saturated colors for the costumes to help the actors stand out against the backdrop. The sailcloth ended up being an aged gold, which was darker than I anticipated, but a nice choice to brighten the palette. Despite the cloth, I failed to account for the rake of the stage and what the actual perspective of the audience would be. The stage itself was a dark brown with washes of purple and flecks of gold. I'm not sure if the angle of the rake changed during the production process or if I was unable to conceptualize what that would actually look like from the audience's perspective. When watching the show, I realized

that visually the actors and the colors were seen more against the deck of the set than the backdrop. I don't think this was a bad thing, but it was a lot warmer visually than anticipated and something I can consider in the future.

The color palette of the costumes was in line with what I had originally intended, but in retrospect, they might have been too saturated under the stage lights. Nearly all of the pieces that could be washed, were washed down either to shrink or soften them. But many pieces were synthetic, brand new, or both so a few washings did nothing to tone down the colors or wear them down. Their shoes were put into rehearsal as soon as they were fit on the actors and Goudsmit's pants were worn in rehearsal for a couple of weeks, so some of this did start. However, distressing or breaking in the clothes became a task that got pushed off and was not a priority or something I really pushed for during production. I did not find having the clothes not broken in to be overly distracting, but I think making the costumes more worn could have given another layer to the show and perhaps fixed the issues with how saturated the palette became. I think this could have also made the transitions between their beginning looks and the found period garments more seamless. Given the opportunity to make changes, I would have definitely made this a higher priority.



Figure 26. Production Photo: Opening looks

There were some scenes that managed to break up how warm and saturated the palette was. For the sailors, I used these incredible yellow coats. When they were first purchased, I was worried that they might be too bright and completely disrupt the palette and had planned on dying them down to more of a mustard color. Thankfully, Jenn Jacobs suggested waiting until we saw them under the stage lights just to be sure. They remained undyed and the pop of brighter yellow really alleviated some of that heaviness from the more saturated colors.





Figure 27. Production Photo: ACTOR TWO and ACTOR FOUR



Figure 28. Production Photo: Sailors

Ultimately, the only major transformative piece of clothing was the reversible skirt for The Old Woman and The Young Woman. I think the skirt was a great idea and the color distinction was clear in normal lighting. Corkery did change the skirt on stage, where the audience could see her. However, during the show, Corkery was blocked to the side in a blue light or there was a lot of action in the primary playing spaces while she was changing. I don't think the reversible skirt had a lot of pay off, especially in terms of color. Under stage lights, the old faded side and the brighter side didn't look terribly different. The blocking looked beautiful and I don't think it was necessary to make her transitions a significant moment and doing so would have been odd for the way the rest of the show was paced. Corkery's transitions between The Old Woman and The Young



Woman were very subtle and I think they were lovely moments if someone happened to be paying attention to them.



Figure 29. Production Photo: The Young Man and The Young Woman



Similarly, I should have given more thought to what the final scene looked like. The transition from vintage styled hipsters into Irish folk inspired period garments worked and had a nice effect to it. However, the final look was less cultivated and it was obvious. I was focused on using pulled and found pieces as their period garments, but that meant that I was limited to what was available in stock. I knew that there were a lot of options available and had seen a lot of great pieces prior to pulling for this show, so I wasn't concerned that I would not be able to find something. In some ways this limitation helped the look of the show, but I think that their finale costumes felt less like an ensemble than their opening looks. Although their finale looks felt less curated than the opening looks, I do think that the path to them and that finale moment evoked the same feeling as the images of the Old Irish.



Figure 30. Production Photo: Finale Looks

Adding in as many rehearsal pieces as possible prior to dress rehearsal allowed myself and the actors to feel out what worked and what did not. Tracking and providing them with an outline really saved me a lot of trouble as we entered dress rehearsals. Since each actor already knew their costume track and had gotten some of that muscle memory established, throwing them into actual costumes was surprisingly easy.

I was also extremely lucky to have an enthusiastic and adaptive cast. At each opportunity, they were all ready to play and adjust and problem solve with me. Every time I came in with adjustments and new pieces, they were excited, made the changes and were really open with me about any issues they had. There were also many times where they did the work for me as a designer. As Payne and I had anticipated, they had acted beautifully and really sold each character. They did not need me to do that for them, but allowed me to complement and support their performances.

I really enjoyed working with director Monica Payne through this process. She was very communicative and often came into the shop to check in and look at pieces as they came in. She pushed me to really articulate what I was thinking. Unfortunately, due to the circumstances, she was not present during dress rehearsals and was unable to give me feedback during that process. While I am glad that there were no glaring problems and that McKelvey seemed unconcerned with my work, I would have liked to have gone through the process and gotten Payne's insight since she and I had been working on it from the beginning. I am curious about what might have been adjusted, or things that I could have done differently with her critiques in mind.

Overall, I think the show and the execution was quite successful. Much of the feedback I received was very positive. The cast was excited about their costumes and wanted to keep or find many of the pieces for themselves. Through the process, I really learned to trust my instincts even though I am not always able to verbalize what those are. I also pushed myself to work in a controlled way and purposefully set limitations for myself, some were very beneficial and some were less successful. The process and design was a direction I had never really explored. As theatre artists, there is a desire or a misconception that we constantly have to push and elevate through concepts and design. While elaborate design is important, it is just as important to recognize the places and opportunities where stripping down and controlling those instincts can take us back to the heart of storytelling. Working on this show solidified that for me and I am proud to have that accomplishment and *The Old Man and the Old Moon* conclude my career at Tulane University.



Figure 31. Production Photo: The Old Man filling the moon



## APPENDIX

### ACTOR ONE Rendering



ACTOR ONE  
THE OLD MAN  
"THE OLD MAN AND THE OLD MOON"

**ACTOR TWO Rendering**



ACTOR TWO  
MATHESON, FIVE LADY  
"THE OLD MAN AND THE OLD MOON"

**ACTOR THREE Rendering**





**ACTOR FOUR Rendering**



ACTOR FOUR  
MABEL, PATRON, J  
THE OLD MAN AND THE OLD M

**ACTOR FIVE Rendering**



ACTOR FIVE  
LLEWELYN, GHOST S2  
"THE OLD MAN AND THE OLD MOON"

**ACTOR SIX Rendering**



ACTOR SIX  
THE OLD WOMAN, MICKEY, CAPTAIN  
BATELEY, THE YOUNG WOMAN,  
"THE OLD MAN AND THE OLD MOON"

**ACTOR SEVEN Rendering**



ACTOR SEVEN  
FISH MONGER, CLERK, LOOKIE,  
REBEI I, BARTENDER, SOL  
"THE OLD MAN AND THE OLD MOON"



**ACTOR EIGHT Rendering**



ACTOR EIGHT  
BOATSWAIN I, ENSEMBL  
"THE OLD MAN AND THE OLD MOON"

**ACTOR NINE Rendering**



ACTOR NINE  
BUTCHER, ENSEMBLE  
"THE OLD MAN AND THE OLD MOON"

**ACTOR TEN Rendering**



Leather drug

ACTOR TEN  
BOATSWAIN 2, ENSEMB

"THE OLD MAN AND THE OLD MOON"



## Additional Pieces Rendering



## Additional Pieces Rendering





**Additional Pieces Renderings**



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## BIOGRAPHY

Samantha Johnson is a freelance costume designer, from Chattanooga, TN currently based in New Orleans, Louisiana. She received a Bachelor of Arts in Art and a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre from The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. After graduation, she freelanced as a theatrical and burlesque costume designer in Chattanooga before relocating to New Orleans to pursue her Master's degree at Tulane University. Some of her favorite design credits include *Sweeney Todd*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *By the Way*, *Meet Vera Stark*, and *Melancholy Play*.