



University of Bristol Theatre Collection,
Vandyck Building, 21 Park Row, Bristol BS1 5LT
Tel: 0117 33 15086



Email: theatre-collection@bristol.ac.uk

Prologue

This exhibition explores costume and set designs for three of Shakespeare's most popular plays. Focusing on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest* and *Twelfth Night*, the exhibition examines how set and costume designers have responded to Shakespeare's texts and the ways in which they have interpreted his various characters in productions that span more than 100 years.

The designs, which date from 1900 to 2010, reflect both conventional and more contemporary design ideas and demonstrate how the central themes of the plays have been interpreted over time, through both fantastical and historical costume. Our selection shows how Shakespeare's characters encourage a variety of readings and provide designers with an opportunity for artistic freedom. This has led to certain characters being continuously 're-designed' for different productions of the same play. Some characters – such as Ariel in *The Tempest* – have been performed by both male and female actors, and these different interpretations have created challenges for designers and produced some fascinating work.

Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank **Dr. Ann Matchette** for her support during this project and for her invaluable advice and guidance whilst creating this exhibition.

We would also like to thank **Dr. Jill Sullivan** and all the staff of the University of Bristol Theatre Collection for their patience, expertise and continued dedication during this project.

Contributors:

Linda Bassett

Lydia Buchanan-Lee

Yan Chao

Faye Latham

Jieon Lee

Rando Zeng

Kaibo Zhang

Epilogue

It seems only fitting to close with a word from the bard himself:

Our revels now are ended. These our actors,

As I foretold you, were all spirits, and

Are melted into air, into thin air:

Prospero, *The Tempest*, (Act 4, scene 1).

Seen together, the objects on display offer an insight into the way in which designers' ideas are translated for the stage as part of the production process. *(re)Designing Shakespeare* provides a glimpse into the world of theatre design, encouraging us to view some iconic dramatic works in a different light.

The Tempest

The Tempest is a comedy about romance and magic. Prospero, once the Duke of Milan, and his daughter Miranda were put to sea and landed on an island inhabited by Caliban (a witch's son) and Ariel (a spirit). The King of Naples' son, Ferdinand, is shipwrecked on the island by a storm, or tempest, created by Prospero. Under the influence of Prospero, Ariel uses his magic to guide Ferdinand to Miranda, who fall in love and prepare to marry. Ariel also sabotages a plan by the other islanders to murder Prospero, leading Prospero to grant Ariel his freedom before returning to Milan and his restored Dukedom.

The costume designs we have chosen from *The Tempest* focus primarily on otherworldly characters, specifically the "airy spirit", Ariel. Throughout the play, Prospero repeatedly commands Ariel to become invisible. Designers are faced with the difficult and exciting task of representing a character who is ethereal and otherworldly. Other notable mythical characters include the Goddesses, Iris and Ceres, and the mask worn by Iris in the wedding of Miranda and Ferdinand can be seen in the tall display case.

On-screen images

The first image relates to the 1900 production of A Midsummer Night's Dream, designed by Percy Anderson and featuring Julia Nielson as Oberon in 1900.

Inscribed photograph of Neilson as Oberon, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Her Majesty's Theatre, 1900. Photographer: unknown. MM/2/TH/LO/MAJ/15

The images from The Tempest have been chosen as they focus on the variety of design interpretations of Ariel — as both a female fairy and an adult male in winged dress. For example, Paul Shelving's design for Ariel performed by fifteen-year-old David O'Brien in 1946.

Souvenir postcards for *The Tempest* as produced at His Majesty's Theatre in 1904. MM/2/TH/LO/MAJ/21

Black and white photograph of Leslie French as Ariel in the Vic-Wells Shakespeare Company production of *The Tempest* in the 1930-33 seasons. Photographer: unknown. OV/P/62/12/2

Pencil and watercolour design concept for Ariel, by Paul Shelving, RSC at Stratford, 1946. TCD/C/141/5

Design concept for Ariel as water-nymph by Maria Bjornson, RSC at the Barbican, 1983. TCD/C/275/2

The images for Twelfth Night have been chosen to demonstrate attempts by designers to replicate historically accurate sets and costumes

Set of six colour photographs of the 17th century style set designs for *Twelfth Night* by Italian artist Lila de Nobili, RSC at Stratford, 1958. RSC/S/207-212

16th century style costume designs with swatches, for Tom Courtenay as Feste and Barbara Leigh-Hunt as Maria, by Alix Stone for the Old Vic production of *Twelfth Night* in 1961. TCD/C/260/2,13

Right-Hand Wall:

35. Costume design by Alan Barlow for Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Bristol Old Vic Company, Theatre Royal Bristol, 1948.

Watercolour, detailing with ink, pencil notes.
BOV/C/3/1

These designs emphasise a connection with the natural world. Oberon's costume features organic elements that are enhanced by the highly naturalistic set design. Barlow's detailed vision of the forest conveys the magic and enchantment of the Fairy Kingdom that is central to the plot.

36. Set design by Alan Barlow for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Bristol Old Vic Company, Theatre Royal Bristol, 1948.

Watercolour, acrylic paint, fountain pen notes.
BOV/S/4

Barlow's imaginative creation of the enchanted woodland was particularly noted in the press review (item 32).

Twelfth Night

Twelfth Night is a comedy that celebrates love and friendship. The play opens in Illyria with Duke Orsino pining for the Lady Olivia who has rejected his advances. Meanwhile, Viola has been shipwrecked on the shores of Illyria and disguises herself as a boy named Cesario to work in the service of the Duke. Orsino sends Cesario/Viola to woo Olivia in his place, but Viola has fallen in love with Orsino, and Olivia falls in love with Cesario. The comedic characters, Sir Toby Belch, Sir Andrew Aguecheek and the maid Maria, play a trick on Olivia's steward Malvolio, who is in love with Olivia. He is persuaded to wear a pair of cross-gartered yellow stockings to impress her – a colour Olivia hates. Olivia meets Sebastian, Viola's twin brother who also survived the shipwreck. She thinks he is Cesario and is delighted when he accepts her offer of marriage. When Viola and Sebastian meet, the twins are reunited and the plot confusions are resolved with the marriage of Viola and Duke Orsino.

Through a plot which revolves around cross-dressing and mistaken identity, *Twelfth Night* explores issues of gender and romantic love. In contrast to *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the

the costume designs here draw on different aspects of historical dress, which reflect the very human relationships in the play.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

A Midsummer Night's Dream is one of Shakespeare's best-known comedies and portrays love as a blind, irrational force. Hermia is set to marry Demetrius but elopes with Lysander. Helena is in love with Demetrius and tells him of this plot. The fairy king and queen, Oberon and Titania, are arguing. Oberon casts a spell on Titania and she falls rapturously in love with the human weaver Bottom, whose head has been transformed into that of an ass. Oberon casts a similar spell on Demetrius so that he will fall in love with Helena. However, the plan goes awry, and the spell is cast on Lysander, who falls in love with Helena. Eventually, Oberon, reconciled with Titania, lifts all the enchantments and puts the humans to sleep, before they wake believing that the events were a dream.

The designs chosen from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* illustrate how Shakespeare's characters have been interpreted in different ways.

30. Souvenir programme for a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, His Majesty's Theatre, London, 1911.

Print, with reproduction oil painting.
HBT/144/8

This production was re-staged in 1911. Once again, Beerbohm Tree's production featured elements of spectacle, and this image features live rabbits and primroses strewn on the ground.

Drawer 6

31. Production photographs for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Bristol Old Vic Company, Theatre Royal, Bristol, 1948.

Photographer: Desmond Tripp.
Black and white photograph.
BOV/P/29/5,8

32. Press cutting review of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Theatre Royal, Bristol, 1948.

Digitised copy of print original.
BOV/PC/5

This press cutting relates to the costume and set designs by Alan Barlow (see item 35 and 36). Barlow's attention to detail successfully conveyed "Shakespeare's enchanting fantasy" onto the stage. The designs were convincing enough to recreate the atmosphere of an outdoor setting in the theatre environment.

33. Production photographs, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Old Vic, 1937.

Photographer: J W Debenham.
Black and white photograph.
OVP/61/16

34. Programme, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Bristol Old Vic Company, Theatre Royal Bristol, 1948.

Print.
PR/126

Drawer 5

26. Property list for Herbert Beerbohm Tree's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Her Majesty's Theatre London, 1900.

Handwritten notes, pen.
HBT/144/15

This is a list of 'New Properties' that would have been made or bought especially for this production. They include wands, spears, a variety of flowers, a property (i.e. artificial) dog and '3 rabbits' - presumably real! Electric lamps and garlands of flowers containing electric lights would have added to the overall spectacle of the staging, typical of Victorian productions of Shakespeare's plays.

27. Costume design by Percy Anderson for Demetrius, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Her Majesty's Theatre, London, 1900.

Watercolour, detailing and outline with pencil.
HBT/D/4/13

28. Costume design by Percy Anderson for Oberon, played by Julia Neilson, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Her Majesty's Theatre, London, 1900.

Watercolour, detailing and outline with pencil.
HBT/D/4/1

*Staged at the turn of the century, Tree's production was "almost a patriotic occasion". Tree's Oberon, Julia Neilson, wore a spiked crown that rendered her very like the image of Britannia on British currency. A review in the Pall Mall Gazette magazine said that "Her Oberon is truly regal, while the mere fact of her being a woman just differentiates it from humanity." (Gary Jay Williams, *Our Moonlight Revels: A Midsummer Night's Dream in Theatre* [Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1997], pp.132-7).*

29. Costume design by Percy Anderson for Guards to Theseus (with fabric swatches), *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Her Majesty's Theatre, London, 1900.

Watercolour, fabric swatches, pencil detailing.
HBT/D/4/15

The designs showcased here provide a contrast between natural and fantasy elements and more classical, historical costume. In particular, they highlight how the role of Oberon has been visually adapted when played by both male and female actors. This complements the costume variations for supernatural characters in *The Tempest*.

Left-Hand Wall:

1. Costume design by Yolanda Sonnabend for Spirit in *The Tempest*. Film adaptation by Derek Jarman, 1979.

Watercolour, black glitter.

TC/D/C/137

Tall Display Case:

2. Mask designed by Harriet de Winton for Iris in *The Tempest*, Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory, 2010.

Papier-mâché base with jet buttons, feathers and fabric ribbons.

2013/006

This magnificent mask was worn by the goddess Iris in the wedding scene between Miranda and Ferdinand. This piece would have been worn above the head of the actor (see item 3), giving the impression of grandeur befitting a goddess. See also the image of Oberon designed by Alan Barlow on the right-hand wall (item 35) from A Midsummer Night's Dream, another otherworldly Shakespearean character whose elaborate headpiece gives the illusion of height.

3. Production photograph of *The Tempest*, illustrating the wedding scene. Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory, 2010.

Photographer: Graham Burke.

Colour photograph.

2013/006

Wall Above Display Case:

4. Costume design with fabric swatch by Alix Stone for Sir Andrew Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night*, Old Vic, 1961.

AXS/8/8

Watercolour, detailing with black pen.

See also drawers 1 and 2 for Alix Stone's costume designs for the entire cast of Twelfth Night (Items 14 and 17).

22. Souvenir play text from the production of *The Tempest* at His Majesty's Theatre, 1904.

Print, with reproduction oil painting inscribed by Nora Kerin.

HBT/175/23

This book would have been on sale to audiences, and commemorated the 50th performance of the play at His Majesty's Theatre. It demonstrates how costume designs could be translated into print media.

Drawer 4

23. Costume design by Maria Bjornson for Ariel, *The Tempest*, Barbican Theatre, 1983.

Blue and red watercolour, detailing with black pen, white gouache.

TC/D/C/275

At this point in the design process, it is unclear whether Bjornson imagined the actor wearing a skin-tight suit or if the actor should be naked and streaked in blue and red make-up. Patterned with veins, the figure looks like one of Andreas Vesalius's anatomical designs from the 16th century, and therefore complements the 16th century historical costumes of the other characters.

24. Production photograph from *The Tempest*, RSC, Barbican Theatre, 1983.

Photographer: Joe Cocks.

Colour photograph.

BTC58/1/2

This shows the conclusion of the design process where the decision had been made for actor Mark Rylance to wear a tight fitting body-stocking patterned with blue and red veins.

25. Production photograph from *The Tempest*, RSC, Barbican Theatre, 1983.

Photographer: Joe Cocks.

Black and white photograph.

BTC58/1/2

18. Production photograph for *Twelfth Night*, Old Vic, 1961.
Photographer: Crispian Woodgate.
Black and white photograph.
OV/P/32/8/70

Stephen Moore as Sir Andrew Aguecheek (centre), wearing the costume designed by Alix Stone (see item 4).

Drawer 3

19. Costume design concept by Percy Anderson for Miranda, *The Tempest*, His Majesty's Theatre, 1900.
Watercolour, detailing and outline with pencil.
TC/D/C/216

20. Souvenir postcards of *The Tempest*, featuring Basil Gill as Ferdinand and Nora Kerin as Miranda, His Majesty's Theatre, 1904.
Black and white photographs on card, colour tinted, gold paint.
HBT/175/2,3

In the original design (see item 19), Miranda is wearing a headpiece made from flowers. Miss Norah Kerin as Miranda is here shown with two flower bouquets in her hair, evoking the Pompadour hairstyles popular in the early 1900s.

21. Souvenir postcards of *The Tempest*, featuring Constance Benson as Miranda, *The Tempest*, Lyceum Theatre, 1900.
Black and white photographs on card, colour tinted.
MM/2/WS/40

The designs for both Benson's and Kerin's costumes feature a natural unstructured look. While evoking Miranda's role as a child brought up away from the influences of society, the dresses also invoke the very fashionable Arts and Crafts style of the 1900s.

Photo postcards such as these contributed to the growth in the popularity of the actor as a celebrity figure and were an effective and modern way to promote a production.

5. Costume design by Alix Stone for Duke Orsino in *Twelfth Night*, Old Vic, 1961.
Watercolour.
AXS/8/5

Alix Stone's designs evoke the paintings of Jean-Antoine Watteau, effectively setting Shakespeare's play in the 18th century.

6. Costume design by Deidre Clancy for Duke Orsino in *Twelfth Night*, Royal Shakespeare Company, 1994.
Watercolour, gouache, detailing with pencil and gold paint.
DCS/D/3

7. Costume design by Deidre Clancy for Sir Andrew Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night*, Royal Shakespeare Company, Stratford, 1994.
Watercolour, detailing with pencil.
DCS/D/10

*Clancy, a highly versatile designer, here utilises historical costume to emphasise the ridiculousness of a comic character. Aguecheek is given highly ornate, fashionable 17th century dress, which stood out from the simple shapes used for other characters' costumes. (Deidre Clancy, *Designing Costume for Stage and Screen*, [London: Batsford, 2014], p.60.)*

Long Display Case:

8. Original costume stockings worn by Henry Irving (later Sir Henry Irving) as Malvolio during his production of *Twelfth Night*, Lyceum Theatre London, 1884.
Silk stockings, yellow and gold thread.
MM/10/50/14

The stage direction in Act 3, scene 4, "Enter Malvolio [cross-gartered and wearing yellow stockings]", is one of the few occasions in Shakespeare's plays where the dramatist directly informs how the character should be visually represented onstage.

9. Journal page showing illustrations from Henry Irving's production of *Twelfth Night*, Lyceum Theatre, 1884.

Black pen, print.

MM/2/TH/LO/LYC/23

The central image shows Irving as Malvolio wearing the cross-gartered yellow stockings.

10. Production photograph showing Oberon, played by Robert Helpmann, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Old Vic, 1937.

Photographer: J. W. Debenham.

Black and white photograph.

OV/P/61/16

11. Costume book compiled by Helen Sharp, Old Vic, 1937.

Notes, fountain pen, fabric swatches.

OV/M/232

*Sketches of costumes with the names of the actors who would be wearing the costumes. This page shows Sharp's design notes for Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The details include "black tights with blue tinsel strips" and a headdress or crown adorned "with coral antennae" (see also item 10).*

12. Programme for *The Tempest*, Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory, 2010.

Print.

2013/006

13. Harpy mask designed by Harriet de Winton for *The Tempest*, Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory, 2010.

Papier mâché mask, black and navy feathers.

2013/006

Please note: the drawers should be read left to right.

Drawer 1

14. Costume design sketches by Alix Stone with fabric swatches for a production of *Twelfth Night*, Old Vic, 1961.

Pencil, watercolour and white gouache.

AXS/8/15

These sketches illustrate the overarching colour scheme for this production and reveal Stone's careful attention to visual coherence among groups of characters.

15. Production photograph for *Twelfth Night*, Old Vic, 1961.

Photographer: Crispian Woodgate.

Black and white photograph.

OV/P/32/8/77

The character in the centre wears the costume designed for Michael Meacham as Orsino by Alix Stone in 1961 (see item 5).

16. Programmes, showing the cast pages and cover, for the production of *Twelfth Night* at the Old Vic, 1961.

Print.

OV/PG/551

Drawer 2

17. Costume design sketches by Alix Stone for the characters in *Twelfth Night*, Old Vic, 1961.

Watercolour, detailing with pencil.

AXS/8/14