To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Kristina Lea Watson entitled "Costumes for Shakespeare's Measure for Measure." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Speech and Theater.

Robert M. Cothran
Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

Vice Chancellor
Graduate Studies and Research

COSTUMES FOR SHAKESPEARE'S MEASURE FOR MEASURE

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Arts

Degree

Kristina Lea Watson

June 1974

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I am grateful to Mr. Robert Cothran whose magnificent scenery helped inspire my designs and whose teaching remains a constant inspiration. I am also grateful to Dr. Ralph Allen both for his guidance during the planning of Measure for Measure and for his continued advice during the preparation of this thesis.

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ABSTRACT

Producing a play is a collaborative act in which directors, designers, and actors together create a complex pattern which, despite its collective origin, is a single coherent whole. An allusive and difficult play offers the interpreters a wide latitude of choices about characters, movement patterns, and theme. The costume designer's decisions concerning period, color, line, and ornamental detail must support the collective interpretation and help define in visual terms the world of the play. The costumes for a production of Measure for Measure at the Clarence Brown Theatre in November 1973 are a case in point, as the pictorial sources for line and ornament and an examination of the reasoning behind each choice clearly demonstrate.

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CHAPTER I

PLANNING THE PRODUCTION

A costume designer, no less than an actor, must take into account what the great Russian director Stanislavsky calls the "given circumstances" of a play. These given circumstances include, of course, all the questions of time and space which create a context for the action. They include also the complex of character relationships which make the events of the plot coherent and credible.

The given circumstances to which Stanislavsky refers are, in fact, not really given at all. In any play there are a range of choices to be made: about tone, about style, about character. The responsibility for making these choices belongs ultimately to the director, but the theatre is a collaborative art and the costume designer must make decisions concerning period, color, line, and ornamental detail which support the collective interpretation and help define the world of the play.

That world is a metaphor for ours, not a replica of it, a complex metaphor composed of movement, patterns, color, rhythms, and all the other elements of performance. Theatrical style is illusive; like any essentially nonverbal idea it resists translation into words. Under ideal circumstances

no single element of that style should be decorative. Thus, the costume designs, like the setting, should be distinctive but self-effacing. They should contribute to the total pattern without calling attention to themselves. The statement they make must be clear but unobtrusive. At the same time they must provide us with essential information about place, time and character. A man's clothes reveal to us his opinion of himself; they often tell us how much money he makes, the level of his education, and sometimes his occupation. Costuming for the theatre must be responsive to the requirements of any art, it must be visually coherent and, above all, it must not contradict the vision of the director. For in the theatre it is the director's interpretation which is the most important given circumstance of all. His decisions are the boundaries within which the designers work.

My costumes for Measure for Measure were created to support an interpretation of the play which avoids many cliches of contemporary Shakespearean production. In approaching the problem of finding an appropriate style for the staging of Elizabethan drama, our director, Dr. Ralph Allen, is neither a naturalist of the Brahm school nor is he an antiquarian like William Poel. The conventions of verisimilitude, he feels, create a false expectation in the audience. Why invite the spectator to view the bed trick or the Duke's disguise in Measure for Measure as something

that might happen in the everyday world? Trying to make such devices literally believable only makes them seem false or trivial. Create instead a world of artifice to which these plot artifices belong.[1] It should not be an abstract world, nor a world based entirely on the stage conventions of Shakespeare's own day. Even if it were possible to reconstruct the Globe Theatre, the exercise would be dry and academic. To Shakespeare's audience the platform stage was familiar; to us it would seem quaint. A sixteenth century Londoner coming to the Bankside would not encounter the bare platform which Poel and his many American imitators see as central to the Elizabethan style. He would see instead a highly symbolic stage with a roof called the heavens and a substage called hell—a stage that was a metaphor for an essentially medieval world view.[2]

If one foregoes the literalness of naturalism, and the crankiness of the antiquarian style, what choices are left? Dr. Allen deplores the recent vogue for productions which arbitrarily set plays in historical periods totally unrelated to the theme or action of those plays. He speaks with contempt of a Troilus and Cressida set in the American Civil

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[1]For best description of Brahm and Poel see: John Gassner and Ralph G. Allen, Theatre and Drama in the Making (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1964).

[2]For best description of symbolic nature of Medival and Elizabethan stages see: Glen Wickham, Early English Stages 1350-1650 (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1959).

War (Stratford, Connecticutt, 1957), a voodoo Macbeth (New York, Lafayette Theatre, 1936), and a Much Ado About Nothing rooted in turn-of-the-century Iowa (Central Park Theatre, New York, 1972).

I describe at length Dr. Allen's negative reaction to these currently popular styles because his opinions were the limits that defined our work. Fortunately neither Robert Cothran, the set designer, nor I disagreed with Dr. Allen's basic approach and together we set about to find some means of translating into contemporary form the stage conventions for which Measure for Measure was originally written.

We addressed ourselves to questions of place and time. Where does Measure for Measure really take place? In Shakespeare's London or in Vienna? What is the tone of the play? What spaces must be created if the stage is to be what Shakespeare's Globe was—a microcosm of the world.

To the uninitiated, the setting which evolved might appear to be fairly traditional and conservative—a continuation of the old-fashioned naturalistic style of staging Shakespeare which we associate with Reinhardt's most grandiose productions. In fact, however, Mr. Cothran's remarkable design (see Figure 1) is very radical indeed, and not only in its massiveness. The whole city of Vienna is laid out before us—a monastery, a prison, a state hall, a street, a cloister, a brothel—each of these elements finished in the



Figure 1. Full Stage.

most detailed and realistic manner possible. However, a closer look at the arrangement of spaces indicates that there is nothing realistic about the setting at all. The brothel abutts the cloister. The state palace has a stairway that leads to the prison. We are looking at an abstract of the world, not a facsimile of it. A city that is not a city, a place that is both somewhere and nowhere; this is the impression conveyed by the setting. The animating idea of the design is a modern rendering of the principle behind most medieval settings—specific places in the world (loca) arranged around a neutral playing space (platea). Such a stage is sometimes called a "simultaneous setting." The more correct term is that of A. M. Nagler, "A polyscenic stage of juxtaposition." In this type of setting, the boundaries between areas are blurred and one place flows into another. Where does the palace end and the street begin? Is this a cloister or a moated grange? Thus, the closed-in quality of most simultaneous settings is avoided. The director must be careful not to fall into the trap of localizing each individual scene in a cramped and rigidly defined space. As I shall indicate, the style of movement developed by Dr. Allen was consistent with the logic of the setting. The movement of characters spilled across the areas and generated a pattern which depended on realistic business but never allowed its basic form to be hidden by a plethora of detail.

What costumes are an appropriate adjunct to this scenic style—at once so abstract and so specific? Should they be "historically accurate?" And what does "accurate" mean in a play like Measure for Measure—a play set in an Italianate Vienna that resembles London, an anachronistic play which chooses its images from the time of its author not from the period during which the events of the plot are supposed to be taking place?

Any period from 1400 to 1600 and any country in Europe might under these circumstances seem accurate. The costume designer has a wide variety of legitimate choices, the final decision will depend on many matters that have only a tangential relationship to historical truth: the mood of the play, the degree to which a particular shape or texture flatters the actors, the style of movement envisioned by the director, the specific activities in which the characters will be engaged. This last factor is of crucial importance. Clothing is made to be worn and is therefore related to habitual patterns of behavior; an Angelo wearing boots walks differently from an Angelo in slippers. Once a material or a style has been chosen, that choice will determine what the character can or cannot do. Costume is closely related to characterization; it creates possibilities for action and establishes limits to it. Both possibilities and limitations must be taken into account during the planning stages of a production.

The search for an appropriate historical period and style must also be informed by certain judgments which can only be called literary. How cheerful is the play? How sombre? What are its central metaphors, its predominant tone? Is Measure for Measure a religious allegory or a comedy of intrigue, or both, or neither?

Our decisions concerning all these matters are described in the scene-by-scene analysis which follows in Chapter II. We did not reduce the play to any rigid scheme, the world we created was not exclusively dark or bright. It was a world much like our own, a world in which values are seen to be illusive and complex.

In the two centuries which circumscribed our choice, the relative neutrality of the late 15th century seemed to offer us the best costume models. The clothes of this period are relatively easy for inexperienced actors to wear; the lines are elegant and simple; the style of the period is a reflection of the late medieval attitudes which provided the basis for Mr. Cothran's set. At first Albrecht Dürer's woodcuts (circa 1500) seemed to offer the best source of costume ideas. But the exuberance of the silhouette seemed, on reflection, at once too cheerful and too heavy for our interpretation.

The source on which we finally settled were the paintings of Sandro Botticelli and his lesser known Italian

contemporaries, Benozzo Gozzoli and Domenico del Ghirlandaio. The costumes in Botticelli's paintings (circa 1480), in particular his Sistine Chapel frescoes, are elegant, simple, and still under the influence of the late Gothic style. There is a gracefulness of line that seemed appropriate for our version of Measure for Measure. Botticelli uses a very broad palette, but the overall effect is dignified and subdued. None of the primary colors are omitted, but only dark values are used. Also one does not find the excessive emphasis on jewelry, embroidery, and trim that is usual in costumes of the period.

Although Botticelli became our principal source we determined not to imitate him too slavishly. Accuracy of costume is often praised by critics. But strict fidelity to source is only important if an inaccurate detail would shatter the dramatic illusion, or if some particularly authentic touch would make a necessary contribution to the spirit of the play. Moreover the audience depends on costumes for much indirect information about the characters and their circumstances. We decided, for example, not to have any women in the court scenes. Only official business is transacted in the bachelor Duke's court, it is not the scene of the usual court balls complete with flirtatious ladies and dandified courtiers. Some equivalent of formal business clothing is needed to convey an appropriate sense of place.

We did not treat our stage as a museum but as a place of action. No single piece of clothing was copied directly from a source. The cut of one double might be combined with the color of another; an "authentic" dress was embellished by an accessory or a trim that had no model but the imagination. Our sense of style perhaps derived from Botticelli, but within that style we improvised, creating images that seemed to support our vision of this dark and curious comedy.

CHAPTER II

MEASURE FOR MEASURE IN TERMS OF COSTUME

A play, and therefore a design idea, reveals itself moment by moment in a performance. Therefore the audience at our production of Measure for Measure perceived a pattern incrementally, more or less in the following fashion.

Act I Scene 1

The polyscenic set, intended as a microcosm of the city, is visible to the audience as it enters the theatre. After a short blackout the play begins with a tableau (see Figure 1, page 5). The courtiers, guards, citizens and principal characters are frozen in half-completed action. In the palace hall (S.R.) the Duke is surrounded by his courtiers in a formal, perfectly balanced, rigidly symmetrical pattern. In the street (C. and S.L.) the crowd, including Lucio, Pompey, the prostitutes, and other citizens, makes a contrasting impression of randomness and disorder. Isabella and the nuns in the cloister, the monks (S.L. above), and the prisoners (C. below) complete this first abstract of the world of the play. The sharp contrast between the rigidity of the court and the near anarchy of the rest of the city is a visual metaphor for the tensions that exist in any system

of law—the imposed pattern threatened constantly by the human impulses which it strives to control.

The first scene begins with movement from the Duke and his court while the rest of the stage picture remains frozen. Thus the Duke's remarks concerning the need for order and his decision to choose the strict Angelo over the more lenient Escalus are juxtaposed with an image of cheerful lawlessness.

The costumes support the complex visual metaphor. The attendant lords are dressed in burgundies and reds, suggesting (with some internal variety) a uniform sense of majesty and justice, the ceremonious nature of laws and other human patterns (Figures 2 and 3). The Duke's robe is red (Figures 4 and 5) with a stenciled black and gold pattern. The ostentation of his gown makes an ironic comment on his self-professed hatred of show, his disapproval of pomp. The black of Angelo's robe is in dramatic contrast to the reds of Escalus (Figures 6 and 7) and the rest. The deputy's singularity is reinforced by his placement at the focal point of the scene in opposition to the sea of red gowns (Figure 1, page 5). Angelo, as do we all, makes his dress a symbol of what he believes himself to be. His evident self-image is that of a fanatically austere judge who does not relish the trappings of the law, but rather the law itself.

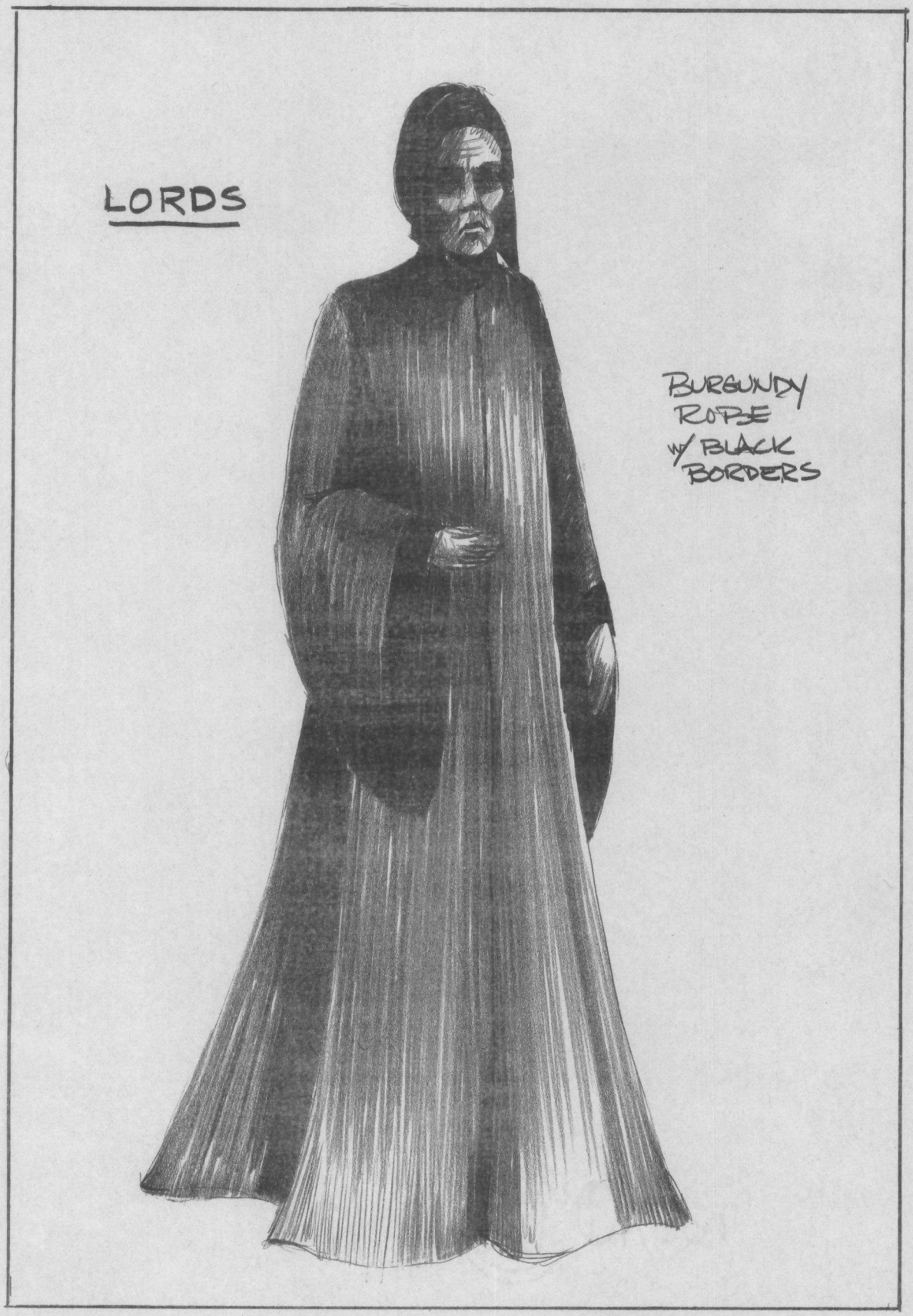


Figure 2. Lords (drawing).



Figure 14. Lords (photo).

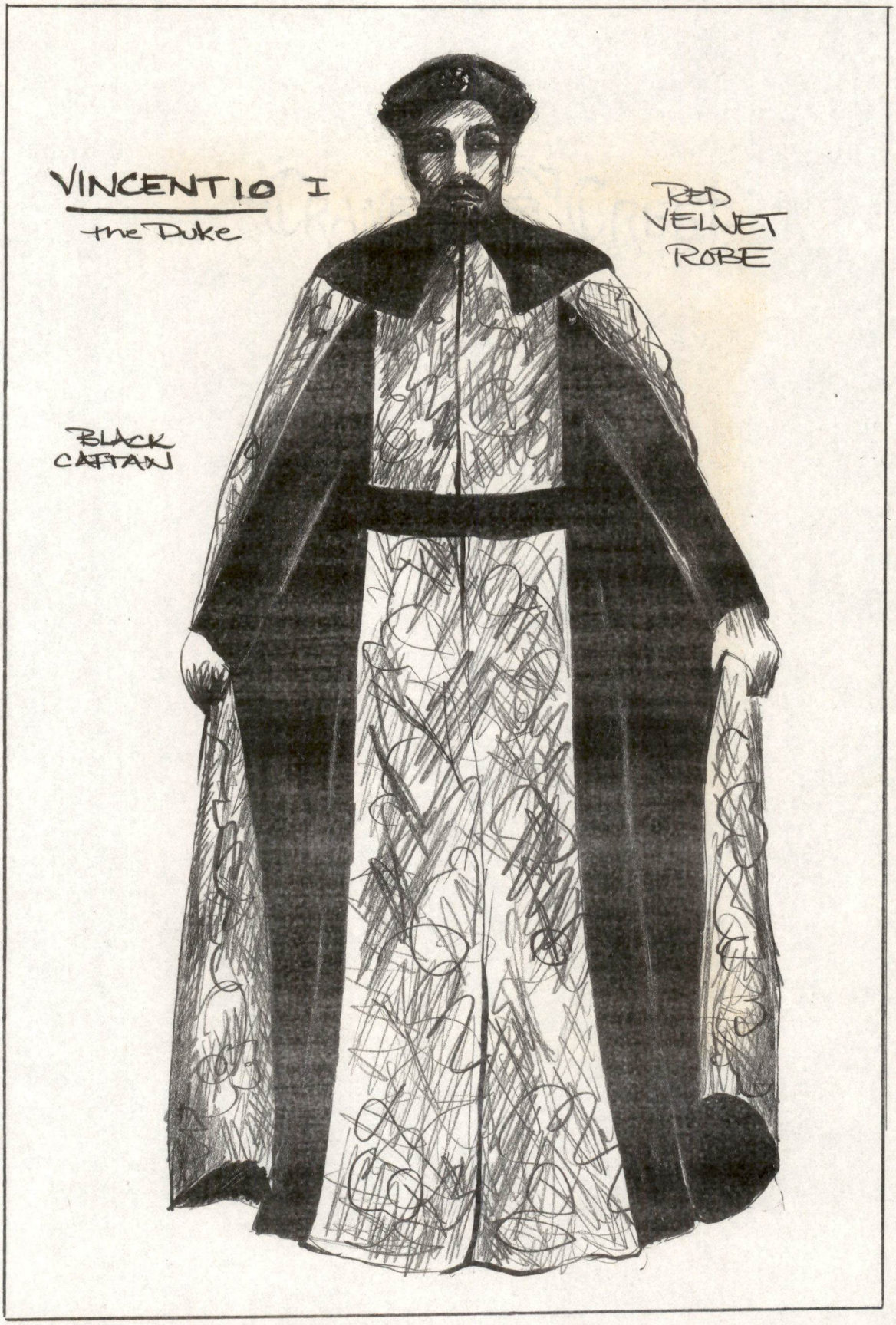


Figure 4. Duke I (drawing).



Figure 5. Duke I (photo).



Figure 6. Escalus (drawing).

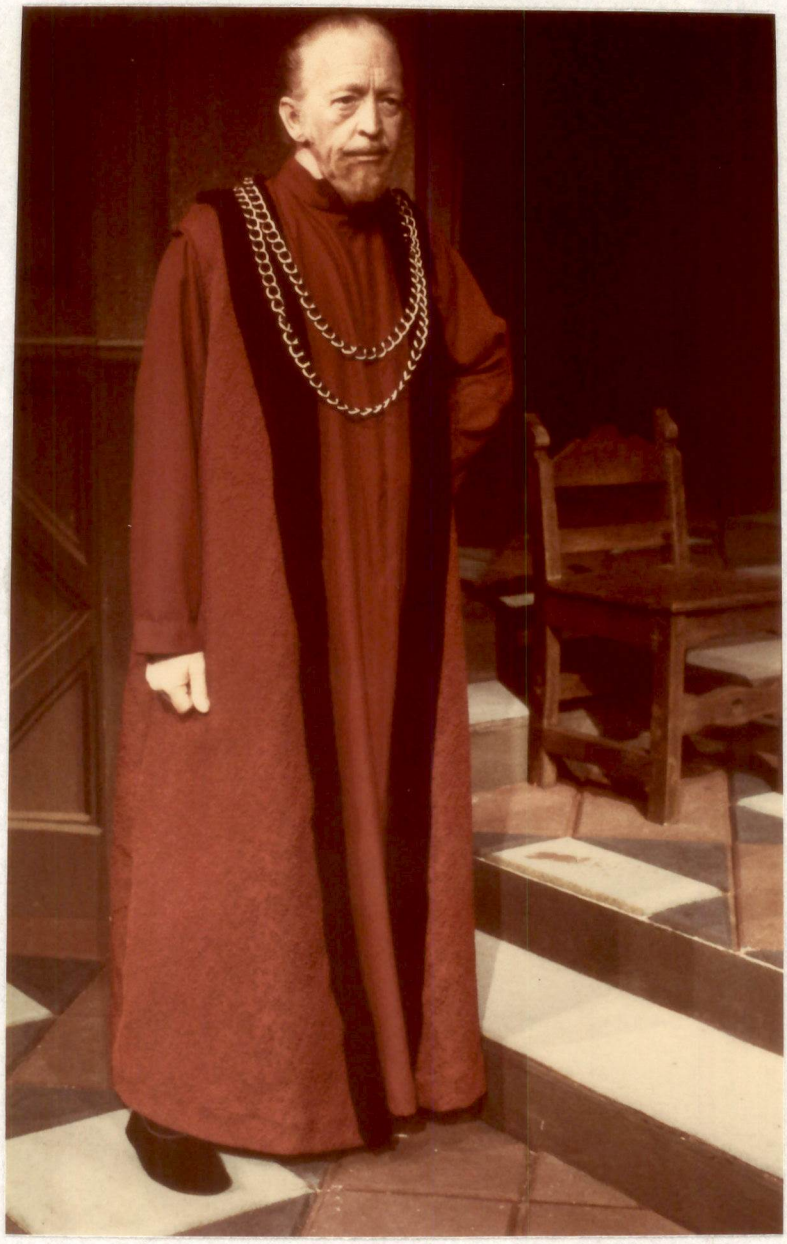


Figure 18. Escalus (photo).

Act I Scene 2

As the courtiers disperse from the Hall of Justice, attention shifts to the street, which has suddenly sprung to raucuous life. Lucio and two gentlemen emerge from the lively and undisciplined crowd. Lucio's willingness to live unencumbered by moral standards is the antithesis of Angelo's excess concern for the letter of the law. As a handsome and stylish man about town, Lucio wears a red jerkin with hanging sleeves and a feather trimmed hat (Figures 8 and 9). The costumes of the gentlemen, of course, are allied in color and value to that of Lucio. One gentleman wears a purple and black velvet doublet, the other is dressed in black and green (see Figure 10). The details of the costumes indicate a sense of stylishness appropriate to Lucio's social class, but are not intended to be foppish. In many productions these three experienced rakes are over-dressed and their manners ridiculed as extremely elaborate. But Shakespeare is not Wycherly. The moral flaw in Lucio and his friends is related to their laxness, not to any supposed artificiality of manners. Thus Lucio's cane, his black velvet hat with full feathers, his hanging sleeves trimmed in blue, the brocade on the gentlemen's sleeves, the gold lace trim—all these ornamental additions to the basic costumes contribute a sense of careless wealth to our first impression of these imprudent men-about-town.



Figure 8. Lucio (drawing).



Figure 9. Lucio (photo).



Figure 10. Two Gentlemen.

Mistress Overdone, the brothel keeper, has a costume defined by her name (Figures 11 and 12). Her red brocade over-dress is tied up to reveal a purple skirt. Her full sleeves are similarly tied, exposing black slashed under-sleeves over a green chemise. The costume in this case provides us direct information about her financial situation (the brothel has been prospering), and her sense of self (she obviously imagines that her garish ill-assorted colors create a tasteful and harmonious effect). Without lessening the sense of her basic humanity, Mistress Overdone's clothes allow her that largeness of outline which we associate with the vice figures of the morality tradition.

The gentlemen exit and Pompey, the bawd, appears with the news of Angelo's first official edict. Unlike Mistress Overdone, Pompey can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Frequently he is a grotesque and sinister comedian whose jokes about venereal disease are a bitter comment on the ideal of chastity which is central to the conflict between Angelo and Isabella. Our Pompey was a much more human clown, an accomodator who changes his caparison with his function, a man who has learned to live with the inevitable corruptions of this world. His costume is conceived of as a hand-me-down from some prosperous customer, its cut no longer stylish, the cloth faded and a little threadbare (Figures 13 and 14). Pompey's green velvet is laced up in the front. Underneath



Figure 11. Mistress Overdone (drawing).



Figure 12. Mistress Overdone (photo).



Figure 13. Pompey (drawing).



Figure 14. Pompey (photo).

we see a striped undershirt, which Pompey obviously considers very stylish indeed, and he wears a soft brown hat with feathers.

Pompey's costume defines a silhouette of the character which is supported by his first stage business. He enters, rushes through a door (established by the previous action as that of a brothel) and rouses the girls, who gather up their belongings hastily in anticipation of the arrival of Angelo's men. The short vignettes in this second scene give a sense of disorder in the life of Vienna, a disorder which the new regime is determined to control. The changing shapes and tempos created by the director's manipulation of the crowds are an important dramatic value in this production of Measure for Measure. In its various, precisely determined configurations, the crowd indicates the moment by moment tensions in Vienna and acts as a reminder that the whole city (and by extension the world) participates in the decisions of its rulers. Altogether more than fifty crowd costumes appear in the most populous scenes. The crowd includes middle class citizens, beggars, prostitutes, tradesmen, and guards. The guards' costumes (black tabards, hoods, whips, and floor-length capes) are intended to be an extension of Angelo's authority: depersonalized, cold, and terrifying. The rest of the crowd unlike the principals, are meant to be seen as a group rather than as individuals. The crowd costumes

therefore, draw no particular attention to themselves. Many are dark in value, nearly all are cold in hue. They lack decoration and detail but are otherwise based on the figured landscapes of Botticelli. The interrelationships between costumes necessarily affect staging, and the pictorial patterns of Measure for Measure grew out of careful collaboration between the director and his designers.

Thus it is a subdued and less flamboyent crowd which follows the tumbril bearing Claudio and Juliet to prison. These first two victims of Angelo's severity are dressed predominantly in blues of dark value, which link the lovers symbolically and pictorially. Claudio's velveteen tabard, and Juliet's rich wool dress are enriched by decorations which suggest prosperity if not wealth. Both have slashed sleeves over white chemises. His trim is metallic gold, while she wears a metallic silver cap and brooch (Figures 15-18).

The Provost is an officer of the State, its chief jailor ("steeled" is the adjective Shakespeare uses) whose unexpectedly kind heart contradicts his forbidding appearance. There were no uniforms as such in the 1480's but we wanted a costume image which would immediately define for the audience the function of this quasi-military official. A compromise was found between the demands of accuracy and intelligibility. Our Provost wears a knee-length fitted black gown, black

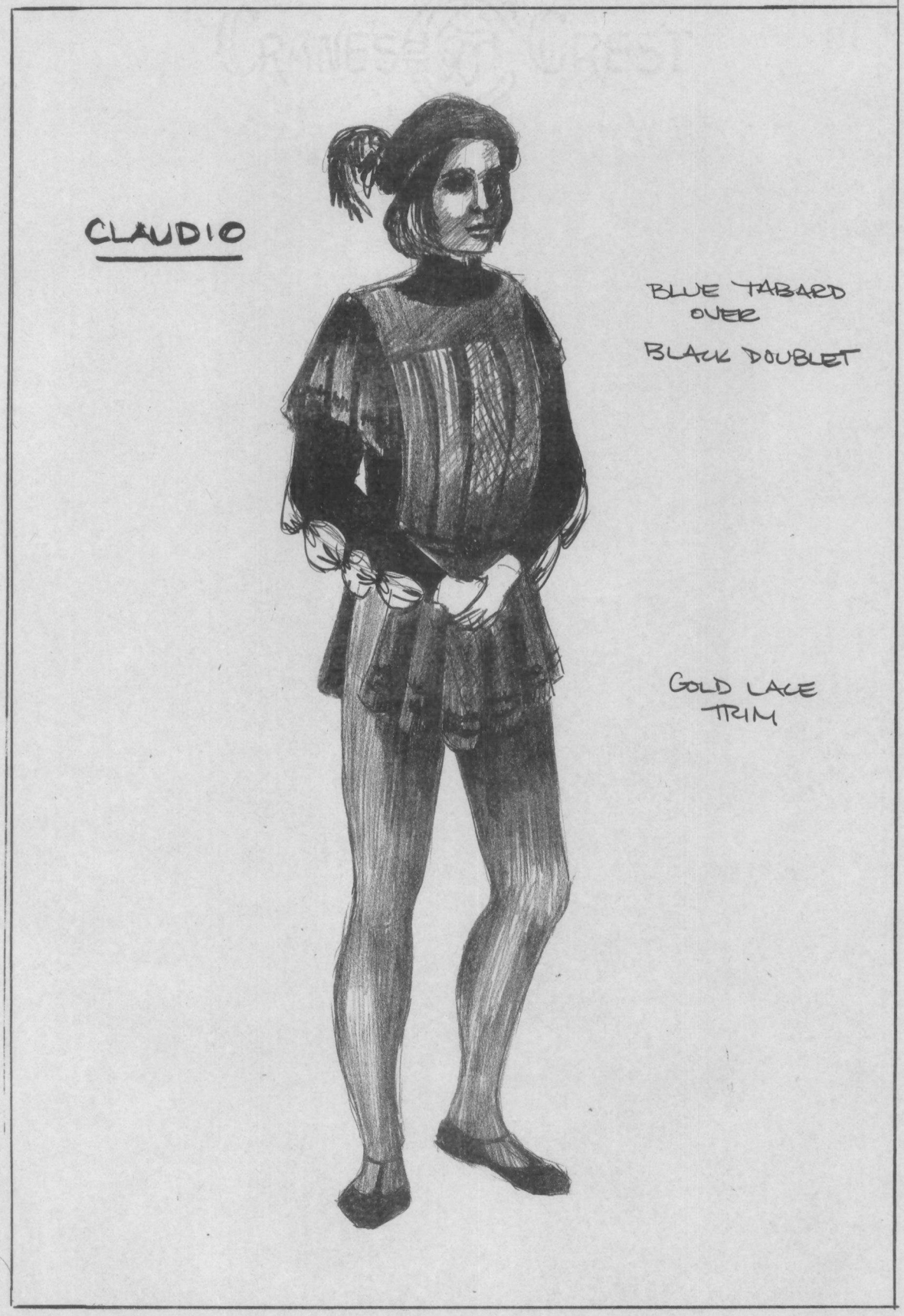


Figure 15. Claudio (drawing).



Figure 16. Claudio (photo).



Figure 17. Juliet (drawing).



Figure 18. Juliet (photo).

boots, and a leather vest lattice-worked with leather studs (Figure 19).

Act I Scene 3

As the crowd in the street dissolves we see the duke U.L. in the monastery with Friar Thomas. The transition to this scene is accomplished by delaying the exit of three of the guards. They remain and gather at the entrance to the prison almost motionless in inaudible conversation. Isabella and four nuns enter the cloister as the Duke begins his first line. The novice sits reading the rules of her order as the nuns silently watch her. From the disorder of the previous crowd scene we see emerge an abstract pattern of tranquility—a triangle with the Duke as its apex. Only he and the Friar speak and move, but the stillness of the other two groups is realistically motivated. The costumes again support the pattern of the scene. The identically garbed nuns are balanced by the uniformed guards. Isabella, separated in space and costume from the nuns, has some initial visual importance, but our eye quickly goes to the Duke. He is wearing a black gown under a tabard of black and gold brocade (Figures 20 and 21), stripped of his robe of state he seems a little diminished and reduced, but still powerful. The monk's costume is of coarse fabric and its hue is the traditional brown.



Figure 19. Provost.



Figure 20. Duke II (drawing).

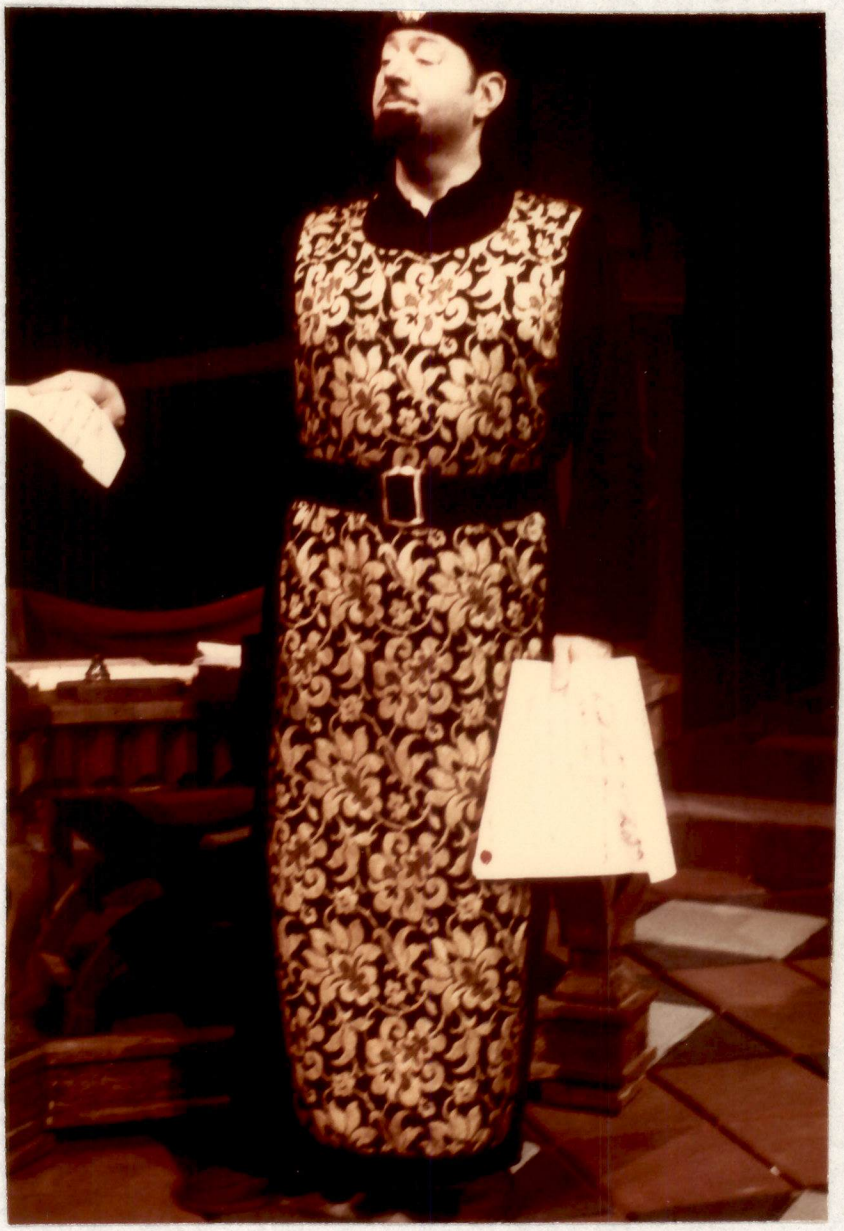


Figure 21. Duke II (photo).

Act I Scene 4

As the Duke and Friar exit, so also do the guards, leaving Isabella in the cloister attended by the nuns. The nuns' dresses are fanciful and bizarre, and are not based on any historical source. They suggest both the other-worldliness of the cloistered order, and also the awkwardness of an extreme response to the shifting complexities of the world (Figures 22 and 23). The bell-shaped sleeves of the black gowns hang to the floor; the veils extend from the high stiff heartshaped headdresses to the shoulders of the women; the vertical lines of the grey tabards give a sense of ungraceful height; and the wimples obscure the chins. The image presented by the nuns is intended to be both comic and grotesque. In this bright morning scene the stiffness of the costume accentuates the comic fright of the sisters at the approach of Lucio. Later, as dimly perceived in the shawdows of succeeding scenes, the unyielding habits will seem sinister and menacing. These costumes, perhaps most accurately of all, seem especially suited to the simultaneously cheerful and threatening tone of this curious comedy.

Isabella, still unsworn, wears a much less severe habit—a simple pale grey dress with a darker grey pillbox and wimple, the latter framing her face much more effectively than would a traditional light-catching white headdress (Figures 24 and 25). Isabella's purity is reflected in the



Figure 22. Francisca (drawing).



Figure 23. Francisca (photo).

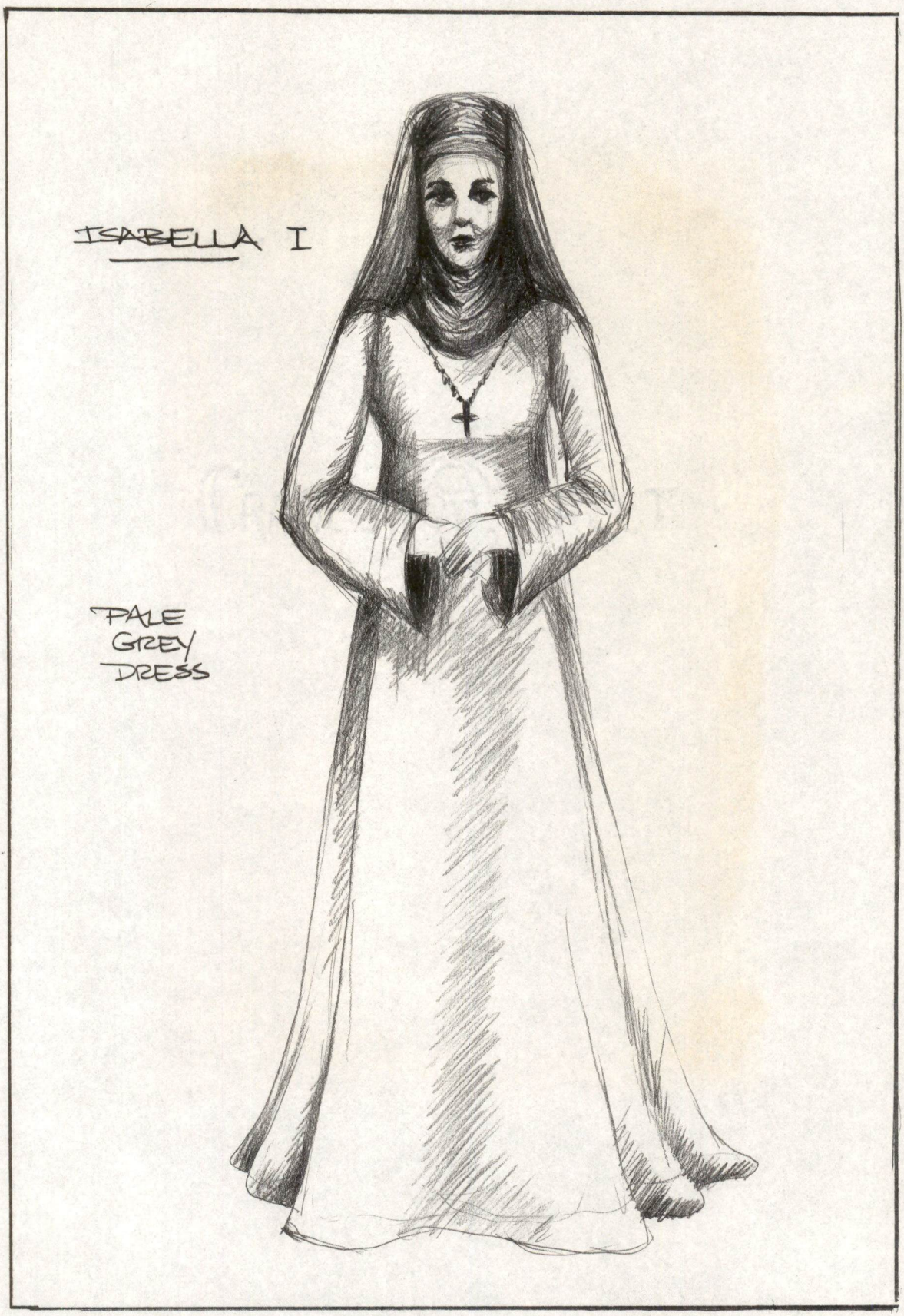


Figure 24. Isabella I (drawing).



Figure 25. Isabella I (photo).

classical simplicity of her costume and in its light value. Hers is the only costume in the play that is not essentially cold, sombre, or garish. It contrasts sharply with the variegated doublet of Lucio and reproduces visually the daring of Shakespeare's strategy—that of introducing his strictest heroine in an extended conversation with his most abandoned rake. The overtones of the morality play are again unmistakable.

Act II Scene 1

The scenes again overlap. Angelo, now dressed in a burgundy robe of state and wearing the Duke's chain of office (his clothes defining his change of function) (Figures 26 and 27), enters with Escalus and the other Lords, as Lucio leaves the cloister.

The entrance of Elbow, Pompey, and a jeering crowds abruptly changes the tone, and again the formality of the robed rulers contrasts sharply with the irregular behavior of their subjects. The scene links two areas (the palace and the street) and the costume contrast contributes to the intentional disharmony of this odd episode, a farcical footnote to the central theme of mercy and justice.

Elbow (in this production given a palpable wife) is a very human character. His roots however are in medieval and Roman farce. His costume, like that of Mistress Overdone's



Figure 26. Angelo (drawing).



Figure 27. Angelo (photo).

has a style that suggests the character's literary ancestory. He wears a dirty blue knee-length doublet over a huge dirty shirt which conceals a swollen and virtually unsupported belly (Figure 28). Elbow's pompous manner belies his reduced means, just as Froth's stupidity undercuts his apparent elegance. Froth in this production is the second gentleman of Act I Scene 2. In this scene his yellow purse is missing, having been appropriated, perhaps, by Pompey.

Act II Scene 2

The departure of Elbow, Pompey, and the crowd sets the stage for the confrontation between Isabella and Angelo. With Lucio and the Provost as a kind of framing chorus, Isabella pleads for mercy, her simple chaste gown mutely supporting her argument. The costume here has a critical dramatic function. It is the symbol of her novitiate which tempts Angelo, whose heart is proof against more conventional allurements.

Act II Scene 3

Angelo's soliloquy (U.S.R.) is overlapped by the entrance of the Duke (D.S.L.) disguised for the first time in his Friar's mantle. The costume hides the Duke only in a conventional way. He must wear the robe for two-thirds of the play and his facial expressions must not be obscured. After experimenting with greys, we finally dressed the Duke



Figure 28. Elbow.

in a soft flowing brown wool robe, richer in fabric but otherwise similar to that of Friar Thomas. Brown has human warmth, and our Duke is no surrogate for god. He is fallible, human, a "Duke of dark corners." The Provost is leading Juliet to a "fitter place" of confinement while, in the shadows, two of the nuns wait. Their costumes, in the dim light, now seem threatening rather than amusing or quaint.

Act II Scene 4

Angelo is dressed in his black cloak as he awaits the return of the young novice. Gone is the robe of state. Clearly the deputy, with characteristic wit, recognizes that his private habit, his puritan mask, is an ironical and much-to-be savored comment on his intended defilement of Isabella.

The movement of the scene if very austere and simple, contradicting and therefore heightening the violence of the expressed emotions. Isabella enters in her simple grey dress, dwarfed by the high columns of the palace. Angelo is directly downstage of her. Their changed relationship leads to a reversal of this position at the end of the scene. The upstage columns frame Angelo's exit as he addresses a lost and bewildered Isabella now occupying his earlier D.S. position. The costume contrast (she almost white, he almost black) enhances the simple pattern of their movement. The effect intended is one of deliberate naiveté.

Act III Scene 1

The middle acts of the play are centered mainly on the prison and on the Duke's role as unseen observer of the underworld of Vienna. After the intermission, this second part, like the first, begins with a tableau. Three drunken citizens can be perceived in the dim light, knocking on the now-shuttered door of the brothel. Isabella is alone in the palace exactly as she was at the end of the soliloquy that preceeded the interval. Her placement reminds us that she must now relay news of Angelo's offer to her brother. Claudio is seen entering with the disguised Duke as Isabella exits from the palace. The simultaneity of action which is such an integral part of this production is supported again by costume contrast, Isabella's light, simple dress (she is a stranger after all to the kind of complex moral dilemma posed by Angelo's offer) is an ironic juxtaposition to the dark tones worn by Claudio and the Duke.

The abrupt change of tone (line 175) which occurs in this scene after Isabella's confrontation with her brother always presents directors and designers with a thorny problem of interpretation. Suddenly, heightened verse becomes flat prose and a near tradegy is transformed into a comedy of intrigue. The change of tone must be prepared for by creating costume images neutral enough to alter with the differing conditions of light. Ours is the classical solution

suggested by Appia. In the scene under discussion, the gradual, almost imperceptible change of lighting which accompanies the exposition of the Duke's plot alters his sombre borwn and Isabella's icy grey into warmer, more inviting colors. The supposed friar and the almost nun are beginning to come to terms with a less than perfect world.

Act III Scene 2

The change in the quality of light (and therefore the effect of costume) is supported by a pattern of movement which literally and figuratively lifts Isabella and the Duke out of the prison and into the street. Lucio appears at the window (above D.L.) surrounded by three apparently naked girls to whom he returns after briefly descending to the street to bait the supposed friar. The abstract quality of this scene (and of the spaces in the setting) are made more concrete by a particular costume detail: Lucio enters without his doublet and adjusting his clothes. This simple piece of business gives us direct character information and motivates the Dukes obvious distaste.

Act IV Scene 1

This curious scene in the moated grange, introduced by the Duke's couplets, is deliberately artificial, playful, and naive. With a straight face Shakespeare employs the conventions of the comedy of intrigue even as he gently pokes

fun at them. This double intention is emphasized by a blocking pattern which is quite self-consciously a pattern composed of triangles, the apex of the triangle (U.L. in the area just below the monastery) is Mariana. Ours is not Tennyson's Mariana ("I am aweary, aweary, I would that I were dead!"), but an elegant young lady who is not entirely unaware of the picturesque effect of grief when it adorns a pretty face. The costume supports this interpretation. She is wearing a very dark and elegant green dress, over an under-dress of green, gold, and black brocade. Her sleeves are slashed to reveal a pale green chemise. On her head is a gold cap with a snood (Figures 29 and 20). We sense that the charmingly pathetic picture she makes is not lost upon her-self.

Many critics are disappointed that Shakespeare allows Isabella to become involved in the elaborate deception which is described in some detail in this scene. However, Isabella is the heroine of a comedy, and this comedy, as its name suggests, is about the need for order and balance, the need to come to terms with an imperfect world. The Isabella of the first part is sympathetic, certainly, but like Alceste in The Misanthrope, her purity is a little self-conscious and cranky. She is learning from the supposed friar, learn-ing to compromise. In this scene she has shed her novice's habit and appears in the pale grey brocaded velvet of a



Figure 29. Mariana (drawing).



Figure 30. Mariana (photo).

gentlewoman (Figures 31 and 32). Isabella has, of course, not compromised very much. Her present costume is trimmed with delicate pearls and modest blue ribbon, and its basic grey color reminds us of her earlier costume and its implications.

Act IV Scenes 2 and 3

The scene in the romantically conceived grange is followed by two prison scenes, but the contrast is not as extreme as one might suppose. Our prison is hardly a very threatening place, ruled, as it is, by an indulgent and sentimental jailor. No one dies here except of natural causes (Ragozine has a "cruel fever" for example) even though the state keeps a full-time but apparently underworked executioner. To this Abhorson, the accomodating Pompey is quickly apprenticed. Abhorson is dressed in a melodramatic overstatement of traditional executioner's garb: black leather vest, gloves, and a hood. Without departing from what might be called an historical image, the studded leather is intended to suggest something of the ludicrous menace that one often finds in modern pornography.

The humor of Pompey's reappearance as assistant headsman is supported by a costume detail. He is wearing his old doublet and hose but an incongruous black hood has replaced his jaunty hat. Barnadine, the prisoner who is too



Figure 31. Isabella II (drawing).



Figure 32. Isabella II (photo).

lazy to die, is wearing the clothes that he probably went to prison in nine years before—an expensive doublet and shirt now, of course in considerable disrepair.

Act IV Scenes 4, 5, and 6

These brief episodes were joined into one simultaneous scene and rearranged so that Angelo's soliloquy (IV, 4, 21-35) immediately preceeds the second intermission.

The order of events is therefore as follows: In the state house Angelo and Escalus have a brief conversation about the strange orders which they have received from the absent Duke. Escalus leaves; Angelo remains at his desk. The Duke, Provost, and Friar Peter (dressed, as Friar Thomas was, in a brown habit) enter. The Provost and the Duke remain above as Peter goes down to the street to meet Isabella and Mariana who, now cloaked, have entered U.C. The other groups remain as Angelo describes his carefully qualified remorse, and the act ends with Isabella (D.C.) as the focal point of a tableau that includes all the others in a four-point abstract pattern. The dark costumes under the dim lighting enhance the sense of mystery and tension still to be resolved.

Act V

This remarkable scene, which functions both as a melodrama and as a comment on melodrama, begins with the

whole city of Vienna in a tableau. The picture includes the Duke in the state house, surrounded by his whole court, all of them dressed in their robes of state.

The humiliation of Angelo, and the Duke's dispensing of justice are thus interpreted as a public rather than a private event, and the crowd is always present. Members of the crowd have realistic objectives and motivations, but the audience never loses sight of the simple geometric forms which comprise their collective placement. The tension between the reality of motivation and the obviousness of pattern reflects the complex tone of the text. Indeed this final scene, with its five recognitions and four marriages, reads like a parody on the poetic justice which is at the root of most romantic comedies. The costumes under the changing light (the scene begins at night and ends with a cold and barely promising dawn) again support the changing values of the text—now threatening, now comic. As the play ends, the four couples are isolated from each other and separate from, but framed by, a semicircular crowd arrangement which extends from monastery to D.L. street. The final picture is one of carefully qualified joy.

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VITA

Kristina Lea Watson was born in Nashville, Tennessee, on June 24, 1950. After graduation from Hillwood High School in 1968 she entered the University of Tennessee. She received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with a major in Painting in 1971. In 1972 she began study towards a Master's degree in Theatre Arts which she completed in June 1974.