

## Teacher Resource Bank

A level Drama and Theatre Studies  
DRAM2 Example Supporting Notes  
Costume Design



## Supporting Notes

Chosen Skill – Costume Designer  
Practitioner – Constance Hoffman  
Chosen Extract – Mistero Buffo –  
The Angel and the Drunkard

### **Section 1 - Evidence of exploration and understanding of the work of the chosen practitioner and justification of the choice of extract in the light of that exploration.**

As a costume designer my aims are to design and create the two costumes for a section in Mistero Buffo called The Angel and the Drunkard. To create my costumes I will also incorporate ideas from my practitioner Constance Hoffman.

*exploration*

Constance Hoffman is an American costume designer who is well known for her imaginative and extravagant costumes. She has worked internationally designing costumes for operas, dances and theatres. She has designed in theatres such as The Royal Opera House in Covent Garden London and The Shakespeare Theatre in Washington. Winning a Tony Award in 2000 and also winning The Outer Critics Circle Award within the same year for her costume designs for Green Bird. When originally approaching a script Constance Hoffman would read through the script and choosing words and phrase which inspire her into her designs. By looking through books she gains more research and it is only until after having meetings with the directors and the other designers of light, sound and set does she start to make her final designs.



The Green Bird The Cort Theatre & Theatre for a New Audience at The New Victory Theater



Grendel, The Los Angeles Opera. The image shows Constance Hoffman's design process for making the costumes.

When starting a new project Constance Hoffman begins by fully addressing the original text, which most of the time is a script. Constance Hoffman view's on the approach to designing costumes is not to be decisive with how you personally want to interoperate the costumes and only like one design from the beginning because it might not be suitable for the performance, depending on the ideas of the director and

other designers. Through reading the text, Constance is able to build up ideas, find books with relevant images, small sketches are drawn of small ideas to help make her visualise the possible costumes. The research is based on

searching through books for inspiring images and personal work of sketches.

Following the research, the first meeting of all of the designers proceeds. It is this meeting that establishes the main ideas of all of the designers and then enables Constance Hoffman to create her final designs. I believe that this is a very appropriate and efficient design process. It enables Constance Hoffman to obtain insightful and accurate research for the costumes of the production.



Grendel, The Los Angeles Opera. The image shows Constance Hoffman's final outcome from the design process on the previous page.

I believe that Mistero Buffo is relevant to my practitioner because I believe I could use her methods and be able to design costumes inspired from books and images from research. For example when designing for A Midsummer Night's Dream at The Shakespeare Theatre, Constance Hoffman looked through many books, viewing different interpretations of the play and came up with a very extravagant outcome. It is this I would like to achieve, with the play Mistero Buffo. When I first looked at the script words and phrases that inspired me for the production were "pay attention kind people" and "oh what a pretty coloured feather". "Oh what a pretty coloured feather" stood out for me because it gave me a requirement for the costume and enabled me to incorporate feathers for the angel costume, making me able to make the costume exciting and extravagant.

3

Word Count – 500

*letter on why appropriate for text though*  
*Thorough investigation of designer*

### Biography

[www.constancehoffman.com](http://www.constancehoffman.com)

### Section 2 - Clarity of dramatic intentions in relation to the interpretation of the chosen extract and the influence of the chosen practitioner; accurate use of specialist terminology.



A traditional interpretation of Harlequin and Perriot.

My dramatic aims for this production are to show humour with my costumes and to help the audience imagine the characters and believe that they are the characters.

The play Mistero Buffo is made up of different small biblical stories which include a slight comedy twist to each. For example the extract being performed is the story of Jesus turning vinegar into wine at the marriage at Carna, which is told by the two contradicting characters of a drunkard and an angel. The two

contradicting characters gave me the idea that the costumes should show the differences between the two; the angel being elegant and delicate but the drunkard

being boisterous and clumsy. The initial idea of this would be that the angel would have a more traditionally recognised look, by using white floating fabric and also the use of feathers. The drunkard on the other hand could have very dirty and old clothes in dull colours like brown, black and dark red. The audience might respond by recognising the classic features in my interpretation of the Perriot and Harlequin costumes. They would the costumes comical because they are not natural costumes; they are outgoing, bright and eye catching.

*Interpretation*

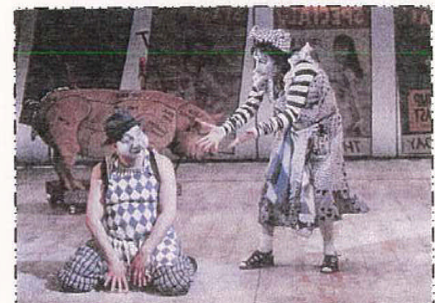
Other interpretations of the play *Mistero Buffo* might include costumes, in all black or base colours because of the different characters changes and then only use props and actions to define each character, for example characters such as a blind man, a cripple, The Virgin Mary, an angel, a drunkard and Jesus are all characters included in the piece. Simple costumes enable the actors to easily change characters. After reading through the text with the actors, the thought of the characters being similar to a travelling story telling duo emerged. From this original idea the theatre style of commedia fitted with the extract. After researching into the style of commedia further, the two characters of Harlequin (or Arlecchino) and Perriot became very prominent. These two characters were originally paired together in a love triangle along with Columbine for whom they were both in love with, but the commedia partnership between them suits the characters of the Angel (Perriot) and the Drunkard (Harlequin). The character of Perriot is naïve, innocent and a buffoon which can be interoperated to an Angel who can be quite holy and graceful. Harlequin is known for his silly antics and being a tricky acrobat, this can be translated to the drunkard for being eccentric and loud. The most well known representation of Perriot is an oversized white shirt or dress, along with large black buttons down the centre, the outfit usually includes a white hat which is pointed and also includes black buttons. The most well known Harlequin costumes are in a diamond pattern of bright colours including red, green, blue and yellow in a shirt tied around with rope with trousers made of the same fabric, the trousers could also be seen as leggings.

#### Fabric Samples:



*influence of  
pinc*

This can be related to the work by Constance Hoffman because the play "The Green Bird" includes commedia inspired costumes, such as masks and checked costumes. From Constance Hoffman's influences I read through the text and highlighted or brought to attention phrases that interested me and inspired me to choose the style of commedia. An example of this is the opening line by the Angel "Pay attention kind people, I shall tell you a story, a story which began..." this line gave me the idea of a



The Green Bird The Cort Theatre & Theatre for a New Audience at The New Victory Theater

travelling story duo because the actor is attempting to gather the attention from those who are around, not implying that they are in the theatre. The costumes on the previous page helped inspire the checked pattern for the Harlequin costume because it is highly recognisable as the style of commedia. Through advice from my practitioner I researched the style of commedia by looking through books about techniques of performing the style and also what the characters would traditionally wear. My design process was inspired by Constance Hoffman's work because I researched in books explaining the style of commedia and I also designed and costumes and redesigned them after input from other members in my group, to get other ideas for the costumes.

Word Count – 699

*Dramatic intention clear Interpretability just for + how to piece*

④

### Biography

www.constancehoffman.com

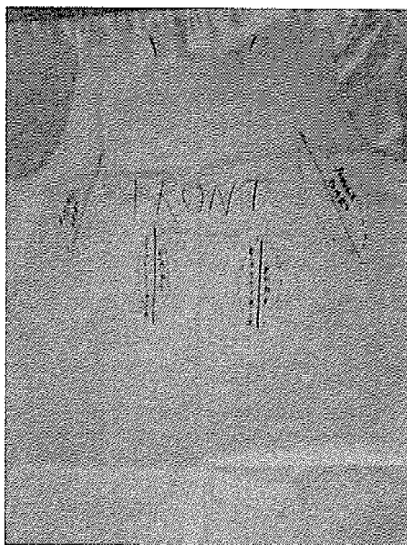
Playing Commedia – Barry Grantham

The Italian Comedy - Pierre Louis Duchartre

### Section 3 - Assessment of the rehearsal process and of the potential effectiveness of the piece including evaluation of the development of the nominated skill; awareness of health and safety factors.

During the creative process I drew a lot of different designs in the style of commedia, each time I would adapt the sketch again to change certain aspects of it (See

Appendix for designs)<sup>5</sup>. The different sketches eventually resulted in my final designs (see Appendix). Using the methods of Constance Hoffman, I discussed my designs and ideas with those in my group to see if they fitted with their ideas.



Block Pattern for both costumes with added darts to be applied when fitted.

I started to make my costumes by making a simple block pattern, from this I was able to make both costumes by adapting it to make the costumes more fitted for the actor. During the process I would ask the actors to try on their costumes to ensure that the costume fits them and they are able to move freely on stage. At first the appropriateness of my design for the Angel costume might have caused a problem, I had designed for it to be a puff ball skirt, but the actor required to jump into a basket. The costume might have made it very difficult for her to gain easy access into it. Therefore I made the skirt hem with elastic this enabled it to be far more flexible than appeared. The actor was able to easily jump into the basket without being restricted by the costume. From this I learned that to make sure a hem made to ruffle at the ends stays ruffled and enable the actor to move around the stage appropriately elastic is needed, so that the hem can stretch and return to its original state.

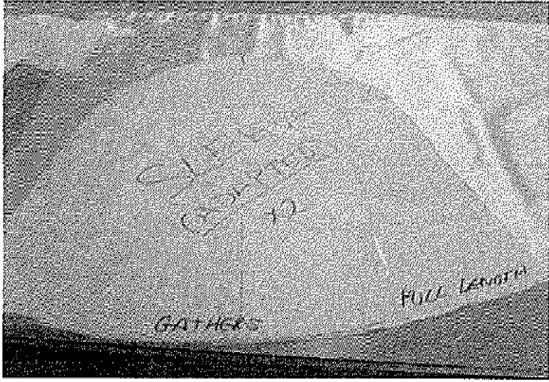
*assessment of pieces*

I believe that my costumes have been a success because they show commedia but in my own adaptation, they are also very breathable for the actors not giving them any restrictions during the performance. I am particularly proud of the Angel costume especially the collar because it has a lot of volume and effectively shows the style of commedia. I also believe that the costumes fitted very well with the play Mistero

*evaluation*

Don't  
Swell

Buffo and suited our personal adaptation of it. One weakness I find from my costumes is the collar of the Drunkard costume, because at first the collar did not suit the actor and also did not suit the costume itself. To overcome this I made a cut down the middle to make it slightly lower, this made a huge difference to the costume and gave it a more professional look. I believe the audience will respond positively to the costumes and to the production because of the comedy version of the biblical tales and the bright story telling costumes. I believe that I have become a better designer because of the experience I have gained and the new design process I have learned which I believe is suitable for me and the way I would like to work in the future. I believe that Constance Hoffman would believe that my designs were appropriate for the production and the research helped me achieve the designs.



Sleeve pattern which I adapted to make wide to enable me to add gathers at the bottom of each sleeve.

As the costume designer I feel that I had a lot of freedom with the costume designing. The actors and I agreed on the main idea but I was able to apply my own ideas and make the designs relevant to the text and the practitioners influence.

Disorder

I feel that I managed my time well and was able to fully make the costumes before the dress rehearsal and still have time to make last minute adjustments, like cutting off loose ends. I feel that the amount of research I did before making the costumes was appropriate and enabled me to fully understand the text, the practitioner and the group aims.

Careful  
with S

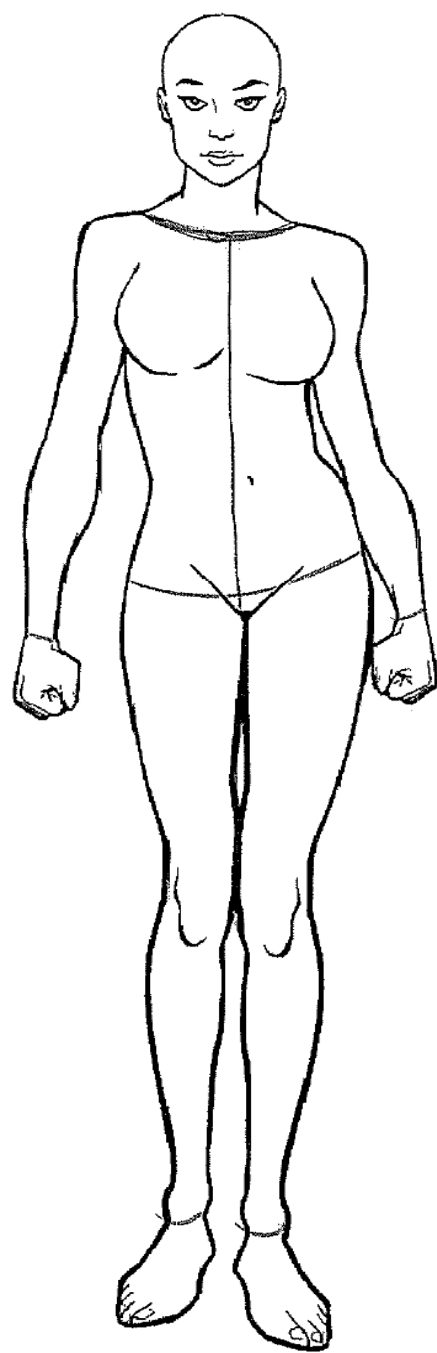
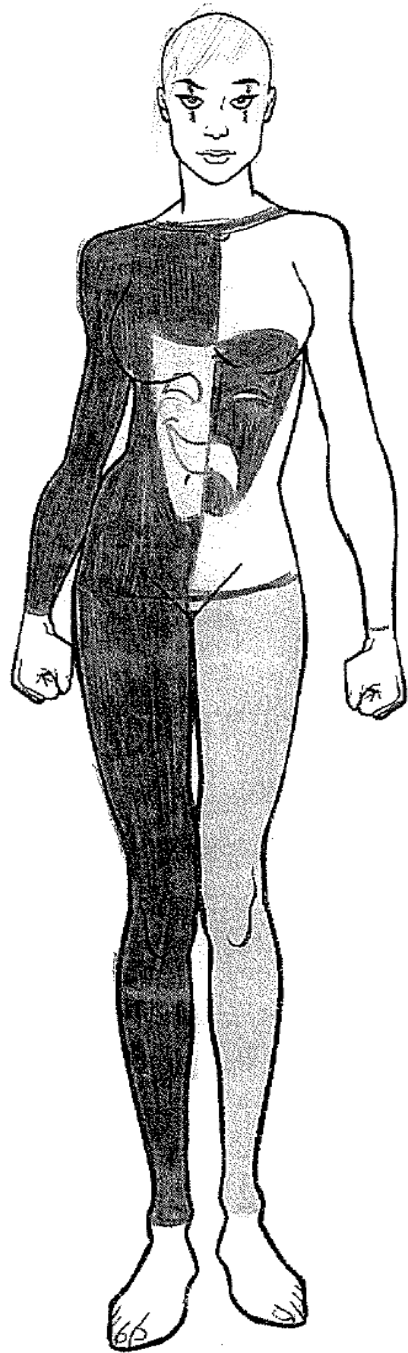
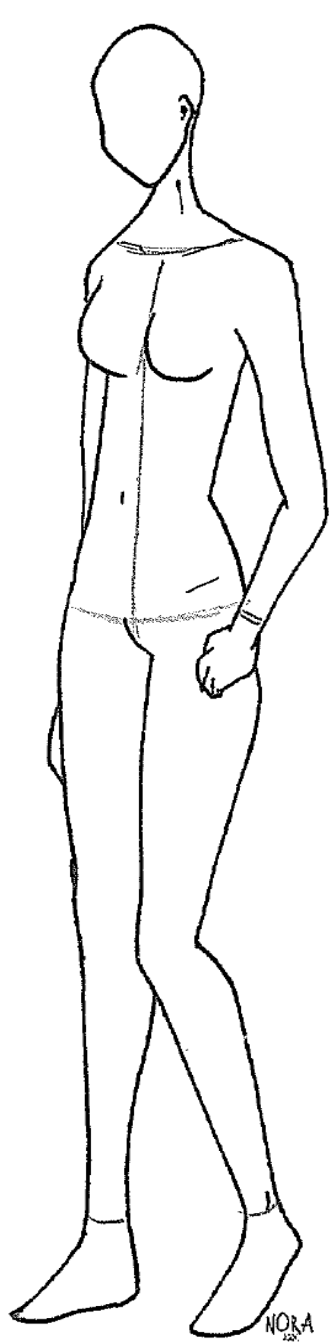
For health and safety I had to ensure that I did not harm either of the actors while pinning the costumes when they tried them on. It was also a case of health and safety for me to make sure that the costumes were breathable and didn't restrict circulation. When making the ruffled collar for the Angel costume I had to make sure that the neck line was not too tight and restrict the actors breathing. Another potential hazard would be having appropriate footwear for the actors, making sure that the shoes were suitable and do not have flimsy soles so that the audience do not fall when they move hastily around the stage. Also in the process of making the costume I had to be careful with the equipment and machinery I used, for instance the use of a sewing machine and the use of scissors and pins, for example when using a sewing machine I had to be careful with my fingers especially to prevent accidents while using the sewing machines I had no distractions and concentrated fully on using the machine properly.

Word Count – 793

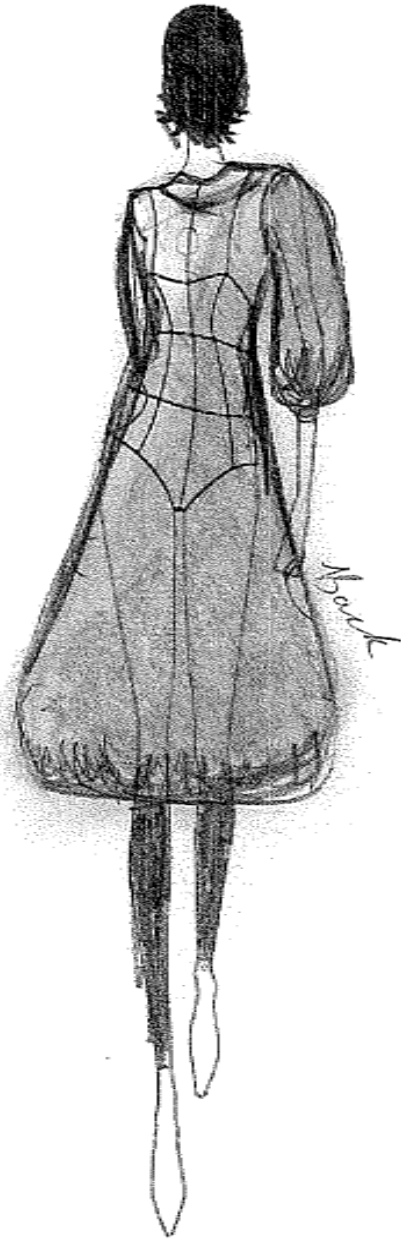
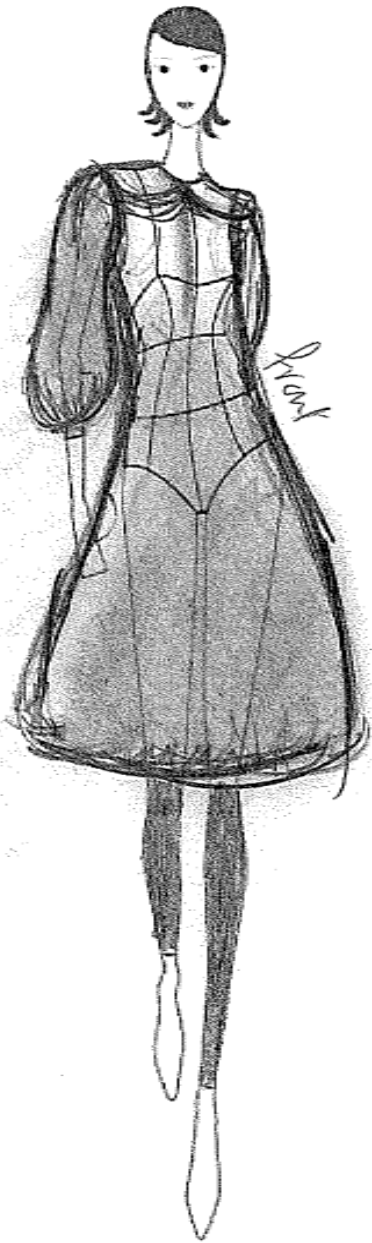
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**Biography**  
www.constancehoffman.com  
Playing Commedia – Barry Grantham  
The Italian Comedy - Pierre Louis Duchartre

## Appendix







# Commedia Inspired.

'innocent'

Front Views

Perrot

'buffoon'

'tricky  
arabdt'

Harlequin

'Angel'

'Drunkard'

'silly  
antics'

'Nave'

The comedy  
relationship  
between  
Perrot & Harlequin  
not always  
getting along.

Story telling  
Couple.

Traditionally  
use  
stringless  
instruments

Nacomi - Size 12  
Stacey - Size 14

