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Costume Design for Paragon Springs

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COSTUME DESIGN FOR *PARAGON SPRINGS*

by

Bethany D. Skinner

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COSTUME DESIGN FOR PARAGON SPRINGS

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This thesis describes the research and costume design and production processes for the play, Paragon Springs by Steven Dietz (1958- ), performed in the Studio Theatre on November 8-9, 11, 14-16, 18, 2012, at the Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film at the University of Nebraska. Paragon Springs was directed by Carrie Lee Patterson. Bethany Skinner was costume designer; David Tousley was scenic designer; Michael Fortcamp was lighting designer; Alma Cerretta served as props master, and Christine Donaghy provided technical direction.

Dietz’s play, which premiered in April of 2000, is based on the play An Enemy of the People by Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906), written in 1882. Dietz’s adaptation is set in the American Midwest in the 1920s. The subject of the play proves to be timeless as the play adapts well to the change in time and place and remains relevant to present day audiences.
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Chapter 1: Overview of Paragon Springs

The play, *Paragon Springs*, takes place in a small town of the same name in rural Wisconsin in April of 1926. The townspeople make their living from tourists who arrive in the warm months for the healing hot springs as well as from employment supplied by the local tannery. Without these two means of livelihood, the town could not survive. When Dr. Thomas Stockman, chief medical officer of Paragon Springs, discovers that toxins from the local tannery are polluting the springs and making them a health hazard, discord and conflict arise within the community.

Initially, the doctor is praised as a hero of the people and savior of the town for his discovery. After the repercussions of his discovery become clear, however, the reality of the situation dawns on the doctor’s older and more practical brother, Peter Stockman. As the mayor of the town, as well as a banker and the head of the board of directors of the Springs, Peter has consulted experts and learned that it will take several years to repair the Springs, enough time for neighboring towns boasting similar hot springs to take over the tourism market. This development would be especially catastrophic if the health scare resulted in lawsuits and liability from those already exposed and could cost far more money than the town could ever pay, resulting from the scientific findings that Dr. Stockman wants to publish.

The only alternative to repositioning the pipes from the hot springs is the equally devastating option of simply shutting down the tannery, the primary employer in the town, and the concomitant cause of the toxic contamination. The doctor’s friends begin to realize that closing the Springs and the tannery would devastate their livelihood. As a result, the doctor quickly goes from being the people’s champion to being “an enemy of the people.”
The townspeople hold a meeting at the edge of town with everyone in attendance. Originally intended to celebrate Dr. Thomas Stockman as he announces his great discovery about the dangers of the spring waters, the attendees of the meeting planned to light a bonfire with their torches at the close of the meeting in a show of appreciation and support for the doctor and his discovery. Instead, Peter Stockman takes over the meeting, painting his brother’s discovery as a problem detrimental to the town if indeed the findings are believed. Thomas is insulted and angered that people would not only question the truth, but also are willing to ignore the dangers of the water for their own self-serving reasons. Thomas insults them and goes out of control as he delivers an incensed speech. He disparages the townspeople and becomes the true embodiment of their enemy; though in his own eyes he is trying to be their savior.

As the meeting concludes, the enraged townspeople light the bonfire in protest against the doctor rather than as a show of support. The Stockman family returns home to find their home vandalized. Thomas decides that he will leave this town full of ungrateful and ignorant people. He cannot stay and bear witness to their disregard of the truth about the water and the dangers it poses. As Thomas makes plans to leave, the Widow Kroger arrives and reveals that she purchased a controlling majority of the Springs’ shares in Thomas’ name, in the hope of shackling him to the very situation he is attempting to flee. After a pep talk from his family, the doctor realizes that the shares are a blessing in disguise because now he can control what happens with the Springs so that the truth cannot be ignored. He is full of naïve idealistic hope that everything will now come out right, even though he has no viable plan for accomplishing such a feat.
All seems hopeful until a visit from some of Thomas’ fair weather friends. They reveal that they believe the entire ordeal was simply a scam so that Thomas could gain control of the Springs. Thomas is offended and disgusted by the hypocrisy of the townspeople. He decides to embark on a journey in search of truths, accompanied by his ever faithful daughter Lorna and his devoted friend Hollis, but leaving behind his wife Katrina who, though she loves him, cannot abide abandoning the life they had built in favor of stubborn idealistic principles and an abstract quest for scientific truths.

The figureheads of the two major sides of this conflict are the brothers, Peter and Thomas Stockman. They each offer poignant and persuasive arguments, stirring up conflict and controversy within the minds of audience. Based on the play An Enemy of the People by Henrik Ibsen (1882), Dietz set his adaptation in the 1920s. It manifests nuclear and chemical contamination scares of decades subsequent to the 1920s. Such scares presumably remain in the popular mind as subjects for movies like The China Syndrome (1979), Silkwood (1983), Erin Brockovich (2000) and episodes from the television program The Simpsons. By setting Paragon Springs in the 1920s, a time period he cleverly parallels with modern advancements, Dietz carefully offers subtle connections to modern-day life that perhaps might nudge the audience into applying the subjects broached in Paragon Springs to their own lives without alienating them with a heavy handed politically laden message the way a completely modernized telling of the story could have done.

Paragon Springs is not just a play about a difficult and thought-provoking question of social, cultural, economic, and moral magnitude. It is also a play about conflicts among people, the individual characters, and about an intellectual and social
concept known as “the masses.” The play ultimately concludes that a concept like “the masses” is imprecise, since any group of people is actually made up of many individuals, despite their similarities.

The individuals in this play are the named characters. Through the dialogue of the play, the audience learns about their life stories, their station in town society, as well as their personalities expressed through costume. Costume is a crucial factor in distinguishing among those characters. The “masses” in this play are essentially the mob of townspeople who congregate at the Town Meeting which concludes with the lighting of the symbolic bonfire. The speeches of Peter and Thomas at the bonfire express the different views and opposing interpretations of townspeople versus individuals. This confrontation is the point at which Thomas’ expressed views alienate him even further from the people of the town, while Peter, the smooth talking politician, has them eating out of his hand.

From a costuming perspective, it was important to capture the two perceptions of the townspeople simultaneously. Thus, the costumed crew, acting as townspeople while changing the set, represented a unifying working-class aesthetic. That aesthetic included calico print house dresses for the women and work boots, caps, and no ties for the men, yet each stagehand/character possessing small variations in style that create individuality. For the bonfire scene, the crew members all add hats and overcoats to represent a mob of townspeople. They become more similar and unified visually in direct correlation to the unified front they present against the doctor. They nevertheless are not completely uniform, and small expressions of individual style remain. Those expressions were visible only to those willing to look past the label of “mob” or “the masses” to see the
individual revealed to the discerning eye. There is no visual surprise that Thomas grouped them into an indistinguishable mass, because (to him, at any rate) the similarity is clearly there. The audience, however, knows he is wrong to say so, and they may even be able to see the individuality within the mass.
Chapter 2: Time Period and Social Class Research

One of the most crucial aspects of the costume research for *Paragon Springs* included the *University of Nebraska Historic Costume & Textile Collection*. Visiting the collection was an important research step because of the close study of actual 1920s garments worn by people in the Midwest. The collection does not focus only on collecting garments with designer labels; it also includes garments owned by local individuals that are indicative of the time for regional culture. Close inspection of these garments offers insight to aesthetic concepts as well as construction techniques. Those techniques include typical closure methods and evidence of garment remaking to adapt to the changing fashion styles.

Periodicals and catalogs from the actual time period were another invaluable research tool. Some of the most valuable resources included the *Sears Catalogue*, *Vogue*, *McCall’s*, *Priscilla, Life, Ladies Home Journal*, and *Saturday Evening Post*, especially pictures of Norman Rockwell paintings. Photographs, advertisements, and fashion plates from the period were likewise valuable. These resources provided insight into the styles of the period as well as the social, cultural, economic, and marketing strategies of the times.

One of the most significant challenges in creating an authentic 1920s look depended upon the fashionable female silhouette of the time period. I decided against corseting or girdling any of the actresses to achieve the boyish figure popular at the time, since their movements needed to be as natural and unhindered as possible (especially with the audience in such close proximity). Because the play takes place in a small
Midwestern town, rather than high-society Paris, extreme figure alterations were not necessary. Function takes precedence over fashion for most practical working-class people. I found that having the female cast members all wear sports bras achieved enough of a mono-bosom, flattened-bust effect. This effect, coupled with the careful fitting of garments, especially those patterned and constructed for the show, created a practical yet effective period look. I found it particularly important constantly to remind myself in fittings that the garments should not be too fitted to the body and should instead hang more loosely than seems correct to the modern eye.

Another concern integral to achieving an accurate look for the time period was hairstyle. It was easy enough to trim the hair of male cast members into a period style; however, the iconic 1920s bob hairstyle made women's hair more of a problem. I did not even consider using wigs because they rarely look good and are often distracting enough to interfere with an audience member’s ability to become absorbed in a scene, especially in a production such as this one where the audience is so close to the actors onstage. Luckily, the two actresses who played the younger female characters, Lorna and Rose, were willing to have their hair cut in a short style indicative of the time period. The two actresses who played the older generations of matronly women, Katrina and the Widow Kroger, were unwilling to cut their hair, but this was not a problem. The more conservative style of long hair in a bun perfectly suited Katrina, the quintessential wife, mother, and homemaker. For the Widow Kroger, short hair would have been incongruent with her age, and the focus was always on her flamboyant hats rather than her hairstyle.
Chapter 3: Character Analysis and Costume Choices

Dr. Thomas Stockman

Thomas Stockman, age 50, is the husband of Katrina Stockman, the father of Lorna Stockman, the younger brother of Peter Stockman, and the Chief Medical Officer of the Paragon Springs. He is forward thinking, intellectual, a scientist, a doctor. He is well educated, bookish, idealistic, unrealistic, a dreamer, and impractical. He is poor at managing money, and he has his head in the clouds. He does not see consequences; only the truth matters to him. The director described Thomas as “learned, but with almost childlike idealism” and as having “difficulty seeing both sides of any debate.” He “goes his own way, usually because he is so focused on his own ventures that he notices little of what is happening around him.” He sees the masses, his fellow townspeople, as inferior and indistinguishable as a whole. He meanwhile views himself as superior to them, due to his intellect and insightful thinking. He is a character foil to his older brother, Peter, and they are opposites in many fundamental ways. Though he is less wealthy than his brother, he is far from shabby and despite the tendency to mismanage money, within the Paragon Springs social structure he is of the intellectual working class—above the tradesmen but below the bureaucrats.

His costume style is of brown and earthy colors with noticeably high and low tones, soft and rumpled. He is less put together and less manicured—especially compared to his brother—and increasingly so as the play progresses. At the end of Act 1, he loses his bowtie and undoes the top button of his shirt. By Act 2, he has exchanged his sports coat for a sweater and rolled up his sleeves, and even his hair looks a bit unkempt. As the play goes on he becomes more undone, almost wild, as he becomes more fervent about
the truth of his discovery. The change in his appearance in turn visually diminishes his credibility as he begins to look less respectable and more out of control.

Thomas’ plaid jacket for Act 1 was a key costume piece with a very specific design, thus the garment had to be built especially for the production. The design was for a boxy style blazer, less sleek than the style of his brother Peter’s, though Peter’s jacket is also rectangular in shape, yet a slimmer style to match the actor’s body. Thomas’ jacket design also included patch pockets, to convey the attitude of functionality over fashion. Finally, Thomas’ plaid needed to be in earthy tones, green and tan especially, but also with a hint of blue and on a large enough scale to appear in distinct visual contrasts of light and dark as well as various segments of color blocks. The object was to avoid a blending into a more uniform color look that occurs with a small scale plaid. Yet this
plaid was not so large in scale that it looked comical, silly, tacky or distractingly loud, or busy. The challenge was to find an adequate woven wool plaid to meet the necessary criteria. Even a trip to fabric stores in Chicago did not yield an adequate plaid fabric. The best choice from a Chicago fabric store did have the tan/cream color desired; however it was plaid with thin red lines that turned the overall fabric a pink hued fleshy color and lacked the earthiness necessary for Thomas’ character. In addition, the plaid fabric contained an unknown percentage of spandex that lent it a stretchiness that would cause difficulties in constructing a tailored jacket. I then engaged in an extensive online search for suitable jacket-weight wool in the desired colors and style of plaid, but I did not find any viable fabrics. In a final effort to find an acceptable plaid for Thomas’ jacket, I made a trip to Pendleton Wool in Nebraska City. There I discovered the perfect woven wool fabric in adequate quantity. However, the wool was very fine and the fabric too thin for suiting weight, thus necessitating the use of a flat lining of a more suitable weight wool to the chosen plaid fabric.

Thomas’ Act 2 outfit was clear in concept, yet it required some experimentation during the dress rehearsal process to achieve the most advantageous combination of garments for the appropriate look. Through experimentation, it was clear that having the pants and sweater too close in color was not successful and neither was only a sweater and dress shirt. He did not look dressed fully enough for the time period, yet he needed to look distinctly dressed down like a somewhat disheveled rebel against the man, his brother. The appropriate look included green slacks, a dress shirt with no tie and top button undone, a tweed vest, and a beige sweater with the sleeves pushed up over the rolled up dress shirt sleeves to indicate he is a man working hard for a cause.
Thomas’ chosen hat indicates his status and personality as well. It is not a cloth cap in the working man’s style, but a structured brim hat, like a homburg, yet it is made of an earthy tweed fabric, clearly not of the same expensive elegant caliber of his brother’s black felt hat.
Jacket fashion fabric [light-weight wool, woven plaid]

Horsehair Interfacing

Flat-lining [light-weight wool]

Fig. 3. Fabric Swatches: Thomas Stockman

Fig. 4. Dr. Thomas Stockman

Photographs courtesy of Alma Cerretta.
Katrina Stockman

Katrina Stockman is in her late 40s, the wife of Thomas and mother of Lorna. She is conservative, God-fearing, modest, and frugal. She is a homemaker, her husband’s helpmate, and she is most in her element in the kitchen of her home. The director described Katrina as “loving, but stern when she feels it is necessary;” she is the heart of the Stockman family, the “glue that holds the family together and the engine that keeps it running.” Her character is a foil to the Widow Kroger, her rich stepmother, and though she is not sleek or urbane, she is not frumpy. Mrs. Stockman is fashionable and well put together for a modest housewife in a small town by making the most of what she has available to her.
I devoted particular attention to the design and construction of Katrina’s apron, not only with aesthetics in mind, but with particular focus on its physical use, through discussion with the director regarding the type of “stage business” she felt was important for Katrina with her apron. Complications with the technical aspects of Katrina’s apron design arose from conflicts with the desired aesthetic for her house dress. Extensive period research confirmed that an integral part of the house-dress look from the period included a slightly dropped waist sash with a bow in back. Besides historical accuracy, this design choice was important for expressing the femininity of Katrina’s personality, despite her station in life that prevented excessively adorned and frilly clothing. The apron also identifies her Act 1 costume as something that would clearly be worn at home and never out of the house or around town. The resulting conundrum was how to structure her apron so that it did not tie in the center back, thus resulting in two bows competing for the same space.
Housedress Fashion Fabric [cotton print]

Housedress collar fabric [white cotton with subtle polka-dot print]

Housedress double-fold extra wide bias binding trim

Fig. 6. Fabric Swatches: Katrina Stockman

Fig. 7. Katrina Stockman
Photographs courtesy of Alma Cerretta.
I briefly considered the idea of having the apron built onto the dress. The director felt that being able to use the “stage business” of having Katrina remove the apron onstage would enhance the contrasts between Katrina and the Widow Kroger and was important to the play. Also important was the design choice to have Katrina sans apron for the party at the end of Act 1. It must therefore be easy for the actress to take off onstage, utilizing closures that both maintained authenticity and offered smooth, natural action in its removal. The possibility of an apron style with crisscross back-straps was barely considered before it was discarded quickly due to the likelihood of actor confusion, tangled straps, and the high possibility of putting it on incorrectly.
The apron design on which I finally settled after extensive period research was a smock like style full apron in the front with only an upper half in the back, ending just above the placement of the house dress bow, which fastened at the sides utilizing tabs with button closures. To make use of the apron as easy as possible for the actress, the neck opening of the apron was large enough for her to remove it by only unbuttoning one of the button sides and pulling it over her head without overly disturbing her hair. A mockup of the apron was used for practice by the actress from very early in the process.
In Act 2, Katrina barges into the *Sentinel* office on a mission to save her family from the imminent disaster she feels her husband’s work may cause; however, when the tide of public opinion turns against the doctor, she changes her tune to stand by, support, and defend her husband. The dress she wears for this scene in the *Sentinel* office is noticeably nicer than her house dress of Act 1, making a visual distinction comparing what was appropriate to wear for housework versus town visits. It presents the standard of dress she would have preferred when the posh Widow Kroger visited her home in Act 1 for a bout of habitual verbal sparring.

Her Act 2 dress is a pale pink floral dress and the overall design portrays a soft femininity and mildness that echoes Katrina’s usual personality, thus accentuating the striking and somewhat surprising contrast when she shows her ferocity in defense of her family. Her skirt is slightly longer than the height of fashion at the time, conveying her modesty, conservatism, and matronly age. For the bonfire scene, she adds a worn but nice overcoat and hat. After the bonfire scene when the Stockman family removes their outer garments within their recently vandalized home, Katrina’s spring dress appears much too gay for the somber occasion.

Originally, I planned for Katrina's floral-print dress to have complimenting solid pink side panels in the skirt (as rendered). However, once I determined the best floral-print fabric for the dress, it became clear that, while the solid pink lining combined with the solid crepe layer resulted in a pleasant peachy-pink overall color, placing it directly next to the solid pink fabric caused it to appear an ugly grey-brown. I amended my original design to make the entire dress out of the floral-print sheer fabric with the solid pink crepe under it. While the original design was distinctly period and accentuated the
unique design lines of the dress, the subtlety of the final design was more suited to Katrina's modest personality.


Fig. 9. Katrina Stockman
Fig. 10. Katrina Stockman

*Photographs by Alma Cerretta.*
Lorna Stockman

Lorna is the twenty year old daughter of Thomas and Katrina. She begins the play as a school teacher who is affianced to Lars Hovstad. She is liberal, forward thinking, embraces progressive ideas, and she has stars in her eyes when it comes to her father. She is interested in ideals such as women’s rights, equality and freedom. The director described Lorna as “an aspiring feminist and humanitarian” who is “charmed by new ideas.” She begins the play viewing the Widow Kroger, her step-grandmother, as a role model but learns a valuable lesson about the Widow Kroger and her values by the end of the play.


Lorna’s first costume look is a period skirt and blouse in the sailor style. While the outfit is professional wear that is indicative of a school teacher, it is in a fashionable style for a young woman of the times. Yet the soft flowing nature of the fabric and style indicate that she does not have the hard edge of worldliness a more urbane woman of her age might have. In fact, the style nicely captures Lorna’s intellectual nature and her desire to present herself as a capable modern woman, with the collar and necktie, yet the sailor style is reminiscent of a child-like look, popular at the time and enhanced by the downplaying of feminine curves, conveying her innocence and childish blind faith in and devotion to her father along with her view of him as infallible.

Fashion fabric [blue moleskin textured fabric]

Collar/Cuffs/Accent fabric [cream loose-weave wool]

Skirt tank-top yoke [blue cotton]

Fig. 12. Lorna Stockman
Photographs courtesy of Alma Cerreta.
Lorna’s skirt is shorter, just above the knee, to clearly mark her as the younger generation and as one keeping up with fast moving modern times. She wears matching blue pumps, in the style of the period, that have just enough adornment to make them interesting and show that she works in her profession as a teacher and can afford such footwear. In doing so, she reflects her status as the only daughter of the Stockman family (the other two children in the original play Dietz chose not to include in his adaptation). Although they are by no means rich, the Stockman family has a modicum of taste and is getting by well enough at the start of the play. While Katrina is frugal with their money, her daughter is certainly not going without in terms of fashion. The same applies to Lorna’s overcoat which is simple enough in design, with minor period appropriate enhancements to make sure she appears, though soft, every inch the modern young woman who has a job. The fabric of her coat is also slightly nicer, compared to her mother’s coat. She also wears a 1920s style cloche hat of navy blue felt, constructed for this production with a band and bow made of the contrasting cream fabric of her sailor dress.

For the bonfire scene, Lorna wears a wool coat-dress, with a cotton calico dress underneath that has a yellow fine wool center front panel. This panel matches the lightest yellow of the yellow-and-navy plaid wool overcoat dress. She wears the same shoes and cloche hat with this outfit. After the bonfire scene, she removes the overcoat dress (tie front closure) onstage during the transition to the next scene that takes place in the vandalized living room of the Stockman home. While the underdress coordinates with the wool plaid overdress, it is a direct reversal in impact. The overdress coat has a wintery feel with the dark blue as the dominant color accented by the lighter bright yellow; the
under dress is yellow fine wool and cream cotton calico with small yellow and blue/black print. The dress is garishly inappropriate for the scene with its optimistically happy and brightly hopeful feel, and serves to accentuate the high hopes dashed by the events of the bonfire town meeting and the hostile reaction of the townspeople.

Coat-dress Over-Garment Fashion fabric 
[dark grey-blue with yellow plaid wool]

Coat-dress under-dress Fashion fabric [cotton print]

Coat-dress under-dress contrast fabric [yellow light-weight wool]

Fig. 14. Fabric Swatches: Lorna Stockman

Fig. 15. Lorna Stockman
Photographs courtesy of Alma Cerretta.
For the farewell scene, Lorna goes back to her original overcoat, with the same hat and shoes, worn over the yellow print under dress which is not noticeably visible. While it was not absolutely required that Lorna have a second outerwear garment for the bonfire scene, it felt aesthetically necessary so that the audience did not get visually tired of seeing her appear repeatedly in the same garment for so many scenes.

For. Lorna Stockman


Fig. 16. Lorna Stockman
Overcoat Fashion Fabric [mohair wool]

Overcoat lining [synthetic]

Fig. 17. Lorna Stockman
Photographs courtesy of Alma Cerretta.

Fig. 18. Fabric Swatches and Hat: Lorna Stockman
Peter Stockman

Peter, who is in his late 50s, is the elder brother of Thomas, with whom he has an opposing personality and character foil. He holds powerful and prominent positions in the town such as mayor, banker, and Chairman of the Board of Governors which controls the Springs. He is conservative, well off, and well put together. He is slick, but not like a used car salesman, since he actually believes what he says. The director described Peter as “a true politician,” “a smooth talker,” and she said he “blunts his loneliness with money and power he finds within the community.”

In order to achieve an appropriately mature look for the character Peter, I utilized several different aging methods to transfer the athletically fit college actor into a credible representation of a middle aged man. While age makeup was certainly used, further
alterations to the actor’s appearance and physicality were required. Subtle torso padding was an effective method discreetly used to transform the actor’s athletic body shape from a toned v-shaped tapered torso to a slightly fuller waist resulting in a more rectangular shaped torso indicative of an older, yet still healthy and fit body. I also added padding to the actor’s shoulders and upper arms to disguise their naturally lean and wiry shape to fill out the suit jacket in such a way that it appeared to fit better and to lend the character a stronger physical presence on the stage.

Once the actor practiced with and became used to the padded torso, it also caused subtle changes in his poise, movements, stance, and carriage. While the actor found the padded change to his body very noticeable, it was in fact a very subtle change with his waist padded out several inches to match the measurement of his shoulders.

I created the padded torso by first selecting a t-shirt with long sleeves, fitted to the actor’s natural body shape, with plenty of vertical length beyond the actor’s waist to ensure the padding could be tucked into his pants and remain securely in place. I added layers of padding to the front and back waist and upper arm areas, hand stitched along the edges of each individual layer of batting in order to make sure the padding was secure and had smooth edges. I first placed padding in the areas that needed the most increase in size and then added consecutively larger layers of batting over it in order to achieve the smoothest and most natural increase in shape. The final layers of batting extended above and below the areas that required an increase in size since the thin layers of batting added negligible increase in size to those areas, but insured a smooth resolution of the padding where it transitioned back into the actor’s natural body shape. The next step included
adding another long sleeve t-shirt, larger than the first, to fit over the new padded body
shape without squeezing it down smaller than the desired size.

Adding the second shirt created a smoother, more uniform, and more natural look
for the padding shape, and protected the batting from wear and tear as well as from
becoming misshapen. Further careful quilting was needed to secure the padding in place.
It was important for the hand stitches to be appropriately tensioned so as not to be too
loose but also, and more importantly, not to be too tight so as to pull the padding into
puckered indentations due to the thread compressing the batting. This final step secured
the batting in place within the layers of the shirt to prevent any shifting of the batting into
unseemly lumps that could develop through use and hand washing of the garment. A
final fitting with the actor determined he felt more comfortable with the sleeves shortened
just below the elbow in order to reduce some of the warmth the insulated garment
generated, yet the sleeves could remain long enough so that the padded upper arms would
remain in place without bunching up into an unnatural shape.

Another effective method I utilized for aging Peter in conjunction with aging
makeup was the careful selection and implementation of an appropriate and age
emphasizing hairstyle. Due to the shape of the actor’s forehead, manipulating the
hairstyle to emphasize the forehead and create the illusion of a receding hairline by
slicking the hair straight back proved to be an effective method. The hairstyle was also
personality appropriate for Peter because it gave him a polished, well groomed, and
manicured, look as well as some severity in his role as a slick politician – all of which
starkly contrasts his brother Thomas’ more organic and increasingly disheveled look.
The greatest challenge with the choice of hairstyle for Peter was forcing the actor’s head of stiff, tight coarse curls to cooperate in the styling process. The first step was to have the actor grow his closely cropped hair as long as possible so that the styling product would have more hair to adhere to and in order to get the period appropriate combed back look. After experimenting with several extreme hair hold products, the Bed Head ultra-glued hair styling glue proved to be reliable to tame and control the actor’s hair into the desired style with multiple applications of large quantities, which was not a problem since the sheen of the hair product resembled the standard men’s hair look for the period.

Fig. 20. Peter Stockman
Photographs courtesy of Alma Cerretta.
Erik Hovstad

Erik, the older brother of Lars Hovstad and his opposite in many ways, is aged thirty and the editor of the *Sentinel*, the town’s newspaper. Formerly, he was romantically involved with Rose, but burned by love he is now bitter, tormented, and full of angst. He is a former war hero, rigid, uptight, reserved, precise, serious, and hardworking. The director described Eric as “having seen many of the world’s atrocities as a soldier in the Great War, he sees darker sides of life rather too easily.” He has hot-headed tendencies and is socially awkward. He is forward thinking and believes in the ideals of the press; he is more traditional than his brother, focused more on the printed paper and less on the newly popular radio. The director also described Erik as “cynical and heartbroken, he manages to funnel his energies into love for his brother and his work.”

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Fig. 21. Erik Hovstad
Erik’s costume remains very much the same throughout the play. He wears stiff green pants indicative of his uncompromising, uptight personality and reminiscent of his time in the military. He wears a dress shirt with the sleeves rolled up when he is at work in the *Sentinel* office, with a tie and a vest with a collar to denote him as a member of the upper working class (white collar rather than blue collar worker) based on intellect, education and his job as a journalist rather than on wealth.

In Act 1, he wears a collared vest in earthy tweed, tying him to the doctor visually for the period in which he is supportive of Thomas and his findings. When opinions shift, and Erik is no longer in favor of publishing the doctor’s findings, he switches to a dark blue collared vest and coordinating tie. This outfit also denotes the chronological passage of time to a different day. Both of Erik’s vests are textured and worn, betraying his financial struggles. For outdoor scenes, he wears the more mature long overcoat style of the upper working class and a structured homburg type hat with brim, setting him firmly in the intellectual working class and not the laboring class.

![Fig. 22. Erik Hovstad](Photographs courtesy of Alma Cerretta.)
Lars Hovstad

Lars Hovstad, brother of Erik, is in his 20s and engaged to Lorna. As Erik’s assistant at the *Sentinel*, he is enamored with the up and coming invention, the radio, and pushed Erik to embrace it as an extension of the paper, and as a more effective way of reaching people. He is easy going and charming. He is more relaxed, looser, and more socially adept than his brother. He is forward thinking and embraces the times, moving forward and adapting. The director described Lars as “energetic and enthralled by new inventions and belief in the future.”


Lars, in contrast to his uptight older brother Erik, has a much more laid back style of dress. His clothing expresses his youthfulness and fascination with new ideas and trends. He has the collegiate look of an educated young adult, though he is not as intellectual as his fiancée Lorna or her father Thomas. His costume look remains constant throughout both acts of the play up until the very end when there is a jump in time, and he is dressed in a distinctly different look for the year 1929.

Lars’ primary costume look consisted of wide leg brown wool pants with a large cuff in the contemporary (for the period) newly fashionable collegiate style, which set him distinctly apart from the older generation, including Thomas, and conveyed his fervor to keep up with the ever evolving current times full of new innovations, especially radio. With his distinct pants, he wore a dress shirt with a tie and a pullover sweater. In contrast to his brother Erik, who wears a homburg type hat, structured with a brim, Lars wears a more casual cap in the newsboy style of the working class, yet slightly larger in size and nicer in quality as was fashionable for the youthful collegiate look. I paid careful attention to the knit look of Lars' sweaters in order to maintain period accuracy. Lars wears a different sweater in each act to denote the change of day and progression of time. His Act 2 light grey stripe sweater sits closer to the neck than his Act 1 green and yellow sweater, so that the dress shirt and tie worn under the sweater are not specifically distinguishable. This allowed the actor to keep on the same dress shirt and tie to enable his quick change into the 1929 costume.

I selected dress shoes for the actor that appeared an indistinguishable color between black and brown and that did not need to be removed in order to change pants so that the quick change would be as fast and smooth as possible. For the year 1929, Lars
appears more mature and snazzy, conveying his obvious success with the dubious radio venture, in a three-piece gangster style suit complete with a fashionably impressive fedora.

Fig. 24. Lars Hovstad  
*Photographs courtesy of Alma Cerretta.*

Fig. 25. Lars Hovstad

*Photographs courtesy of Alma Cerretta.*
Odegaard

Odegaard is the dubious printer of the *Sentinel* who rents the building which houses the paper to the Hovstads. He is the long-standing chairman of the Property Owner’s Association and considers himself a representative of the Tradesmen of the town and a spokesperson for the majority. He is both co-founder of the Temperance Society and a notorious bootlegger who always has a bottle of hooch on his person; he is a functioning alcoholic. The director described Odegaard as conservative because the town is conservative, a “joiner who likes to consider himself popular and well liked—and doesn’t find fault with adjusting beliefs to remain that way.” He is backward, preaching about the merits of the “school of life” over a fancy education—a direct contrast to the doctor who embraces intellectualism and naively lacks the hard edge a person gains from worldly experience of consequences. Also, while the doctor is straight-forward, guileless, and stubbornly steadfast in his belief of right and wrong based on the absolute inflexibility of truth, Odegaard is a realistic cynic who readily sways to the tide of popular opinion. He is often sarcastic and offers some comic relief throughout the play. He most often appears with a temperance logo proudly displayed on his arm and a libation in hand or clearly present on his person—working as a visual reminder of his unabashed hypocrisy.

The character Odegaard had several costume looks which, rather than conveying any character development, simply changed according to situational needs, like the other townspeople who experience no “character growth” over the course of the play. His first costume look is a pair of coarse brown denim weight pants in the traditional working class style, a blue-and-white striped collarless shirt with the sleeves rolled up, a coarse
light brown collarless vest, in direct contrast to the more educated and uptight look of Eric’s collared vests, and a pair of work boots. A full-length stiff, coarse, dark brown printer’s apron with two large pockets, one which held his quintessential flask of bootleg liquor and the other a rag with printing ink stains, was his outer garment layer.

Odegaard also professes to be a founder of the local Temperance Society, an ironic oxymoron since he is a drunk and a bootlegger. The script calls for him to wear an armband that denotes him as a supporter of the Temperance movement. After researching the Temperance movement and identifying various logos and symbols associated with it – eagle wings, patriotic color schemes, hatchet, balance scales, a ribbon

Fig. 26. Odegaard
bow (for a women’s group) and other heraldic like symbols indicative of various societies—I developed a Paragon Springs Temperance Society that incorporated the balancing scales, the wings, the red/white/blue color scheme and the word “Temperance,” that was simple enough in design and large enough in scale to be visible to the audience as well as recognizable in its reference for those familiar with the Temperance movement. The arm band was strategically sized and placed so that enough of the logo was visibly displayed on the outward portion of the arm. The arm band fastened closed with snaps, and I used hooks and bars to attach it securely to the arm of the shirt as well as to remove it.

In order to make the young actor look mature enough for the character Odegaard, the makeup crew applied age makeup along with stippling for a weathered texture and red cheeks for intoxication. As another method of disguising his youth and to portray visual elements representative of the character, the actor grew a beard, which had to be darkened with mascara applied to the naturally grown facial hair. The makeup crew applied ink stains to the actor’s hands to further disguise his youth. The actor wore his hair disheveled, and his hair was cut into a period style haircut.

Fig. 27. Temperance Symbols
In order to change for the scene at the end of Act 1 for the party at the Stockman home, the actor removed the Temperance arm band and printer’s apron, and rolled down his shirt sleeves. I exchanged his work pants for a slightly nicer pair of slacks and his vest for a dark brown coarsely textured blazer style jacket. The result is a dress-up, fancy outfit for Odegaard when he tries to look nice and impressively respectable, yet the look is not as successful as he imagines. In Act 2, back at the Sentinel office, he wears the same printer’s outfit that he wore in Act 1 complete with apron and temperance armband, only with a darker striped collarless shirt.
For the Act 2 bonfire scene, Odegaard makes the same change as in Act 1, going from the *Sentinel* office to the Stockman party, changing into his dress-up outfit. For the bonfire scene, he also adds an overcoat and a soft cap in the traditional style of the working class. For the final scene in the Stockman home, he removes the overcoat and cap, while keeping on the coarse brown jacket.

Fig. 29. Odegaard
*Photographs courtesy of Alma Cerretta.*
The Widow Kroger

The Widow Kroger, in her mid-to-late 50s, is the iconic embodiment of an evil stepmother towards Katrina, and despite her open enmity with Katrina and Thomas, she garners reluctant respect from the audience through her strength of personality. Lorna begins the play on good terms with her step-grandmother, despite the open ill will between the Widow and her parents, and even looks up to her as a sort of role model until the Widow betrays her and her family unforgivably in the end. It is clear that Lorna is drawn to the Widow since she is forward thinking, embraces progressive ideas and women’s rights, and has a strong presence and commanding personality that will be cowed by no person, man nor woman. The Widow is also clearly intellectual and well educated, though she has a tendency to spout silly scientific tid-bits that characterize her as an intelligent know-it-all. She is a noted eccentric in personality and in dress, and is somewhat fashionable and elegant and clearly displays the polish of wealth which she uses to set herself apart—and, to her mind, above—the rest of the townspeople that surround her, especially Katrina, adding to the dichotomy between these two characters. The Widow is known for her eccentric style and outlandish hats. Though the Widow has money and refinement and wears clothes that are elegant, if eccentric, and fancier than those around her wear, she is not haute-couture but still of the working class, though a higher tier, as the owner of the tannery and largest employer in the town.

The Widow Kroger stands out like a glitzy sore thumb in the small town of Paragon Springs, yet she would be nothing special in a more urban setting. Although she is an independent and self-supporting woman, her wealth was gained through marriage and almost immediate widowhood resulting in her inheritance of the tannery and all of
her husband’s money (including the Stockman family’s share of the inheritance) which she wastes no opportunity to rub in their faces. She is a bit of a Black Widow—married to Katrina’s father at age 53, he died after a few short months—wearing the mantle of widowhood as a badge of honor, yet rather than feeling deep-seated grief for the loss of her husband, she relishes the title of widow. She brags about how coveted she was by men, and yet she was a bit of an ‘old maid’ before the marriage late in life that brought about her exalted status of widowhood. She employs a false, saccharine sweetness to ineffectively cloak a nasty personality; she is rude and self-centered. The director described her as “eccentric, she sails through life caring little for what others think of her. She considers Katrina a trial, Thomas a curiosity, and Lorna a plaything.”

The Widow Kroger’s first dress evolved from the original rendered design based on improvements that surfaced in the construction process. While her long jacket remained the same, a sleek black with peach/gold lining, the coordinating dress worn under it did undergo minor re-arrangement. Originally, I designed the garment with the peach/gold fabric also used for the lining of the jacket with the sheer black floral overlay as the shorter top layer with a band of black fabric at the hem so that a band of the peach/gold fabric framed the bottom of the hem of the dress. However, the peach/gold fabric did not turn out to be a suitable under layer fabric because it resulted in an overall brown look for the dress. This was unacceptable due to the desired design concept that the widow always wears traditional black as a dominating color mixing with other loud fabrics and prints that betray her attempt at false modesty appropriate for a proper grieving widow and reveal her insincerity toward lifelong grief. Instead, she wears widowhood as a flamboyant badge of honor, elevated status and freedom.
In order to avoid the browning-out of the dress, I used a black fabric for the long under dress and then applied a peach/gold strip of fabric to the bottom of the shorter sheer overlay to achieve the desired overall look while staying as true as possible to the original design concept. This change resulted in merely switching places of the black and peach/gold solid fabrics making up the dress – including the change of the v-neck binding from the original band of black to a band of peach/gold.

**Fig. 30. Fabric Swatches: Widow Kroger**
The Widow’s second look, a cape-coat worn during the bonfire scene of Act 2, remained true to the original design, but improved throughout the process. The first influence on the cape-coat’s construction was the fabric. At a fabric store in Chicago, I located a limited amount of black wool fabric with large maroon embroidered designs. The fabric was exquisite, elegant, and exceptionally appropriate to the particular design of the widow’s second look as well as to her personality and the fiery qualities I wished
to express in this scene, with an embroidered motif that was impressively compatible with the time period. An immediate problem that resulted once settling on the black wool fabric with maroon embroidery was the limited quantity that was available and how to find a compatible solid black wool fabric as identical as possible in texture, weight, and all other physical properties, especially color.

The color was difficult to determine, especially with only standard fluorescent overhead lighting in the fabric store, since theatrical lighting with color gels will often reveal distinct blue/red differences in black dyed fabric that otherwise looks the same under “normal” lights. Since access to a Chicago fabric store was only available for a single weekend due to time and distance constraints, there was no opportunity to swatch the fabrics and then test them under theatrical lights prior to purchase. It was a relief that the two black wools turned out to be sufficiently compatible.

With the actual use of the embroidered fabric for the cape there arose additional complications. After brainstorming several construction ideas, I decided that the embroidered motifs would be individually cut out and then appliquéd onto the cape portion of the garment, with an identical stitch and color thread as used in the original embroidered designs, radiating out from the neck of the garment.

I had to make additional fabric-based construction decisions regarding the maroon ruffles on the garment. Eventually I decided, after weighing the pros and cons of all the options, that instead of cutting the ruffles in a spiral or cut on the straight of grain and then extensively gathering them, the ruffles would be cut on the bias to limit the gathering bulk, yet be able to fold in half lengthwise to avoid tedious hemming of the
small ruffles. The chosen fabric had just the right amount of spring to give life and body to the ruffles while still pressing flat into the desired shape. I determined that applying the ruffles to the surface of the coat fabric, not stitched, but underneath the ruffle where the seam allowance is folded down at the top, gave the appearance they were inserted into the coat, but without having to create complicated slashes or additional seam lines that were not ideal for the design lines of the coat.

Finally, the draper and I put forth extensive effort in the patterning of this cape-coat to ensure that the actress had, slightly limited, but adequate range of motion with her arms. I provided a mockup of the garment for her in rehearsals for testing out its functionality and so that she could get used to it and look as though she was at home in the garment.

Cape-coat Fashion fabric [high quality black coat-weight wool]

Cape-coat appliquéd embroidered motifs [black wool with maroon embroidery and black couching]

Cape-coat contrast fabric for ruffles [synthetic]

Neckerchief Bow fabric [silky synthetic]


Fig. 32. Widow Kroger
I made significant developmental changes to the widow’s third and final outfit during the production process. The initial design for the sheath dress with cascading gradient triangular accent pleats down the center front remained constant, while the design for her over garment continually evolved. The initial design idea was for another coat-like cape, though more cape-like than the garment worn for the bonfire scene, which achieved its size through fabric quantity, but this style was rejected because its fluid, flowing quality and its design and construction lent itself to a knit fabric. The inherent softness of a knit garment was not suitable for the widow’s strong character and large presence and was especially inappropriate for the developmental arc of the character which culminates in her final offense against the Stockman family as she uses Lorna’s...
inheritance to buy up the majority of the Springs stock in Thomas’ name to exact spiteful retribution.

The revision of the outer garment was structured in nature and controlled the fullness of the previous design with formal pleats that ended in triangular shapes, mimicking the front of the dress. While this harsher design was more in tune with the nature of the widow’s character, it was too visually complex and detracted from the effect of the dress. In addition to these developments, the fabric purchased ultimately helped to clarify the design elements which led to the final successful design.

Even though I was still working out the over garment design at the time of fabric shopping, based on the fabrics chosen for the corresponding dress I found the perfect fabric for the outer garment and thus the design sorted itself out from there. Even though the usual practice is to have a firm design for which the appropriate fabric is then sought, this more organic process worked well in this particular instance. The final fabric was a heavy-weight black with a subtle sparkling, interwoven textural design, large in scale. The subdued flashy boldness of this fabric was in keeping with the dress design, yet did not compete with the large scale floral purple, magenta, and black print dress with intricate front cream cascade. Thus the final design resulted in a relatively simplistic cape of medium length with two tiers for understated extravagance and subtle glossy black trim to define the edges. The design also included a choker-like neck style with a brooch closure for a severe look, giving a more structured, streamlined and secure look (as opposed to a tie closure) and did not interfere with but accentuated the moderately scooped neck of the dress.
The nature of the stiff fabric gave the garment the fullness required to achieve the large presence the widow’s character needed, yet without excess bulk or a fluidity of fabric that would portray inappropriate softness. The resulting progression of the widow’s three over garments (from coat in Act 1 to cape-coat in the bonfire scene in Act 2 to the cape in the Stockman family home scene at the end of Act 2) was pleasing in its continuity and drew attention to the overall progression of strength and vitriol possessed by this increasingly vengeful character who progresses from moderate animosity towards the Stockman family to a desire to destroy them. Another key design choice for the Widow Kroger was the dichotomy between subdued and proper black with outlandish and excessive flair. Her costumes convey loudly and clearly that she is lording her money over those around her, especially the Stockman family.
Dress center-front cascade accent fabric [creamy off-white silky synthetic]

Dress fabric [brocade-like light-weight woven synthetic]

Cape Fashion fabric [brocade-like woven synthetic with some sparkle threads]

Cape lining [black synthetic]

Fig. 35. Fabric Swatches: Widow Kroger

Fig. 36: Preliminary Sketch: Widow Kroger
Fig. 37. Widow Kroger

Fig. 38. Widow Kroger

*Photographs courtesy of Alma Cerretta.*
Hollis Lindgren

Hollis Lindgren is in his 40s and walks with a slight limp, mostly using a cane. He is a handyman, though his wife Rose does most of the actual work because he is a hopeless dreamer and is distracted easily from the reality that the work must be done and a living must be made in order to survive. He is the doctor’s ever faithful acolyte, and to Rose’s constant consternation the doctor’s influence only exacerbates and encourages Hollis’ tendency to get lost in his thoughts to the detriment of their reality. He is in love with his wife, Rose though he knows she does not truly love him. Rose chose him over Erik because he was safe and secure and, because of his bad leg, could never leave her to go off to war and be killed like her brothers. The director described Hollis as having “measured energy and that he is steadfast and intensely loyal to those he admires. He is unusually soft spoken yet he is willing to stand up for his friends at any cost.”

Hollis’ costume looks are very simple and straightforward. His primary costume look, the same for Acts 1 and 2 with only a subtle color change of his shirt, is a lower-level working class adaptation of the doctor’s look, especially regarding the earthy color palette. He wears green dungaree-style work pants with patch side pockets, folded up cuffs, and a tan work shirt with button-flapped utilitarian patch breast pockets flaps with the sleeves rolled up, plus brown work boots. For the outdoor scenes, Hollis wears a worn working man’s soft cap and a short wool coat in the casual style of lower working class men. His costume looks do not fluctuate because he remains constant in his loyal support of Thomas despite the swaying tide of the town’s popular opinion.
**Rose Lindgren**

Rose Lindgren is in her 30s and is the only character in the play Dietz invented out of whole cloth. As a result, she stands apart from the play’s dominant action, though Dietz made her the wife and complete opposite of Hollis Lindgren. She married him because he was safe and secure, despite her previous and perhaps lingering romantic attachment to Erik Hovstad. She is down-to-earth, practical, hardworking, and a realist. Though she is somewhat conservative thinking, she improbably does her husband’s job of general all-around handyman in addition to her own since he is unreliable with his head in the clouds. She is a construction of recent trends in feminist thinking, reminiscent of a Rosie-the-Riveter type character though without the political connotations, since she undertakes “a man’s work” out of necessity for survival but without any grand ideals or desire to make a political statement for women’s rights and equality. She nevertheless would have been completely out of place in the original play, just as she would have been in the 1920s when the Dietz play takes place. The director described Rose as “strong and immensely practical, gentle but firm, not exactly unhappy but sometimes feels she would be happier if she knew a little less about life.”

Rose begins the play in her work clothes, which consist of worn overalls with folded up cuffs and a mildly coarse buttoned-up tan shirt, clearly a work shirt, that she wears with the cuffs rolled up a little. Though the rest of her outfit could be a man’s garment, the collar of her shirt has a slightly feminized shape and style. She also wears broken-in work boots. Since the first scene takes place outside at dawn, she wears a denim shirt-jacket unbuttoned with the sleeves rolled a bit at the cuff as her work
costume outer garment. The well-used and worn nature of Rose’s clothes is a significant indication of her situation in life.

Rose next appears in the *Sentinel* office emerging from the (offstage) print room wearing the same work clothes, minus the denim over shirt-jacket, where she has been working to repair the printing press, indicating that she is a jack-of-all-trades, taking any job she can in order to make a living, including the work that should fall to her husband, Hollis.

At the end of Act 1, Rose enters the party scene in the living room of the Stockman home wearing a dress appropriate for the festive occasion. It is a modest dress, simple in design, and likely the nicest dress she owns and probably one of the few
feminine garments she owns. The dress is in good condition because she would rarely have the opportunity to wear such a dress since she is always dressed in her work clothes and hard at work.

In Act 2, Rose appears with her husband at the start of the bonfire scene in what is one of her only other feminine outfits. This costume is a rust-orange pleated skirt, too long to be considered fashionable because Rose does not have the luxury of changing her wardrobe to keep up with the ever changing height of fashion. The skirt is functional in nature and made of wool, indicating the warmth needed for the night time outdoor venue,
as opposed to the lighter, more spring-like fabric worn for the indoor celebratory occasion at the doctor’s house. The weight and more somber nature of the wool skirt also indicate the change in attitude towards the doctor and his discovery, which is no longer considered something to be celebrated. As with her party dress, Rose wears an attractive, yet simple and functional pair of brown heels indicative of the time period. She also wears an overcoat, less fitted or stylish than most women would wear, and a brown cloche hat that, like her shoes, is attractive yet simple and functional. Under her overcoat, Rose wears the same shirt that she wears for her work outfit, thus enabling a faster costume change back into her work clothes for the next scene.

Fig. 43. Rose Lindgren

Photographs courtesy of Alma Cerretta.


Fig. 44. Rose Lindgren

*Photographs courtesy of Alma Cerretta.*
I discussed with the director whether Rose should remain in her same costume for the farewell scene that takes place the following evening chronologically, where she bids her husband, Hollis, goodbye as he sets off on the journey with Thomas and Lorna. Another option was for Rose immediately to change back into her work clothes after the bonfire scene and wear her overalls, which she wears at the end of the play, for the previous farewell scene as well. After much consideration, it was decided that it was important for Rose to wear her work clothes in the farewell scene in order to emphasize the truth of her speech to Hollis at the end of the bonfire scene where she explains that despite whatever conflict is occurring about the doctor and his discovery, people will still need work done the following day, and she will be there to do it because that is the reality that is necessary for her survival. She then ends the play wearing exactly the same outfit in the final scene that she wore for the opening scene, adding to the visual confirmation that the play has come full circle and remains consistent in the depiction of the final scene as a déjà vu-like echo of the opening scene of the play.

The character Rose uniquely belongs to Dietz's *Paragon Springs* since she is the only character without an equivalent in Ibsen’s *Enemy of the People*. Her character is not used to drive the plot of the play, so it was important to explore the importance of her presence in Dietz's play. Rose is the only character that does not get caught up in the fervor of the doctor’s discovery. In Act 1, she attends the party for Dr. Stockman and is happy that those around her are joyful, but she does not become elated with hopes for the future as the other characters do. In Act 2, when the tides change and the doctor’s discovery is feared rather than celebrated, she does not join the mob shouting against the doctor and is rather subdued at the town meeting while all of the other characters speak
out against him. Rose is a character who knows her lot in life. She seeks to weather the storms of hardship as best she can, and does not get distracted with fanciful hopes. Rose is the constant by which all of the other characters' fluctuations can be measured. It is therefore, especially fitting that she begins and ends the play with scenes of such similarity.
Chapter 4: Working with Director, Actors, Designers, and Stage Manager

Since *Paragon Springs* is such a realistic “slice of life” play, it was important to make sure the actors were comfortable with their costumes so that the wearing of their clothes looked natural, especially regarding any action involving their clothes that occurred onstage. I handled this by making sure that shoes, hats, coats, aprons, hankies, purses, pocket watches, etc. were available for rehearsal far in advance in order to give the actors plenty of opportunity to acclimate themselves to the use of these items in a natural, familiar way.

The arena style staging of the play necessitated authentic costume construction with precise and accurate stitching since the audience sat very close, surrounding the actors on all sides. I gave the actors shoes and even some garments (actual rather than rehearsal equivalent) to use in rehearsal earlier than usual in order for them to break them in for comfort as well as to rub the “new” off of them for an authentic look of a well-worn article of clothing instead of a costume brand new and fresh off the rack.

Collaboration among designers is an important part of any theatrical production, and *Paragon Springs* was no exception. Prior to purchasing fabric, essential collaboration occurred with the set designer regarding color. This was important for the unity of the play and to prevent distasteful color clashes; however finding the balance of colors between set and costumes was essentially very easy for this play for several reasons. Most notably due to the arena style staging of the play, the set was minimal and more suggestive of location than anything else, and thus there were no flats creating walls of color as a backdrop for the actor, eliminating the concern of costumes blending into or
clashing against the background. Also, the minimal set allowed costumes such as
Katrina’s yellow and the yellow of the Stockman home to visually tie into the set via
color without any of the usual difficulties.

Collaboration with the props department was crucial regarding the brooch Lorna
drops in the jug of water. As with the coins Dr. Thomas Stockman drops in the jug
earlier in the play, the director truly felt the importance of those moments required a bit
of “stage magic” enhancement so that the items would drop through the water in the jar to
the bottom slowly, allowing the importance of those moments to register.

In order to get the optimal effect when Lorna dropped the brooch in the water, it
needed to be made of plastic; however, the brooch needed to look like a 1920s family
heirloom. After much searching, I discovered the perfect period looking plastic cameo
large sized shank button. I discovered, through the use of rehearsal brooches, that the
actor playing the part of Lars required the simplest and easiest clasping mechanism
possible due to the trouble he was having pinning the brooch onto Lorna during the
scene. The need for authenticity of stage business prevented the use of more modern
easy closure devices. The final brooch was a plastic antique reproduction cameo shank
button with the plastic shank removed and a simple pin closure similar to that of a safety
pin, with no additional circular lock mechanism for the pin that is standard on most
brooches.

Another factor in the equation was the amount of water in the jar. More water
was better for dropping the objects; however, a full jug of water proved to be too much
water to be reasonable to handle at the end when Thomas throws the water at his back-
stabbing, fair-weather friends. Thus, the production team came to a reasonable compromise regarding the amount of water in the jar. The primary concern regarding the throwing of water near the end of the play involved Lars and his quick change into a 1929 suit between the water throwing scene and the final scene of the play. I discussed this concern with the director at the initial meeting and with costume concerns in mind, she was able to stage the water throwing scene so that Lars exits earlier than the other characters, as soon as Dr. Thomas Stockman begins throwing the water, enabling him to get off stage without getting wet and allowing plenty of time to make the costume change.

In order to assist in the speed of the costume change, Lars continues to wear the same shirt and tie previously barely noticeable under his sweater, and he is able to take off the old pair of pants and put on new ones without removing his shoes. Due to these accommodations, it was not necessary to have him wear the 1929 suit under his 1926 pants for the majority of Act 2 – a concession that would have been possible and I considered during the process of building Lars’ 1926 pants, but I wished to avoid due to concerns regarding the silhouette, line, hang, and fit of the pants and a noticeable difference if worn without the 1929 pants underneath for Act 1 and then worn with them for Act 2.

The assumptions made about weather and temperatures for the play were crucial production choices that I discussed and determined with the director at the start of the design process. The script designates the time and place as early April, 1926, in a rural Wisconsin town. Weather in Wisconsin in April can often feel like full-fledged spring or still like winter, even rapidly fluctuating between the two. More often than not, it is
relatively warm in the middle of the day, but significantly colder at night. Thus, the
director and I decided that it would be reasonable for the characters to dress in a more
warm-weather fashion during the day scenes but to wear overcoats for the evening/night
and dawn/early morning scenes when the characters are outdoors. This particular choice
helped to visually signal, through costume choices, the changes in both place and time of
day to the audience since the set was so minimal with little change other than props and
limited set dresses. Another choice related to the use of overcoats and outer garments was
the importance of accessories, especially hats, which were an expected part of outdoor
wear in the period, and thus necessary to the period-authentic approach of the production.

Collaboration with the lighting designer was essential to the costume and overall
success of Paragon Springs. After discussions with the director, we agreed that the
production demanded as authentic a nature as possible, and this authenticity was to be
accomplished with extensive period research of garments, along with the inclusion of all
the realistic accessories of the time period needed to create the “feel” of authenticity and
“realness” the director desired. The most complicating of those accessories were hats.

Since the production team discussed the use of hats in the very early stages of
production, the lighting designer was able to accommodate them without too much
difficulty or inconvenience. In order to minimize the difficulty caused by hats, brims
were kept as minimal as possible, while still remaining authentic to the period. The
Widow Kroger is described in the script for her eccentric and outstanding hats, but for
ease of lighting, I decided that the outlandishness of her hats could be accomplished with
extensive trim and lavish adornment rather than exaggerated size of the hat itself.
Additionally, two characters, Dr. Thomas Stockman, and the Widow Kroger wore glasses
with lenses, creating another complication for the lighting designer to take into consideration.

One concern related to the use of accessories such as outer garments and hats, I resolved through collaboration with the director, set designer, actors, and stage manager, was the logistics of adding and removing the outer wear at appropriate times in order to not disrupt the continuity of what was time and place appropriate. I worked out most of the adding and removing of hats and coats with the actors directly, and rehearsal hats were made available at the start of the rehearsal process so the actors would have plenty of time to work out when they were needed and when to remove them so they could use the garments comfortably and naturally. Some of the outer wear choices worked themselves out through the rehearsal process. For scenes where outer garments served no purpose and would only get in the actor’s way, and if removed would clutter up the minimalist acting space (such as when an actor enters a scene supposedly arriving from outside to enter a room) it was simply written that the character would have deposited their outer garments in a theoretical entry way (off stage) before entering the room that occupies the playing space, thus already unencumbered by their outer garments.

There was one instance, however, where the removal of outer garments needed ample consideration. In Act 2, the bonfire scene ends with the Stockman family – Thomas, Katrina, and Lorna – and Hollis Lindgren posed and looking off into the flames of the distant bonfire. As they are frozen, the scene – and thus the set – shifts around them to transition to the vandalized living room of the Stockman home. Since the characters remain on stage during the transition from an outside scene to an inside scene, it was important to make sure there would be a non-disruptive way for them to dispose of
their outer garments once removed, especially since the change occurs at a particularly poignant place in the drama. Due to the minimalist nature of the set, it was unlikely there would be a place to put the garments onstage, but if that was how the director wished to handle the scene, it would be important to collaborate with sets, and props regarding how to accommodate the garments. The director, however, did not wish to deviate from the sparse aesthetic of the set by creating a place to keep the outer garments within the playing space. Instead, because we discussed the situation early in the process, the director was able to organize the action onstage so that between Katrina and the costumed crew members responsible for changing the scene around the actors, the garments were removed from both the characters and the stage seamlessly with no interruption to the flow of the dramatic progress of the play.

I collaborated with the lighting designer by studying potential garment fabrics under the various lights and color gels anticipated for each scene. This experimentation truly allowed the best fabric choices to be made by simulating the actual lighting under which the fabrics would be seen by the audience.

One of the greatest collaborative challenges among costume designer, director, set designer, technical director, props manager and actors was the use of live fire on stage. The Act 2 bonfire scene calls for lighted torches. Due to the intimacy of the stage seating with the audience so near, coupled with the intense pivotal moment of the story line that depends on the torches as iconic symbols as well as plot driving devices, live fire was an important aspect of the play. While the director was willing to accept the possibility that live fire torches might not be an option due to the up close setting of the production in the black box Studio Theatre, she felt that fake fire torches were not a viable option because
of the detrimental effect they could have to the moving scene by jarring the audience out of the moment by using a less than credible prop. Her preference was to rework the scene without torches while still attempting to preserve the essence of the scene. Due to the director’s persuasive justification of the importance of live fire to the impact of the crucial scene, where the townspeople choose Peter over Thomas and most importantly where Lars chooses his brother over Thomas and by extension his fiancée Lorna, the entire production team decided that despite the added difficulties every effort possible would be made to have live fire torches onstage.

As a result, all departments began researching laws, rules, regulations, requirements, and restrictions for live fire onstage in a theatrical production according to both Lancaster County and the University of Nebraska. Not surprisingly, there was little to no actual documentation to be found, especially regarding costumes, thus it fell to the technical director to get the necessary approvals and determine any limitations or precautions needed with regards to all aspects of the production. The technical director determined that, due to the nature of the safety torch used—a gam torch, low temperature burning, self-extinguishing, designed specifically for this type of theatre use—it would be possible to use live fire on stage.

The primary costume concern that arose during the regulations investigation was whether or not the garments would need to be treated for either flame resistance or flame retardancy. Discussion of such treatments gave rise to such questions as: How many actors’ costumes would need treatment – just the three designated by the director to hold the torches—or anyone near the flames? How much would it cost to treat the costumes and would it be feasible without going over budget? Will the treatment significantly alter
or negatively impact either the surface look of a garment or the nature of the fabric and the way it hangs or responds to movement? Will any of the actors have an allergic or otherwise adverse reaction to the strong chemicals used to treat the costumes? Will all layers of the costume worn by the actors need to be treated or only the outermost layer? Will the university costume department allow the treatment to be applied to existing garments taken from university stock, including almost all of the overcoats and hats worn in the bonfire scene? Other concerns that arose were: Are there any fabrics and fibers that need to be avoided? Can hair products still be used?

Due to the safe nature of the torch used and the lack of rigid restrictions in the region, there were not many requirements or restrictions for costumes. We confirmed that wool, cotton, and other natural fibers were safer than synthetic materials. The technical director also determined that garments with fabric made after 1950 were already pretreated with a level of flame retardant during the manufacturing process. All of the overcoats worn in the scene by actors close to the flame fit these criteria, thus the live flame onstage did not end up complicating the costume process. The use of torches did result in the minor problem that an actor would sometimes drip residue from the torch fuel on his costume; however, this did not result in any major or unsightly damage to the garments.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

*Paragon Springs* is a play about a town with a conundrum, a moral quandary, and though it is a seemingly straight-forward problem, it eludes any easy solution. The course of the play presents two answers to the problem, both of which are simultaneously right and wrong. It is right to want to save the town, but it is wrong to knowingly offer a service to people that will unknowingly put them in danger. It is right to embrace the scientific proof that there is a danger that needs to be addressed, yet it is wrong to destroy an entire town and the lives and livelihoods of all who live there.

While *Paragon Springs* has a strong political and social message (a question brought up for debate with strong arguments on both sides), the play leaves the audience with no clear answers, only food for thought. From a costume perspective, this is a show about the characters: their individuality, their similarities and differences, comparisons and juxtapositions. The ensemble style of the cast leads to the focus of a play about its people as well (while some characters may be more prominent than others, all are an essential part of the action and the pictures of the life presented). There is no chorus and there are no stars. This was a college production, after all. This collectivist mentality was especially important to the director which she made clear in her use of an ensemble bow with the entire cast at once for the curtain call, rather than bringing actors out individually in waves.
Appendix

University of Nebraska - Lincoln
Johnny Carson School of Film & Theatre
Budget for Paragon Springs
Fall, 2012

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<th>Date</th>
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<th>Remaining</th>
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Table 1: Paragon Springs Budget
## Costume Plot

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<th>Character</th>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mode</th>
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<td>Lorna Stockman</td>
<td>Base</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Base</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Base</td>
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### ACT 1: April 3, 1926

1.3: Sitting Room, Stockman Home, Morning

ADD:
- blue skirt (underdress) I, D
- blue blouse w/ off-white collar & necktie I, D

(*Exit then Re-Enter*)

ADD:
- blue speckled overcoat D
- navy blue hat w/ off-white ribbon N/A

1.6: Sitting Room, Stockman Home, Evening

REMOVE:
- blue speckled overcoat
- navy blue hat w/ off-white ribbon

INTERMISSION

2.2: Bonfire, Edge of Town, Night

REMOVE:
- blue skirt (underdress)
- blue blouse w/ off-white collar & necktie

ADD:
- white slip M, HD
- off-white, blue & yellow print dress with yellow front & collar I, D
- dark blue w/ yellow plaid overcoat S, D

(*nicely tied front bow*)

ADD:
- navy blue hat w/ off-white ribbon

April 5, 1926

2.3: Sitting Room, Stockman Home, Dawn

REMOVE: (*onstage*)
- dark blue w/ yellow plaid overcoat
- navy blue hat w/ off-white ribbon

2.5: Edge of Town, Dusk

ADD:
- blue speckled overcoat
- navy blue hat w/ off-white ribbon

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Table 2: Paragon Springs Costume Plot
Bibliography


McCall’s Magazine 52 (1925). Print.


University of Nebraska. *Textiles, Merchandising, and Fashion Design Historic Costume Collection*.

*Vogue* 65 (1925). Print.

*Vogue* 67 (1926). Print.

