

2001

Costuming in Shakespeare's History Plays

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Richard as King and Armed

*Costuming in Shakespeare's
History Plays*

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Shakespeare's
History Plays*

February 7 - April 14, 2001

*Special Collections Library
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan*

Hours of Exhibit
10:00 am - 5:00 pm, Monday - Friday
10:00 am - Noon, Saturday

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INTRODUCTION

It has been said that costumes in a theatrical production can “make or break” a play. That may be too strong a statement, but it is true that effective stage costume engages an audience’s attention, has the possibility of enhancing an actor’s performance, and even of carrying the viewer into another time and place. Certainly costume usually defines a character, establishing age, gender, social status, occupation, and personality. It helps convey the overall theme and mood of a play.

Not always, however, did actors, managers, and directors consider these factors particularly important. Prior to the nineteenth century, costume generally was used to advertise power, authority, and wealth. An actor might select a costume to show how grand he was or to parade clothes given by a patron in order to reflect well on that person’s wealth and social status.

In this period the costumes were usually contemporary with the date of performance, only occasionally reflecting the historical period of the play’s setting. This was especially the case with female characters, since they were expected to represent the current definition of ideal beauty. Rarely would an actress be willing to present herself in dress that was not fashionable for the time. Actors and actresses alike avoided the “ugly” and competed for elegant dress regardless of the character being played.

The Romantic Movement in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries served as the impetus for change. Antiquarian research became fashionable, and theatrical productions started to incorporate costumes designed as re-creations of historical periods. By the Victorian and Edwardian periods, the pendulum had swung its full arc. Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, for example, carried the goal of pictorial realism to a degree requiring live rabbits and a carpet of grass with flowers for his 1900 presentation of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. The designer based his/her work on extensive historical research, sometimes even overshadowing theatrical reality with too much detail.

This exhibit, “Costuming in Shakespeare’s History Plays,” illustrates these developments and explains the work of today’s costume designers from initial vision to finished garment. Its creation marks the visit of the Royal Shakespeare Company to the University of Michigan campus in March 2001. Since that troupe is presenting productions of *Henry VI*, Parts 1, 2, and 3, and *Richard III*, the ex-

hibit concentrates on those plays along with *Richard II*.

Materials in the exhibit have been drawn from the outstanding Shakespeare Collection in the Special Collections Library as well as drawings, photographs, and actual costumes borrowed from the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Stratford Festival of Canada, the private archive of Professor Emerita of Theatre Design at the University of Michigan, Zelma Weisfeld, and the University of Michigan Theatre and Drama Department. Four productions are highlighted, two of *Richard II* and two of *Richard III*. Three are period pieces. They provide a look at successful, mid-to-late twentieth-century, historically accurate stagings of these plays. The fourth one is a production of *Richard II*, presented at the Stratford Festival of Canada in 1999. It offers a mixture of styles and costume from the late-fourteenth century with many from the twentieth-century, including suggestions of twentieth-century military uniforms and dress associated with social and political movements.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This exhibit exists because of the many people who gave generously of their collections, time, and talents. First, Professor Weisfeld was an invaluable resource. Her description of the process of creating costumes for the Shakespeare history plays she worked on during her career at the University of Michigan served as inspiration for a major section of this exhibit. Furthermore, materials from her collection are used here to illustrate that process, providing a backbone to support the gist of the story. We are very grateful to her for the loans from her personal collection and the sharing of her expertise and enthusiasm.

The Stratford Festival of Canada generously opened their archives to us, lending several costumes and accompanying illustrations that create bridges from the design process to the actual performances. We thank Jane Edmonds, Archivist and Researcher, and her staff for their cheerful and ongoing assistance. The Royal Shakespeare Company has lent us two special items from its archives — a pair of gloves reputed to have been Shakespeare's, and an extra-illustrated engraving of the great nineteenth-century actor Edmund Kean. The University of Michigan Theatre and Drama Department lent costumes created by Zelma Weisfeld.

We have drawn freely on the expertise of others on campus. Kevin

Canze of the Museum of Art arranged for the loan of a display case, delivered it, and gave advice on using it to best advantage. We are very grateful to Julie Marsh and the Costume Shop of University Productions for the loan of a sewing mannequin. Tom Hogarth of the University Library Conservation Service devised a support for the horse's armor, and assisted ably with other challenges of display along with his colleagues Leyla Lau-Lamb and Shannon Zachary. Margaret Kelly, of the Library's Systems and Cataloging departments, used her talents as a theatrical costumer to advise us on the mannequins used in the exhibit, and assist us in dressing them. Kathleen Dow from the Special Collections Library applied her artistic training in many areas of this exhibit.

The Friends of the University Library and Bart and Sandy Silverman gave generous financial support for the production of this exhibit. Professor Gary Decker of the University of Michigan's Theatre and Drama Department organized the panel discussion for the opening of the exhibit on February 13, 2001, and Zingerman's of Ann Arbor and Neal's Yard Dairy of London, England, donated bread and cheese for that event.

And, finally, thank you for coming to see the exhibit and for letting us share our collections with you!

Peggy Daub
Head, Special Collections Library

Kathryn L. Beam
Exhibit Curator

Shakespeare Rare Print Collection, edited by Seymour Eaton.
Philadelphia: R. G. Kennedy & Co., 1900.

In these prints, actors David Garrick (1717-1779) and Richard Cook (17—) wear the standard costuming for Shakespeare's plays from the Elizabethan period through the eighteenth century. Both are dressed in garments appropriate to the time when the play was performed, rather than the actual setting of the play. Occasionally Garrick played pre-Commonwealth plays in Elizabethan dress, but nearly always used contemporary garments for plays set after 1660.

Shakespeare's Gloves, circa 1620.

One of the treasures of the Royal Shakespeare Company is this pair of kid leather gloves, reputed to have belonged to William Shakespeare (who died in 1616!).

Embroidered in silver thread and pink silk with silver fringed edging, the gloves were presented to David Garrick by John Ward of Leominster on the occasion of Garrick's Shakespeare Jubilee at Stratford-upon-Avon in May 1769. In a letter to Garrick, Ward relates how he was given the gloves by an elderly glazier in Stratford, also called William Shakespeare, who assured him that "his father had often declared to him that they were the identical gloves of our great poet...."

Garrick used the gloves in performances of *Hamlet*. They were later bequeathed to Sarah Siddons and Fanny Kemble, the famous eighteenth- and nineteenth-century actresses.

On loan from the Royal Shakespeare Company's Archives.

William Hogarth. *The Works of William Hogarth*. Philadelphia: George Barrie & Son, 1900.

This engraving by eminent British artist William Hogarth (1697-1764) captures David Garrick in the role of Richard III at the moment in Act V when Richard starts up from his couch after having been visited in his dreams by the phantoms of his murdered victims.



Ninety-six Portraits of Eminent Actors in Shakespearian Characters. London & New York: J. Tallis & Co., 18—.

Engraving of Edmund Kean as Richard III petitioning Lady Anne.

Garrick's performance in this role marked his formal debut on the London stage in October of 1741.

Hogarth's 1746 engraving shows Garrick's approximation of Elizabethan dress. He was one of the earliest actors to reveal in his costumes some concern for realism and historical accuracy.

Sylvester Harding. *Shakespeare Illustrated by an Assemblage of Portraits and Views.* London: G. Sidney, 1793.

Throughout the eighteenth century interest in historical realism began to be applied to the theatre. Actors and directors occasionally turned to published works by historians who included illustrations such as these. The depiction of Henry VI in volume one of this work is taken from an image painted on glass in King's College Chapel, Cambridge University. That of Joan of Arc in volume two is based on a portrait in the town hall of Orléans, France. Both engravings would likely assist managers or actors preparing for a new production of *Henry VI*.

Case 2

James Robinson Planché. *Costume of Shakespeare's Historical Tragedy of King John.* . . . London: John Miller, 1823-25.

The turning point in the way theatre practitioners viewed the designing of stage costume came in 1823 when Charles Kemble mounted a production of Shakespeare's *King John*. Kemble, then manager of Covent Garden, was persuaded by James Robinson Planché (1796-1880) to use historically accurate costumes for every role in *King John*. Before this Kemble usually clothed only the major characters in pseudo-historical garments, using costumes from the company's wardrobe for the minor roles.

The playbill advertising this new production said:

. . . *King John* . . . will shortly be produced with an attention to Costume which has never been equaled on the English Stage. Every character will appear in the precise habit of the Period – the whole of the Dresses and Decorations being executed from copies of indisputable authorities, such as, Monuments, Sels [!], illuminated Manuscripts, painted Glass, etc.

Joseph Strutt. *The Regal and Ecclesiastical Antiquities of England: containing the Representations of all the English Monarchs.* . . . A new and improved edition by J. R. Planché. London: Henry G. Bohn, 1842.

One of the most frequently cited authors for authority on costume was Joseph Strutt (1749-1802). An author, artist, antiquary, and engraver, Strutt's primary contributions were his books illustrating the dress, manners, and customs of the English people, published at various times throughout his life. This particular book first appeared in 1773. It contains drawings and engravings based on illuminations found in medieval and Renaissance manuscripts, and is believed to be the first of its kind published in England.

Planché must certainly have been aware of Strutt's work in his own historical research. This 1842 edition contains critical and explanatory notes by Planché about each of Strutt's drawings. In addition, Planché says in his note to the reader that "I have endeavored to do justice to the industry and candour of Mr. Strutt, as well as acknowledged the obligations under which he has laid all who have subsequently interested themselves in the History of Costume."

James Robinson Planché. *Twelve Designs for the Costume of Shakespeare's Richard the Third,* by C. F. Tomkins; after the drawings and with the descriptions of J. R. Planché. London: Colnaghi & Son, 1830.

Planché continued to supervise Charles Kemble's productions at Covent Garden, including *As You Like It*, *Hamlet*, *Cymbeline*, and *Henry IV, Part I*, as well as this 1830 production of *Richard III*. In this publication Planché describes the authorities on which his drawings are based, providing later researchers the opportunity to check for themselves. Whether or not the artists and scholars at the Stratford Festival did indeed use Planché in their research, there is no doubt about the similarity between the 1830 drawing and this wooden shield used in a Stratford Festival production of *Richard III*, possibly in 1977.

Shield on loan from the Collection of the Stratford Festival of Canada Archives.

Case 3

James Robinson Planché. *A Cyclopaedia of Costume or Dictionary of Dress*. . . . London: Chatto and Windus, 1876-79.

A publication appearing just before Planché's death in 1880 is his two-volume "Dictionary" (volume 1) and "General History of Costume in Europe" (volume 2). Likely the culmination of a lifetime of research and devotion to a cause, these volumes have been used by generations of costume designers.

Volume I shows the text and drawings for the term "girdle" which Planché defines as "the waist-belt of civil costume introduced during the six or seven centuries following the death of Edward the Confessor and the Norman invasion." Volume II is open to illustrations of "general dress of Europe contemporaneously with the reigns of our fourth, fifth, and sixth Henrys...."

On loan from Zelma Weisfeld.

King John Souvenir. *Shakespeare's Historical Drama King John produced at Her Majesty's Theatre by Herbert Beerbohm Tree on the 20th of September, MDCCCXCIX*. London: British Mutoscope and Biograph Co., 1899.

The most famous actor-manager during the late Victorian and Edwardian periods was Herbert Beerbohm Tree (1853-1917). Beginning as an actor in 1878 and becoming manager of the Haymarket Theatre in 1887, Tree built in 1897 Her Majesty's Theatre which developed into the primary home of Shakespeare in London between 1900 and 1914. Tree continued and even extended the principles expounded by Planché and put into practice by Kemble, Edmund and Charles Kean, and Henry Irving. His work is often regarded as the last stage in the development of pictorial realism in staging and costuming.

In this souvenir booklet for his 1899 production of *King John*, Tree states that his aim was to create a setting "which should place before the public a living picture of the times as designed by Shakespeare." Although not known as a great actor, Tree performed the role of the king in this production, shown in the photo in a most regal pose.

Case 4

***Ninety-six Portraits of Eminent Actors in Shakespearian Characters*. London & New York: J. Tallis & Co., 18—.**

The change in attitude toward historical accuracy in costuming during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries received some impetus from the romantic desire to reconstruct the past, in part to find a refuge from contemporary reality. One actor following the trend during this transition period was Edmund Kean (1787-1833). Noted especially for his interpretations of some of the most demanding roles in the Shakespearean repertoire, Kean made his Drury Lane debut in 1814 as Shylock, followed soon by performances as Richard III, Hamlet, Othello, and Iago.

This print depicts Kean during his early years at Drury Lane. It is an engraving of Richard III petitioning Lady Anne in Act I, scene ii of the play.

***Ninety-six Portraits of Eminent Actors in Shakespearian Characters*. London & New York: J. Tallis & Co., 18—.**

James Robinson Planché's most loyal disciple was Charles Kean (1811-1868), son of Edmund Kean. Lacking his father's power as an actor, he turned to directing and managing. His first venture with a Planché-inspired Shakespearean tragedy was a production of *Richard III* in New York's Park Theatre during his 1846 American tour. The performances offering faithful reproductions of late fifteenth-century architecture and dress were enthusiastically received.

This reproduction of a contemporary painting is an excellent example of Planché's research as it would have been seen on stage. The production probably was Kean's revival of *Richard III* in February 1854 at the Princess's Theatre.

"Mr. Edmund Kean as Richard III." Engraving, 182-?

This engraving of Edmund Kean in the role of Richard III was published in London by S. Johnson, St. Martin's Lane, probably during the 1820s. At some time during its history, the engraving was hand-colored and decorated with small pieces of cloth, stamped-out

pieces of silver and gold leaf, beads, and glass stones.

It was donated to the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1994 and has been sent to Ann Arbor specifically for inclusion in this exhibit.

On loan from the Royal Shakespeare Company's Archives.

Royal Shakespeare Company. Program, *Richard III*, 1985.

This double-fold spread in the 1985 program for the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of *Richard III* provides an excellent overview of costuming the character of Richard. The prints and plates range in date from 1745 to 1980. Of particular note are the two eighteenth-century illustrations: #9. David Garrick in 1745, and #7. John Philip Kemble in 1783.

On loan from Zelma Weisfeld.

Royal Shakespeare Company. Programs, 1964 and 1984.

Programs for a 1964 production of *Henry IV, Part I* and a 1984 production of *Henry V* also include exceptional coverage of actors and costuming in the roles of these two kings. The plates and photos offer a study of many details including robes, crowns, hats, weapons, and jewelry, as they were designed and worn in performances during the last two hundred years.

On loan from Zelma Weisfeld.

Case 5

University of Michigan Professional Theatre Program. Program, *Richard II*, 1978.

Professor Emerita Zelma Weisfeld taught costume design at the University of Michigan for twenty-eight years before her retirement in 1988. She or her students designed the costuming for all theatrical productions at Michigan and she herself has been in demand by numerous regional companies.

In 1978 the Professional Theatre Program mounted this production of *Richard II*, directed by Richard Burgwin, with Christopher Walken in the title role, and costume design by Professor Weisfeld. In the program notes "From the Director," Burgwin writes that his production "strives to illuminate the visual splendor of the period" creating "a highly selective and specifically focused visually suggestive background and context in which the actor and the word [i.e., Shakespeare's poetry] stand out in bold relief."

All items concerning this production are on loan from Zelma Weisfeld unless otherwise noted.

Zelma Weisfeld. Research Book, *Richard II*, 1978.

One of the first tasks of a costume designer is to come to an understanding of the director's vision for a production and then to do the research needed to translate that vision into visual reality. For *Richard II*, director Burgwin specified an historically accurate play illuminating the period of Richard's reign, 1377-1399. The costume designer studies the details of the dress of the period so that the finished product presents both theatrical and historical reality.

Weisfeld's research book contains notes, drawings, and photocopies for all aspects of dress during this period. The book is opened to details concerning jewelry and accessories. It also contains much material on the heraldry of the day, reviewing the symbols, colors, and figures associated with each noble family prominent in the play.

The sketches are included to enable Weisfeld "to put the [historical] period in my hand as well as in my head." Weisfeld says she uses the exercise of drawing the images found in historical reference books as a means of moving beyond mere copying. Sketching in the research book begins the process of creating original interpretations of the historical period.

Zelma Weisfeld. Fabric Swatches, *Richard II*, 1978.

Once the research is complete and the early meetings with the director have been held, the costume designer begins planning the needs of each character, which characters or actors are double-cast, and which ones need quick changes. Preliminary or layout sketches (see Case 11 for *Richard III*) are discussed with the director and other

artistic designers. Based on these drawings, the designer conducts the “swatching” process. This is not the actual buying of the fabric but the selection of fabrics best suited to each character’s visual purpose in the play. These fabric samples are usually discussed with the director before purchasing occurs.

Zelma Weisfeld. Sketch Sheets and Photos, *Richard II*, 1978.

After fabrics have been approved, detailed sketches are drawn. Shown here are preliminary notes and the finished plan for Richard’s costume in Act I and again in Act IV at the time Richard relinquishes the crown to Bolingbroke. This exchange is in part captured in the photo which also shows Bolingbroke’s red robe, a change from the blues he has been wearing earlier in the play (see Case 9). Richard maintains his golds and whites, but they are darkened from the glitter of the sun-king in Act I (see Case 7).

Black and white photos on loan from University Productions.

Case 6

Zelma Weisfeld. Dress Parade, *Richard II*, 1978.

Different costume designers may use a variety of methods to ensure that no detail for any character has been forgotten. One such aid is shown here. The dress parade is a means of checking hemlines and seams, allowing actors to see themselves and each other in costume prior to a dress rehearsal, and providing an opportunity for the actors to handle various costume accessories and props.

Zelma Weisfeld. Costume Checklist and Chart in Bible for *Richard II*, 1978.

Other aids which Weisfeld used for this production include a simple list of items needed by each character for every appearance on stage and a more complicated chart intended to track the existence of each piece, from full robes to shoe buckles. The system of x’s reflects different stages in an item’s creation and readiness for the stage. The

chart is one means of keeping track of the hundreds of items used in a single show, although other methods can be used as well.

The various sketches, lists, charts, plans, and miscellaneous notes for a production are kept in binders called ‘bibles.’ *Richard II* was complicated enough to require two such ring binders.

Zelma Weisfeld. Costume Sketch, *Richard II*, 1978.

A third finished sketch for Bolingbroke was needed for this play. The first two, displayed in Case 9, show the shift from royal blue to regal red (Acts I and IV). For Acts II & III, however, Bolingbroke must appear as the challenger for the crown who is ultimately successful. In Act II he has arrived back in England from a period of exile and is gathering his supporters and forces around him; in Act III he is on the battlefield. The costume is the Bolingbroke blue with the red rose of the House of Lancaster prominently displayed on his chest. The blue cape has been painted to darken the fabric making it more appropriate for war scenes.

Case 7

Zelma Weisfeld. Costume Sketches, *Richard II*, 1978.

Part of director Burgwin’s vision for the play was that the staging would reflect King Richard’s changing fortunes. Since one of Richard’s emblems was the sun-king, Weisfeld introduced him in Act I wearing a blazing sun on his chest. In this way Richard appears in gold and white, with all of his faction also dressed in pale colors.

At this point in the play he is at the height of his power. As his fortunes deteriorate his colors become more subdued, never going entirely to black, but shifting more and more to gray, until by Act III when Richard and Bolingbroke meet at Flint Castle Richard is garbed in this gray-green robe. Yet even in these colors, the same color-palette is used including a gold or yellowish tinge behind the gray. He retains gold trim as seen on his great collar and, of course, his crown. Richard, therefore, begins in a sumptuous, bright costume and moves slowly to simpler, unadorned, and darker-hued dress.

Zelma Weisfeld. Costume Sketches, *Richard II*, 1978.

Richard II's queen and her ladies-in-waiting are also dressed in the bright colors first associated with Richard as all-powerful king. Queen Isabella appears in Act I in a glorious white and gold gown. By Act V, she is in the pink gown shown here with the addition of a darker-hued cape. The pink gown alone was worn earlier in the garden scene of Act III. The queen's first lady-in-waiting is dressed in a dark pink, a material of heavier texture but still within the family of paler colors.

Case 8

Stratford Festival. *Souvenir Programme*, 1999.

The 1999 production of *Richard II* at the Stratford Festival offers an eclectic vision of the play. Directed by Martha Henry with sets by Astrid Janson and costumes by Allan Wilbee, the effect tends towards a time and place that is yet to come. The mix of historical detail and twentieth-century style can carry the viewer to another world, one couched in history but suggestive of universal lessons and human frailty.

On loan from the Collection of the Stratford Festival of Canada Archives.

Stratford Festival. Photographs, *Richard II*, 1999.

These program and production photos illustrate the mixture of styles described above. The viewer is led by details in the costumes to contemplate the many wars and social movements of the twentieth-century.

The actors and roles in the photos are Geordie Johnson as Richard II, William Needles as the Bishop of Carlisle, Steve Ross as Sir John Bagot, Jordan Pettle as Sir John Bushy (seated), and Donald Carrier as Sir Henry Greene.

The 1999 production of *Richard II* was costume designer Allan Wilbee's debut at the Stratford Festival. Mr. Wilbee's theatre career had included nearly fifteen years as an actor and dancer before he shifted his focus to design.

On loan from the Collection of the Stratford Festival of Canada Archives.

Stratford Festival. Wardrobe Dresser Sheets, *Richard II*, 1999.

Descriptions of Richard's principal costumes are given on these two wardrobe dresser sheets. The one on the left describes his Costume #1 which includes the basic shirt and trousers worn under several outer layers. For this basic costume the cream silk brocaded robe and belt seen in the photo to the right are added on stage. Costume #2 includes the jacket seen on the mannequin underneath the beige moleskin coat which becomes Costume #3.

Details on these sheets can be in any or all of the categories listed at the bottoms of the sheets.

On loan from the Collection of the Stratford Festival of Canada Archives.

Stratford Festival. Costume Rendering, *Richard II*, 1999.

Allan Wilbee's final drawings for costumes #1 and #2, designed with actor Geordie Johnson in mind. These garments are displayed on the mannequin to the left.

On loan from the Collection of the Stratford Festival of Canada Archives.

Case 9

Zelma Weisfeld. Costume and Costume Sketches, *Richard II*, 1978.

In contrast to Richard's colors of white and gold (see Case 7), Bolingbroke, Duke of Hereford, who becomes King Henry IV by the end of the play, is first dressed in blue, a royal color without being the king's color. He wears various shades of blue, not donning the regal red robe until he actually becomes king in Act IV. Weisfeld's final sketches for these two costumes are shown here.

The tunic is worn by Bolingbroke in Act I. Other individuals associated with Bolingbroke wear costumes either in the blue family or having some blue accent. In plays with as many characters and

factions as is the case with Shakespeare's history plays, it is often very helpful for the costume designer to color-code the characters.

Sketches on loan from Zelma Weisfeld; costume on loan from University of Michigan Theatre and Drama Department.

Case 10

Stratford Festival. Costume Rendering, *Richard III*, 1988.

The 1988 production of *Richard III* at the Stratford Festival was planned as a period piece. Designer Sue LePage created the costumes as realistic, late-fifteenth-century garments. This final sketch gives an excellent idea of the gown actually worn by actress Goldie Semple in the role of Queen Elizabeth. Missing from the mannequin on the right is the jewelry, consisting of a "gold sunburst necklace" and three rings.

On loan from the Collection of the Stratford Festival of Canada Archives.

Stratford Festival. Wardrobe Dresser Sheets, *Richard III*, 1988.

The wardrobe dresser sheets for Queen Elizabeth describe Costume #1 as a "blue panne gown with hanging sleeves and gold Indian trims . . . [and a] blue headdress with jeweled crown & veil." A black mourning veil was overlaid in scene 13.

The second sheet for Costume #2 is the gown worn after King Edward IV's death. The widowed Queen wears a "midnight blue silk brocade dress with hanging sleeves laced back." The material and workmanship in both gowns are exceptional for theatrical costumes.

Designer Sue LePage has enjoyed an extensive career working for numerous companies across Canada, including many productions for the Stratford Festival. She was the 1979 recipient of the Tom Patterson Award at Stratford.

On loan from the Collection of the Stratford Festival of Canada Archives.

Stratford Festival. Production Photo, *Richard III*, 1988.

Included in this photo are Goldie Semple as Queen Elizabeth, James Blendick as Duke of Buckingham, Susan Wright as Queen Margaret, Colm Feore as Richard, and Stephen Russell as Lord Hastings.

On loan from the Collection of the Stratford Festival of Canada Archives.

Case 11

Richard Burgwin. "Concept and Production Plan," *Richard III*, 1979.

The costume designer bases his/her work on the concept or vision for the production usually first articulated by the director. For the 1979 University of Michigan production of *Richard III*, English and theatre professor Richard Burgwin served as director. This essay comprises Burgwin's statement of his plans, describing his "concept" and presenting rough ideas about purpose, set, costume, tone and imagery, emotional effect, and even text.

All items concerning this production are on loan from Zelma Weisfeld unless otherwise noted.

University of Michigan. Department of Theatre and Drama [and] The Professional Theatre Program. Program, *Richard III*, 1979.

These two programs, one showing the cover illustration and one open to Burgwin's essay, "From the Director," summarize Burgwin's final "concept" as it developed during the play's preparation. Research by twentieth-century historians has presented a much different assessment of the king Shakespeare depicted as a murderous villain, even describing him as "quite a successful king who brought good administration and much needed reform in spite of his brief reign."

Zelma Weisfeld. Character Layout, *Richard III*, 1979.

Early in the planning stages for this production, Weisfeld prepared these character sketches. They are layouts of characters in acts and scenes as they might appear together on stage. The sketches enable the designer to present her own vision of color, form, and fabric, to discuss her ideas with the director, and to consider the costumes as they might be seen from the back row of the auditorium. The plans are quite preliminary and are open to change as actors are selected, fabrics are found, and lighting and sets are determined.

Zelma Weisfeld. Fabric Swatches, *Richard III*, 1979.

With the character layouts in hand, the designer begins to choose fabrics. An interesting study is possible for this production by comparing the preliminary sketches with the fabrics ultimately selected. Of note is the red and black patterned material painted darker and used for Richard's jerkin. Following the concept established by Burgwin, the original reds and whites would have been too bright.

Case 12

Zelma Weisfeld. Costume Sketches and Production Photos, *Richard III*, 1979.

Two final drawings are shown here with photos taken during performances. The black-patterned gown for Lady Anne in Act I as well as the red-hued patterned jerkin for King Richard in Act III remained surprisingly consistent throughout the various stages in the play's preparation.

Shown in the photos are Nicholas Pennell as Richard III and Terry Hallquist as Lady Anne.

Zelma Weisfeld. Character Scene Chart, *Richard III*, 1979.

A character scene chart is a particularly useful tool for the costume designer. It is absolutely necessary to determine who is on stage at the same time and how much time is available for costume changes.

Zelma Weisfeld. Costume Plot and Costume Chart, *Richard III*, 1979.

Both of these documents are part of the bible for *Richard III*. Just as displayed for Richard II (see Case 6), these lists and charts ensure comprehensive coverage for all items that make up each character's costume.

Case 13

Stratford Festival. Costume Rendering, *Richard III*, 1988.

Designer Sue LePage created a dark costume for King Richard in Act IV, scene iv when he is confronted by the widowed Queens, Elizabeth and Margaret, and the Duchess of York, each accusing him of separate murders. Over the basic doublet is an overlaid tunic of black suede with gold and silver studs. The crown is an "everyday coronet."

On loan from the Collection of the Stratford Festival of Canada Archives.

Stratford Festival. Wardrobe Dresser Sheet and Production Photo, *Richard III*, 1988.

King Richard wears a full set of armor for the battle against the forces of Henry, Earl of Richmond (Act V, scenes iv and v). The photo shows Colm Feore as Richard and Geraint Wyn Davies as Richmond as they clash on the battlefield, while the wardrobe dresser sheet describes the costume supporting the armor. In the production Mr. Feore wore a gray canvas shirt with quilted padding under the armor. On the mannequin the undergarments are not those used by Mr. Feore, but ones created to fit this particular mannequin.

On loan from the Collection of the Stratford Festival of Canada Archives.

Case 14

Zelma Weisfeld. Costume and Costume Sketches, *Richard II* and *Richard III*, 1978 and 1979.

The costume shown here is the tabard worn by the king's standard bearers and heralds. The quartered pattern containing the fleurs-de-lis of France and the lions of England was a principal heraldic device for both Richard II (1377-1399) and Richard III (1483-1485). As a result, Weisfeld used the same costume for both plays.

The tabard in its current state is the result of the 1979 production of *Richard III*. For that play director Richard Burgwin wanted the costumes to reflect a crumbling, decaying society under the leadership of an evil, corrupt king. Thus the stage was generally dark and textured, and costumes reused from *Richard II* needed to be darkened. In this instance the tabard was over-painted with black, either by spray or dry-brush.

The four costume sketches are from the production of *Richard II*. They provide an excellent example of how a basic black costume for attendants and soldiers can be easily adjusted by the addition of tabards and hats to create lancebearers and other necessary but minor characters associated with a particular faction.

Sketches on loan from Zelma Weisfeld; costume on loan from University of Michigan Theatre and Drama Department.

Freestanding Displays

Stratford Festival. Coronation Crown and Program, *Richard III*, 1988.

Designer Sue LePage pursued historical accuracy in all the details of her designs, including, of course, King Richard's coronation robe and crown. The crown is very similar to a drawing in a manuscript now in the British Library and reproduced in Planché's *Cyclopaedia of Costume* (see Case 3).

This crown was worn by Colm Feore as Richard III in the 1988 Stratford Festival production. The photocopy of one page from the program includes a color photograph of the robe and crown as seen in the play.

On loan from the Collection of the Stratford Festival of Canada Archives.

Stratford Festival. Costume, *Richard II*, 1999.

Geordie Johnson as Richard
Directed by Martha Henry
Costumes by Allan Wilbee

On loan from the Collection of the Stratford Festival of Canada Archives.

Stratford Festival. Costume, *Richard III*, 1988.

Goldie Semple as Queen Elizabeth
Directed by Brian Rintoul
Designed by Sue LePage

On loan from the Collection of the Stratford Festival of Canada Archives.

Stratford Festival. Suit of Armor, *Richard III*, 1988.

Colm Feore as Richard, Act V

Directed by Brian Rintoul

Designed by Sue LePage

*On loan from the Collection of the
Stratford Festival of Canada Archives.*

**Stratford Festival. Horse saddle and head/neck armor,
Henry V, 1980.**

Although made for a play set in a period approximately sixty years earlier than *Richard III*, this saddle and horse armor are excellent reminders of Planché's goals of recreating an historical period in every aspect of a play's presentation.

The 1980 Stratford production of *Henry V* was designed as a period piece. Directed by Peter Moss and with costumes and props by John Pennoyer and Daphne Dare, these items were used as scenery. The saddle was never intended to be sat in but was instead a background piece along with the armor helping to re-create an armory in which one of the scenes of the play was set.

*On loan from the Collection of the
Stratford Festival of Canada Archives.*

*“From Jerkin to Jacket: Changing Styles in
Shakespearean Costume Design”*

A public lecture by Kathryn Beam, Curator of the exhibit
“Costuming in Shakespeare’s History Plays”

The lecture will be presented on:

Sunday, March 11, 1:00 pm

Thursday, March 15, 6:30 pm

Sunday, March 18, 1:00 pm

Special extended hours for the exhibit in connection with performances
of the Royal Shakespeare Company:

Sunday, March 11: 12:30-4:30 pm

Tuesday, March 13: 5:00-7:30 pm

Thursday, March 15: 5:00-7:30 pm

Sunday, March 18: 12:30-4:30 pm

Cover Image Credits:

Front: "Richard as King, and Armed" from: James Robinson Planché. *Twelve Designs for the Costume of Shakespeare's Richard the Third*. London: Colnaghi and son, 1830.

Back: "Mowbray's Lancebearer," original sketch by Zelma Weisfeld for the University of Michigan production of *Richard II*, 1978.

We hope you will plan to visit our next exhibit,
"Dictionaries and the Rise of Middle English
Lexicography," due to open in April, 2001.

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"Mowbray's Lancebearer"