

The world of farce is a tricky one. Within it, there are very few rules, very little structure, and little of anything that resembles real and expected life. Yet, within this realm, there is also a sense of urgency, of terrible and true crises edging into the frame and disrupting the carefully orchestrated chaos. It is here that stories such as this one take place.

Because of all of this, it is important to me that the actors both look as though they live in a realm of fantasy, while at the same time look natural and comfortable in what they are wearing. Costumes are not a last-minute design element-they are the character's clothing; clothing is a private statement about who each of us is, and what we wish to exhibit to the world. Therefore, it is important that not only should the simple aspects of a character's inner monologue seep into the costume design (elegance, etiquette, upbringing, etc.), but also that some of the wilder aspects find their way to the surface. As Stephen Sondheim says, "I like neurotic people. I like to hear the rumblings



beneath the surface." And, therefore, it was my job to bring out and place on exhibition some of those rumblings.

It is through a mixture of design elements of the Belle Epoque, the performer Bjork, and various elements of Runway and Couture fashion that I have tried to coax forth the inner demons of each character and bring out some of the following elements: the inner matador in Histangua, the shallow sexuality of Tournel, the innocence and coquettishness of Raymonde, the sexually frank and unabashedly forward word of Olympe and

Finache, etc. It is my feeling that the easiest way to do this, without delving into the cliché or stereotypical, is to use Runway fashion, a world where the absolutely ridiculous meets the absolutely serious.

In closing, I would reiterate that it is imperative to me that the characters look, if not *natural* in their costumes, then at least *rational*, because as Julie Taymor says, “I don’t want costumes; I want clothing.”

-Caroline Stine