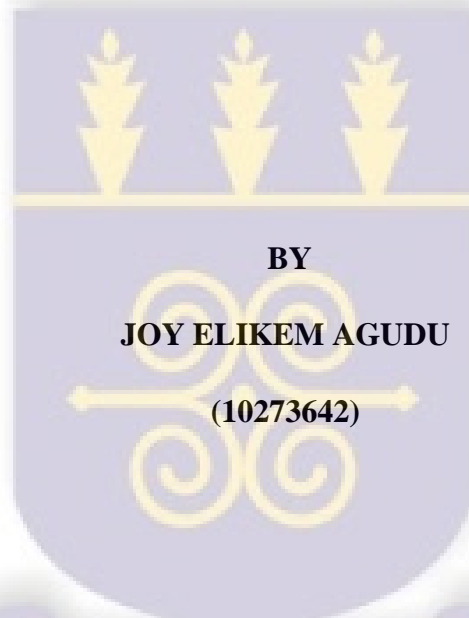


**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**  
**SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS**

***COSTUMING ALLEGORICAL CHARACTERS FOR  
COLORED GIRLS WHO HAVE CONSIDERED SUICIDE  
WHEN THE RAINBOW IS ENUF***



**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD  
OF MASTER IN FINE ARTS (MFA) THEATRE ARTS DEGREE**

**JULY, 2015**

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that apart from the references to other people's works, which have been duly acknowledged, this project work is of the result of my own original investigation and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

**Candidate Name: Joy Elikem Agudu**

Signature.....

Date.....

**Principal Supervisor**

Miss Cecilia Adjei

Signature.....

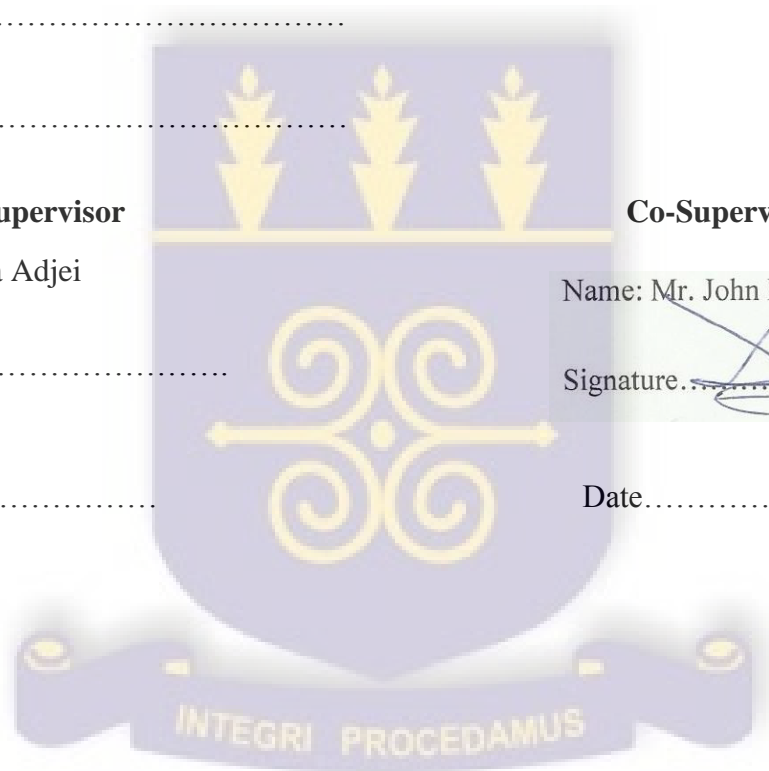
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**Co-Supervisor**

Name: Mr. John K Djisenu

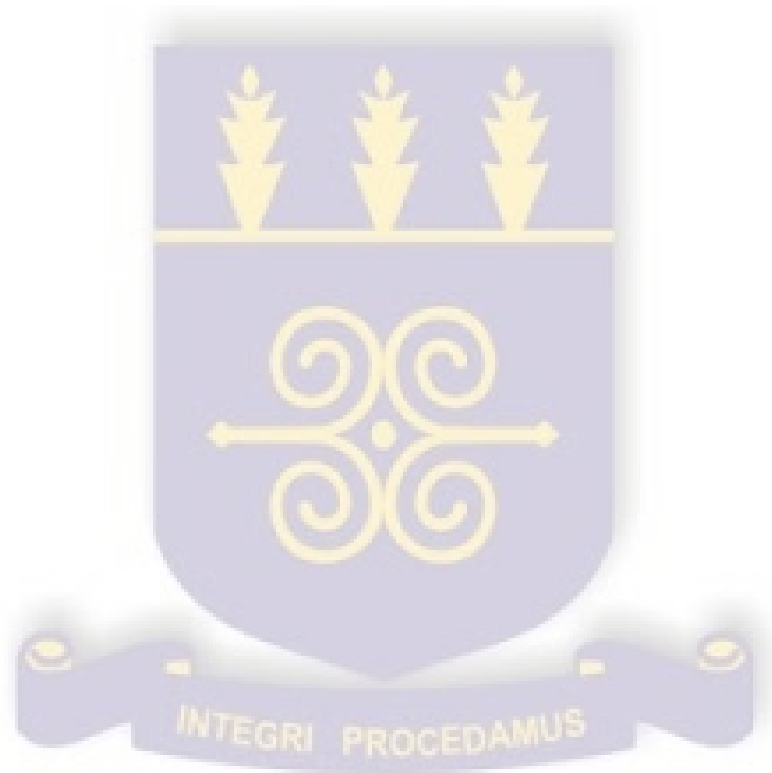
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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty and the entire Sosu, Dugah and Agudu families.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

My greatest appreciation is due to God Almighty and my principal supervisor Madam Cecilia Adjei, for giving me directions and making corrections that have resulted in the presentation of this work. Thank you for being a strong pillar in my academic life, and scolding me with one hand while drawing me closer with the other, as you put up with me during this thesis project period.

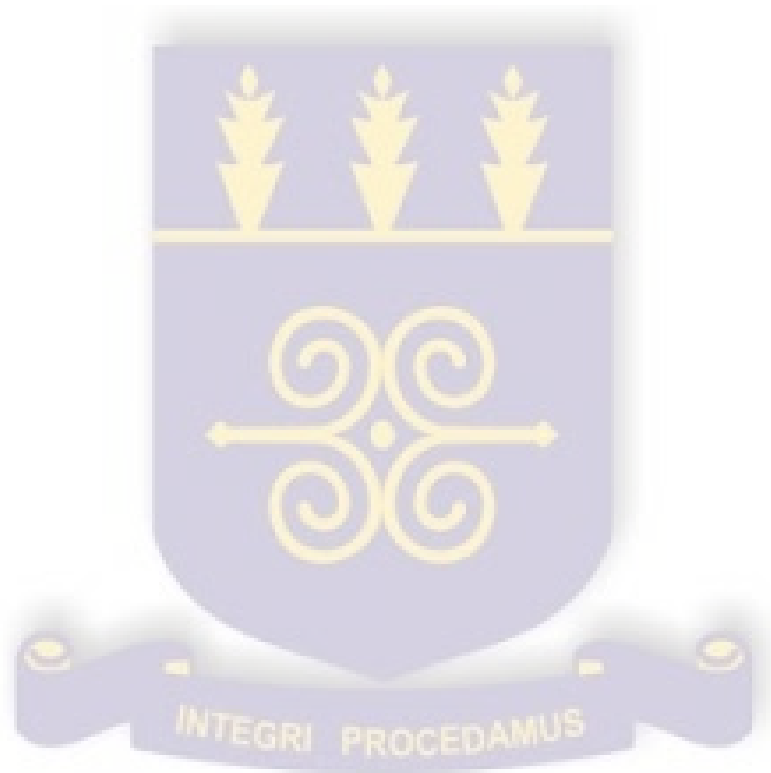
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Finally, I acknowledge the contributions of my immediate family for all their financial support. Not forgetting my friends especially Harry Agyeman, Eunice Baaba Hazel, Precious Akos Dominic, Melissa Aba Wallace, Iddrissu Kananzoe (I.S), JnJ Dance Ministry, Frank Edzii, Ebenezer Blessing and Jonathan Dubgatey. Their daily inspirational words have been a fountain of hope and encouragement.

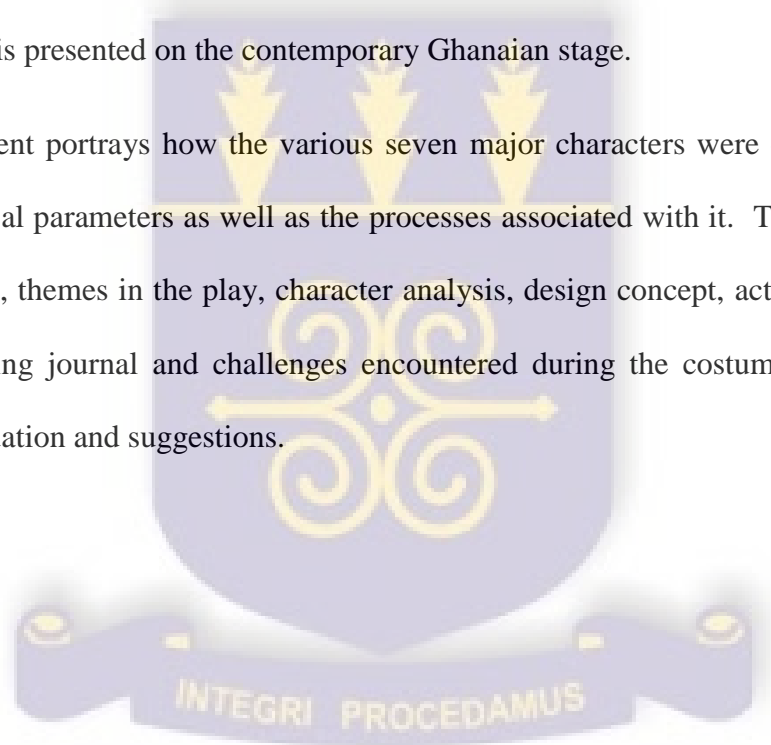


## ABSTRACT

This research explores how allegorical characters can be costumed using Ntozake Shange's *For Colored Girls who have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf* as a case study. It delineates on the need for a costume designer to enmesh herself in the total objective of the author and director before creating a suitable costume within the allegorical purview.

It therefore traces the historical and biographical sources of the author to deduce ideas for the creative process. The play written in 1974 and set in America among the 'black' community is presented on the contemporary Ghanaian stage.

This document portrays how the various seven major characters were costumed within the allegorical parameters as well as the processes associated with it. This also includes the synopsis, themes in the play, character analysis, design concept, action chart, colour chart, working journal and challenges encountered during the costuming process and finally evaluation and suggestions.



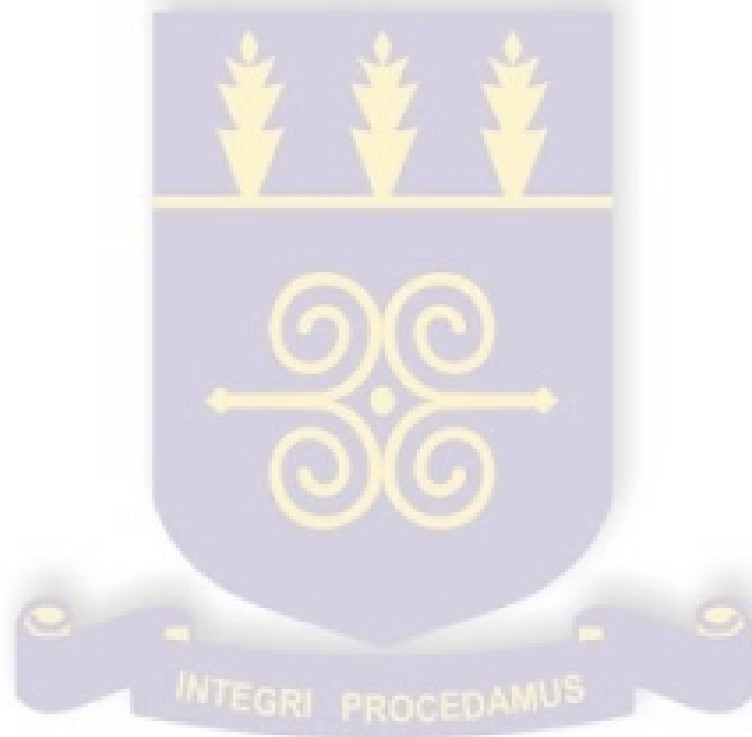
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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

This work seeks to discuss and experiment with costumes in achieving the portrayal of characters in an allegorical purview using Ntozake Shange's play, *For Colored Girls Who have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf* written in 1974.

Clothing worn daily basis, define and describe us. Whether bought in a store or designed at home. Occasionally, practical consideration in wearing these clothes come to play. Such as, comfort, availability and pricing. Even in these circumstances, the selected outfits of the individual reflect his persona. Costumes therefore communicate and reflect a character's personality. It also points out the nature of a character, as well as convey the spirit and intent of the persona.

The *Lotus Illustrated Dictionary of Art* (Harding 2010:11) defines an allegory as “a type of figurative expression, usually a narrative with one or more personifications and often with some moralizing conclusion”.<sup>1</sup> It is derived from the Greek word, ‘allegoria’ that literally means, “Speaking otherwise”.<sup>2</sup> Nordquist (2010:5) defines it as a “rhetorical strategy of extending a metaphor through an entire narrative so that objects, persons and actions in the text are equated with meaning that lie outside the text”.<sup>2</sup> These definitions suggest that, if a whole story is meant to be read as a representation of some human idea, concept, or historical event, it should not be read and understood literally. In addition to that, if the playwright wishes not to say something in a straightforward manner, then

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<sup>1</sup> Harding, P. (2010) *Lotus Illustrated Dictionary of Art*. New : Lotus Press <sup>2</sup> Wheeler's page of literary terms <https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/resource>

<sup>2</sup> Nordquist, R. (2010). *Thinking Allegory Otherwise*. California: Stanford University Press.

detailed consideration should be given to interpretation of the text to draw meaning out of it.

Moore's glossary of *Theatre of Appreciation terms* also defines an allegory "as the representation of an abstract theme or themes through the symbolic use of character, action, and other concrete elements in a play".<sup>3</sup> I agree with this definition in that, characters, ideas or events in a literary text show a larger concept that are not directly said but implied. Whatever the larger concept may be, the author uses it to provide his commentary on the subject matter.

Cooper and Mackey (1995:12) also suggest that an allegory could be a "parallel to symbolize a real meaning".<sup>4</sup> Typical examples are the parables in the Bible, including the parable of the sower and the talents found in Mark 4:1-41 of the New International Version Bible. These parables, the events and happenings are likened to the kingdom of God. This is not the focus of my work. Likewise, allegories used in medieval plays purposefully to teach some moral lessons in order to distinguish good from bad. The writers of these medieval plays were anonymous as there were no specific authors. They always had hidden messages, and as one read or listened to the stories, one eventually recognized subtle hints that led to the allegory or the true message that the author wanted to send.

Moving further, Agyekum (2013: 101) espouses that, "in a simple allegory, characters and other ingredients often stand for other definite meanings, which are often abstractions. In effect, abstract qualities and actions are personified in allegories".<sup>6</sup> That

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<sup>3</sup> [abs.kafkas.edu.tr/upload/225/Theatre Appreciation-Terms.pdf](http://abs.kafkas.edu.tr/upload/225/Theatre%20Appreciation-Terms.pdf) on 17<sup>th</sup> August, P.201)

<sup>4</sup> Cooper, S. & Mackey, S. (1995) *Theater studies an Approach for advanced level*. England: Stanley Thorres Ltd. <sup>6</sup> Agyekum, K. (2013). *Introduction to Literature*. Legon- Accra: Adwinsa Publications.

is to say, they are given human characteristics. In a Ghanaian play like *The Marriage of Anansewa* by Efua Sutherland, Michael Etherton is quoted by John Djisenu in the publication, Fontom from (2000) as giving a political interpretation to the play. He analyzes the play as

An allegorical representation of Ghana's policy on nonalignment in its relations with other nations following Independence. Anansewa is Ghana; Ananse the national leader; the four chiefs the representatives of the international community.<sup>5</sup>

Like Ananse who wants to marry his daughter to the man who loves her the most, Ghanaian leaders try to have an alliance with promises but, as much as possible, maintain their independence.

One may ask, why I consider Ntozake Shange's play, *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf*, as an allegorical play. The characters are nameless and are represented by rainbow colours thus making them abstract. The only information the playwright gives about them is that they are women. Secondly, the women in the play are a representation of all women who suffer abuse or rape as stated in the play. In addition to this, they have no definite or direct contact with their close families or friends. Their life stories are narrated by themselves through the use of poetry. Much work then lies in the hands of a costume designer to bring to bear the inner or „spiritual“ intent of each character as interpreted in the play.

Allegorical characters can therefore be described as personalities that are comparable to things or events that have human attributes in order to show some level of moral or intellectual lessons. These characters have subtle inner characteristics in that they

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Etherton, *The Development Of African Drama* (London: Hutchinson,1982):226

communicate either the thoughts or the ideas of the author. In the play, we see seven nameless coloured women, representing stories of several women whose lives are a struggle with the complicities of 'black women identities' against the backdrop of abuse, rape and betrayal. The playwright describes these women as "nameless and assume hegemony as dictated by the fullness of their lives"<sup>6</sup> (1977: xii). The visual elements in a theatrical performance, that include costume, go a long way to help with the interpretation and character analysis. It plays a unique role in the advancement of the dramatic action; hence the need for their rightful interpretation on stage. It is the role of the visual elements, such as costume, to bring to life the inner spirit and intent of characters.

Costume, according to Barbara and Cletus Anderson "is the distinctive style of a people, class, locality or period. It expresses an individual's role at a glance as well as subtly suggests a character's vice, virtues and hidden traits"<sup>7</sup> (1999:18). It is therefore essential for a costume designer to provide the appropriate attire that represents the true attribute of a character. By the cautious use of colour, shape, fabric and sometimes the sound the fabric makes, a costume designer can infuse designs with some distinctiveness in contrast to the standard dress which the character is expected to use. This makes the designer an artist and as such is expected to be more creative and incorporate creative abilities to develop innovative designs that describe the internal thoughts of a character.

Therefore, the process of creativity is essential to the work of a designer and the materials used for the work. There is the need for proper interpretation on stage for the audience to make meaning out of the characters. This seeks to suggest that the moment a

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<sup>6</sup> Shange, N. (1977). *For Colored Girls who have Considered Suicide when the Rainbow is Enuf*. New York: First Collier Books.

<sup>7</sup> Anderson, B and Anderson, C. (1999) *Costume Design*. New York: Earl McPeck.

character appears on stage, dressed in a certain way and fitted with certain clothing and accessories he/she should reflect to a certain degree the inner intent for which the character represents.

It is against this background that this thesis-project seeks to employ the historical and artistic methodological approach aided by the elements and principles of design to create costumes for the characters in the chosen play.

### **Why I chose Costume Design**

The elaborate use of designs, patterns and decorations as well as make up on the actor or a model has always caught my attention as I was growing up. I could spend almost half of my day looking through magazines and journals to find clothes and how they have been designed and worn by models. This course was chosen primarily because of the interest, talent and potential discovered since childhood. I became interested also in choosing materials that could be used to make dresses by joining pieces picked from different places for my dolls. It had always been my greatest desire to be a designer but of which kind I could not tell until I came of age. It did not come as a surprise to my parents when I opted to major in costume and make-up in order to have an in-depth understanding about costume and make-up design so that I can contribute my quota to the body of knowledge and practice that already exist.

### **Problem Statement**

The use of appropriate costumes that delineate a character cannot be overemphasized. Achieving spectacle in a production through the use of costume is very essential. However, in recent times, the same cannot be said of costumes for both screen and stage

productions, especially when these characters do not have concrete associations or well defined character traits.

Costumes used in some movies seldom reflect the attributes of the character. Thus communication through costume is minimal or not present at all. Some costumes prescribed for actors are based on the fashion trends in vogue, thereby turning the production into a display of designer wears and fashion styles. Often, some directors take it upon themselves to determine and dictate the kind of costumes an actor must wear. With my personal experience in this regard, the movie industry has consequently turned into a parade of different fashion styles and a display of stylish garments that have no bearing on the movie. Some movies are also shown with the whole citizenry wearing the same type of fabrics. Including the chiefs and elders, making the production unimaginative, with no proper identification. My thesis- project seeks to address some of the above-mentioned problems and concerns.

### **Objectives of Study**

The study aims to achieve the following:

- Analyse the said script and individual characters, scene by scene for appropriate costume.
- Convey the significance of individual characters or theme of the play.
- Create costumes revealing the inner intent of the characters.
- Document the step-by-step scholarly approach in creating costumes for the chosen play so as to serve as a reference point for future costume designers.

## **Methodology**

The researcher seeks to:

- Thoroughly read and re-read the script to analyse each character in the play for appropriate costume.
- Identify the mood of the play, taking into consideration the given circumstances, the setting and the background of the play to serve as an aid to costume the characters.
- Experiment and create costumes for the characters using the artistic methodological approach.
- Use the historical research methodology, by reviewing existing literature (library sources, articles, journals, on-line/internet materials,) on the stated topic.

## **Justification of the study**

The costumes of actors on stage to depict the period or era of the play is no doubt justified. The establishment of relations as well as occupation is also of much importance. In addition, the work seeks to reveal the inner intent of characters through costume to enable the audience to distinguish between characters and their traits.

## **Significance of Study**

The study is important in the sense that it provides room for the designer to explore possible ways of presenting characters on stage who have limited information from the script about them. It also allows the costume designer to enhance the movements of such characters on stage.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the researcher reviews existing literature in the field of costume design, colour and the intended design concept as well as the clothing style of the seventies in America among Africans. A brief history of the African Americans and an overview of their art and culture are also considered. In order to comprehend the concept of costume design, a detailed explanation of each word is examined.

#### Costume

Costume as defined by the Andersons (1994:20) is “anything worn on stage whether it be layers of clothing or nothing at all. It includes all accessories used by the actor such as hats, jewellery, bags, mufflers, shoes, fans and all items the actor carries as part of his characterization”.<sup>8</sup> The Encyclopaedia Americana (2001: 378) also defines clothing as “all the elements used in covering and adorning the body such as headdress, jewellery, accessories, hand items, footwear and body designs, in relation to a country, time, class or position”.<sup>9</sup> In view of their common elements, the words costume and clothing may be used interchangeably to mean apparel.

Costume reflects the historical, present and past of an individual, including his community, sex, age, status and occupation. Barton (1963:23) supports this claim by stating that “costume is the outward and visible sign of the inner spirit which informs any given period and nationality”<sup>10</sup>. The internal character traits of an individual are made manifest through the costume he wears. In addition, each costume is unique to every period and a people’s civilization. This distinguishes them from other nationals

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<sup>8</sup> Anderson, B. Anderson, C. (1999). *Costume design*. New York: Earl McPeck.

<sup>9</sup> Encyclopedia Americana. (2001).vol. 9, Danbur, Connecticut: Grolier Incorporated.

<sup>10</sup> Barton, L. (1963). *Historic Costume for the Stage*. Boston: Walter H Baker Company.

and it communicates non-verbally to onlookers. For instance, the Romans were particular about one's status in society, and clothes were a simple way of expressing one's status. Rich people wore purple because it was an expensive dye; and important men had red shoes. Barton (1963:121) shares these views as follows:

Ancient Rome was very much a “face-to-face” society and public display and recognition of status were an essential part of having cloths. Much of Roman clothing was designed to reveal the social status of its wearer, particularly for freeborn men. In typical Roman fashion, the more distinguished the wearer, the more his dress was distinctively marked, while the dress of the lowest classes was often not marked at all.<sup>11</sup>

In the same vein, Kurland (2004:2) asserts that “costumes are not mere garments, they are visual tools used to release the soul of a character – a way to lift a character off the page into a three dimensional world”.<sup>12</sup> This implies that, the costume an actor wears on stage depicts his inner spirit, which is made visible to the outer world. The mood of the actor, to a larger extent, is revealed to the audience through his costume.

Psychologically, costumes aid an actor to express his emotional state to the audience. The costume serves as a tangible tool to express the intangibility of a character's behaviour. Arnold (2001:411) confirms this in his book, *The Creative Spirit: An Introduction to Theatre* that “the character definition expressed through costume must support rather than impede the actor's work”.<sup>13</sup> Kaiser (1985:184) also adds, “Wearing costume are more tangible and visible than any other form of human behaviour”.<sup>14</sup> This is quite true for the Ghanaian actor who may be draped in cloth as a Chief. His

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Kurland, J. (2004). *50 Designers/50 Costumes*. Beverly Hills: Galleries of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

<sup>13</sup> Arnold, S. (2001). *The Creative Spirit an introduction to Theatre*. Toronto: Mayfield Publishing Company

<sup>14</sup> Kaiser, S. (1985) *The Social Psychology of Clothing and Personal Adornment*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company

demeanour and gestures are well calculated and majestic, showing forth some level of pomposity and glamour, thereby expressing the kingly and noble nature of his status. On the other hand, a dancer in a bright coloured, lightweight attire does so to relieve any weight that may impede movements. This is seen in Lady in Purple's costume for the poem Sechita (Fig 3.26), she is given a light see-through black skirt to enable her execute her dance movement with ease.

## **Design**

To achieve a design, three main processes are required. These are thinking, looking and doing. Lauer (1990:4) suggests, "These activities are not in any chronological order but rather may be overlapped or performed in any order".<sup>15</sup> The concept of design usually refers to the motivation behind a work of art. Lauer (1990:2) defines design "as a planned arrangement of elements to form a visual pattern".<sup>16</sup> In relation to costume, the costumier needs to employ the ground rules and elements of design, which include line, colour, shape, form, space, texture and light to bring out the distinctive visuals of the character's personality. Lauer's definition also seeks to suggest that the output of a design must always have a visual organization. By extension, a design concept must relate to the setting, props and lighting. This is because communication is the core of an artwork, and the visual representation is always key to convey that message.

Keiser and Garner (2003:177) define design as "the organization of design elements using design principles to create products that are considered aesthetically pleasing to the observer".<sup>17</sup> Carroll and Rosson (1985:9) propound that a "design is a non-

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<sup>15</sup> Lauer, D.(1990) *Design Basics*. New York: Dryden Press

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Kaiser, S. & Garner, M.B.(2003) *Beyond Design: the Synergy of Apparel Product Development*. New York: Fairchild Publications, Inc.

hierarchical process that is neither strictly bottom up nor down”.<sup>18</sup> This goes to buttress the point made earlier by Lauer concerning the concept of looking, thinking and doing in design. In designing, inspiration may come from all sorts of sources, either by a thought or by participating in an activity. ‘The thinking’, must be done by having a clear understanding of the artistic processes involved. ‘The looking’, recommends that the artist be very observant with the things surrounding him to draw inspiration from them. ‘The doing’, on the other hand, has to do with executing of all the things the artist has conceptualised. This involves try outs with possible materials that best communicate the design. The designer can start with a cheap product, like old newspapers as a sample method or rough sketches of ideas. This allows him to experiment and explore possible ways of developing the design hence employing ‘the thinking’ process. In my case for instance, my first try out material was with polyene rubbers. I realised stitching and having them in shape for the actor to feel comfortable will be problematic so I chose to you fabric instead.

In the final stage of a design, there are instances where some accidents or mistakes do occur to the artwork. For instance, a mistaken slit created on the shoulder sleeves of Lady in Purple’s costume created wide opened sleeves. It was later realised this mistake enhanced her hand movement. These accidents do not, in all occasions mar the initial intent. On the contrary, they make the artwork more stimulating and attractive. This goes to support an observation made by the Andersons (1999:v) in their book, *Costume Design*: “costume design is both an art form and a practical craft, a duality that makes the field somewhat difficult to master and equally elusive to explain to others”.<sup>19</sup> These

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<sup>18</sup> Carroll, J and Roson, M. (1985) *Usability Specifications As A Tool In Interaction Development*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex,1-28,

<sup>19</sup> Anderson, B. Anderson, C. (1999). *Costume design*. New York: Earl McPeck

design processes are also relevant in the creative steps of designing costumes for the allegorical characters in the play, *For Colored Girls who have Considered Suicide when the Rainbow is Enuf*. However, in order to develop these designs, I considered the type of lifestyle and clothing styles used in the era the play was set in order to develop a design theme for the costumes.

### **The Use of Quilts**

The quilt (fig3.13) as a multi-purpose cloth is of significant use in the ‘black’ communities in America. The quilt provided warmth, preserved memories of events and could be used as a source of storytelling, using the images embossed on it. In addition to its complexities, the quilt serves as a ‘message board’ for the underground railroad to guide slaves on their way north to freedom. Some unique techniques known to the African American quilts include patchwork, applique quilt among others. They were characterised by some features, which include asymmetrical designs, bright colours, and bold geometric shapes, which are spiritual symbols. Therefore, although the quilt is so simple, it has its complex nature. It is in view of this that I used the quilt as my design bases for *Lady in Red*. She refers to her love as complicated. Having a complex design to express a complicated emotion is what I sort to achieve.

In an interview with Emeritus Professor Jacob U. Gordon, the second occupant of the Kwame Nkrumah Chair, Institute of African Studies of the University of Ghana he stated categorically that the aesthetic sense that existed among the ‘blacks’ around the 1970s placed a leading element of the African response to art. He calls its polycentrism. He explained further that, the term refers to the presence of several colours in painting or several movements on a dance body occurring in the context of the presentation of art. In this period, the use of colours was varied and profound. He reiterated that, African

Americans around this period were preoccupied with reconnecting to their African roots through their food, music, clothing and literature. He described it as a period of ‘reassertion’. However, some of the designs also reflected Asian cultural influence as people sought answers to their spiritualist teachings. The belief in magic was also prevalent in that era. People resorted to mediums to know their ancestry. It is important to note that the 1960’s trend of expressions in décor and art continued into the 1970’s. This resulted in the creation of many stylish and innovative design trends that are still popular again today.

### **The Notion of Colour among African Americans**

The first thing that comes to mind when colour is mentioned to an ordinary African American is the word race (this does not represent the entire black race though). The researcher arrived at this notion after a personal conversation with some foreign students who are African Americans at the University of Ghana campus. In view of their sensitivity to colour, I had to clarify my intended notion in order to elicit the answer I wanted. The answers were that, colours that were trendy in the 70s were bright green, turquoise, sunshine yellow, orange and brown. White was used everywhere – in furniture as well as for backgrounds to offset brighter colours. Some of the other strong uses of black and white were often accented with a bright colour. There was no particular meaning attached to colours but the bold use of them; like red, yellow and orange gave an impression of sophistication. Emeritus Gordon recounted his ‘hey’ days in the seventies in America. He said; ‘everybody wanted to look ‘chic’ and hip. Nobody wanted to be regarded as simple or boring. Even those who wore tones of brown, blue or purple had a shining effect to it. This was also reflected in their use of pillows, accent chairs and other fixtures.

## **The Use of Colour in Costume Design**

One major thing that one notices with regards to costumes worn by an actor on stage is colour. In simple terms, colour is the effect of light on an object. The colour of a costume enhances or helps project the characters mood and this deeply affects the audience awareness of the character created by the costumier. In the play, colour is emphasized. Selected colours from the rainbow are used to identify the women in the play. The setting of the play in this production is in America, within the black community. However, as this play is to be presented to a Ghanaian audience, a careful study of how Africans perceive colour is considered in order to understand their perception about the colours used in a setting not familiar to them.

These colours are red, yellow, green, blue, orange, purple, and brown. Each colour carries a meaning, which is subjective to every society or group of people.

In the Ghanaian setting, colours are symbolic and their meanings convey a moods and feelings.

### **Red**

The use of the colour red signifies close blood relations, anger, war or danger. It is associated with nature's red tomatoes. It is usually used for funerals, invitations for warning against danger, violence, and sometimes outdoor ceremonies. In the Asante region, the *Asafo* warriors generally dress in red. With the Krobos, their puberty rite ceremony, known as *Dipo* often has the initiated girls in a tomato red strip of fabric about eighteen inches wide and seventy-two inches long. It is passed between their legs and draped over waist beads. Leaving the ends hanging loose at both the front and back. In addition, among the Akans and Ewes, women tie red bands around their heads over their dark headkerchiefs during the early part of funeral ceremonies. They do this to

signify that they are closely related to the dead and second, that death is a terrible loss to them in particular.

### **Yellow**

This colour is associated with ripe lemon, such as gold. It is worn during marriage ceremonies, puberties and other similar ceremonies like installation of chief and for parties. It also stands for warmth and controlled fire. Prosperity, glory, maturity and prime life. They are also used to symbolize the presence and influence of God in society and the rule of a king. Among Akans, Gas, and Ewes it is traditionally almost a rule that the chiefs use gold ornaments, while the queen mothers tend to use silver. It is probably for the same reason that most durbars of chiefs in Ghana are so often dominated by all tones of yellow. The yellow colour is used in the costume for Lady in Yellow. She lost her virginity. This is deemed as very valuable and treasured in our Ghanaian society.

### **Green**

This connotes newness, fertility, growth and vitality. It is associated with vegetation. It is also worn during puberty rites and hunting. During the Fante and Ga puberty initiation ceremonies, green is worn as the colour of cloth during the second stage of the initiation rite. A highly scented green preparation called 'Krobo' is used in daubing the body of a mother a week after she has delivered a child successfully.

### **Orange**

This colour suggests sunlight and anger. This colour is a blend of red and yellow. It is a colour used to show cheerfulness, flamboyant and extroverted personalities. It is often used for social occasions like weddings and parties. A colour associated with self-confidence and independence usually for people who are adventurous and risk-takers.

### **Purple**

This colour has no origin in our Ghanaian setting. It was an expensive dye derived from shellfishes in the Mediterranean seas. It was a colour strictly used by the rich because of its rare usage. A colour meant for royals and nobles among ancient Greek and Roman.

### **Blue**

It signifies early dawn, love, female tenderness and the rule of a queen. It is the colour of the sky. They are worn for love and charm. It is usually worn during outdoor ceremonies and for serene appearances. It is also often used to symbolize the rule of a queen mother. Among the Fantes, up to this day the widow/widower is made to wear *Birisi* (indigo blue cloth) as soon as the death of the spouse is announced. This is to symbolize the fact that he or she has been closest to the heart of the dead one.

## **Brown**

This represents the decay or rottenness of things that have passed away. This colour is close to the soil and it is associated with it as well as colour of rotten objects. It is also used to mourn the dead. Farmers and hunters often use this colour. This colour is used on the costume for lady in Brown. She introduces the play with the poem dark phrases. She desires to free herself from the pain and struggles of this life. The use of the brown colour highlights her condition.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS OF WORK

This chapter is an overview of the methodological process used in designing clothing for the play, *For Colored Girls who have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf* written by Ntozake Shange and directed by Vivian Agbovi.

The historical and artistic methodological approach was used to design clothing for characters in the play in order to portray their allegorical traits. The historical methodology helps to trace the beginnings and developments of people, institutions and things. Whereas, the artistic methodology, allows the designer to rely on his or her intuition, inspiration and imagination for the artistic creation and interpretation (Ukala, 2006:15). Thus this work is going to rely on both the historical and artistic approaches to seek historical information to serve as an aid in the creative process.

Additionally, the clothing styles of the African Americans in the seventies were used as a template to redesign costumes for the characters. These clothing styles were used in the era in which the play *For Coloured Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf* was set influenced these designs. These clothing styles were then redeveloped and modified to suit the ‘Concept of Subtlety’. The concept of subtlety is a picked up word by the researcher derived from the word allegory because allegory seeks to portray the not so obvious information about a character.

This was the same thought that underpinned the recreation of the costumes for the seven (7) major characters in the play – the use of subtle hints from the way they communicated their emotional thoughts in the play. Therefore, this concept was used, bearing in mind that the recreated design does not lose its original design significance entirely in the new design.

### **Clothing Style in the Late Seventies In America**

The play was set 1974 among the ‘black community’ of America. It was a time when civil rights awareness had erupted and people of ‘colour’ perused to remove the burdens of colonization and imperialism that suppressed them. The spirit and desire for liberation was prominent all around American through the blacks. (Rakoff, 1999: 16)

During this period, the clothing colours worn were bright and advancing. The men and women wore tight fitting trousers and platform shoes. Most of the women had high long boots and very short jeans. It was a flamboyant fashion fun era, which highlighted some of the best elements of fashion in the 60s but exaggerated some of them. The tunics, skirts and robes were also very popular during this period. Rakoff (1999:18) states that,

It was hard to tell which clothes were meant to be worn at home and which ones were for ‘a night on the town’. They wore butterfly collars, skin-tight t-shirts, sandals, leisure suits, and flower-patterned dress. The most common theme throughout this fashion period was the tight fitting pants(trousers)<sup>20</sup>.

In addition, women from all walks of life wore trousers of different kinds. They wore boots that had several style trends, including the platform, knee-high, stretch vinyl and plain old leather.

Two distinct fashion styles emerged in this period. One was the Parisian peasant style which was common to the ‘black’ community. They wore capes, turbans, glowing colours, billowing skirts and puffy sleeves. The other style was the ‘clean-cut All-American’ style that was borrowed from classic sportswear.

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<sup>20</sup> Rakoff, D. 2012. *This American Life: The Invisible Made Visible* Retrieved August 19.

### **Selection and Background of the Play**

After a careful study of the clothing style in seventies, I approach the graduate directing students to inquire about the play they will direct. I was to find out if their selected plays would enable me achieve my purpose with regard to costumes. I approached some of the graduate directing students and they warmly gave me their scripts to read. After further deliberations, I selected the play, *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf* written by Ntozake Shange and directed by Vivian Agbovi.

### **Synopsis of the Play**

The play recounts the story of African American women and what it is like to be a coloured woman in the then America. The play centres on seven women who encounter some form of abuse, neglect and harassment; either physically, sexually or emotionally. These women are nameless and are represented by the colours of the rainbow. They are: lady in orange, lady in purple, lady in green and lady in brown, lady in red, lady in yellow and lady in blue. The play begins with the characters as mere friends but as the story unfolds, they realize how each of their lives stories are interwoven together. Each woman then becomes a support to the other during some of their most terrifying moments. A wide range of issues, including the manipulation of women, abortion and one-sided love are discussed in the play.

### **About the Author**

Ntozake Shange was born and named as Paulette L. Williams in Trenton, New Jersey, to an upper-middle-class family. Her father was Paul T. Williams, an Air Force surgeon, and her mother was Eloise Williams, an educator and a psychiatric social worker. Growing up in an affluent family gave her the opportunity at that time to read several

books in English, French and Spanish. Her association with jazz groups like Josephine Baker, Miles Davis and Charlie Parker did not also come as a surprise, as they were friends to her parents. Shange graduated with honours from Barnard and moved to Harlem to familiarise herself with the plight of the needy black women in the city. The victimized experiences of the women that she witnessed spurred up anger in her and she expressed them in her poems. This anger and empathy towards the victimized black women could have been caused by her short-lived unhappy marriage to a law student which led her to attempt suicide a number of times. She earned a Master of Arts degree in American studies at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, in 1973, after which she began teaching at various colleges in Northern California. One night while driving home after teaching an evening class, Shange saw a huge rainbow over the city of Oakland, California, and realized that women have a right to survive. Her experience inspired the title of the play, *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf*, composed of twenty poems. She wrote these poems over a period of years, and read them in women's bars in San Francisco during the summer of 1974. She later took the choreographed poems to New York. After two years of off-Broadway performances, Shange combined her poems and formed them into a production. She continues to write drama, fiction, and poetry in America.

The following section will involve a breakdown of some of the thematic concerns in the play. An action chart, colour chart as well as an analysis of each character in the play. For the purposes of directorial concepts, the director chose to add up characters who are not mentioned in the play. These characters are also analysed by the costume designer.

### **Themes in the Play**

According to the *Oxford Learners Dictionary* (2009:652) theme is the main subject or idea in a piece of writing, speech or film<sup>21</sup>. Owusu (2002:2) in his book, *Analysis and Interpretation of Ola Rotimi's The Gods Are Not To Blame*, asserts that 'theme is the central or main idea, the message, determined by the playwright's purpose. It could be a moral lesson, criticism, statement, or observation or a combination of any of these'<sup>22</sup>. In this instance, it is the main subject matter in the play; the pivot on which the play revolves; the message of the play determined by the playwright's purpose. Three major themes identified in this play include:

- a. The brutality and anguish endured and experienced by African American women.
- b. Women of colour deserve to be heard and never subdued.
- c. A black woman should believe in herself and all her elemental values despite the cruelties meted out to her (Working theme)

### **The Brutality And Anguish Endured And Experienced By African American**

#### **Women**

In the poem, *Latent Rapist*, we see the 'ladies' recounting the experience of being raped by a man considered as a friend. In recent times, research has shown that the majority of rape victims suffer at the hands of someone they know such as a family member, a family friend, an acquaintance or a work colleague. The likelihood of being raped by a complete stranger down a dark pathway is now less likely to happen

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<sup>21</sup> *Oxford Learners Dictionary*(2009). Oxford university press. United Kingdom

<sup>22</sup> Owusu Martin (2002). *Analysis and Interpretation of Ola Rotimi 'The Gods Are Not To Blame'* Sedco Enterprise, Accra.

The use of vernacular language makes the poem seem like an inner dialogue. The pieces of sentences begun by one lady and continued by the others shows how rape affects women and how their individual experiences are similar. The short phrases spoken by the different 'ladies' can be likened to the uncertainties and fragments of thoughts similar to a woman dealing with the aftermath of rape. Patching everything together is something every victim goes through after she has been attacked. These women also face the harsh reality of dealing with the scars of their attacks, knowing that since the rapist was a 'friend', pressing charges will be almost impossible.

Another brutal treatment accorded black women by black men is reflected in the story of Beau Willie Brown and his 'baby mama' Crystal. Beau Willie is a Vietnam War veteran who brutalizes his girlfriend with knives and beatings. He embodies the violence and the physical abuse that African American women suffer at the hands of black men. From this perspective, the playwright can be seen as addressing the abuse that all women have experienced at the hands of dissatisfied and embittered males who have decided to vent out their anxiety upon their women. Beau Willie's victimization by racism in school, his frequent harassment by police officers, his job as a gypsy cab driver and most of all his maladjustment as a Vietnam War veteran, suggest that his behaviour is a result of racial and economic oppression in his society. His inability to manage his frustrations provokes him to extend his worries to the woman. Therefore, to an extent, society is responsible for the violence that black women undergo at the hands of victimized men.

### **Action Chart**

An action chart as seen in table 3.1 tells the number of times each character in a given play appears on stage. It is a summary of how the cast come in and out of stage and it tells the number of characters on stage at a particular time. It chart also serves as a guide

in the construction of the costume plot, colour chart and helps determine the rhythm of the play.

Furthermore, it helps the costumier to know the number of costumes needed for the entire production and for each character as well. Additionally, it informs the costumier to be acquainted with any quick change in costume that is likely to occur and take the necessary steps to tackle them.

### **Colour Chart**

The colour chart is table 3.2. It shows the colours of all costumes selected for the actors on stage. This is to aid in selecting colours that synchronize with each other as well as unify with the colours of the set. The colour chart gives an idea as to how the stage will be at a glance, and gives a graphic representation and a clear perception of the colours used. Colours can help determine age, status, and mood of a character and that is why there is a need to develop a colour chart to help determine the general mood of the play as well as the mood of each character. Colours are symbolic and contribute to the reality of form in a play. The colours of costume must be planned with a view to gaining harmony.

**Table 3.1: Action Chart**

Characters	Dark Phases	Graduation Night	Now I Love Somebody	No Assistance	Am Poet	Latent Raptist	Abortin Cycle	Sechita	Toussaint
L. Brown	x	X	X						
L. Yellow	x	X	X		X				
L. Purple	x	X	X		X				
L. Red	x	X	X	x	X			x	x
L. Green	x	X	X		X				
L. Blue	x	X	X			X	x		
L. Orange	x	X	X						
Sh. Brown	x								
Sh. Yellow	x	X							
Sh. Red	x								
Sh. Blue	x					X			
Man 1		X	X						
Man 2		X				X			
Man 3		X							x
Beau Willie Brown									
Toussaint L'Ouverture									x
Toussaint Jones									x
Lady 1									
Lady 2									
Lady 3						X			
Lady 4									
Boy									
Girl									

\* L= Lady

\*Sh= Shadow



















































**Table 3.1 Continuation of Action Chart**

Characters	One	I use to live in a world	Pyramid	No more love poems	Somebody almost walked of with all of my stuff	Sorry	A nite with beau Willie Brown	A laying on of hands
L. Brown				x	X	X		x
L. Yellow				x	X	X		x
L. Purple				x	X	X		x
L .Red	x			x	X	X	x	x
L .Green				x	X	X		x
L .Blue		x		x	X	X		x
L. Orange				x	X	X		x
Sh. Brown						X		
Sh. Yellow						X		
Sh. Red	x							
Sh. Blue		x						
Man 1	x	x	X					
Man 2		x	X					
Man 3		x	X					
Beau Willie Brown							x	
Toussaint L'Ouverture								
Toussaint Jones								
Lady 1		x	X					
Lady 2		x	X					
Lady 3		x						
Lady 4		x						
Boy							x	
Girl	one						x	

**Table 3.2: Colour Chart**

NAME OF CHARACTERS	Dark Phrases	Graduation Night	Now I love somebody	No assistance	Am a Poet	Latent Rapists	Abortion Cycle	Sechita	Toussaint
L. Brown	▲	▲	▲						
L. Yellow	▲	▲	▲		▲				
L. Purple	▲	▲	▲		▲				
L. Red	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲			▲	▲
L. Green	▲	▲	▲		▲				
L. Blue	▲	▲	▲			▲	▲		
L. Orange	▲	▲	▲						
Sh. Brown	▲								
Sh. Yellow	▲	▲							
Sh. Red	▲								
Sh. Blue	▲					▲ ▲			
Man 1		▲	▲						
Man 2		▲				▲			
Man 3		▲							▲
Beau Willie Brown									
Toussaint L'Ouverture									▲ ▲
Toussaint Jones									▲ ▲
Lady 1		▲							
Lady 2		▲							
Lady 3		▲				▲			
Lady 4		▲							
Boy									
Girl									

Table 3.2 Continuation of Colour Chart

NAME OF CHARACTERS	ONE	I Use to live in a world	Pyramid	No More Love Poems	somebody almost walked	Sorry	A nite with beau willie	A laying on of hands
L. Brown								
L. Yellow								
L. Purple								
L. Red								
L. Green								
L. Blue								
L. Orange								
Sh. Brown								
Sh. Yellow								
Sh. Red								
Sh. Blue								
Man 1								
Man 2								
Man 3								
Beau Willie Brown							 	
Toussaint L'Ouverture								
Toussaint Jones								
Lady 1								
Lady 2								
Lady 3								
Lady 4								
Boy								
Girl								

### Summary of Character Analysis

This is Table 3.3 (P.29) continued on page 30. It summarizes each character in the production. It is broken down in six components. This comprises the will, desire, decorum, moral stance, mood intensity and list of adjective of a character. At a glance, the role and nature of a person can be quickly deduced. This table assists the costume designer in selecting the appropriate costumes that depict the mood and attitude of each character.

**Table 3.3: Summary of Character Analysis**

<b>Character</b>	<b>Desire</b>	<b>Will</b>	<b>Moral Stance</b>	<b>Decorum</b>	<b>List of Adjectives</b>	<b>Mood intensity</b>
Lady in Brown	To be handled warmly	To loose herself from here pain, struggles, and distorted life	Insecure and confused	Mature Beautiful	Silent Stuttered Confused Worried	Moody Uncertain Frustrated but later Hopeful
Lady in Yellow	To have love and intimacy	To become a woman whose love is immune from pain	Lively and Curious	Inquisitive Delicate	Adventurous Fragile	Excited Hurt but positive of the days to come later
Lady in Red	To find a way of escape from her pain	To let go of her hurt and pain	Offended Harsh Bold Resentful	Strong Complicated Unhappy	Upset Angry Gloomy	Bitter Hurt Sad but optimistic
Lady in Blue	To know her actual origin	To be unconscious of her colour and race	Conscious Uncertain Unclear	Displaced sense of origin Loves to dance	Race cautious Worried Musical	Undecided Unsure Amusing Care-free
Lady in Orange	To experience love and joy	Not to be trapped in words but to sing and dance	Unrestricted Loose Unattached	Free-spirited Easy- going	Open-minded Informal	Free –spirited Rhythm
Lady in Purple	To bring to bear the misrepresentation of womanhood	To emphasize the worth of womanly virtues and power	Virtuous Womanly Beauty Divine Virtue	Splendor Sanctified Sacred Moral	Honorable Respectable Worthy	Virtue Queenly Highly regarded
Lady in Green	To be able to handle everything that belongs to her	To take all of her „stuff“ back	Hurt Pain Anguish	Scorn Contempt Disdain	Troubled Disturbed Uneasy Anxious	Distress Disappointed Sad Upset
Shadow character for Lady in Brown	To live in a society where she is accepted	To leave her present location to be with Toussaint L'ouverture	Insecure and confused	Young Beautiful	Confused Worried	Wishful Imaginative Uncertain

**Table 3.3 Cont. Summary of Character Analysis**

<b>Character</b>	<b>Desire</b>	<b>Will</b>	<b>Moral Stance</b>	<b>Decorum</b>	<b>List of Adjectives</b>	<b>Mood intensity</b>
Shadow character for Lady in Yellow	To get intimate with a man	To act like she knows what she wants	Active and Sensual	Attractive Inviting	Adventurous	Excited Playful Erotic
Shadow character for Lady in Red	To be the center of attention	To flaunt her sexual prowess at men	Bold Seductive Resentful	Strong Daring Sexy	Glowing Attractive Tempting	Flirtatious Mischievous Naughty
Shadow character for Lady in Blue	To be loved genuinely	To know those who are true to her	Uncertain Bruised Bitter	Trusting	Worried Afraid	Enthusiastic Unsure Hurt Bitter
Man 1,2,3 (Extra character)	To have a relation with the women	To be intimate and assertive in the life "s of these women	Strong Muscular Forceful	Deceiving Cunning Misleading	Pretentious	Smooth talking, Abusive
Lady 1,2,3 (Extra characters)	To love and be loved	To find out the true reason for man"s love for them	Expressive Tolerant	Feminine Attractive	Lovable Gullible	Loving Bitter Hurt But hopeful
Toussaint L'Ouverture.	To give hope to lady in Brown	To lead her out of her integrated society	Firm Strong Dependable	Social activist Liberator	Adamant Resolute Caring	Affectionate
Toussaint Jones	To live a life free from oppression	To fight for his human right	Free spirited	Childish	Imaginative	Playful
Kwame Beau Willie Brown	To receive love from parents in a peaceful environment	To see his father love his mother dearly	Innocent loving	Juvenile Timid Out spoken	Naïve	Worried Timid
Naomi Kenya Willie Brown	To receive love form parents in a peaceful environment	To see her father love her mother dearly	Innocent Loving	Juvenile Timid Loving	Naïve	Worried Timid

Beau Willie Brown	To be a good loving father and husband to his family	To be a man who can provide financially for his family	Aggressive	Antagonistic	Intimidating Threatening	Impatient Hostile
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### Character Analysis and Design Concept

To carefully analyse and understand a character in a play, a costumier needs to consider some human traits and qualities that define them. This includes knowing their desires, wills, decorum, moral stances and their mood intensities. Although it is very important, as a costume designer to have an idea on how you perceive a character, it is necessary to know what the playwright says about the character, the characters says about him or herself, other characters say about the character in question and the character says about others. This play is poetically inclined. That is to say, it has a lyrical tone to it. The use of words and phrases give a deep feeling of imaginative emotions as well as, taking a narrative form. Thus, analysis of wordings and phrases are also considered in order to understand and translate a character's nature into a visually artistic language, which can be communicated on stage through costume.

The design concept explains the rationale behind the work of art, using the fundamental principles and elements of design as a backdrop. In addition to this, the design concept may have a bearing with the setting of the play.

Additionally, the clothing styles of the seventies were used as a template to redesign costumes for the characters. The clothing styles used in the era in which the play *For Coloured Girls Who Have Considered Suicide when the Rainbow is Enuf* was set influenced these designs.

These clothing styles were then redeveloped and modified to suit the 'Concept of Subtlety'. In regards to subtlety, it is hard to notice or see. It shows signs of recognising and understanding things that are not obvious. Therefore, this concept has been borrow

for this thesis in order to project the not obvious traits the characters. This was the same thought that underpinned the recreation of the costumes for the seven (7) major characters in the play using subtle hints from the way they communicated their emotional thoughts in the play. Therefore, this concept is used, bearing in mind that the recreated designs does not lose thier original design significance entirely in the new design.

The motivation behind the ‘concept of subtlety’ as my design concept emanates from;

- i) The word allegory which implies ‘the not obvious’.
- ii) With inspiration from the my working theme

I used the principles and elements of design with emphasis on lines and harmony as my guiding blocks to show each characters individuality, taking into consideration the setting, props and lighting.

The costume designs for the seven women are based on the figurative words used by the seven ladies to describe their love. This is done by randomly selecting items in the era in which the play is set that represent the descriptions of their love. These items are further transformed to become clothing’s by extending and redirecting the lines in the art. The creation of these designs are very much dependent on lines to create patterns and texture. A line is conventionally known as a path led by a moving point. Without lines it is almost impossible to conceive a work of art hence the dominant use of it. However, the original artwork has a bearing on the new outlook of the final costumes

This is used as a basis to redesign the characters’ costumes. This was done by extending the lines of the costume for Lady in Red in to complex and intricate line as in Fig3.16

The curly patterns, created in the Lady in Green’s costume was created by using lines. The surface quality of the costume that is perceived as smooth, delicate, rough or flat is influenced by texture.

Texture is used to show depth and as well can be used to show a character's traits. The Lady in Blue's flamboyant and voluminous cloak shows forth her dramatic and magical nature. Colour also plays a key role in this play. It communicates the mood of a production within a particular setting.

### **Analysis of Characters using Design Concept**

#### **Lady in Brown.**

The Lady in brown is the first 'lady' to be encountered in the play. She introduces the play with the poem 'dark phrases', indicating the gloomy and blurred phrases of womanhood but is quick to add that although the play will be a recount of the 'dark phrases' of their lives, it is also a celebration of it. The Lady in brown presents herself as a matured person who desires to be handled warmly, and to free herself from her pain, struggles and distorted life. There is a sense of insecurity and confusion in her state of mind, which is represented, in her murky brownish dress. The level of frustration coupled with the disappointment of her shuttered dreams makes her yearn to be heard and not stifled. A lighter shade of brown chosen for the dress inspires the hope for a change of situation. Choosing the colour brown used in the dress indicates her level of maturity since brown is considered a matured colour in both the Ghanaian and African American society.

The presentation of the brown colour among the seven women is a symbolic representation of black beauty- the black identity of the African Americans. As discussed in chapter two, a flower is usually given out to a woman on her first date or proms night. Preferably a rose flower. This is to show how worthy and appreciated she is for accepting the invitation. Using the description of her love as beautiful, I used a rose flower to interpret it into a clothing design as seen in fig3.1. The nature of the rose

represent the Lady in brown. A lovely, soft and warm person .Lady in Brown’s fabric is made out of cotton silk. In addition to other fabrics, the cotton silk was also patronized in this period.

**Fig 3.1:** A Rose Flower



**Table 3.4: Costume Plot for Lady in Brown**

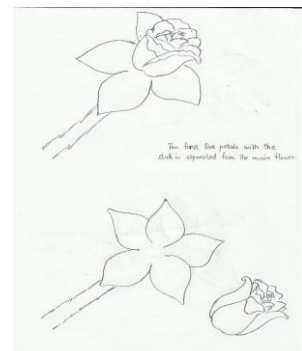
ACT	Costume	To do
1	1. Murky brownish dress	Build
	2. Big dangling brownish gold earrings	Buy
	3. A pair of cream high-heeled shoes	Buy

### Design Process for Lady in Brown

**Fig 3.2:** (A-H)

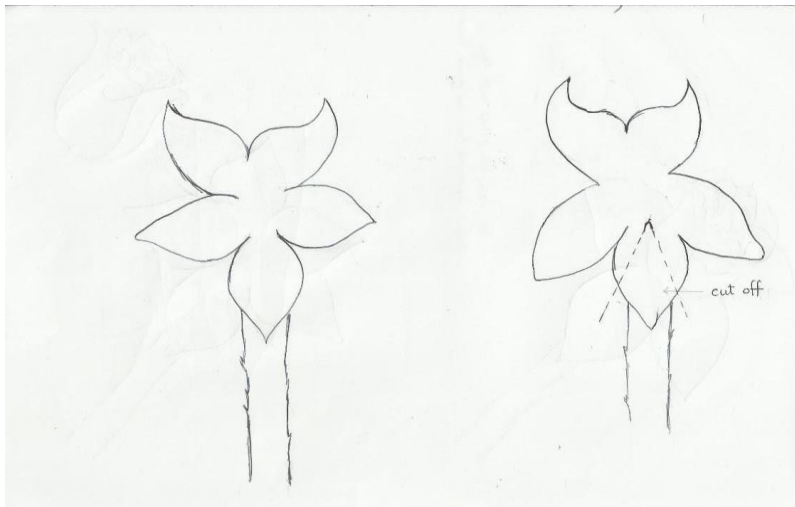


**A:** Rose flower

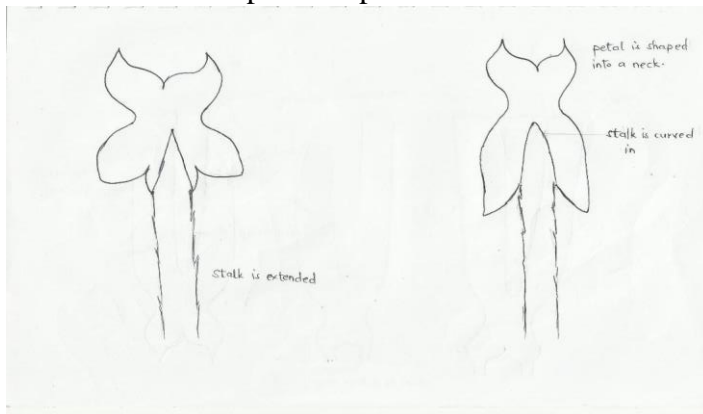


**B:** first five petals separate from flower

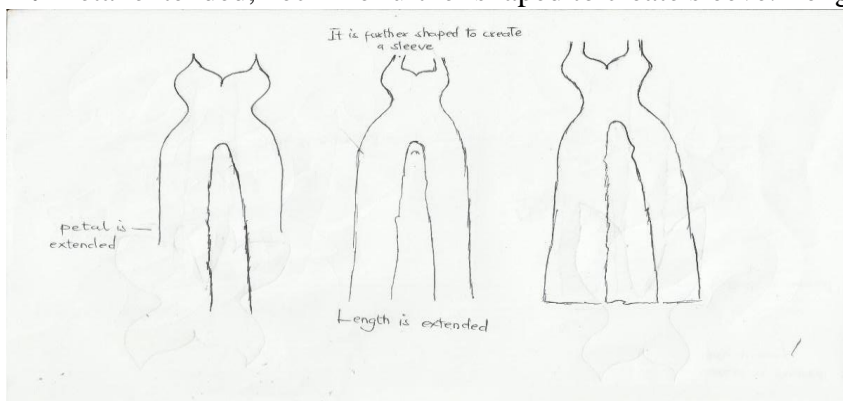
**C: Cut off point of flower**



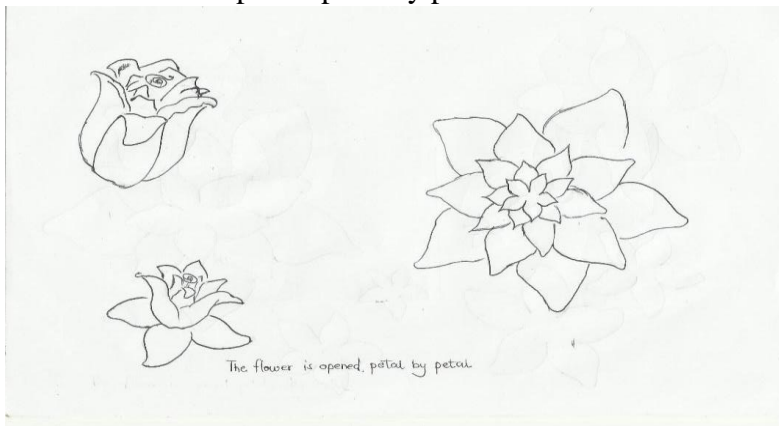
**D: Stalk extended petal shaped in neckline. Stalk later curved in**



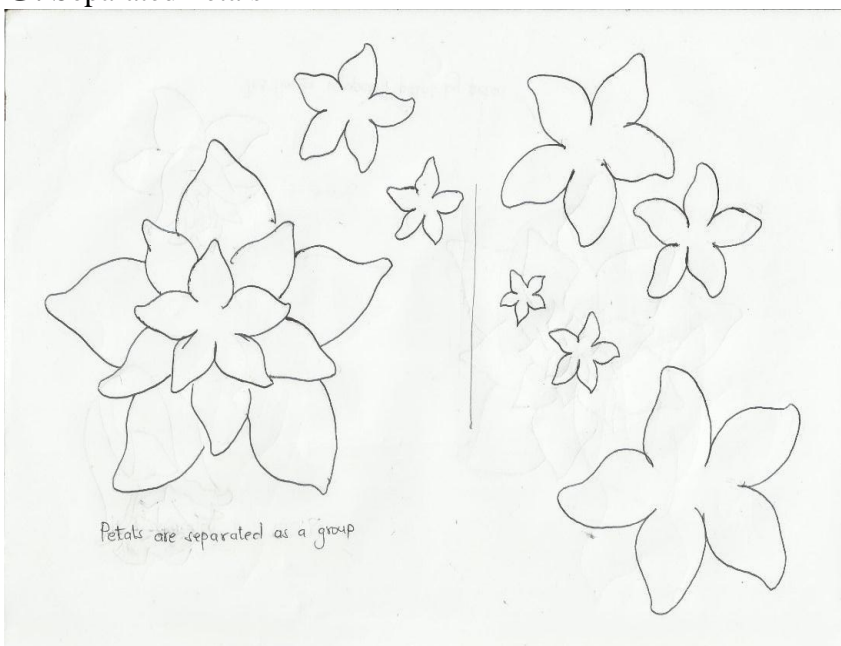
**E: Petal extended, neckline further shaped to create sleeve. Length extended into a dress**



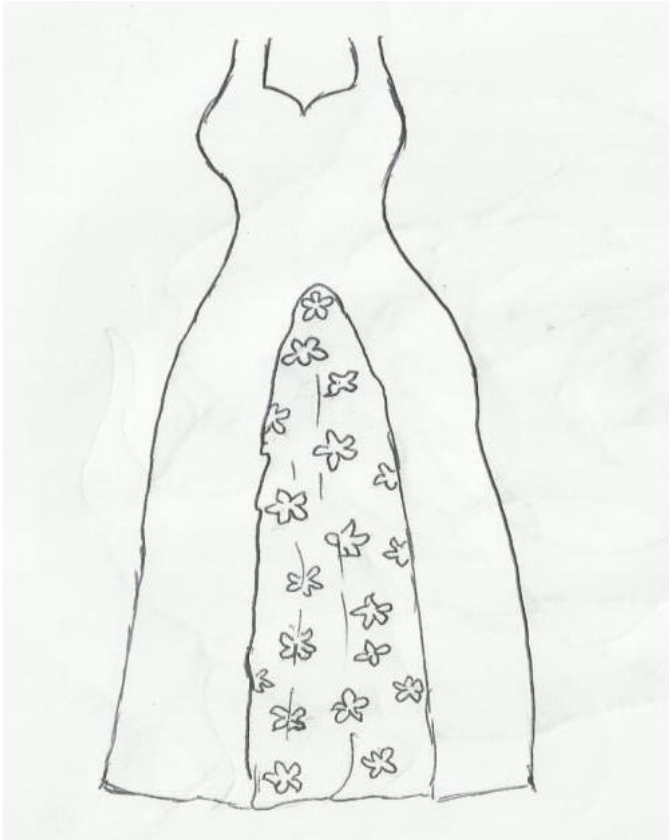
**F:** Rose flower opened petal by petal.



**G:** Separated Petals



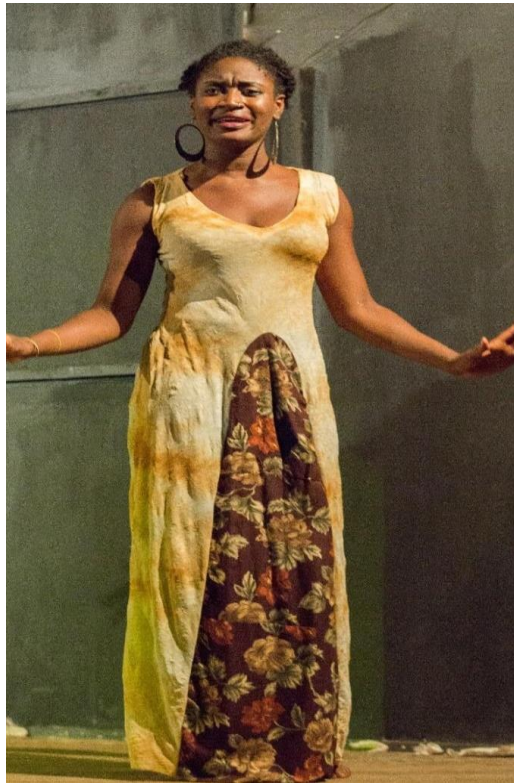
**H:** Petals as designs in mid-section of dress



**Fig 3.3: Rendering of Lady in Brown**



**Fig 3.4: Lady in Brown in Real Costume**



### **Lady in Yellow**

She desires to have love and intimacy and so loses her virginity at her own Will. Her dress is created out of a disco light ball, fragmented into pieces as seen in fig. below which describes her belief in fantasy. The disco is a usual night out for people. The ambiance was a mirage of pleasure and passion. Her yellow costume is gay in colour, representing her youthfulness. Her vulnerable nature is exhibited when she finally says, 'my love is too delicate to have thrown back in my face'. A see-through fabric with patches of sequins describe that vulnerability. Her virginity perceived as valuable can be compared to gold in the Ghanaian parlance. Gold has a yellowish outlook and it is called *sika* in the Akan language. Gold kept very well so as not to lose it easily just as teenagers are encouraged to preserve their virginity with all that they have. Her sleeveless, flared attire represents her curious and adventurous nature. The use of the

elaborate sequins as a protective band on her waist area tells us of how she desires to have her love immune from pain and any strained relationship, especially with the opposite sex.

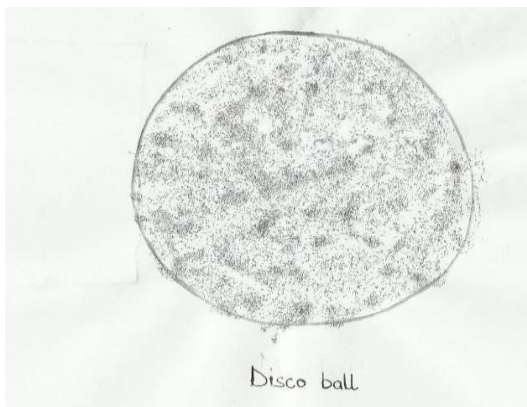
**Fig 3.5: A Disco Club Bulb**



**Table 3.5: Costume Plot for Lady in Yellow**

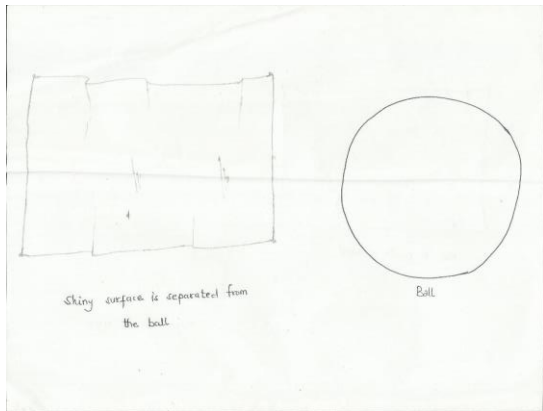
ACT	Costume	To do
1	1. Bright yellow sleeves dress with sequins 2.Large yellow earrings 3. A pair of black plumped heeled shoes 4. natural Afro hair	Build Borrow Buy Build Buy

**Fig 3.6: Design Process for Lady in Yellow (A-F)**

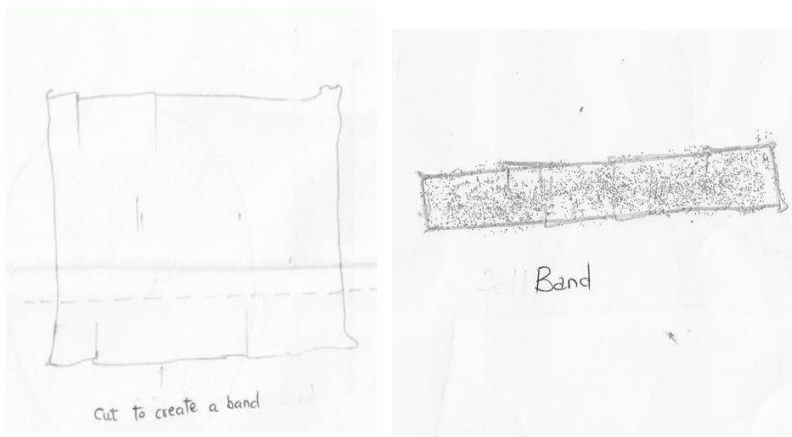


**A: Drawing of disco ball**

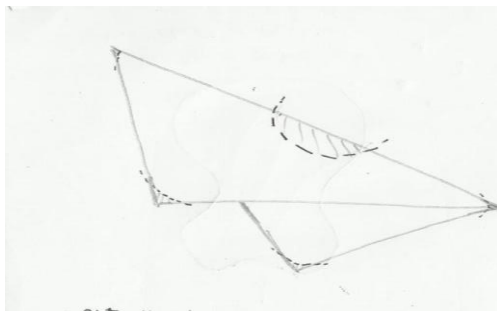
**B: Shiny surface separated from ball**



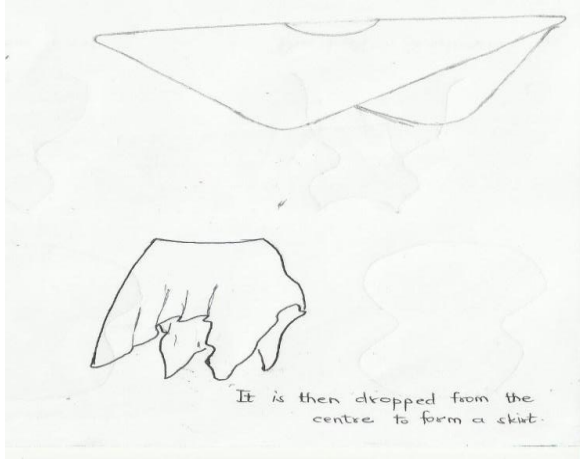
**C: Portion of peeled surface cut to create band**



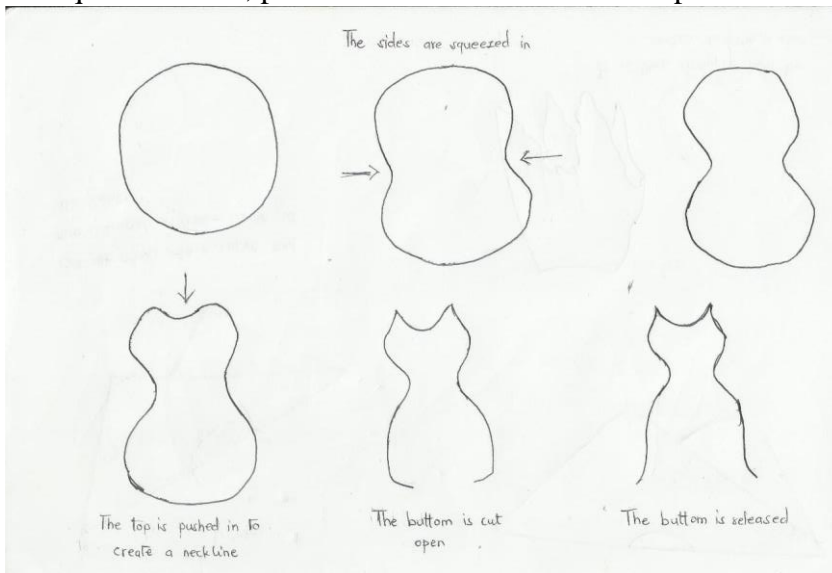
**D: Peeled surface folded into two. Edges curved into semi-circle for waistline**



**E:** The folded fabric is then dropped from the centre to form a skirt.



**F:** Squeeze in ball, push in to create neckline. Cut opened at the bottom, and release.



**Fig 3.7: Rendering of Lady in Yellow**



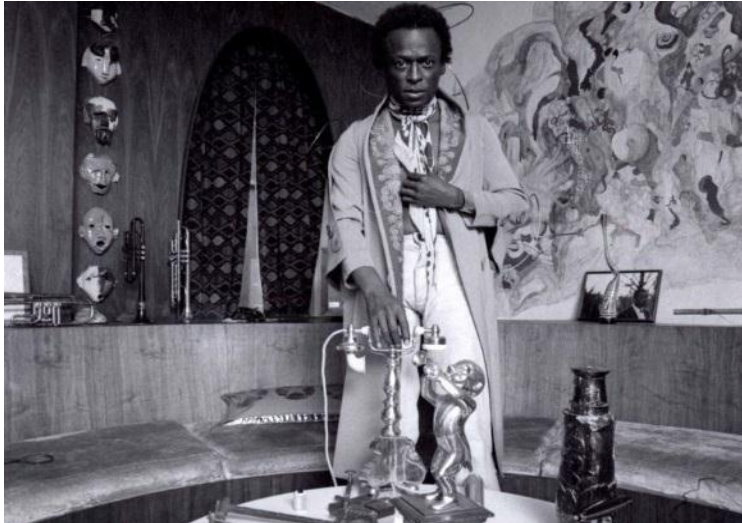
**Fig 3.8: Lady in Yellow in Real Costume**



### **Lady in Blue**

Although she is unconscious of her, colour and race, she desires to know her origin. Her mixed race of Spanish and African American gives her room to explore the two sides of her cultural identity. She describes her love as magical so her costume is derived from an African American magician clothing. This costume is reconstructed as seen in Fig3.10 to suit her allegorical nature. The colour of her costume is blue. Her long, fitting dress is derived from the length of the magician's trousers. The tiny glitters in her attire is to add up to the magical quality. When the stage lights fade in the costume takes on a mystical look. A cloak without a hood is attached to her dress to give her a dramatic look as she frequently moves about swiftly with a lot of intensity. Both sides of the dress are slit in order to help her with easy movement.

**Fig 3.9: An African American Magician**

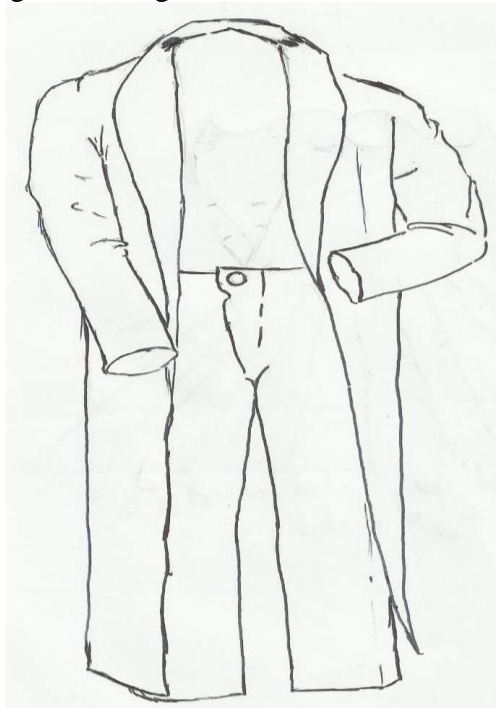


**Table 3.6: Costume Plot for Lady in Blue**

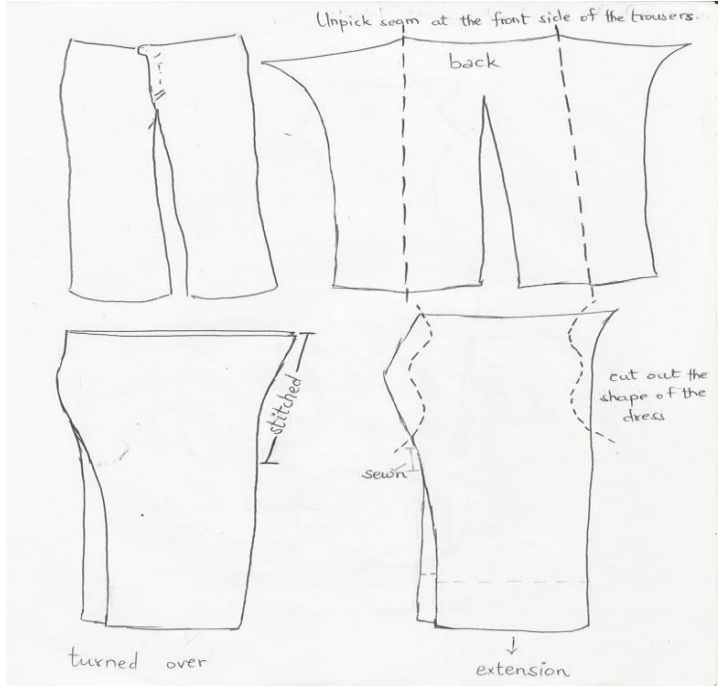
Act	Costume	To do
1	1. A long blue fitting dress with cloak 2. Medium blue dangling earrings 3. A pair of flat black shoes 4. curly wig with a touch of wine	Build Borrow Buy Buy

**Fig 3.10: Design process for Lady in Blue (A-I)**

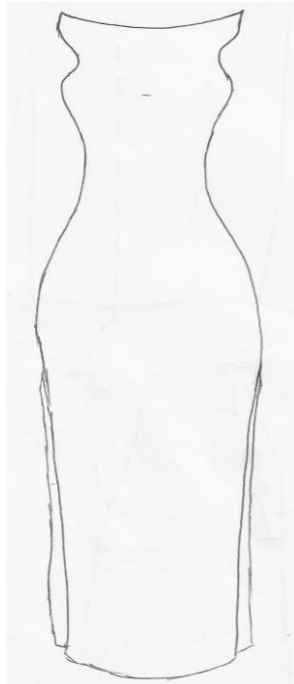
**A:** Drawing of the magician costume



- B:** i) Trousers seam unpicked at front side.  
ii) Turn over for two folds.  
iii) Stitch together for slit at both ends.  
iv) The shape of dress cut out .trousers extended into dress length.



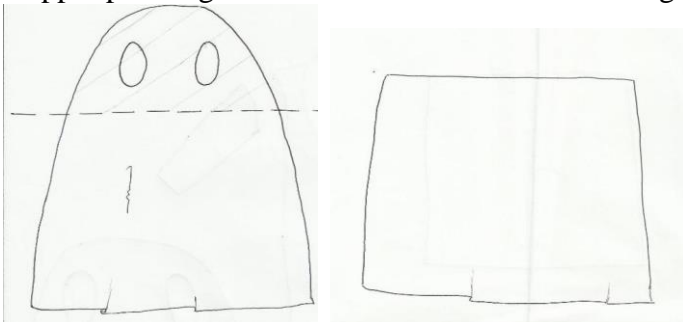
**C:** Dress is carved out.



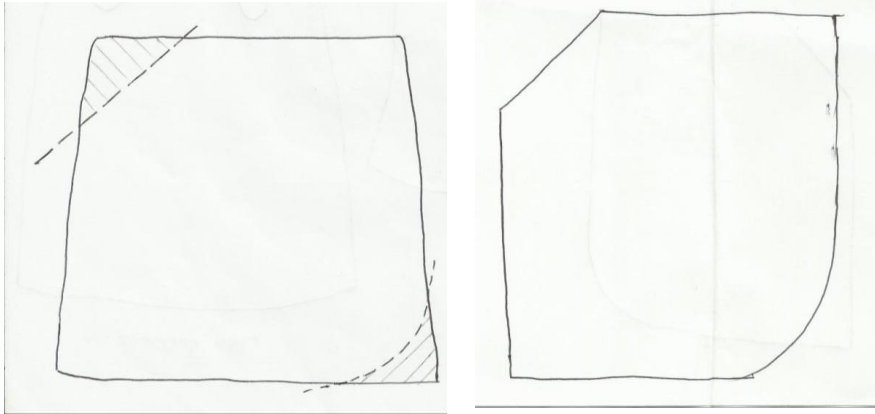
**D:** Making of the cloak: sleeves cut-off, garment then opened out without folds.



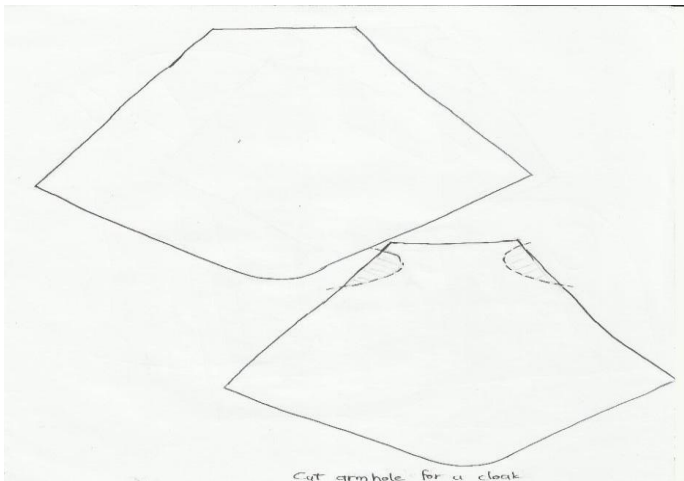
**E:** Upper part of garment cut-off: This leaves rest of garment in a square-like form



**F** Cut off two opposite edges; One side diagonal and the other curved.



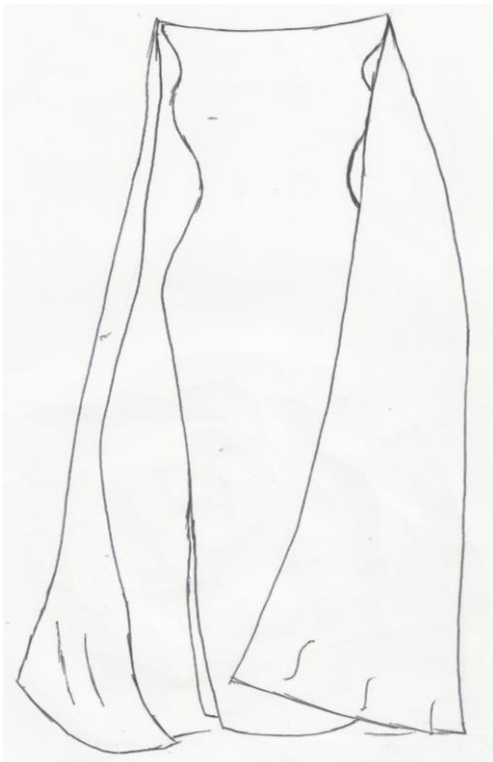
**G:** The fabric is rotated 90° to the right: armholes created to make cloak.



**H:** A cloak ready to be placed on dress



**I:** Cloak is attached to dress.



**Fig 3.11: Rendering of Lady in Blue**



**Fig 3.12: Lady in Blue in Real Costume**



### **Lady in Red**

She expresses her thoughts on how to find a way of escape from her pain by criticising her lover who has denied her of any assistance in developing and maintaining their relationship. Her choice of words are harsh, bold, resentful and strong. Sharp lines are used in her costume to reflect this. Red is a symbol of anger, deep pain, boldness and love. In addition, she yearns to let go of the hurt and pain she has experienced emotionally and physically from a relationship. The zigzag pattern in her costume is an indication of the complicated emotion of rage she feels. She is given a seductive and clingy costume, describing her nature of being offended, bitter and disappointed. Her desperation is evident in the clingy nature of her dress. She describes her love as complicated; hence the use of the quilt as a source for her costume.

**Table 3.7: Costume Plot for Lady in Red**

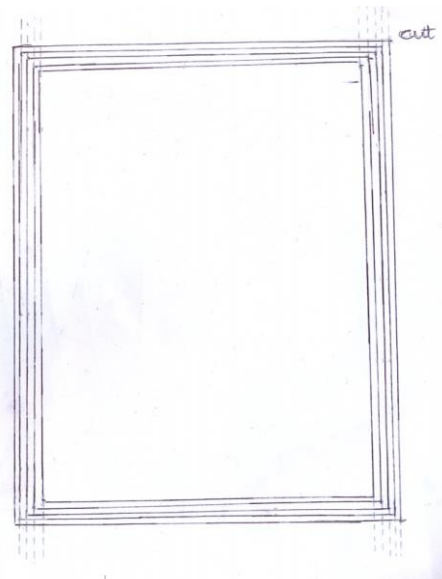
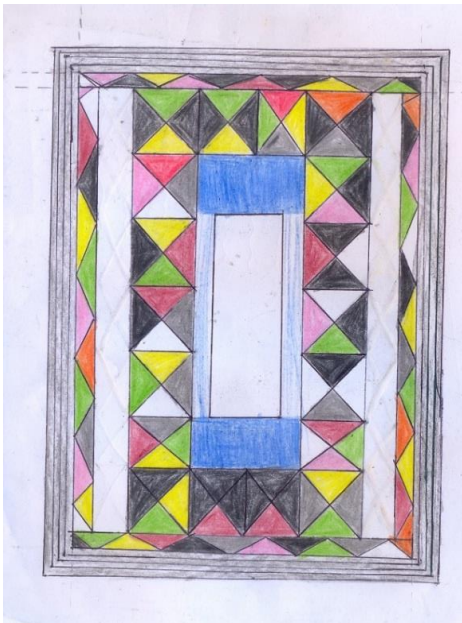
Act	Costume	To do
1	1. Red sleeveless knee length dress	Build
	2. black pump heels	Borrow
	3. A pair of dangling earrings	Buy
	4. black netty stockings	Buy
	5. black wig	Buy

**Fig 3.13: The Quilt**

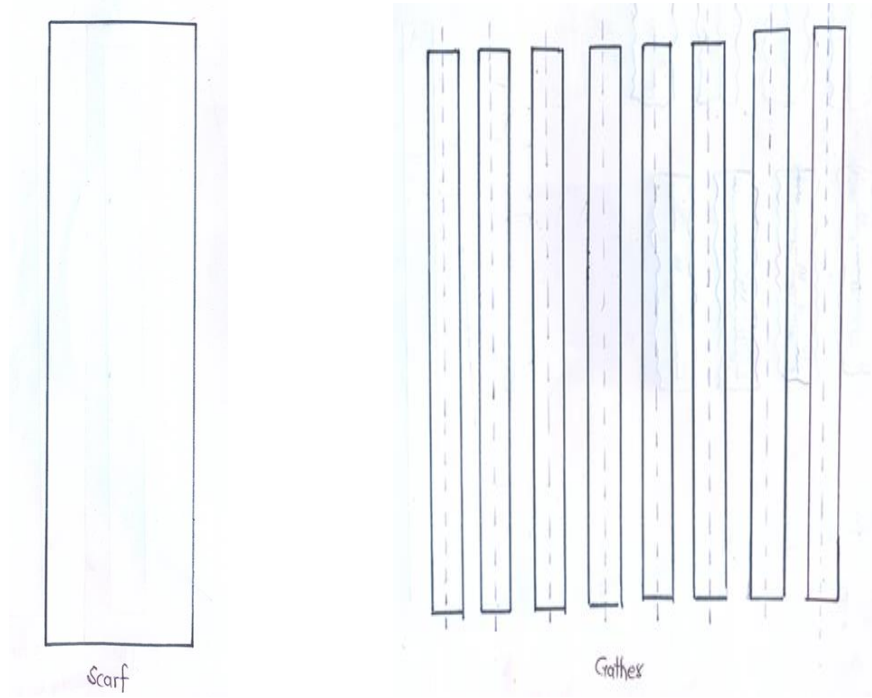


**Fig 3. 14: Design Process for Lady in Red (A-I)**

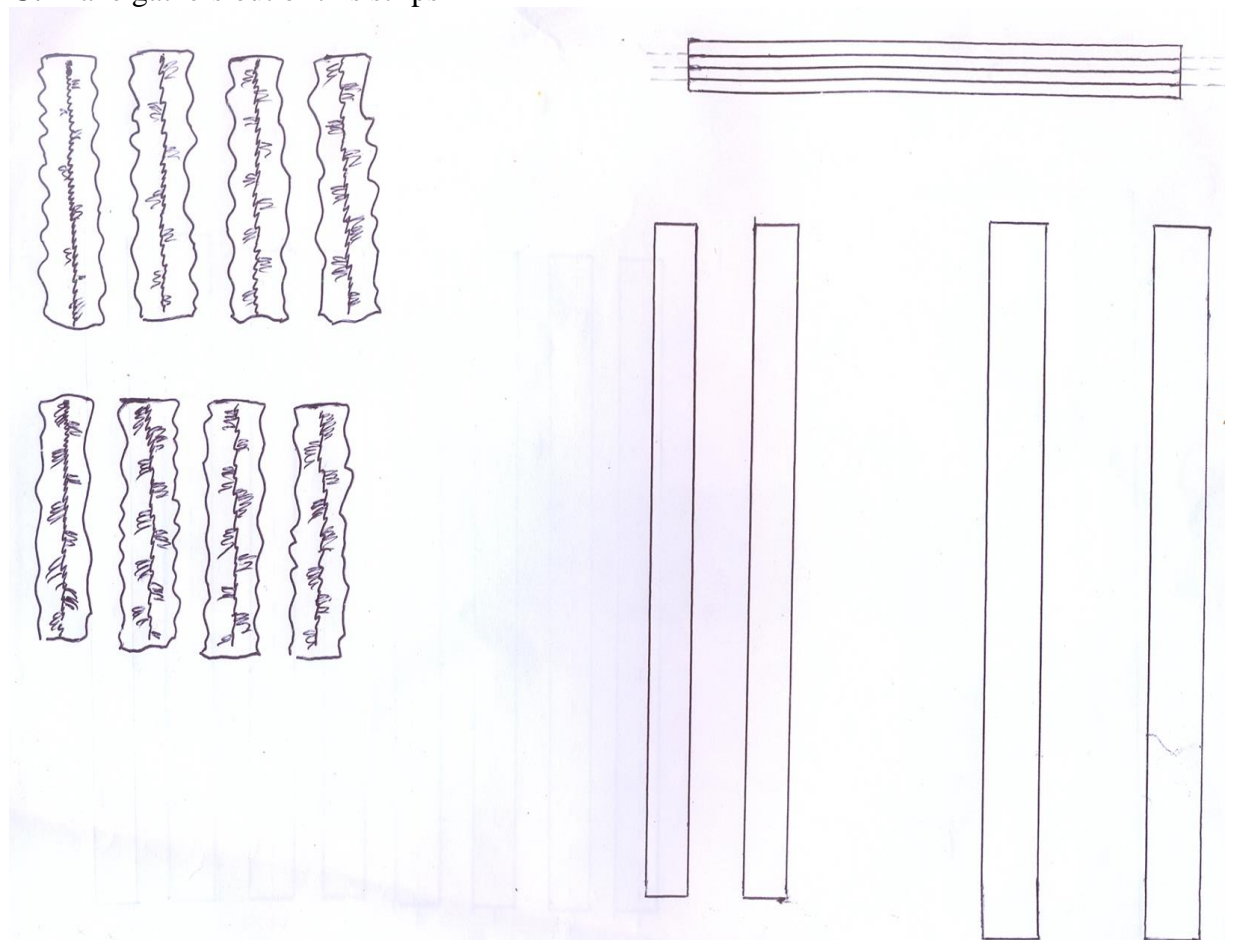
**A:** Cut out inner patterned design



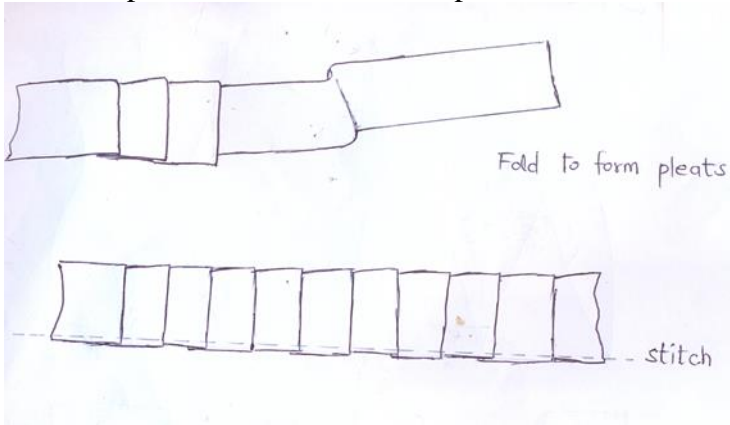
**B: Make strip of cloth**



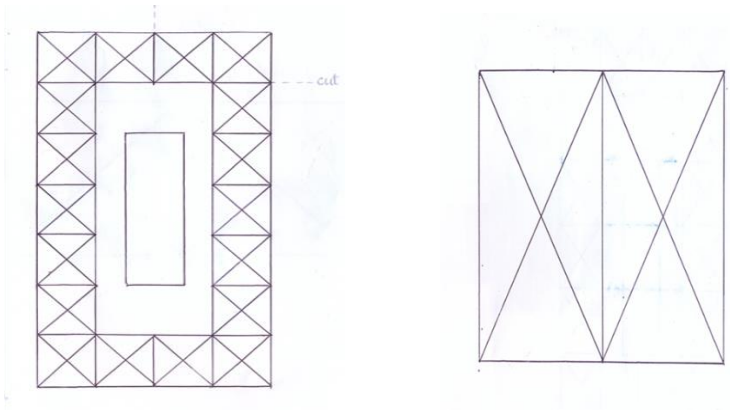
**C: Make gathers out of this strips**



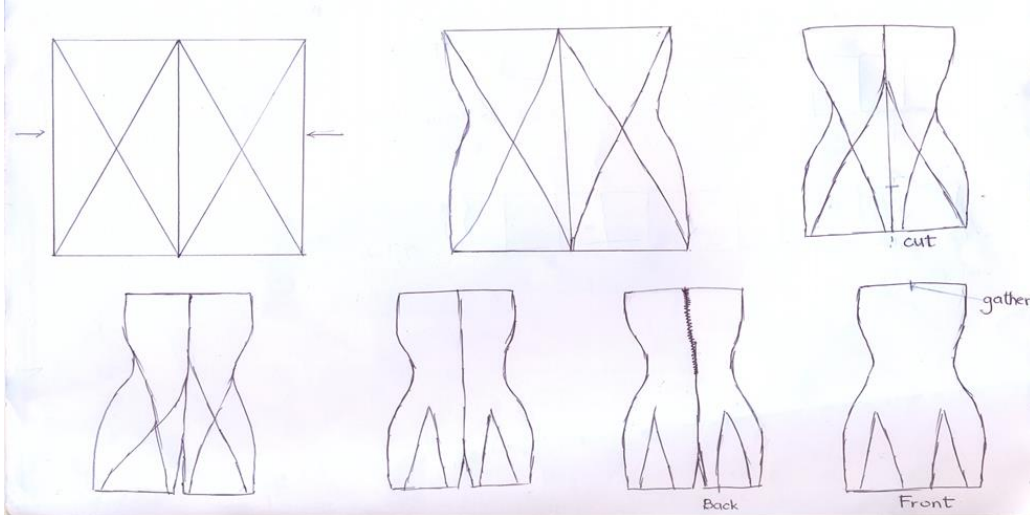
**D:** Make pleats out of the other strip



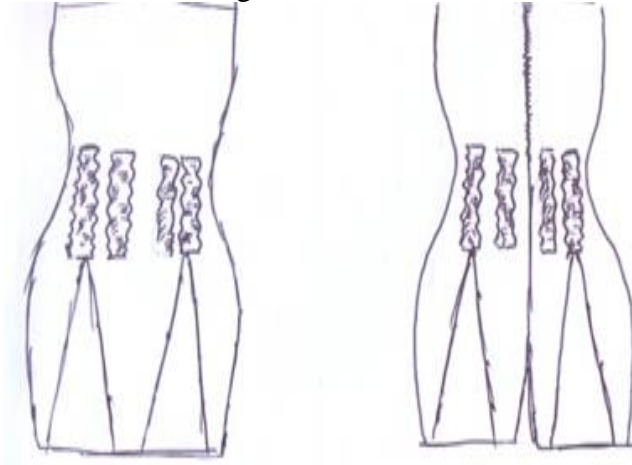
**E:** Cut out section of the folds



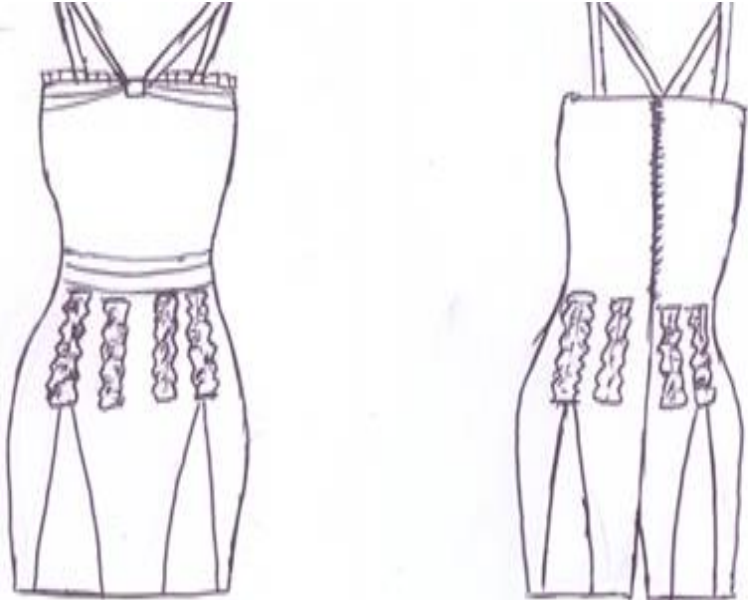
**F:** Create and squeeze out dress from quilt design



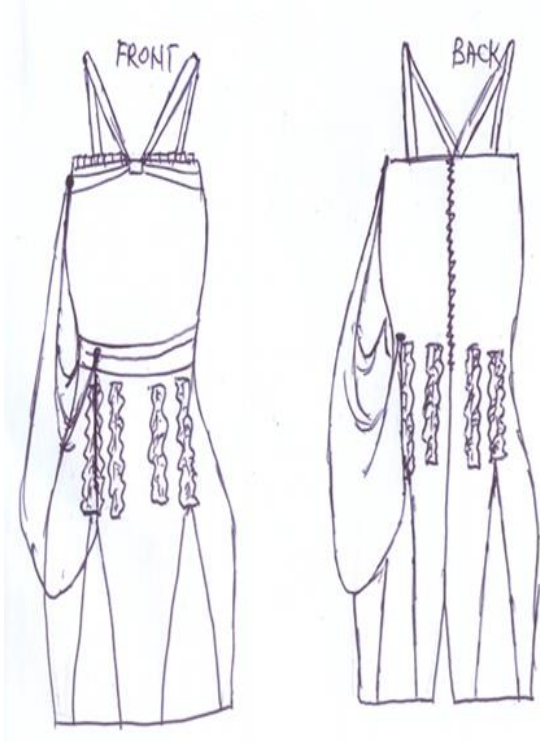
**G:** Add folds and gathers to dress



**H:** Add belt and attach sleeve



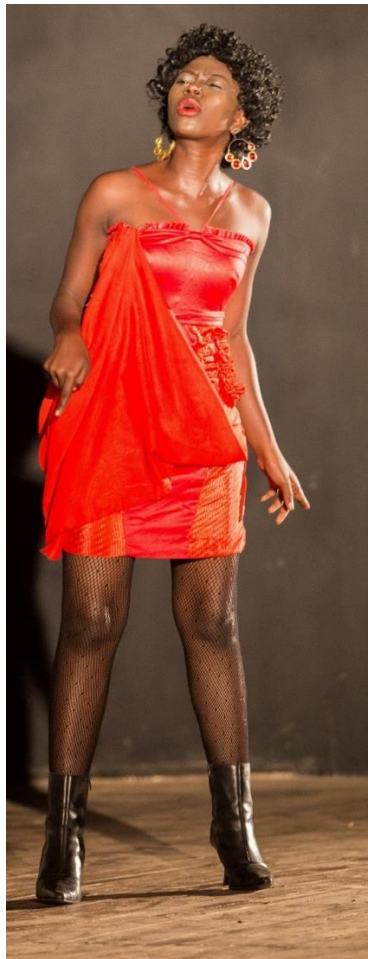
I: Attach scarf to completed dress.



**Fig 3.15: Rendering of Lady in Red Costume**



**Fig 3.16: Lady in Red in Real Costumes**



### **Lady in Orange**

She desires to experience love and joy. To loosen herself to dance and escape pain and as well remain unrestricted and unattached. She laments the plight of the coloured girl as being an evil woman; a bitch or a nag who ends up in the bottom of a man's shoe. She tries to prove how free-spirited and easy-going she can be and that is why she describes her love as 'Saturday night'. This is seen in her informal costume that is derived from the clothing style of a typical

1970s African American woman who usually loves to go to the disco on Saturday nights. They wore tight shorts and jeans with long boots. Their make-up and hairstyle were

mostly flamboyant, and elaborate as can be seen in Fig 3.17. Lady in orange wears a three quarter see-through chiffon shirt with a tight orange short and an ankle boots (Fig.3.20)

**Fig 3.17: African American woman in the 1970s**



**Table 3.8: Costume Plot for Lady in Orange**

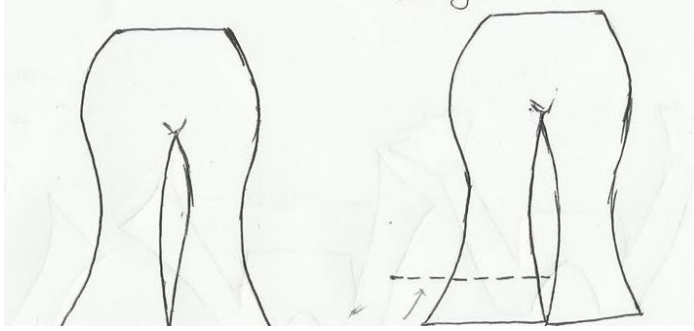
Act	Costume	To do
1	1. Orange three quarter see through chiffon shirt Orange tight shorts Black stockings A pair of black high heel pumps shoes 5. Small earrings	Build Build Buy Buy Borrow

**Fig 3.18: Design Process for Lady in Orange (A-H)**

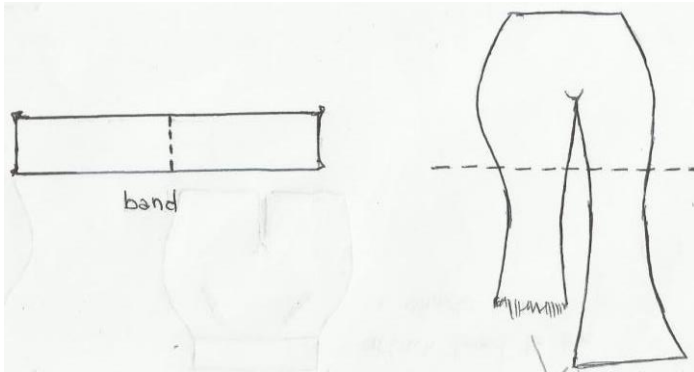
**A: Drawing the costume**



**B:** One end of the trousers is cut to the calf to form a band



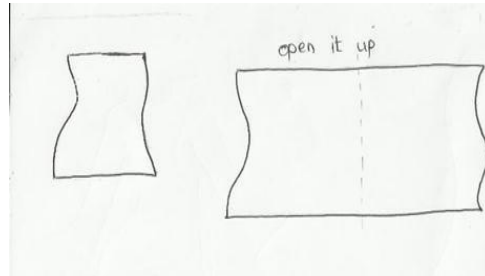
**C:** A band is created and set aside. Both trousers are shortened to the thighs.



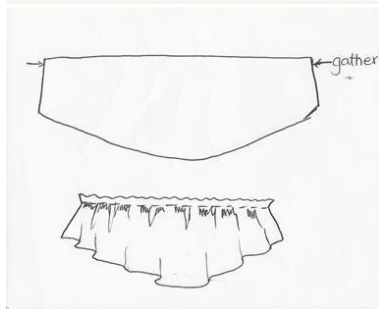
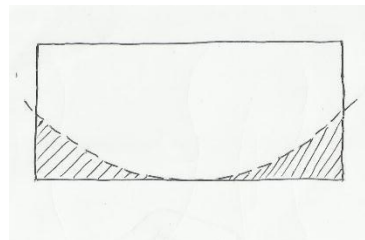
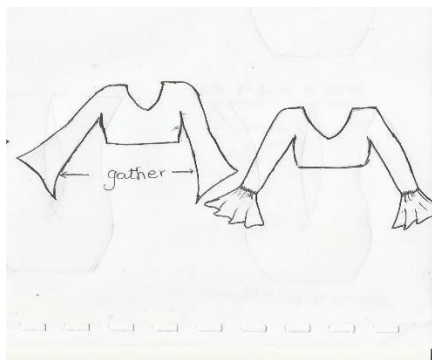
**D:** Shorts are created. It is then turned over for stitching. The band as attached to the shorts to create a belt.



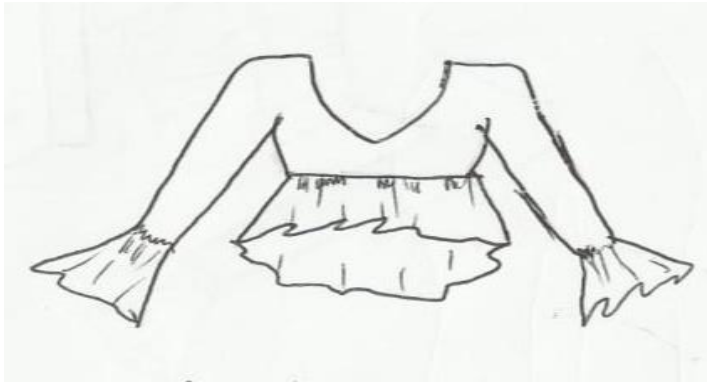
**E:** the neckline is removed. The mid-portion of the blouse is also cutaway. The cut-away part is released opened.



**F:** The hand opening of the shirt is turn into gathers whiles the cut-away blouse is sewed into gathers. This is later attached to the shirt.



G: Blouse ready to be worn by the actor.



H: Complete costume for Lady in Orange



**Fig 3.19: Rendering of lady in Orange**



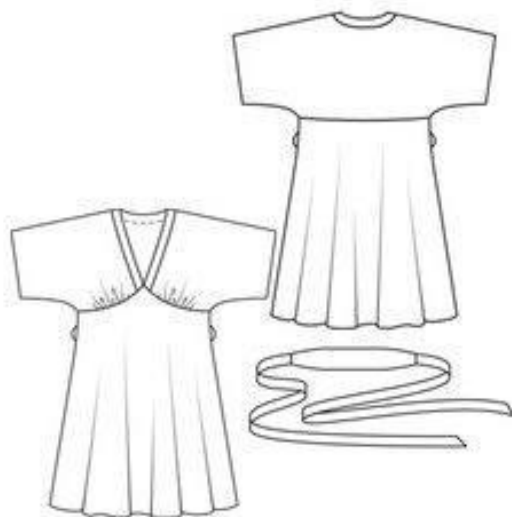
**Fig 3.20: Lady in Orange in Real Costume**



### **Lady in Purple**

The lady in purple poses womanly virtuous and seeks to emphasize on how women should be highly regarded. She says ‘her love is too sanctified to have thrown back on her face’. The word sanctified served as a source of inspiration for her costume. Coming from a Christian religious background, the priestly gown is what readily comes to mind for the recreation of the costume. The purple trimming are used for designs on her chest area for emphasis. In her second appearance, the lady in purple uses music and dance movements to describe what she represents- sechita. She wears a sleeveless sequins top and a see through chiffon skirts. She is given excessive jewellery and make up to complaint her sensuality as she moves. In the pyramid scene, a pyramid turned upside down is designed in her costume to depict the ‘not obvious’ atmosphere that describes a three-way female friendship that is like a pyramid.

**Fig 3.21: A Priestly Gown**



**Fig 3.22:** Design Process for Lady in Purple (A-E)

**A: Drawing the Gown**



**B: Deconstruct the Gown**



**C: Divide skirt into two even parts**



D: Loose strip placed at frontal part of shirt to create V- shape



E: Join shirt to trousers, to form jumpsuit.



**Table 3.9: Costume Plot for Lady in Purple**

Act	Costume	To do
1	1.Purple jumpsuit with trimmings 2. Cream heels 3. A pair of small dangling earrings	Build Buy Buy

**Fig 3.23: Rending of Lady in Purple First Costume**



**Fig 3.24: Lady in Purple in Real Costume**



**Fig 3.25: Rending of Lady in Purple Second Costume**



**Fig 3.26: Lady in Purple in Real Costumes**



**Fig 3.27: Rendering of Lady in Purple Third Costume**



**Fig 3.28: Lady in Purple in Real Costume**



**Lady in Green**

She is anxious, distressed and upset because someone has robbed her of her memories and things that makes her who she is as woman. Her love, as she calls it ‘music’ serves as a point of interpretation and redesigning of her costume. The colour green on the colour wheel can be perceived as a bright or cool colour depending on its tone. It can be related to a musical note which can be played either in a high or lone tone.

**Fig 3.29: Musical Notes****Table 3.10: Costume Plot for Lady in Purple**

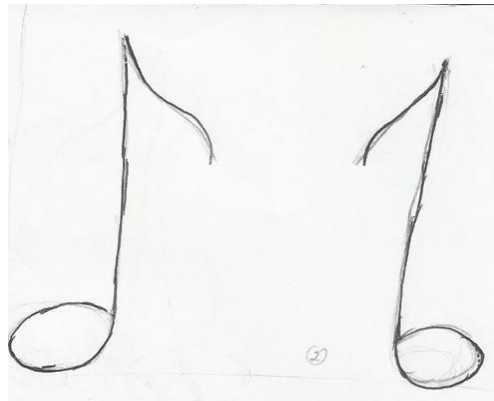
Act	Costume	To do
1	1. green- accent knee length dress	Build
	2. Cream heels	Borrow
	3. A pair of small dangling earrings	Buy
	4. light brown stockings	Buy
	5. Green bangle	Buy

**Fig 3.30:** Design Process for Lady in Green (A-F)

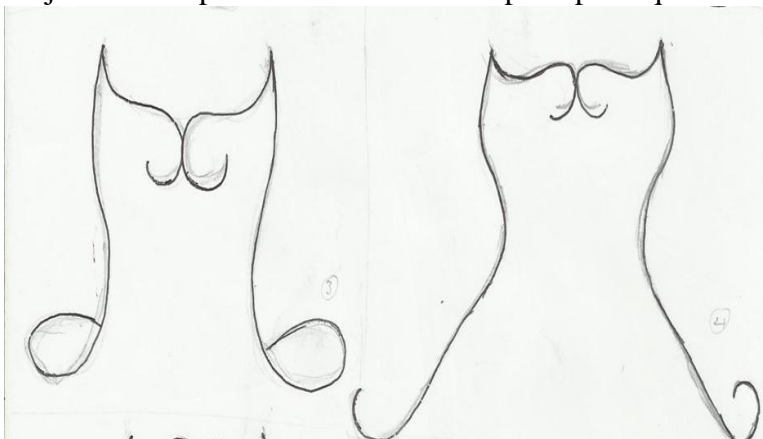
**A:** Draw musical note



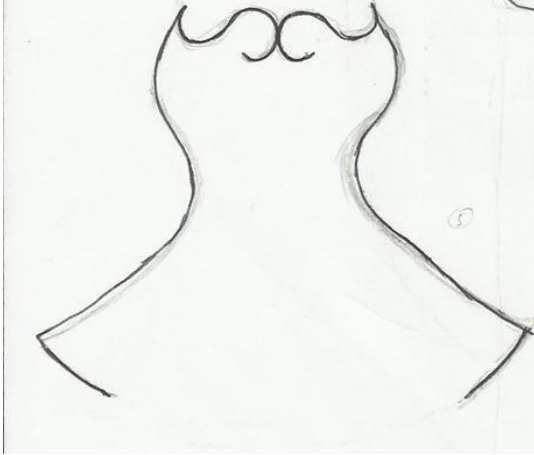
**B:** Re-draw to face each other



**C:** join curved portions for neckline. Open up the quiver.



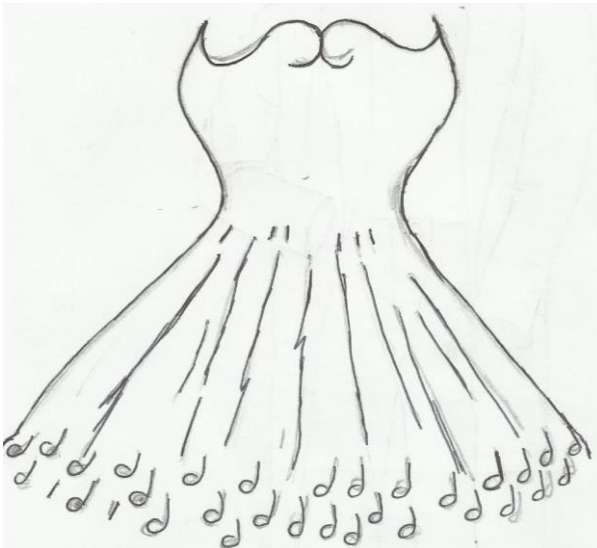
**D:** squeeze centre for body shape. Extend neckline. Curve in base.



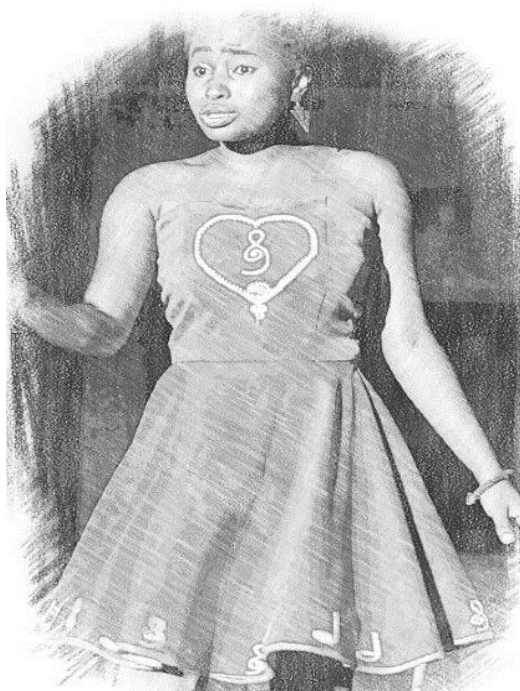
**E:** Close inn baseline to create off-shoulder dress



**F:** Final outlook of the dress as sketched.



**Fig 3.31: Rendering of Lady in Music**



**Fig 3.32: Lady Green in Real Costume**



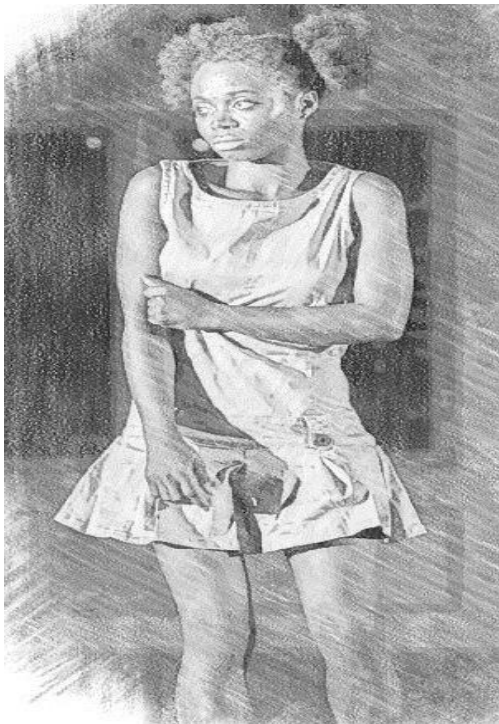
**Shadow Character for Lady in Brown.**

She desires to leave her present location to be with Toussaint L’ouverture. She feels insecure and confused. She is an insecure and confused young girl who desires to live in a society where she is accepted. She wears a brown cute dress with pleats at the base.

**Table 3.11: Costume Plot for Shadow Character for Lady in Brown**

Act	Costume	To do
1	1.Cute light brown dress with pleats 2. Tiny small earrings	Build Borrow

**Fig 3.33: Rendering of Shadow Character for Lady in Brown**



**Fig 3.34: Lady in Brown Shadow Character in Real Costume**



**Shadow Character for Lady in Yellow**

She is an adventurous young lady who is excited to get intimate with a man. She is dressed up for a party in a skimpy short with braces. This is to indicate her attractive and inviting nature. She also wears a yellow shirt in addition to showing her fragility and playfulness.

**Table 3.12:** Costume Plot for Shadow Character for Lady in Brown

Act	Costume	To do
1	1. skimpy black short with braces 2. yellow shirt 3. black pump shoes	Build Borrow Buy

Fig 3.35: Rendering of Shadow Character for Lady in Yellow



Fig 3.36: Shadow Character for Lady in Yellow in Real Costume



**Shadow Character for Lady in Red**

She flaunts her sexual prowess at men. Her reddish full back shirt coupled with a sequins short skirt with glitters accentuates her body curves, making her attractive, mischievous and tempting.

**Table 3.13: Costume Plot for shadow character for Lady in Red**

Act	Costume	To do
1	1.All back red sleeves top 2. Gold jewellery and accessories 3. Ankle boots	Build  Borrow  Buy

**Fig 3.37: Rendering of costume**



**Fig 3.38: Lady in Real Costume**



**Fig 3.39: Rendering of Second Costume**



**Fig 3.40: Lady in Real Costume**



**Shadow Character for Lady in Blue**

In view of her trusting nature and her desire to experience love genuinely, she wears a sleeveless blue top with an orange brownish skirt that portrays her uncertain and worried demeanour.

**Table 3.14: Costume Plot for Shadow Character for Lady in Blue**

Act	Costume	To do
1	1. dark blue sleeves blouse 2. brownish orange skirt 3. black plump	Build Borrow Buy

**Fig 3.41: Rendering of Lady in Blue Shadow Character**



**Fig 3.42: Lady in Real Costume**



**Man 1, 2 &3 (Extra characters)**

These are characters introduced into the production by the director. Their purpose in the lives of these women is to get intimate and assertive with them. They come with pretentious and misleading ploys. Their cunning and deceitful traits is revealed by the colour of their shirts, which is similar to that of the lady they desire to have. They also wear tight fitting trousers to compliment the look.

**Table 3.15: Costume Plot for Extra Characters (Men)**

Act	Costume	To do
1	1. tight fitting trousers 2. coloured shirts to compliment 3. black shoes 4. Black shinning afro hair	Build Pull Borrow Buy

**Fig 3.43: Rendering Of Extra Characters (Men)**



**Fig 3.44: Extra Characters in Real Costume (Men)**



**Woman 1, 2 & 3 (Extra Characters)**

They are also additional characters introduced into the production by the director for aesthetics. They are portrayed as women who are gullible tolerant and loving. Their costumes are short miniskirts with tight fitting tops. All are in different colours such as red, blue and brown.

**Table 3.16: Costume Plot Extra Characters (Women)**

Act	Costume	To do
1	1. skimpy coloured skirts	Pull
	2. a blouse to match with	Pull
	3. black pump shoes	Buy

**Fig 3.45: Extra Characters in Real Costume (Women)**



**Toussaint L’Overture**

Toussaint L’ouverture is firm, strong and dependable. He gives hope to Lady in Brown. His Black cut-away coat and grey box checked trousers reveal his dependability, and belief in liberation.

**Table 3.17: Costume Plot for Toussaint L’Overture**

Act	Costume	To do
1	1. black cut away	Pull
	2. grey box checked trousers	Pull
	3. black shoes	Borrow

**Fig 3.46: Rendering of Toussaint L'Ouverture**



**Fig 3. 47: Toussaint L'Ouverture in Real Costume**



**Toussaint Jones**

He wears a brown corduroy trouser with a striped shirt. He is also exhibits the spirit of liberation, although he is playful and childish.

**Table 3.18: Costume Plot for shadow character for Toussaint Jones**

Act	Costume	To do
1	1. brown corduroy trouser	Pull
	2. striped shirt with holes at the elbow	Pull

**Fig 3.48: Rendering of Costume**



**Fig 3.49: Toussaint Jones in Real Costume**



**Kwame & Naomi Kenya, Beau Willie Brown**

They are loving and innocent kids but naïve to the extent of which their father can abuse them. They desire to experience love from both parents in a peaceful environment. Kwame wears a brown shirt with sea blue shorts to depict his humble and peaceful personality, while Naomi Kenya wears an off-white dress, depicting her innocence.

**Table 3.19:** Costume Plot for Children

<b>Act</b>	<b>Costume</b>	<b>To do</b>
1	1 a brown shirt	Borrow
	2. sea blue shorts	Borrow
	3. off-white dress	Borrow

**Fig 3.50: Rendering of Costume**



**Fig 3.51: Children in Real Costume**



**Beau Willie Brown**

He is the father of Crystal children. He desires to be a good loving father and husband to his family, despite his aggressive and impatient attitude. His threatening and intimidating traits are seen in his brownish striped vest that reveal his muscles and bare chest.

**Table 3.20:** Costume Plot for Beau Willie Brown

Act	Costume	To do
1	1. brownish striped waistcoat shirt 2. black trousers	Pull  Pull

**Fig 3. 52: Rendering of Willie Brown Costume**



**Fig 3.53: Willie Brown in Real Costume**



## CHAPTER FOUR

### WORKING JOURNAL AND EVALUATION

#### Introduction

According to Adjei Cecilia, an authority in costume design, in a class discussion on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2014, at the Department of Theatre Arts, School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana, Legon, a working journal is the process of keeping records of all activities before, during and after a production or performance. A diary that documents the process involved in piece of work. This chapter centres on the documentation of the processes involved in costuming through the use of the working journal. This record serves as a reminder to the artist and also serves as a reference point for anyone who wishes to follow the carefully planned activities as well as mistakes that may have been committed. Here is a detailed account of the processes employed in costuming Ntozake Shange's *For Coloured Girls who have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf*.

#### Tuesday, 2nd September, 2014

After a careful study of the clothing style in the seventies, my supervisor advised me to approach the graduate directing students to inquire about the play they will direct. I was to find out if their selected plays would enable me achieve my purpose with regard to costume. I approached some of the graduate directing students and they warmly gave me their scripts to read. After further deliberations, I selected the play; *For Colored Girls who have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf*, by Ntozake Shange and directed by Vivian Agbovi.

**Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 2014**

I scheduled a meeting with the director. We planned to meet later in the afternoon, since she had to attend lectures. I shared my design concept with her. She gladly accepted the idea and gave me permission to proceed. We both agreed to maintain the setting of the play, since it suited both design and directorial concept.

**Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> September, 2014**

Having finalized all necessary arrangements with the director. I met with my supervisor who then advised that I quickly have a full understanding and an in depth idea of the play. I went to the library to read and re-read the script. Because the play is a Choreopoem, I gave detail attention to the textual references, setting, plot, previous action and given circumstances in order to place each character in the allegorical preview of my research. After the third reading, I tried to visualize the characters in their costumes.

**Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> September, 2014**

After reading the play for the fourth time this day, I documented all character names as well as hidden characters whose names were not captured in the character list of the script. I also took note of some characteristics of characters in the play for accuracy. This included, age, gender, and physical qualities. This helped me to decide on which concept to give each character.

**Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> September, 2014**

An action chart, colour chart and costume plot was created to have a summarized version of the script. The action chart enabled me to know the number of times a

character appeared on stage. It made me aware of the quick changes needed to be noticed. The colour chart aided in my selection of the right tones of colours as well as the blend of it. This colour chart played a major role in my work as it gave me a clear view of all the colours used on stage at a glance.

### **Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2014**

I researched into the history of costume in general with much emphasis on the clothing style of the seventies. This was because the play was set in that period and I needed to acquaint myself with the clothing trends of that period, especially among the ‘black community’ in

America, with a careful study of their pictures found in the School of Performing Arts library.

I further went online to check out some of the trendy styles that had taken centre stage in the media in the period of the seventies.

### **Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> September, 2014**

The director informed me about the days for the auditions. I needed to be there to select students who were interested in working on the costume and make-up department of the production.

The audition was scheduled for Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> September to Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> September, 2014, between the hours of 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. Notices were posted around the school premises for students to apply.

**Wednesday, 17th September, 2014**

Audition started at exactly 5:00 p.m in the graduate seminar room. I was able to gather the names of girls who were interested in assisting the costume department for the production. After they came before the panel, I informed them that a text message would be sent to them to confirm their qualification as costume and make-up assistants. I needed seven girls to assist me to work but twenty girls came on the first night for auditions. I therefore decided to work with the list of girls I had gathered on the first night and short-list them based on merit and how they performed at the auditions.

**Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 2014**

On Monday, those who qualified were sent text messages and were made to come to the Efua Sutherland drama studio at 4:00 p.m. I discussed my costume concept with them. I also asked them to read the script again to have a better understanding of the play. I also taught them how to create a costume plot, an action chart and colour chart to help them with a better understanding of what they were doing. An hour and half later, the director held a production conference at the Efua Sutherland Drama Studio at 5:30 p.m with the entire cast and crew. The director spelt out her expectations to the cast and crew and admonished us to work in unity to achieve a successful production.

**Tuesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 2014**

I met with the costume crew. We discussed how they understood the play. They shared their personal perspectives of costume analysis of the play. It was insightful as they were all geared up to show off fashion trends that were in vogue. I explained my design concept to them again for them to understand the perspective from which I was going to costume the production.

I assigned different days to the wardrobe girls for the attendance of rehearsals.

### **Wednesday, 24<sup>th</sup> September, 2014**

I went to Makola (a central market place in Accra) on this day. The purpose for this trip was to ask for the prices of fabrics, haberdashery and make-up materials that were to be used for the production. I returned to campus about 2:00 p.m. I discussed the prices of the items with my supervisor who advised me to create a budget for all the characters in the production to discuss with my director.

### **Monday, 29<sup>th</sup> September, 2014**

I prepared a detailed budget based on the prices given by sellers in the market. I then had a meeting with Vivian Abgovi, the director. We discussed the budget and decided on who was to pay for what. It was noted that the school was going to give an amount of money for design students for their project. She volunteered to top up the money, should the need arise. I was completely grateful to her for that.

### **Tuesday, 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2014**

I went back to Accra with two of the costume crew to purchase the fabrics, haberdashery and make-up materials for the production. We also purchased one pair of high boot shoes, often known as the ‘Santiago shoes’ for one of the major characters in the play. I left at 12 noon and got back at 3:30 p.m. Later in the evening, I went for the rehearsals and took the body measurements of the cast as well as some additional characters the director had included in the production. Since the rehearsals were intense and I did not want to interrupt, I asked the rest of the cast to come to the costume shop

the next morning, between the hours of 9:00 a.m and 12 noon for their body measurements to be taken.

### **Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2014**

With the help of the costume crew and costume shop assistants, the body measurements of the cast were taken. Some also had to attend lectures between the stipulated time so I had to follow up on them later that evening at the rehearsals ground. I went to the costume storage and pulled out some costumes with the help of the costume shop assistants. In consultation with my supervisor, fabrics and tones of colours were decided on.

### **Thursday, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2014**

At 5:00 a.m. this day, I met four of the wardrobe girls who volunteered to assist me to go to Accra to purchase the items we had listed. We grouped ourselves in two, each group having four members. One group went shopping at Tema Station, and the other group at *Kantamanto*.

Items purchased included ‘Santiago shoes’, stockings and fabrics. The leotards in town were quite expensive and, since the price was beyond what we budgeted for, we decided to buy them the next day. We returned to campus at about 11:00 a.m. We started cutting out the costumes with the help of the costume shop assistants. By 3:00 p.m, fatigue started setting in, we took a break so that the girls could relax and prepare for the evening rehearsal at 7:00 p.m.

**Friday, 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2014**

I went to Accra again to purchase the seven leotards that would be worn by the ladies in the introductory performance. On my way to Accra, I called the costume shop attendants to continue with the cutting and sewing of the fabrics. I also purchased make-up for theatre blood. With efforts from the costume crew and shop assistants, the sewing of costume began. Upon my return, the wardrobe girls were eager to help, even though some of them had never sewn with a machine before. They were also on hand to iron stiff onto the facings of the cut garments and to pin them in place. The costumes were not ready until the following working day.

**Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

The costume crew came around to add the final touches to the costumes. Afterthat, the cast tried on their costumes, and then we arranged and hung them on the rack in the costume shop. Stitching and mending of pulled costumes from the storage also continued.

**Wednesday, 8<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

With the costumes almost completed, I discussed the use of make-up for the play with the wardrobe girls. I dyed and sprayed the leotards in the seven colours (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, brown and violet) needed. I added sparkles to them in order to give them a shiny look and appeal. This was quite challenging because the black leotards kept on absorbing the colours of the spray. The spray was intensively used in order to get the effect I needed. Then the leotards were left to dry.

**Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2014**

Costumes were ironed, labelled and hung in preparation for technical dress rehearsal. With the help of the action chart, I inspected the finished work to find out whether every character had a costume to wear on stage. Later that evening, costumes were conveyed from costume shop to the male and female changing rooms.

**Friday, 10<sup>th</sup> October, 2014**

I directed all the costume crew to dress up specific characters to make the work much easier. I hung the roster chart in the changing rooms for them to follow accordingly. I also directed them to hang each costume at vantage points for actors who would require quick changes.

**Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> October, 2014**

The dress parade was conducted. All actors wore costumes and stood on stage in groups and my supervisor and director pointed out some aspects that needed change and necessary corrections to be done.

**Tuesday, 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2014**

The dressing parade and technical night started at about 7:00 p.m. The cast fitted the costumes. Some still complained their costumes did not fit well enough, and alternations were done on them the next morning. They came on stage to see how the costumes responded to light and the set design.

**Wednesday, 29<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

There was a second fitting arranged and, this time, costumes fitted perfectly. The various corrections were done; Lady in Purple's zip was replaced. We also had to change the high heeled shoes of Lady in Blue into flat ones because she explained to me that she personally did not know how to walk in heels.

**Thursday, 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2014 to Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2014**

The production started at 7 p.m. and ended at 9 p.m. each night. An hour before the production, the wigs the cast would use were combed out to look good, make-up was applied on the actors and at exactly 7:30 p.m., the production began and ended at 9:30 p.m. On the first night of production, I sat among the audience to watch and to take notes or comments.

**Monday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2014**

After the production, I supervised the washing of all the costumes as well as neatly ironing for submission. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of November 2014, all items were submitted to the most senior costume assistant.

**EVALUATION**

**Costume and Light**

Lights offer visibility and illuminate the figures seen on stage. They are used to tell the mood of a particular character or scene, and also establish emphasis through the use of spot lights and also according to Wilson and Goldfarb (1999:113) lighting in a theatrical production helps to identify the time of day and enhance the visibility of actors on stage. In relation to costume, often times when some real costume meet stage

lights it changes colour. Therefore as a costume designer, I called the lighting designer to have a closer look at the colours of costumes to inform him of his selection of the appropriate gel for the staging of the play. Due to this, some gels had to be changed because of the effect it had on some particular costumes. However, during the technical dress rehearsal, the lighting department did not use light in both the prologue and the epilogue. To my surprise, they used it on the main performance day and this marred the appearance of some of the costumes used in that scene. Nevertheless, in all, the appropriate lighting gels were used to enhance the effect of the costumes.

### **Costume and Set Design**

According to Wilson and Goldfarb (1991:74), the set design in a production is to establish the locale in which the play takes place. It is discussed that the key function is to provide the audience with some backdrop for the play because every play is set in a particular period. The minimal use of the set design on stage gave room to the actors to freely move about in their costumes, especially for the Lady in Blue whose movement required twirls and swift, without restrictions particularly in the Harlem scene. Therefore, the set construction in this production contributed immensely to the success of it.

### **Costume and Colour**

Colour helps to define shape and mass .The artist, in this case, the costume designer, used colour to convey emotions and as well determine the mood of the actors in general. It is also a powerful and noticeable element of design on stage. It's meaning and proper interpretation helps to achieve a pleasant effect. The use of colour played a major role in this production as it gave room to interpret the role of each character

through costume. In the play, red symbolizes anger, deep pain, boldness and love and this resonates with the behaviour of

‘Lady in Red’ who yearns to let go of the hurt and pain she has experienced emotionally and physically from her relationship. In the case of Lady in Yellow costume, the colour yellow represents gaiety and youthfulness as seen in her excited nature. She shows enthusiasm when talking about the loss of her virginity.

Different colours are interpreted in diverse ways in different geographical locations. In *For Colored Girls who have Considered Suicide when the Rainbow is Enuf*, audience, (of Ghanaian origin), readily interpreted the characters although the setting of the play is in America.

The tones of colours used for the costumes blended with each other, giving it a cohesion. The appearance of all the seven women in their respective colours gave a pleasing effect. Hence, the colours of the costumes used in the play harmonized with each other.

### **Costumiers and Cast**

The cast and costumier interpersonal relationship is a key ingredient in the success of a production. This is because when they cooperate with the costumier, it speeds up the rate of constructing costumes. Therefore, the general attitude of the cast towards the costumier, to a degree, determines the pace at which the costumier works. This is in areas such as reporting for their body measurements and fitting of sewn costumes. However, if the cast decides to behave in the negative, this could hinder the creative process. The cast cooperated with the costumier. This results from the fact that they all reported at the costume shop any time needed, except for the reason of attending

lectures. As a result, I had to follow them up at the rehearsal ground to take their body measurements. In addition, when the costumes were constructed, they were called upon to fit them. They all did so without hesitation. Regarding comfort of costumes, the actors in an interview remarked that the costumes fitted them properly and functioned correctly while they were acting on stage. For instance, the actor who played the role of Lady in Purple was costumed in a long jumpsuit style. This gave her room to easily squat and throw her legs. In an interview she granted after the production, she expressed a high level of satisfaction wearing her costumes.

### **Costume and Audience Response**

The audience re-action to the costume was embracing. As I sat in there I realized people discuss how they understood each character by the way they were costumed.

After the production, an interview with some selected persons like Madam Aba Hazel, a tutor in one of the neighbouring schools said she loved the costumes especially for the lady in brown. 'It showed her calmness and maturity' she exclaimed. Bright Djangmah, a national service person of the Department of Theatre Arts said he could really relate to the costumes for each character because they clearly defined each character. Lecturers like Fabiola Opare Darko and Regina Kwakye-Oppong congratulated me for a good job done. Most especially, I beamed with smiles when my principal superior, Madam Cecilia Adjei gave me a thumps up.

The costumes depicted the true personalities of each character.

### **Costume Designer and Director**

The director is the one responsible for the creation and coordination of all aspects of the production in the theatre. Additionally, she works closely with the performers as well.

The director of the play cooperated very well with me and this went a long way in achieving the success of the production. She occasionally called to find how far the creation process of costume was going. This gave room for us to discuss and have a deeper understanding about the concept being employed.

After some deliberations, on how the characters were to look, she gave me room to design in any way that I needed to show forth the characters in an allegorical manner. In all, there was a healthy relationship between the costume designer and the director and I commend her directorial style.

### **Costume Designer and Costume Crew**

The duties of the costume crew included assisting with the creative process of the costumes, as well as being available at every given time. I ensured that the actors were comfortable and prepped up for their costumes. The costume crew dedicated their time to make sure all costumes were ready on time. They gave out their creative suggestions each time they had the opportunity, and they were always willing to learn. These hardworking young ladies reported on time, washed all costumes and ensured none of them went missing or torn. It was a delight working with them.

**BUDGET**

Lady in Brown

<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Unit Price(GHC)</b>	<b>Total (GHC)</b>
2 yards	Deep brown flowered fabric	5.00	10.00
3yards	Murky brown fabric	5.00	15.00
1 pair	Earrings	4.00	4.00
1 pair	High heeled shoes	20.00	20.00
			<b>49.00</b>

Lady in Yellow

<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Unit Price(GHC)</b>	<b>Total (GHC)</b>
3 yards	Yellow fabric	5.00	15.00
2yards	See- through sequins	10.00	20.00
1 pair	Earrings	4.00	4.00
1 pair	High heeled shoes	25.00	25.00
			<b>64.00</b>

Lady in Red

<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Unit Price(GHC)</b>	<b>Total (GHC)</b>
5 yards	Plain red fabric	5.00	25.00
1 pair	Black netty stockings	5.00	5.00
1 pair	Big red dangling earrings	4.00	4.00
1 pair	Ankle heeled boots	40.00	40.00
			<b>74.00</b>

Lady in Orange

<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Unit Price(GHC)</b>	<b>Total (GHC)</b>
5 yards	See-through orange chiffon fabric	5.00	25.00
1 pair	Black netty stockings	5.00	5.00
3 yards	Orange dacron fabric	10.00	30.00
1 pair	Ankle heeled boots	40.00	40.00
			<b>100.00</b>

Lady in Purple

<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Unit Price(GHC)</b>	<b>Total (GHC)</b>
6 yards	Purple velvet fabric	5.00	30.00
1 pair	cream stockings	5.00	5.00
1 pair	golden purple earrings	5.00	5.00
1 pair	Cream heeled shoes	40.00	40.00
			<b>80.00</b>

## Lady in Green

Quantity	Description	Unit Price(GHC)	Total (GHC)
5 yards	Accent green fabric	6.00	30.00
1 pair	Light brown stockings	5.00	5.00
1 pair	Dangling green earrings	4.00	4.00
1 pair	Cream heels heeled boots	45.00	45.00
			<b>84.00</b>

## Lady in Blue

Quantity	Description	Unit Price(GHC)	Total (GHC)
6 yards	Blue plain fabric	6.00	36.00
1 pack	Glitters	5.00	5.00
1 pair	Small blue earrings	4.00	4.00
1 pair	Black flat shoes	25.00	25.00
			<b>70.00</b>

## Extra Characters

Quantity	Description	Unit Price(GHC)	Total (GHC)
6 yards	Blue accent fabric	5.00	30.00
10yards	Sequins fabric	10.00	100.00
6 yards	Khaki fabric	42.00	4.00
7 each	Different colours of shirts	25.00	25.00
6 pairs	Earrings	4.00	24.00
9 pairs	Black/cream stockings	5.00	45.00
5 pairs	High heeled shoes	25.00	125.00
			<b>353.00</b>

## Haberdashery

Quantity	Description	Unit Price(GHC)	Total (GHC)
6 packs	thread	2.00	30.00
10each	zip	1.00	100.00
6 packs	buttons	4.00	4.00
7 yards	Velcro	5.00	25.00
9 pairs	hair wigs	30.00	24.00
5 pairs	bangles	5.00	45.00
5 pairs	hair bands	25.00	125.00
1 pack	needles	5.00	5.00
10 yards	trimmings	5.00	25.00
10 yards	stiffening	5.00	25.00
			<b>408.00</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL(GHC)</b>			<b>1282.00</b>

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

#### Summary

The main purpose of this thesis project has been to experiment with costumes in the portrayal of allegorical characters in the play *For Coloured Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow Is Enuf*, by Ntozake Shange.

This thesis-project has dealt with the use of costumes to represent allegorical characters in a play that has African American characters. It was written in 1974, set in America and presented on the contemporary Ghanaian stage. The project started with the costumier undertaking a research into the costumes of the 1970s with emphasis on the African American as well as a brief history of them. In addition to this, the costumier studied the meaning of colours in both Ghanaian and African American contexts.

This resulted in the costumier documenting the processes involved in creating costumes for allegorical characters. The creative process was guided by the ‘concept of subtlety.’

This concept refers to the use of subtle hints in the lines of the various characters in the creative process of the costumes.

Finally, this thesis-project embraced the historical and artistic methodology for its successful execution. In the artistic process of the costume for the stage, some key findings (out of which some recommendations are made below) were discovered which are very significant and may thus contribute to knowledge.

## **Major Findings**

The researcher discovered ways of creating clothing out of abstract feelings. An area I shall recommend for further research is the creation of accessories for abstract characters that will serve as a complete costume to convey the emotional state of the character to an audience.

Even though Africans and Americans have different conceptions of colours, there is, however, some notions of colour that cut across. Perhaps, because of the African heritage of the African American. Therefore, one may conclude that, irrespective of where it is used and for what purpose; the notion of colour is imperative in every society. This is a fact every researcher should be conscious about.

I discovered that, the clothing style of the 1970s is currently what is in vogue among most contemporary University of Ghana students. Especially, the Afro (natural hair) and the use of colour blocking in their African prints, popularly called *Asasawa*.

To achieve excellent results in the creation of costumes for allegorical characters. The costumier would have to experiment with numerous sketches and fabrics in order to attain an appreciable outcome.

## **Challenges Faced**

Some of the notable challenges that were faced in the course of this experimental project included the following;

- The designs made on the black leotard by the costumier did not show clearly on stage when it came into contact with lights as compared to daylight and in pictures.

- The introduction of new characters, the casting of dual roles and some floating characters<sup>23</sup> in the production gave the costumier additional work because some of my analysis had to be done based on their rehearsal cues. Some also had no specific roles. Therefore, I had a huge challenge trying to figure out how to costume them to complement the other characters and meet the director's concept.
- There was inadequate funding due to the amount of funding allocated for this project that was woefully insufficient. This has had a great influence on the project in terms of the acquisition of some items in time. For instance, some actors could not rehearse with their shoes/heels because I could not acquire them earlier. Meanwhile, these shoes were not easily available in the market and needed to be acquired earlier to enable the actor (s) get used to them on stage. Yet, the purchasing of these shoes/heels were done closer to the performance night. As a result, the performers found it difficult to adjust comfortably in them. Consequently, it affected their free flow of movements, especially in the scenes they were required to dance on stage.
- The creation and determination of the styles for the seven major female characters in order to portray them as allegorical was also one of the huge challenges I encountered as a costumier of this project.
- The search for and finding of some additional costumes for the minor characters in the wardrobe was a challenge.
- The notion and interpretation of colour in America was partially opposed to that of Africa, hence, it was a challenge to me in my bid to find a level ground between the two.

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<sup>23</sup> These characters were not part of the initial script.

## **Recommendations**

In view of some of the successes and challenges faced in this project, the costumier would like to suggest the following:

- These clothing styles were developed from the ‘Concept of Subtlety’. The concept of subtlety is a coined word by the researcher derived from the word allegory. The use of subtle hints from the way the characters communicated their emotions in the play was used as a basis, bearing in mind that the recreated design did not lose its original design significance entirely in the new design. Design students who wish to create for allegorical characters could adopt this theory and practice.
- Theatre is a collaborative endeavour. Hence, all the other departments in a production should make it a point to work together as a team. For instance, during the technical dress rehearsal, the lighting department did not use light in both the prologue and the epilogue. However, they used it in the main performance day and this led to the challenge in point one above.
- I recommend that adequate funds should be allocated to researchers in time to facilitate their work.
- This costumier had a good working relationship with the director because she was not restrictive but gave the designer the room to explore her creative sense. Hence, I will like to commend her for her directorial style.

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## **Interview**

Emeritus Professor Jacob U. Gordon. 15<sup>th</sup> September 2015.

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**Appendix I**

**Pictures of the Costumier at Work,**

A



Costumier working on costume of Lady in Blue

B



Costumier cutting out costume of lady in Brown

C



Costume of Lady in Purple

D



Stiffening of the green costume stiffening is done

E



Costumier teaching an assistant how

F



G



Applying makeup on the face of an actor before the performance

I



J



K



L



M



Costumier with the director of the production

N



Costumier with wardrobe girls

## Appendix II

### Characters in Make Up

A



A cross section of the main characters in their makeup and Afro wig

B



Lady in Purple elaborate makeup for  
of Lady in

Sechita



The use of theatre blood on the face

Red on stage.

### Appendix III

#### Pictures of Characters on Stage

A



The women in their leotards on stage

B



Their appearance when placed in a silhouette

C



Lady in Red sending the man out of her house

D



Beau Willie Brown asking for Crystal forgiveness

E



All seven women on stage

F



Curtain Call