

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH SEMESTER/EXPLORATORY GRANT APPLICATION

Body of Proposal

As the only student costume designer for the February 2008 WSU production of *West Side Story*, I will be responsible for translating the director's ideas into completed costume designs for a cast of 52 actors. The translation process involves 20-30 hours of library research in which I will literally immerse myself in the fashions worn during the late 1950's. This research will allow me to design costumes that accurately reflect the clothing worn by the characters who lived during that period of time. It is highly critical that I purchase appropriate fabrics to ensure that the costumes worn by the actors look authentic.

I must spend at least 35 hours with the costume shop manager discussing a variety of methods of acquiring costumes for this production. Possible methods used in the past include renting costumes from theatre departments at Utah State University or the University of Utah, or even the Pioneer Theatre Company when they are available for our use. Other methods include altering existing costumes owned by and housed in our theatre department at WSU. A final method which has proven most useful to experienced student designers in the theatre department has been to manufacture new costumes based on original, researched designs. I draw original designs of costumes based on historical research.

Sewing original costume pieces is difficult because a wide range of fabrics does not exist locally. Based on my experience as a designer I have found that most of the fabrics available locally are generally restricted to two main types: broad-cloth cotton and polyester satin, used by quilt makers and prom dress sewers, respectively. To illustrate, I have designed two shows for WSU: *Really Rosie*, fall 2004 and *¡Bocòn!*, spring 2007. Although my designs authentically reflected the time periods, I could not find locally appropriate fabrics to sew the

costumes to look authentic. For this reason, I am proposing a trip to Los Angeles to purchase the fabrics crucial for the best presentation of *West Side Story*.

Los Angeles is the ideal location due to their vast garment district where quality fabrics can be purchased at inexpensive prices. This wide selection cannot be found locally and ordering through the mail and on-line is not practical due because I need to touch the fabric. As a budding designer, I need to develop the ability to purchase authentic materials economically, an experience that my faculty mentor will closely supervise. Further, I will develop skills of purchasing correct amounts of fabric compatible with the design sketches. This skill is essential in ensuring that there is enough fabric for costume pieces without wasting money.

I believe that this experience will be a critical part of my education at WSU. The experience I have had designing in the past has given me the knowledge that will ensure the success of the proposed travel to purchase authentic fabrics. I will be able to continue to expand my fund of knowledge of costume construction based on my own designs. I hope that the materials that I acquire in Los Angeles will enable WSU to present a most memorable version of *West Side Story*. In addition to the production I also plan to display my completed work from *West Side Story* and *¡Bocòn!* at the Undergraduate Symposium to be held March 28, 2008.

References:

Richman, Joe (July 30, 2007). *West Side Story: The Murder That Shocked New York*. National Public Radio, All Things Considered. Retrieved November 17th 2007 from <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=12350113>

Schneider, Eric C. (1999). *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings: youth gangs in post-war New York*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.

Shih, Joy. (1997). *Fashionable Clothing from the Sears Catalogs: late 1950's*. Atglen, PA: Schiffler Pub. Inc.

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PROSPECTIVE PROJECT TIME LINE

- December 2007:** Meet with the director to discuss design direction
Receive a cast list, collect necessary measurements
Complete necessary research
Complete preliminary sketches; decide on color palette for each character
- January 2008:** Travel to purchase materials needed—travel at the end of the first week,
Friday through Sunday
Discuss costume construction with the costume shop manager
Supervise costume fittings
Choose existing costumes, discuss alterations
- February 2008:** Continue to supervise fittings and construction of new costumes
Complete final renderings
Compile information for entry at ACTF and individual adjudication
15th Photo call for publicity photos
27th First day of Dress Rehearsals
29th Opening Day