



RACHEL DAWN MODELS THE SUN COSTUME FROM THE 1993 PRODUCTION *CHIMERA*



LISSY IRONS IN STEAMPUNK LOOK FROM 2009'S *AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS*



ANGEL MCNABBL- LYONS SPORTS DESIGN FROM *AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS*

PHOTOS BY ATHENA DELENE

# FORTY YEARS AND COUNTLESS COSTUMES

*Fashion and theater collide for Alexandra Bonds' historic runway show at the UO's Hope Theatre*

**A**lexandra Bonds' retrospective costume fashion show this weekend, *Portfolio*, promises a lively look back at nearly four decades of stitching, with 40 garments leaping from literature to the runway each night.

"We started with our favorites, and curated a selection from there," says Bonds, a costume designer, UO professor emerita and historian. "I knew that because it was a fashion show, what we'd focus on were flashy, beautiful pieces."

We're in the basement of Villard Hall, where a gray windowless room has become a delightful repository, stuffed to the rafters with Bonds' work from her 38-year career constructing costumes and educating students in the fine art of how to do so.

Theater buffs might see a Lady Bracknell hanging among the stock, or a Sir Anthony Absolute, or maybe a *Chimera* or two. It's a bountiful collection: Colorful, textural, with myriad shapes and silhouettes.

"I'm inspired by the work of Vivienne Westwood and Alexander McQueen," Bonds says. "And it's an interesting circle, presenting these costumes in a fashion show when the costumes themselves were so inspired by those fashion designers."

Bonds herself is influential. Many designers working in the Eugene performing arts got their start in Bonds' costume shop, learning to vision, draw, construct, sew, dye and fabricate just about anything that the work at hand calls upon.

When asked how she feels to see her students go on to their own success onstage, Bonds beams. "Like a proud parent," she says.

Though Bonds is quick to credit the generations of student workers who designed and sewed countless costumes under her careful tutelage, the garments on display for *Portfolio* are all hers: The work includes a black, white and multicolor number from 1996's *A Servant of Two Masters*, an outfit befitting a Harlequin.

"Based in Commedia dell'arte, the character traditionally looked different than everyone else," she says. "The challenge was to create unity onstage within this different world."



COSTUME DESIGNER ALEXANDRA BONDS WITH ONE OF HER DESIGNS

PHOTO BY TRASK BEDORTHA

Bonds traces the quilted edges from a skirt for a 1983 production of *The Merchant of Venice*:

"It's a Seminole patchwork, reflecting the inlaid marble patterns of Italian Renaissance flooring," she says. "I think it was the first time that I really was able to bring together metaphor, with texture and line," she says.

Also on the runway, watch for Bonds' work for *A Midsummer's Night Dream* — "a wild New Orleans hangover, with lots of nasty fairies" — as well as costumes from *Love Will Shake*, which were exhibited internationally.

And you'd be hard-pressed to find anyone in Eugene who knows more about fashion history than Bonds. It's a fascinatingly relevant topic, suggestive of social, economic and political change.

So what's her all-time favorite fashion moment?

"I have to go to the Tudors because of the richness of the surfaces, the ruffs, lace, blackwork, the jewels and embroidery," Bonds says.

She's also attracted to the rounded hoop skirts of the late 19th century, and the earlier Regency era. "It's really beautiful," Bonds says. "With the tailcoats for men, colored breeches, hats and long coats."

"But my favorite era used to be the one I was working within," she says.

*Portfolio* will feature Flex Dance Company, also wearing Bonds' originals, and a sound score by UO graduate Shawn Kahl. A book of Bonds' designs will be for sale at the event.

The main attraction, without a doubt, is the 40-plus costumes brought to life by approximately 18 volunteer models, both men and women.

Bonds says she didn't worry about gender specificity when assigning garments, but instead went with who fit the costumes. "I didn't want to do all those alterations," she says with a chuckle. ■

*Portfolio* will be presented 7 pm Friday and Saturday, Oct. 14 and 15, at the Hope Theatre, University of Oregon Campus; \$10-\$25. Tickets available through [silverliningproduction.com](http://silverliningproduction.com)