

The Players of Dieudonné DESIGN PROCESS

Costumes and fashion are something I have always had a passion for, so I was thrilled that my first design project was for my theater company's debut production, *The Players of Dieudonné*.

We wanted to create a timeless setting for the piece – a universe that looks familiar but feels different. Therefore I drew upon historical fashion, researching clothes of the Medieval, Elizabethan, Jacobean, and 17th Century periods; choosing garments and shapes that intrigued me from each with the goal of creating unique mishmashes of time periods that, together, form a cohesive look. Below you can find some of my research images. To further jumble the Players' world, I incorporated more modern materials and garments such as sneakers and denim to create an unidentifiable yet realistic pocket of the universe our story could live in.

When looking at a line-up of the characters, I wanted their colorful and outrageous outfits to put a smile on the audience's faces and excite them to what is coming. I was also aware of the silhouettes of each character and how they would look as an ensemble, so tried not to reuse any shapes or garments between costumes.

As an actor, I am familiar with the excitement of wearing your costume for the first time when suddenly the character you've been visualizing in your head is standing in front of you. It was vastly helpful to be a working actor on this project as I got a deeper understanding of each character and my co-actors' desires and intentions for them. Furthermore, being such a physical play, a big part of rehearsals was creating distinctive physicalities for our characters which informed my designs in visualizing how certain garments would accentuate those movements. Still, what I wanted most was for my friends to feel comfortable and excited in what they were wearing and that it reflected their character correctly.

I took inspiration from productions such as *His Dark Materials*, *Dune*, *The Threepenny Opera*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Anna Karenina*, and *Alice in Wonderland* which, in their own ways, use familiar objects from our world in a different way that is curious to the audience yet totally normal to the characters.

THE CHARACTERS

*King Dieudonné*

For our King and dictator I aimed to reach the highest level of lushness – with obscene colors and materials, everything was to be as maximalist as possible. I wanted Will to feel confident in the clothes he was wearing, as Diuedoné exudes that in bucketloads.

In conjunction, I wanted there to be something off about his character too. Something cheap and gaudy to make Dieudonné feel outside of the old money world of royals he so wants to be accepted in. Achieving this by adding too much jewelry, too many ruffles, and the spray painted gold loafers.





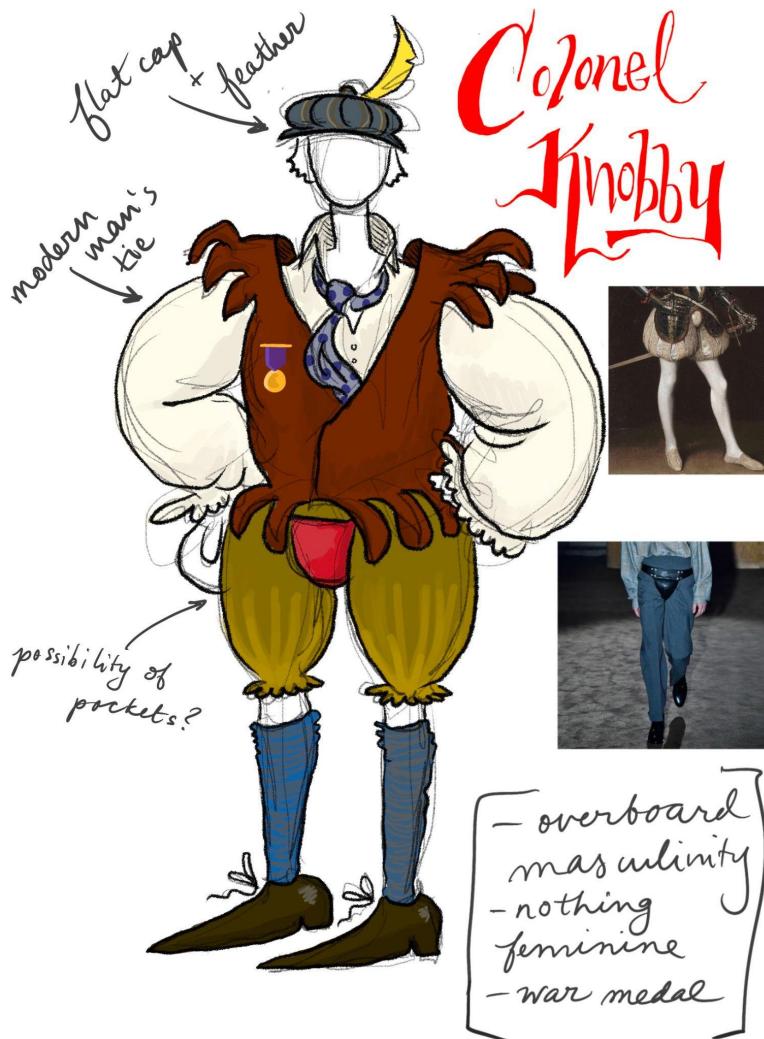
Huzzah

The innocent and excitable Huzzah is one of the most active characters in our play therefore she needed to be able to move unrestrictedly. We tried the corseted look I had drawn but it wasn't working, and when we found these yellow overalls it clicked immediately.

She is also the youngest character in our show, so giving her oversized clothes enhanced that and became a feature of her character.

Not seen in these photos, but we found a great pair of colorful polka dot Converse and a simple crossbody satchel that really add to this fun loving girl.





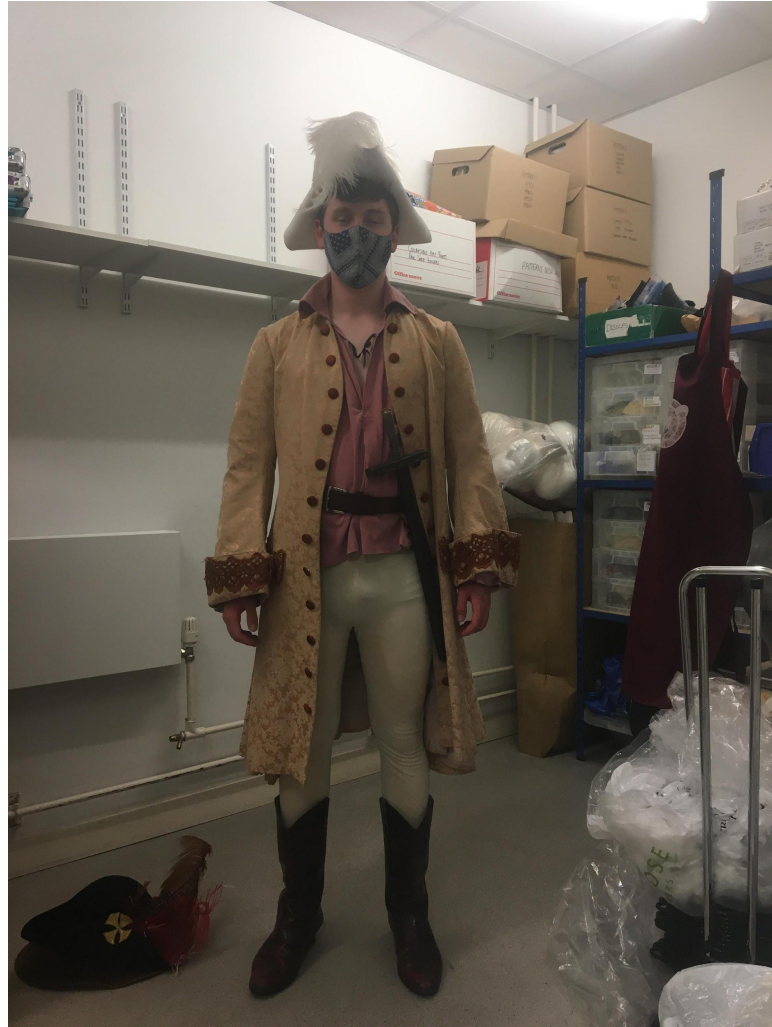
Colonel Knobby

Colonel Knobby was so fun to design as he is a woman in disguise. This wasn't something we felt we were able to touch upon in our first run of the play due to time constraints, but Emily and the cast were very aware of it for future edits.

Therefore, we wanted to design something hyper masculine to heighten this disguise for the Colonel.

One of the first items of clothing that came to mind was a codpiece often worn by men in the 16th century, and I based the rest of the costume around that, also referring to English school boy's uniforms, Harley Davidson bikers and the *Peaky Blinders* to create this ultra manly outfit.

Emily will also wear a mustache, have a feather in her flat cap, and a war medallion on her leather vest.



Sir Calvin Monroe

Our multi-award winning lead actor and extreme egoist, Sir Calvin Monroe, was based on a mixture of Robin Hood, John Wayne, and photos I found during research of 19th Century Shakespearean actors.

Pink was a strong color I felt for him. Not only because it used to be a desirable color for men to wear and in the vein of the Rococo painting style I associate with him, but also because I felt it gave off the aura of someone who is both vulnerable and bold.

Matt needed a sword for this role, and we decided on a plastic pirate toy one which juxtaposes his supposedly chivalrous persona and the warlord characters he plays.





Polonius

Polonius is the transcriber for the King's story and also one of the oldest members of his Players and therefore a leader amongst the actors. I wanted him to have an air of elegance and dignity that is at odds with their other leader, Wandsworth Porridge.

Tijan and I were also aware of finding clothes that fit his background as a black actor in our group of Players and a history for Polonius in the troupe that doesn't ignore this fact.

Therefore we took inspiration from traditional Wolof clothing which features a lot of blue and interestingly tailored jackets. I was also inspired by *The Irishman's* costumes of mid-20th Century mobster suave glitz, which I added with his hat, belt, rings, and brooch.



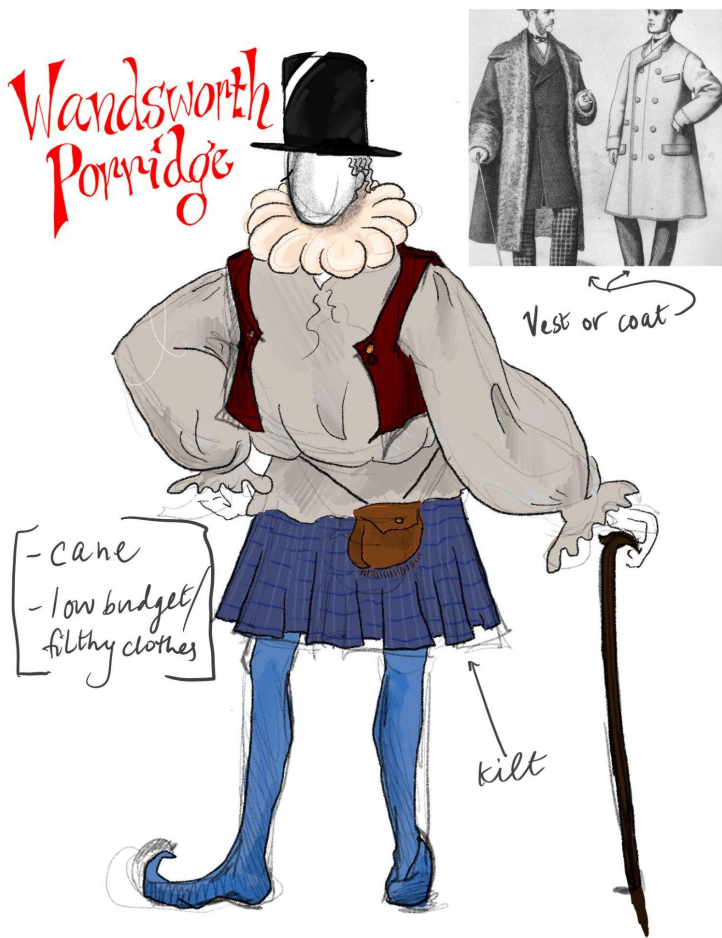


Camille Françoise

Camille is the French female lead actor of the Players and is as dramatic and self-absorbed as her co-star, Calvin, who she is in constant battle with for attention, roles, and gravitas within the company. I had hoped to find a deep red dress as shown in the drawing to oppose Calvin's lighter style, but this dress seemed to compliment the idea that she still has to cater to Monroe's whims rather than embracing her own more Baroque style. The black beret is at odds with the youthful dress, adding a layer of seriousness that is in her personality.

I wanted to capture her self-assured disregard and general rudeness to others by giving her oversized black sunglasses not seen in these photos in an ode to French New Wave fashion.

I imagined her wanting to look like Marie Antoinette but on a budget, hence the shorter "ill-fitted" petticoat.



Wandsworth Porridge

I loved fitting Ellis for his role as the bumbling director of the Players. He is the go-between for the Players and King Dieudonné and therefore needed to be more “presentable”. However, it is against Mr Porridge’s personality to be put-together, unlike Polonius. Therefore I aimed to create an uncomfortable and funny mixture of styles that encapsulate his unique position in the cast.

I felt that a kilt was perfect for Wandsworth and was adamant in finding the perfect one as, to me in modern day, it is the definition of manly assuredness. It takes confidence for a modern man outside of Scotland to wear a kilt, and I think it suits Wandsworth very well.

Adding a ruff and top hat are what I imagined Wandsworth would haphazardly do in the morning to make himself look important for the King and his cane became an iconic feature to his funny waddling walk.



Rick

Rick is our forward-thinking protagonist brought to the Kingdom from his countryside farming village. His groundedness is at odds with the other Players' eccentric personalities, and therefore I wanted his outfit to start off simple and through the play add more crazy "costumes" that are in contrast to his straightforward point of view.

I was thrilled when we found the jester's hat as it was a perfectly silly addition to throw on – a garment he'd been assigned to wear as part of his new role in Dieudoné's play. I took inspiration from handymen, Romeo from Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet*, and Medieval court jesters.



INTERESTING SHAPES

Cravats/ruffs
Top hats
Head scarves
Draping layers
Puff sleeves
Calf stockings
70s & 80s Italian mafia-style
Balaclavas
Vests/suit jackets
Balloon trousers
Kilts
Jester hats
Voluptuous wigs
School uniforms
Corsets
Money pouches
Renaissance floppy hats
Capes
Pointy shoes
Swords
Big buckle shoes
Lace up work boots
Wizard hats
Walking sticks
Cowboy hat & boots
Fur coats
Codpieces
Big feathers
Tuxedos

PHOTO INSPIRATION

