

A BOOK OF DRAMATIC COSTUME

by

EDITH DABNEY

*State Teachers College
Kirksville, Missouri*

and

C. M. WISE

Louisiana State University



F. S. Crofts & Co.

Publishers, New York

1930

COPYRIGHT, 1930 BY F. S. CROFTS & CO., INC.

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BY THE VAIL-BALLOU PRESS, INC., BINGHAMTON, N. Y.

CONTENTS

	PREFACE	PAGE V
CHAPTER		
I.	INTRODUCTION	I
II.	COLOR AND THE COSTUME PROBLEM	7
III.	EGYPTIAN COSTUME	27
IV.	HEBREW COSTUMES; MEDIEVAL CHURCH COSTUMES	39
V.	GREEK COSTUME	53
VI.	ROMAN COSTUME	67
VII.	MEDIEVAL ENGLISH COSTUME—PRE-SHAKESPEAREAN AND SHAKESPEAREAN COSTUME	77
VIII.	AMERICAN COLONIAL COSTUME	95
IX.	EIGHTEENTH CENTURY EUROPEAN COSTUME; AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY COSTUME	101
X.	VICTORIAN COSTUME IN EUROPE AND AMERICA	115
XI.	MODERN COSTUMES	125
XII.	NATIONAL COSTUME; AMERICAN INDIAN COSTUME	137
XIII.	CONSTRUCTION SUGGESTIONS	155
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	161

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PLATE	PAGE
I. Egyptian Woman's Costume	33
II. Egyptian Man's Costume	35
III. Group in "Antony and Cleopatra" by William Shakespeare	37
IV. Hebrew Men and Women	45
V. Medieval Church Characters	49
VI. Group in "The Rock" by Mary Hamlin	51
VII. Greek Costume	59
VIII. Greek Costume	61
VIIIa. Manner of Draping Greek and Roman Garments	63
IX. Group in "Iphigenia" by Euripides	65
X. Roman Costume	73
XI. Group in "Roman Holiday" by Roman Laim	75
XII. Medieval English Costume	83
XIII. Pre-Shakespearean and Shakespearean Costume	87
XIV. Shakespearean and Pre-Shakespearean Costume	89
XV. Group in "Robin Hood" by Owen Davis	91
XVI. Group in "Twelfth Night" by William Shakespeare	93
XVII. American Colonial Costume	99
XVIII. Eighteenth Century European Costume; American Revolutionary Costume	105
XIX. Eighteenth Century European Costume; American Revolutionary Costume	107
XX. Eighteenth Century European Costume; American Revolutionary Costume	111
XXI. Group in "Devil's Disciple" by Bernard Shaw	113
XXII. Victorian Costume—American Phases	119

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PLATE		PAGE
XXIII.	Victorian Costume—American Phases	121
XXIV.	Group in "Abraham Lincoln" by John Drinkwater	123
XXV.	A Modern Miscellany	129
XXVI.	Figure in "R.U.R." by Karel Capek	131
XXVII.	Group in a Children's Play	133
XXVIII.	Group in "Maker of Dreams" by Oliphant Down	135
XXIX.	National Costume	141
XXX.	National Costume	143
XXXI.	National Costume	147
XXXII.	Indian Costume	151
XXXIII.	Figure in "Mikado" by Gilbert and Sullivan	153
XXXIV.	Group in "The Great Divide" by W. V. Moody	159

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE subject of costume is long and complicated. It has been written upon frequently, voluminously, and sometimes well. Guided, warned and inspired by well learned people, whose invaluable research has filled many and large volumes of costume history, the authors of the present book have set for themselves the severe limitations implied in their title, "A Book of Dramatic Costume." Their stress is on the word "dramatic." Whence the following introductory discourse—intended, by the way, to be read, not sighingly leafed past.

Here is a basic question, the answer to which has determined the acceptance or rejection of every item considered for admission to the pages of this book:—Has it dramatic significance? Now clothes are fascinating. From the days of fig leaves to the days of the Follies, clothes, their quality and quantity, have occupied more time than food-getting, more thought than religion, more conversation than the weather. Such an amount of attention has brought into being an incalculable amount of clothes, unbelievably varied in material and fashion. It is a stock temptation to try to get everything into a volume.

But! Dramatists have selected the peoples of relatively few periods to put into plays; and of these peoples, relatively few individuals. A book of dramatic costume must, there-

fore, firmly inhibit any ambition to become a history of costume. It must include precisely those costumes which can be used in plays, and precisely no more. Countless costumes, lovely, grotesque, quaint, concealing and revealing, may plead for attention and representation; but if no character in a play has worn them—we have said!

There is the added fact that—so runs the phrase of our childhood Latin text—the added fact that a book of dramatic costume can not, even within its self-prescribed limits, be an accurate costume history—any more than a costume history can be a good book of dramatic costume. That is because historicity in dramatic costume is not possible, nor strictly desirable.

This would be explained. Perpend. The stage demands simplification and exaggeration. The hundred-year-old, four-hundred-dollar Chinese costume once used in "The Yellow Jacket" was delightfully accurate and historical. But it was entirely uninteresting. At audience distance, its fine stitches, delicate tracery and minute design were invisible. A garment in simplified design and exaggerated figure would have made the proper target for the eye—its inexpensive, contemporary inexactness would have succeeded, where the priceless, aged historicity of the other failed.

There are in the costumes of any people in any period, certain constant elements, such as the mid-line decoration of the Egyptian dress, the eye-satisfying, chin-torturing ruff of the Elizabethans, or the immaculate collars and cuffs of the immaculate Puritans. These constant elements characterize

the costume—identify it, constitute nearly all an audience of laymen knows about it or sees in it. The dramatic costumer can take these constant elements, simplify and exaggerate them as previously suggested, and turn out the sort of costume that “belongs” in drama—the sort with which this book concerns itself.

All this to get to the point of saying what the reader may expect of this book. (And here follows the material of the preface, which has surrendered itself to Chapter I in order to get itself read.) This book undertakes to present in line-drawing pictures, a selection of the costumes of most of the peoples and periods (the larger periods—no sub-periods) touched by dramatic literature. The plates of drawings are arranged in a loose and approximate chronology. As may be expected, the selection is limited to costumes known to be worn by characters in plays, pageants, operas and other dramatic and quasi-dramatic forms. In the drawing of these plates, the matter of constant elements has received major attention. There has been some exaggeration and simplification, though at this point not enough to obscure the original nature of the costumes. Accompanying these costume drawings are drawings of ornaments, utensils, weapons, motifs and other useful minutiae. Colors, materials and like details are outlined in the accompanying discussions.

Now comes the matter designed to make the reader who omits perusing this page uncomfortable as possible. Following each plate, or set of related plates, there is a scene-set of some play using costumes of the country and period illus-

trated. In these sets are figures wearing costumes derived from preceding drawings; the particular, derived from the general, so to speak. In these costumes, the principles of simplification and exaggeration, with obvious use of the constant elements, will be seen to be applied.

Now! Having spent many months in sifting from sources musty and dusty, domestic and foreign; having bowed humbly to the scholarly Racinet and marveled at his diligent German *confrères*, having carefully selected and painstakingly prepared the general, and having then shown its application to the particular, the authors hope that they may send their "litel boke" out to many directors who will also derive particular costumes for their plays from the general sources here provided.

Some words about the settings herein. The authors can not help hoping that these will be noticed, possibly admired, even sometimes followed. But settings are not properly a part of this book. That is, they are only backgrounds for the figures they accompany. Some day the authors may give the important subject of setting its due; but for the present, they hope only that their chronology of typical dramatic clothes may be the source of many beautiful dressings-up of many successful plays.



CHAPTER II
COLOR AND THE COSTUME PROBLEM



SOURCES

- Bassett, Jones—*Mobile Color and Stage Lighting*; Electrical World, 1915, V. 66.
- Chevreul—*Principle of Harmony and Contrast of Color*; Paris, 1838, tr. by G. Bell & Sons, London, 1912.
- Gordon & Pepper—*Modern Color*; Harvard University Press, New York, 1923.
- Jacobs—*The Art of Color*; Doubleday, Page, New York, 1923.
- Luckiesh—*Color and Its Applications*; D. Van Nostrand, 8 Warren St., New York, 1921.
- Luckiesh—*Light and Color in Advertising and Merchandizing*; D. Van Nostrand, 8 Warren St., New York, 1921.
- Luckiesh—*Lighting Art, Its Practice and Possibilities*; McGraw Hill Book Co., New York, 1917.
- Luckiesh—*Language of Color*; Dodd, Mead, New York, 1918.
- Luckiesh—*Visual Illusions*; D. Van Nostrand, New York, 1922.
- Luckiesh—*Light and Shade*; D. Van Nostrand, New York, 1916.
- Ross—*The Painter's Palette*; Houghton, Mifflin Co., Boston, 1919.
- Sargent—*The Enjoyment and Use of Color*; Scribner's, 1923.
- Snow and Froelich—*The Theory and Practice of Color*; Prang, Chicago, 1920.
- Taylor—*System of Color Harmony*; Taylor System of Color Harmony, 425 5th Avenue, New York, 1923.
- Vanderpoel—*Color Problems*; Longmans, Green, New York, 1903.
- Ward—*Colour Harmony and Contrast*; Chapman and Hall, London, 1912.
- Wise—*Dramatics for School and Community*; Appleton, New York, 1923.

CHAPTER II

COLOR AND THE COSTUME PROBLEM

OUT of the mass of writing and experimenting which up to date has been done relative to color, and pending the additional knowledge which presently we are sure to have, we may set down for the play costumer a few rather usable simplicities.

1. Every color means something.
2. Certain color combinations are agreeable—others disagreeable.
3. The colors of costumes must be planned with a view toward grouping to gain unity and harmony.
4. The colors must be selected with regard to the position of accents in the grouping.
5. The color of the scene-set must be considered in relation to the colors of the costumes.
6. The two quite different processes of mixing lights and mixing pigments must be understood.
7. The effect of colored lights on fabrics must be understood.

This chapter will undertake to deal briefly with these seven items.

Every color means something. Just why, scientists may sometime find out. It may be that the wave length of a given light ray, say red, impinges on the retina with a frequency that is in some way out of phase or step with the rhythm of

some vital process, such as breathing or the heartbeat, and so excites a discord in the nervous system connoting war or blood or murder or something equally violent. If so, then blue must be "in step," so as to soothe the savage breast. Or some other reason, equally intriguing or ridiculous may function. When we have discovered it, we shall know it. But we shall not even then know more surely than we know now, that every color does mean something.

To be sure, we are educable creatures; through education, one people may come to feel yellow to symbolize cowardice, and another nobility: but in the main, there is remarkable agreement among all peoples as to the symbolism of a given color. "People of every age and nationality are affected by color, and racial characteristics may be partially determined by the colors which a certain people love."

It is consistent with the intentional compactness and practicality of this book not to say more than has just been suggested to the imagination, but rather to go directly to the listing of certain collected meanings or symbolisms of colors. Yellow (Clear):—Wealth, gayety, love, constancy, joy, hope, dignity, power, fruitfulness, royalty, harvest, sun, gold.

Yellow (Grayed):—Jealousy, deceit, inconstancy, decay.

Green (Clear):—Eternity, vitality, growth, hope, faith, truth, inspiration, youth, springtime.

Green (Grayed):—Envy, decay, jealousy, calm, rest.

Blue (Clear):—Truth, firmness, stability, modesty, quietness, constancy, lack of sympathy, coldness, success.

Violet (Clear):—Dignity, royalty, solemnity, martyred truth, tragic love, victory.

Violet (Red):—Majesty of kings.

Violet (Light):—"Half-mourning," delicacy, refinement, old age.

Red (Clear):—Cruelty, guilt, hatred, anarchy, excitement, warmth, shame, hurry, passionate love, ardent zeal, creative power, divine love, patriotism, purity, honor, royalty, cardinals.

Red (Grayed):—Monotony, inferiority, poverty, withered hope; autumn, monks, nuns.

Orange (Clear):—Domesticity, passion, vitality, mild unrest.

White:—Innocence, purity, faith, chastity, truce, joy, winter, mourning, deities, angels, ghosts, priests, virgins, saints.

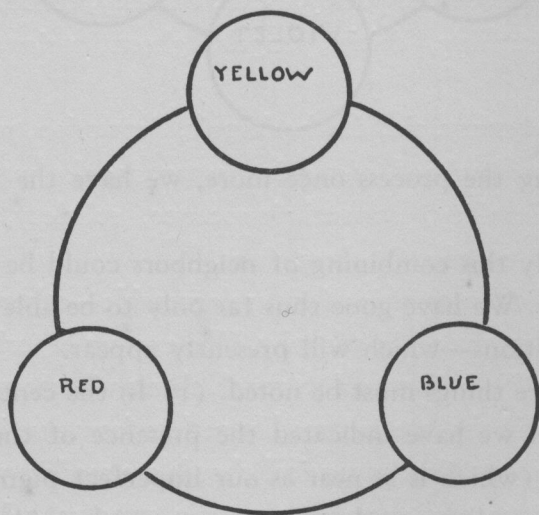
Black:—Mystery, sin, death, despair, depression, witchcraft, magic, widowhood, mourning, satan, monks, nuns.

Gray:—Humility, accused innocence, subtlety, mystery, coldness, monks, Quakers, nuns.

Certain color combinations are agreeable—others disagreeable. One might again ask why. The answer is perhaps easier this time. We understand so much about vibratory frequencies in music that we can readily gather from musical science a valid analogy. Just as musical chords are made up of sounds whose frequencies agree in a certain way, so color chords, i. e., color combinations, are made up of colors whose wavelengths agree in a certain way: and just as in music the most

interesting chords are those whose components do not agree too perfectly, but have a palatable amount of dissonance, so in color, those combinations are most interesting whose components possess the right amount of dissenting contrast. In sound, too much agreement may produce the emptiness of a perfect octave; in color, the insipidity of tan and white. Both are like a gravy which lacks the inspiration of a little salt or paprika or tabasco.

The simplest way to arrive at some adequate conception of good color combinations is through the soundly scientific device of the color wheel. Omnipresent as it is in books of all sorts, we are obliged to include it here. Made as for pigments, starting with what are for pigments the primary



colors, the simplest possible wheel appears as in the accompanying diagram.