

Volpone

By Ben Jonson

Unrealized Costume Design

by

Lillie Moses

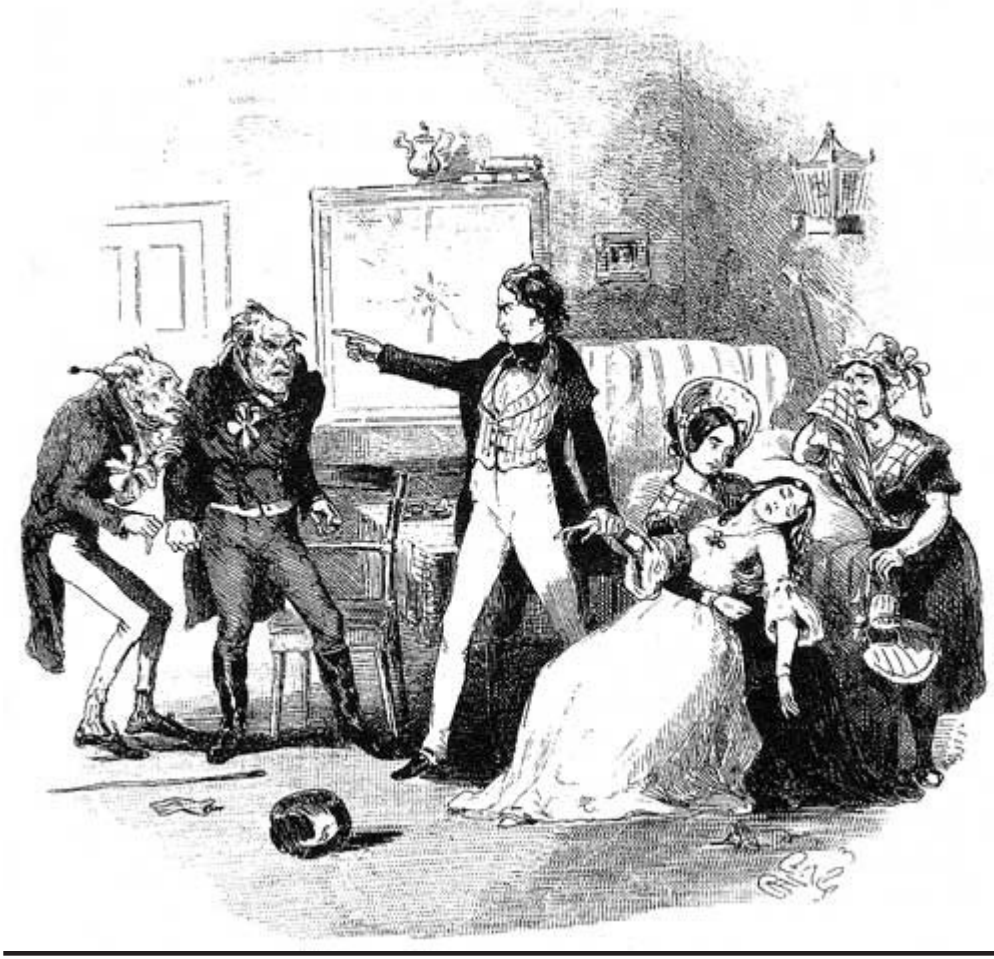


Illustration by Halbot Knight Browne for a scene from Charles Dickens's Nicholas Nickleby.

Design Concept

My design concept combined animalistic or classic characterizations of the characters' personalities with a Victorian Venetian setting. In keeping with the dark undertones and somewhat Dickensian plot of the play, I chose to set it during a time strife with poverty, greedy merchants, constraining gender norms, and strict social morals unheeded by those who dared. In my costume designs, I kept close to the early Victorian period while also trying to convey the true nature of each character whether good or evil.

About the Play

Volpone by Ben Jonson focuses on an old miser who delights in tricking wealthy acquaintances by pretending to be an invalid and attaining more money in doing so. Along with Volpone (meaning Fox in Italian), many of the other characters have names pertaining to specific animals such as Mosca (the fly), Voltore (the vulture), and Peregrine. These names point to unflattering personality traits and make it easier for the audience to understand Ben Johnson's social commentary of European society in 1605.

BONARIO

ACT III SCENE 2,6,7
ACT IV SCENE 5,6
ACT V SCENE 10,12
"VOLPONE"



Jillie M

An ensemble from The Victoria and Albert Museum ca. 1840-50.



I was inspired by this jacket from The Mode in Costume by R. Turner Wilcox while designing Volpone's invalid robe.

VOLPONE

ACT I SCENE 2-5
ACT III SCENE 3-5,7
ACT IV SCENE 6
"VOLPONE"



Jillie M

CELIA

ACT II SCENE 2,5,7
"VOLPONE"



Jillie M

A woman's dress ca. 1836-40 from The Victoria and Albert Museum's fashion collection.



LADY POLITIC WOULD-BE

ACT III SCENE 4,5
ACT III SCENE 2,3,6
ACT V SCENE 3
"VOLPONE"



Jillie M

Lady Politic Would-be's birdish capped sleeves and beplumed bonnet came from a 1836 fashion illustration from Le Bon Ton Journal.



A detail from an illustration from The New Swell's Night Guide to the Bowers of Venus ca. 1847 provided inspiration for Androgyno's costume.

ANDROGYNO

ACT I SCENE 2
ACT III SCENE 3
ACT V SCENE 5,11
"VOLPONE"



Jillie M

MOSCA

ACT I SCENE 1-5
ACT II SCENE 6
ACT III SCENE 1,2,5-9
ACT IV SCENE 3-6
ACT V SCENE 2-3
"VOLPONE"



Jillie M

An ensemble from The Victoria and Albert Museum ca. 1820-30. I modified the high wasted pants and coattails to imitate the body of a fly in my rendering.

