

Improvisation in Costume Design: The Production of *Androcles and the Lion*

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Abstract

Costuming a period play such as George Bernard Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion* is associated with diverse challenges of which identifying and employing materials needed to build similar costumes for use is a major challenge to the costumer. The purpose of the paper was, therefore, to identify 'non – conventional' materials which were to be used to build costumes for the play, *Androcles and the Lion*, written in 1912, set in ancient Roman civilization but staged on a contemporary Ghanaian stage. The play was written with both Greek and Roman characters. Library resources, archives, the internet as well as data from interviews conducted, constituted primary and secondary data on the kind of costumes used during the ancient Greek and the Roman civilization and the materials that they were made of. Based on the data collected, other alternative materials found in Ghana were used to improvise the Greek and the Roman costumes for the performance of *Androcles and the Lion* on a contemporary Ghanaian stage.

Keywords: Improvisation, Costume, Theatre, Non – conventional, Greek and Roman costumes

1. Introduction

A distinctive phenomenon which has in the twenty first century gained root and also served as a motivating force to reckon with in life is "improvisation". The concept of improvisation has attracted attention both locally and internationally and in many quarters such as the industry, academia and public life. In academia, the need for improvisation in the Performing Arts is even more imperative. This is because artists are mostly enthused about this phenomenon for the reason that it is a conduit to creativity. This emanates from the fact that creativity is central to the work of art.

According to Carter (2000:181), the term improvisation "invokes associations with such related notions as spontaneity, extemporization and the absence of deliberation. On the other level, the term brings to mind words like creation, invention or organization". Carter's enlightenment, on the one hand, brings to the fore the spontaneous approach to which people are compelled to react. This is evident in situations where actors act without scripted plays as references, thus acting on the spur of the moment. On the other hand, improvisation to Carter could also imply creating a new item to serve a particular need for the individual, society or the community at large. Contemplating on the concept of improvisation, Santi and Illetterati (2010:7) note that:

Improvisation can be considered a collective, creative phenomenon, an individual skilled performance, an emerging act within a rooted practice, or as a set of generative techniques.... At the same time, when speaking of improvisation, we appear to be dealing with something whose features, examples and roles are well known as they appear in the different fields of life-experience.

From the emerging viewpoints, we get to understand that improvisation is a creative phenomenon which requires the skills of an individual to be able to achieve a goal. Thus, the creativity of an individual is a fundamental requirement to the success of an artwork. Carter (2000:181) agrees with Santi and Illetterati (2010) as he states that "improvisation draws upon intuitive recourses of the mind and the body (or person) and often leads to creative actions in some field of human endeavour". Another idea worth noting from Santi and Illetterati's definition of improvisation is the fact that improvisation incorporates some of the characteristics of the original item. Although the newly created item will not be like the original, it has some resemblance to the original, which the society can easily identify with. By this, the departing point of the new item from its original is marginal, as the artist takes his inspiration from the original source.

Agreeing with Santi and Illetterati on this view, Solomon (1986:225-226) notes that "improvisation incorporates some of that elusive quality of 'originality'". For instance, some recent works and programmes in the area of Performing Arts Studies in Ghana portray some elusive qualities of the original form and structure of some traditional African performative art forms such as "Ananse" stories and traditional dance forms. This has led to the coinage of such term as contemporary African dance and theatre which have even assumed classroom instruction in the Ghanaian setup.

According to the *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English* (sixth edition, 2000:653), to improvise is "to make or do something using whatever is available; usually you do not have what you need". The question as to why people improvise is highly associated with the above definition. From the above, it is obvious that the absence of a number of items causes majority of people to improvise. This may arise due to

advancement in technology which has led to the absence of the said items. In addition, this definition points clearly to the fact that the availability as well as the cost of resources, to a larger extent, determines what one can employ to achieve his goal in improvisation. It is worth noting that resources vary from one community to the other, thus, various communities have different kinds of resources which they can employ to achieve a said intent. It is obvious from the foregoing that what can be used in improvisation vary from community to community and even within the same community. This stems from the fact that a particular resource can serve various functions only if one can identify the alternative uses to which that resource can be put. What might be considered dreadful and inefficient may be considered functional to another person for practical use.

The foregoing indicates that improvisation focuses on how a creative work is achieved based on an existing one. Costume design, as one aspect of the visual elements in theatrical performances is no exception as it is one area where improvisation thrives. In all theatrical performances, costumes play unique role in the advancement of the dramatic action and its importance cannot be downplayed, hence the need for their proper interpretation on stage for audiences to make meaning out of them. This is because through the use of costumes, one can establish the historical period, the social and economic environment of characters and their gender in a production. It is very important to note that costumiers do not only consider the aesthetic function of costumes on actors. The intended role that the actor plays, the period in which the play is set and the suitability of the costumes to the actor are also crucial to the costumier as he selects his costumes. It is against this background that Ingham and Covey (1992:45) in *Costume Designer's Handbook* espouse that "no one has to deal more with actor tension than the costume designer". Thus, the duties of a costumier in realizing the visual quality of a performance cannot be overemphasized because the actor does not act solely to portray his emotion but his emotions are catalyzed by the costumes he is given by the costumier. It is in this vein that Gillette (2000:396) postulates that "the costume designers' job entails the manipulation of the design of each character's clothing to project some specific information about the character". Costumiers employ various materials in designing their costumes. These materials range from conventional fabrics to haberdashery among others. However, the use of other non-conventional materials in the creation of costumes has become apparent due to the high cost associated with the purchasing of the original materials. Not only does this condition influence costume improvisation, but also the absence of traditionally required costumes due to technological advancement. Besides, the variations in climatic conditions also propel costumiers to improvise for the reason that a material used for a costume might be comfortable or uncomfortable to the wearer due to temperature variations. For example, an actor may feel uncomfortable wearing a woolen costume in any of the hot regions on the globe. To this end, a number of non-conventional materials ranging from industrial products such as polystyrenes to household substances are now employed in costume designing especially in the Ghanaian setting.

2. Improvisation in Costumes for the Stage

Improvisation in performing arts costuming has been in existence, especially in the advanced countries where costume precursors like Oliver Messel used drinking straws to produce Maori's skirts for actors in the film, "The Seekers" (www.van.ac.uk/materials, retrieved 15 October, 2011). Additionally, improvisation in costuming is also explicit in the production of masks using vacuum formed plastics (www.studiocreations.com retrieved 20 October, 2011). Furthermore, costumes used in performances in most developing countries are more often than not improvised. In a performance at the University of Ghana, an armour was constructed using craft foam. This was done because such costume is not easy to come by in the market hence the need to improvise. The stylistic representation of the improvised armour really resonated with the looks of the original armour. The use of paper to construct costumes has also been experimented by several costumiers, especially in the developed world, but for its damage rate (after washing), its usage in the theatre is limited.

It is against these practical backgrounds that the researchers seek to identify and employ materials which are available in the Ghanaian community to construct costumes for actors in Bernard Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion*, written in 1912 and set in ancient Rome but presented on a contemporary Ghanaian stage. The characters in the play are of ancient Greek and Roman origins - soldiers, gladiators, and lions. In costuming the play in question, some costumiers have over the time, resorted to different ways possible to achieve their aim. Notable among them is the painting of faces of actors to represent a lion. Others choose to create lion's mask for actors.

Previous discussions have revealed several ways by which costume designers in the performing arts improvise in order to achieve their objective in costuming. Though this innovation has received serious attention in the Western world for example, the Ghanaian arts sector lacks such innovativeness and creativity. Some reasons may be attributed to the unavailability of materials to create foreign costumes for foreign plays and high costs of such costumes and lack of creativeness and innovation on the side of most costume designers in the arts. These and other factors informed the researchers to undertake this study. The paper looks at how costumes for characters in *Androcles and the Lion*, a Period play could be crafted from available resources in Ghana without necessarily buying the actual costumes from the European market since these costumes are rare to come by in

Ghana. The paper takes a look at some historical bent on Greek and Roman costumes where the play in question is originally set. It then looks at how and why Ghanaian costumiers improvise especially in the educational set up. The paper finally discusses four characters in the play and how their costumes were created from available materials stressing the costumiers' creativity and innovativeness.

3. History of Greek and Roman Costumes

Tracing the history of costume from the biblical unknown to the known civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greek, Roman among others, one needs to know that geographical, political, trade, weather and cultural conditions affected and determined the costumes of each civilization. Climatic conditions determined the style of costume and also the natural resources determined the initial materials used for costumes in each civilization. Interestingly, the length of draped loin cloth among the Greeks and Romans serve as a means of identifying the status of the wearer. The rich and dignified people drape loin cloth which extends beyond their knee. The poor and less privileged in society, however, drape theirs to the knee level. The style of draping varied from one civilization to the other and this resulted in different names for costumes of almost the same (Barton, 1963).

3.1 The Greek Costumes

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica (2003), Greece is a country that is located at the South Eastern end of Europe and it is in the southern most country of the Balkan Peninsula. It is a land characterized by mountains and sea with an area of Fifty Thousand Nine Hundred and Forty Nine (50, 949) square kilometers. The people of Greece believed in a pantheon of gods which they held in high esteem. Basically, developments in ancient Greece took three folds; the Archaic, the classical and the Hellenistic era. According to Michell, (1940) the main occupation of the Greeks was agriculture. They reared animals and grew crops which they depended on for their survival. To Wilson and Goldfarb (2002) a number of significant achievements were made in the areas of politics, philosophy, science, and the arts, including theatre. Tortora and Eubank (1982), in writing about the contributions made by early Greece in terms of academic achievements to the development of Performing Arts, espouse that Greece produced eminent philosophers like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and tragic dramatists like Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides who wrote drama which dealt with the nature and faith of man. Additionally, the ideas, philosophies and writings left behind by the Greeks and the resultant archaeological findings from old ruins and statuette have formed a good source of evidence not only for the study of Literature and politics but for the study of Greek costume.

Discussing the type of fabric used in constructing Greek costumes, Wilcox (1958:11) notes that woolen and to some extent, silk were the main fabrics used in costume construction. However, woolen fabrics were chiefly employed and made in a variety of texture capable of falling into soft folds when used. The woolen fabric was used to construct costumes to retain the body temperature due to the cold climate in the region. The abundance of the woolen fiber in the Greek community was credited to the high rearing of sheep, from which the fleece, which is the raw material, was obtained. In order to distinguish the status of the wearer, Anderson and Anderson (1999:267), note that "the wealthy in the society dyed and bleached the woolen fabrics and decorated it with embroidered borders...before using it to construct their costumes." This implies that the poor use the original colours on the wool to create their costumes as they were unable to dye, bleach and decorate their costumes.

Among the costumes of ancient Greece is the 'chiton'. The chiton, according to Wilcox (1958:11) is an outer garment constructed from two pieces of rectangular woolen fabric sewn partway up the sides and fastened on each shoulder with a pin called the fibulus. The arms of the wearer emerged from the sides. There were variations in the wearing of the chitons and these were achieved by belting the chiton at the waist with a girdle and manipulating folds over it or wearing it without the girdle. Basically, there are two main types of chitons. These are the ionic and doric chitons. The ionic chiton, to Barton (1961) is wider in size as compared to the doric chiton which is smaller. Further to this, the doric chiton which is the early garment of the Greeks has a fibulus securing the fabric at each shoulder with an over- fold emerging from the neckline at the front of the wearer called the 'peplos'. The ionic chiton, however, has several fibula securing the fabrics at each of the shoulders of the wearer without an over fold or peplos. In addition to the chitons, himations were also worn by both sexes. The himation is also a kind of an outer garment which is worn by both sexes. It is a rectangular piece of fabric which is bigger in size as compared to the chlamy, Anderson and Anderson (1999:265). The himation can be draped alone for men or draped over the chiton at the shoulder leaving the right shoulder bare for both sex. The large size of fabric required in draping this costume prevented the poor from using it as they could not afford to acquire it due to the cost involved. To this end, the wearing of the himation became the costumes for the rich in the society. Unlike the chiton and the chlamy, the himation was not fastened with a fibulus, but rather, it was held in place by the way the body was carried.

In his book, *The Concise History of Costume and Fashion*, Laver (1969:30) identifies the 'chlamy' as another type of costume used during the ancient Greek period. The chlamy is a cloak made from a smaller

rectangular loin cloth, thrown around the shoulders and fastened with a fibulus. It was mostly worn as a short military cloak by young horsemen, foot-soldiers and travelers and served as a form of protection against the cold weather. The period was characterized by wars, as the Greeks fought in many battles. Barton (1963: 55) observes that, “warriors in early centuries fought naked save for the chlamys and a helmet, but later they dressed in chiton and equipped themselves with helmet made from metal”. Tortora and Eubank, (1982:50) add that some protective devices used include breast plates made from metal, wide metal belts, shin guards and shields. In order to decorate their costumes to look more appealing,

Wilcox (1958:12) observes that the Greeks introduced pleats into their female costumes. This was achieved by wetting the fabric with thin starch, twisting it carefully, and then laying it in the sun to dry. This technique was chiefly done by the wealthy women in the society. Both men and women used perfumes, and applied oils in their hair and body. Men wore beards and had their hair cut short. Women used gold and silver hair pins and tiaras to hold their hair. Flowers and ribbons were also used to hold the hair. Women dyed their hair and wore veils. Plaiting and crimping of female hair were also in existence. Other popular styles included the tying of the hair with a fabric scarf. All these formed part of the costumes of the Greeks.

Discussing costume accessories used during the period under review, Barton (1961:62) and Wilcox (1958:12-13) identify the parasol as an umbrella used to protect the Greeks against the sun’s rays and fans were used to cool themselves. Men and women wore sandals made from leather which was held on the foot by leather straps. The buskin, a type of foot wear was worn up to the middle of the calf and laced in front. According to Anderson and Anderson (1999:268), a unique custom characterizing the wearing of foot wears was to remove it upon reaching the house. Sandals were worn outdoors, and boots worn for hunting. No footwear was worn indoor.

According to Anderson and Anderson, (1999), Wilcox (1958:13) and Houston (2003:78), bands, necklace, bracelets, and earrings formed part of their ornaments. However, Barton (1961:62) asserts that although these constituted their ornaments, Greek men and women did not deck themselves with such an abundance of ornaments.

3.2 The Roman Costumes

As noted by Wilson and Goldfarb (1991, 2002), Barton (1963:73), as ancient Greece declined in power and importance, another civilization emerged in Europe. It was located on the Italian peninsula, and its centre was the city of Rome, from which it took its name. Since wars were peculiar distinctive features of this era, that is, the third century, B.C., Rome engaged in a lengthy conflict referred to as the Punic wars and finally emerged victorious. In 146 B.C., the Romans conquered the Greeks and took over all their possession. The indigenes of Greeks then served as slaves to the Romans. The Roman civilization was characterized with the establishment of Universities, and practical achievements seen in the areas of law, engineering and military conquest. Tortora and Eubank (1982:59-60) remark that Rome became a wealthy, complex society as a result of their victory in the wars they participated in. However, the strain of the war on the society, economy and the resulting social strife led to civil war and to the appointment of a dictator for life, Julius Caesar. Following Caesar’s assassination in 44B.C, Augustus, his grand-nephew and adopted son, after a long debate among his siblings, became the first Roman emperor. Wilson and Goldfarb (1999:207) assert that religion was also of extreme importance to the Romans, and they worshipped gods comparable to the Greeks.

Concerning art, the Roman art in general had an air of Greek influence. This was because the Romans took on the Greek culture when they conquered them. Payne (1965: 96) puts this clearer that “the role of Romans in the area of arts was more of borrower and adapter than of a creator”. In the introduction of *The World of Roman Costumes*, Bonfante (2001: 4) unravels how the Romans attach much significance to their costumes as:

Dress for a Roman often, if not primarily, signified rank, status, office, or authority. . .

. The dress worn by the participants in an official scene had legal connotations. . . .

The hierarchic, symbolic use of dress as a uniform or costume is part of Rome's legacy to Western civilization.

Despite these, there were similarities between Greek and Roman costumes. The Romans like the Greeks also used woolen fabric to construct their costumes and to some extent silk. However, due to the expensive nature of the silk fabric it was mainly used by the rich in the society, (Wilcox, 1958). As noted by Barton (1963:79), the tunic or tunica was the males’ outer garment and was the corresponding type of the Greek chiton. It consisted of two pieces of fabric joined together at the sides and also at the top, leaving space for the head at the top and spaces for the arms at the sides. The “Augustus clavus” was then attached to the front view of the tunica for citizens. The “Augustus clavus” was a band about one and half inches wide, of purple colour and this signified the high status of the wearer. The colour purple was used to identify the high status of the wearer.

Tracing the origin of the word purple, Wilcox (1958:19) notes that it is the Latin “purpura”, the name of a shellfish which yielded the famous Tyrian dye . Augustus Caesar employed this colour as a distinct hue for royals and from that time to date, the colour purple is still associated with royalty. With the tunic, the Roman

citizens draped the toga. It was similar to the Greek himation. Unlike the himation which could be draped either over the chiton or without the chiton, the toga was always draped over the tunic. According to Anderson and Anderson, (1999:267), Payne (1965:96), Barton (1963:75), the most important male garment was the “toga”. It was a garment worn over the tunic by male citizens only and it distinguished Roman male citizens from everybody in the world. It was an outer garment with a rectangular or semicircular shape draped over the tunic. It was draped thus: one end laid against the chest, then carried over the left shoulder, around the back and brought under the right arm to the front. According to Wilcox, (1958:18-19), the draping of the toga became an art with its straight- hanging folds as this gave dignity to the wearer. Barton (1963:78) shares in Wilcox’s postulation when she adds that “a toga worn too loose, or carelessly draped, was a reproach to the wearer”. The ability of the woolen fabric to fold over easily coupled with the artistic manner in which the toga was draped created folds in them known as sinus (Totora and Eubank, 1982:61). The sinus served as a kind of pocket where paper scrolls were kept by the philosophers. The ordinary citizen according to Wilcox (1958:18) wore a plain toga while magistrates and other dignified people wore the purple bordered toga. It is in the light of how the toga is revered that Payne (1965:96) refers to it as ‘the most Roman of Roman garment’.

Another kind of costume notable in the Roman era was the stola. It was the female outer costume for the Romans and was adapted from the Greek chiton. It was a straight robe reaching to the feet of the wearer. It could hang straight on the wearer or bloused over a belt or a girdle and had sleeves attached to them. The palla, a draped shawl, is another type of costume worn by women during the early Roman civilization. This was also the counterpart of the Greek himation. Similarly, the palla was draped over the stola as the himation was draped over the chiton during the Greek civilization, Totora and Eubank (1982:64).

Hair was worn short and in the case of women, in public it was usual for the head to be veiled. In view of this, the women used their palla to cover their head. As time progressed, head bands and tiaras made from gold and silver were attached to the hair. Rings were worn by both sexes; the women used bracelets, anklets, necklaces and ear-rings, (Laver 1969). According to Laver (1969:40), “at first, the Romans wore beards, but from the second century B.C they began to be clean-shaven, and this became the universal custom under the Empire”. Since one of the great enterprises of the early Romans was war, military costumes were important to the preservation and promotion of their clothing culture. Notable among these were the helmets and shin guards which were made from metal, tunics and cloak made from woolen fabrics; armour, crossed sandals and baldric made from animal leather. Barton (1963:-80-82) indicates that the length of the soldiers’ tunics was shorter. Intuitively, this could be attributed to the fact that its short length will propel them to run faster as more of their work depended on brisk movements. The armour was then worn over the tunic to protect the wearer. The baldric was also worn across the chest of the soldiers as they kept their metallic swords in them. The military officers wore the paludamentum, a large cloak over their amour. This was to distinguish them from the ordinary soldiers who wore smaller cloaks. On their feet, soldiers and civilians wore cross sandals made from thick animal leather. In some instances, the straps of the leather were laced on the shin of the wearer something similar to the Greeks.

4. Improvising Costumes for the Production of *Androcles and the Lion* on a Contemporary Ghanaian Stage

The role costumes play in Ghana whether on stage or on screen in achieving the spectacle of any production cannot be overemphasized. This is because with the appropriate costumes, audiences are able to derive meaning from the message that is being communicated to them. However, in recent times, costumiers for both screen and stage productions do face challenges in their pursuit to achieve their intent. One great challenge staring them in the face has to do with the reproduction of costumes for Period plays on a Ghanaian stage. The fact remains that the kind of materials used in the production of ancient costumes are, to a larger extent, not in existence in Ghana, maybe due to technological advancement, taste and fashion. Additionally, the non-availability of a particular kind of motif in a fabric also hinders the costumier’s intent when he or she wants to produce costumes for a particular period play. This is because meanings derived from motifs in fabrics are crucial to the advancement of the message the actor sends across to the audience.

In instances where the original materials for such costumes are available, it is not advisable to use them on the contemporary Ghanaian stage due to the changes in climatic patterns. This is because the climate of every country whether cool or hot, determines what is to be worn at a particular time. In instances where the original costumes for a particular period play are available, actors are unable to wear them because of the temperature in weather. Again, the original costumes are so expensive that costumiers (student costumiers) cannot purchase. Thus, most student costumiers in Ghana resort to borrowing costumes for productions which tends to limit their creative ability. Costume design is an art and, as such, a costumier is expected to be more creative and his creative ability can also operate within the sphere of improvisation in order to solve pertinent problems regarding costumes for Period plays such as *Androcles and the Lion*.

The subsequent paragraphs discuss four main characters in *Androcles and the Lion*, describing the materials used to improvise for their costumes when the play was produced on a theatre stage at the University of

Ghana.

4.1 Gladiators

Ancient Roman gladiators as found in *Androcles and the Lion* were well built men who fought even to the point of death to entertain Caesar and spectators. These gladiators were seen to be terrifying and even harmful though they were cherished and respected in the society. As part of their original costumes (as seen in Fig 2), they wore helmets and shin guards made from metal. Their foot wear was a pair of crossed sandals made from animal leather. Their nudity was covered using strips of woolen or fabric. Figure 1 show gladiators whose costumes were crafted from local materials from Ghana. Creating similar costumes for the gladiators to look like the original ones, the costumiers used gourd (calabash), straw board and paper to build the helmet while straw board, foam and papers were used to build the shin guards. To make these items have that metallic look, the costumiers sprayed them with bronze paint. Their improvised foot wear was made using discarded car tyres which were cut and shaped to look like the original types which have cross straps. The nudity of the gladiators was covered using red polyester fabric. The red colour revealed their aggressive and dangerous nature. In order to make these gladiators look very sweaty, shear butter was smeared on their bodies. Below in figure 1 is a picture depicting the gladiators costumed for the play in Ghana. Fig 2 is a pictorial format of Ancient gladiators.



Fig. 1, Actors playing the role of in improvised costumes



Fig. 2, Pictorial format of ancient gladiators retrieved from

<https://www.google.com.gh/search?biw=1024&bih=629&tbm=isch&btnG=&q=GLADIATORS>

4.2 Lion

The lion is an animal which lives in the forest and later became a friend to Androcles. Their friendship comes about when Androcles, a lover of animals, removes a thorn from the lion's right paw in the forest. Because the lion is a wild animal that lived in the forest and cannot be brought on stage, the costumiers used some local materials to build its costumes as seen in fig 3. The costumiers employed polyester fabric, foam, metal gauze and raffia skirts which they cut and glued together to create costume for the actor to play the role.



Fig. 3 An actor in an improvised



Fig.4 Pictorial format of a lion, costume of a lion
<https://www.google.com.gh/search?q=lion&source>

4.3 Androcles

Androcles, a small, thin, ridiculous little Greek tailor believed to be a sorcerer, is a man of thirty- five years who loves animals. He is a humble man who does not want to betray his Christian faith and wants to die as a martyr. He is the husband of Magaera, who both lived in economic hardship where they have to sell all their belongings to survive.

As discussed earlier on, some ancient Greek men wore chitons similar to the Roman tunics with leather sandals which have straps laced on the wearer's shin as foot wear. Androcles' improvised costumes (Fig 5) were a short brown chiton girdled at the waist and a pair of sandals. The chiton was made from polyester fabric instead of wool. His humility was revealed by the brown colour of his costume. For his sandals, he was given a pair of black rubber slippers which had cords attached to them. These cords were laced on his shin, something similar to the Greeks. To make the actor assume the age of thirty five, mustache and beard were fixed to his face. This was because the actor was twenty years old with a young looking face.



Fig. 5 Androcles in an improvised chiton



Fig.6 Pictorial format of a chiton Retrieved from <https://www.google.com.gh/search?q=lion&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ei#q=chiton&tbn=isch>

4.4 Megaera

Megaera, a pampered slattern, well- fed Greek woman in the prime of her life is the wife of Androcles. She is impatient and rude to Androcles and expects him to spend more time with her than with the animals. She wears a Greek chiton.

Greek females wore costumes such as ionic and doric chitons and palla. The palla was used to cover the hair. These costumes were made from woolen fabric. They had footwear which was a pair of crossed sandals made from animal leather. The costumes for Megaera in fig. 7 were improvised costumes which looked similar to the original. They were a light-brown doric chiton and a cream palla. These were constructed using polyester fabric. Her footwear was a pair of black rubber slippers with cords attached and laced on her shin to look like that of the Greeks.



Fig. 7 Magera in an improvised chiton



Fig 8 Pictorial format of Doric chiton

4.5 Other Pictures of Improvised Costumes





Costumiers creating shin guards

Unpolished helmets

5. Findings and Conclusion

This paper took a look at some historical bent on Greek and Roman costumes. The play under study is originally set in Rome during the early period of Roman civilisation which was characterized by wars. It then looked at how and why Ghanaian costumiers improvise especially in the educational set up. The paper finally discussed four characters in the play, *Androcles and the Lion*, a period play and how the costumes of the characters were created from available materials stressing the costumiers' creativity and innovativeness. From the discussions the following findings have been outlined.

- Some materials available in Ghana, such as gourd (calabash), metal gauze, papers, strawboard, foam, raffia among others can be employed to construct costumes for the play under review and other plays for the Ghanaian stage. Such non conventional materials are of equal aesthetic value as compared to the original materials used in building them.
- Knowledge of various fiber behaviours of materials helped in choosing what was appropriate to create the three dimensional form (sewn costumes) of Greek and Roman costumes from its two dimensions (pictorial view).
- To achieve excellent results, different materials have to be practiced with when improvising materials for costume construction.
- All the costumes built are in good shape and can be re-used in any subsequent productions. However, durability of these costumes is dependent on proper storage and maintenance by actors and costumiers alike.
- The research also revealed that there are some similarities in Ancient Greek and Roman costumes and that of indigenous Ghanaian costumes.

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