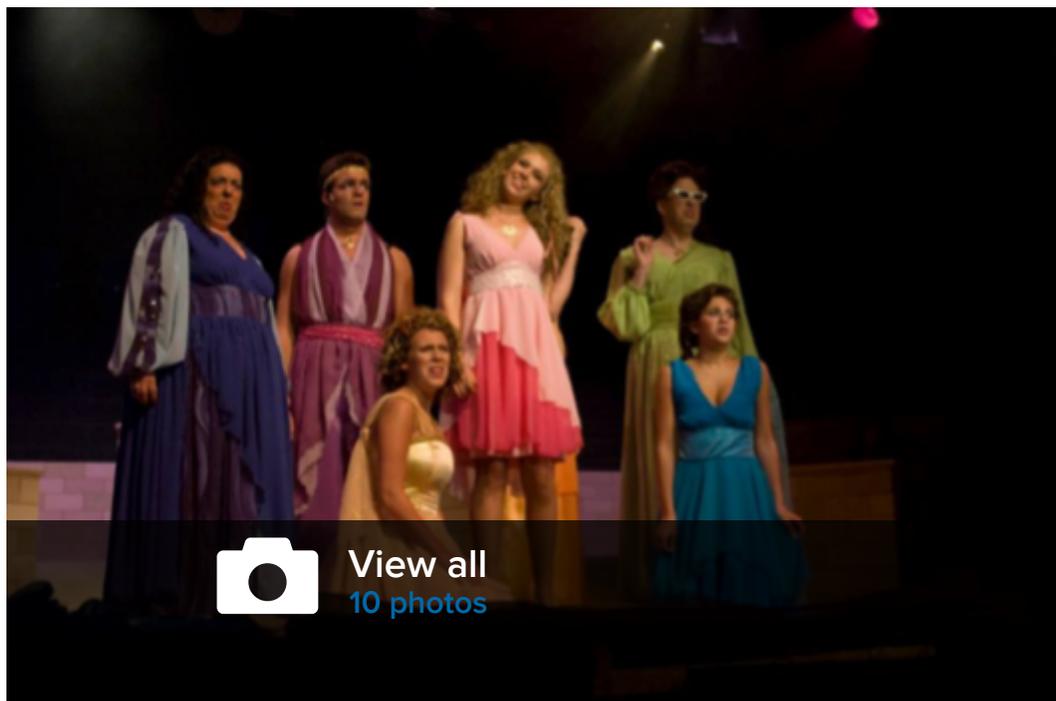


Performing Arts Profile: Meet designer Jasen Smith

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Jasen Smith, costume designer - 'Xanadu' at Weathervane Playhouse, September 2013
Provided by Jasen Smith

As part of a new [Performing Arts](#) Profile series, meet costume designer **Jasen Smith**, resident costume designer and costume shop manager at [Weathervane Playhouse](#).



Photo provided by Jasen Smith

Jasen designs costumes for 13 productions per season at the volunteer-based theatre, which also provides educational opportunities in [design](#) and construction of costumes for volunteers.

Hired in 2008 by the Weathervane Playhouse, the costume designer is one of the first professional designers in their history.

“I started sewing when I was about five years old. My grandmother read an article that said if you taught boys to cook, clean, sew and let them play with dolls they would grow up to be better fathers and husbands. She also wanted me to be self-reliant,” says Smith.

Although he wasn't into making his own clothes as a child, he could hem and do simple alterations. His heart was set on acting, however.

“I did not really think of costume work until college. My family is not an artistic family in their careers; my mom paints as a hobby, a cousin is a drama therapist, an uncle is now beginning to write.”

Smith attended [Huntingdon College](#) in Montgomery, Alabama as an acting major. He happily gave up his work study job re-shelving books in the library when the Theatre Department posted a job for someone to do sewing in the costume shop. He applied and got it.

“My sophomore year, the person who was designing left. Over the course of that year I worked on the shows and discovered that I had a knack for design and helping to create character through clothes,” Smith says.

Smith, who shops mostly at Goodwill, doesn't design his own wardrobe, though.

“I never know what the day is going to bring. So if I'm dyeing fabrics, distressing costumes or painting, and it gets on my clothes it's not such a big deal. I don't have a lot of free time for personal sewing. And since I sew all day, I don't want to spend my free time at a machine.”

The rest is history. He's worked on a lot of productions over the years and admits that all shows have their challenges.

“Some challenges are in cast size, some are in the construction of the garments. At Weathervane, the two hardest shows for me were "Amadeus" and "Seussical.”

““Amadeus” was a complete build for the shop. The cast was made up of eleven men and four women. The show is set in the late 18th century and the early 19th century. For the men, we made 24 pairs of knee breeches, 30 waistcoats, and 14 jackets. The women all had three to six costumes. This was the largest complete build we had done.”

““Seussical” was also a complete build, as it was all Dr. Seuss-inspired characters. The cast was 36

children aged 7-18 and we had four weeks to complete the show. My costume shop is staffed with volunteers aged 60-76.”

There are many shows Smith would love to work on that he hasn't gotten to design yet, or shows he has done that he would like to revisit.

“I would like to design "A Little Night Music." It's one of my favorite musicals. I love the theatrics of it, and the early 1900's are my favorite period to design. Also on that list is "Kiss me Kate," "Anything Goes," "Private Lives," "Hairspray," and "Tarzan." The shows I would like to revisit are "Into the Woods," "Blithe Spirit" and a few others that, with time, I see mistakes and missed opportunities.”

Be sure to check out Jasen's designs at Weathervane this upcoming season! For more about the Weathervane Playhouse, visit www.weathervaneplayhouse.com.

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