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Janya Orchard

Karen Cedzo

1980s

Fairbanks, Alaska

Series: University focus

University of Alaska campus in Fairbanks, Alaska

Janya Orchard talked about costume design. She said if the proper foundation isn't there then the period garment will not look right. You begin with the actor's body and add shape with a corset or bustle pad and petticoat. Karen Cedzo said Orchard is the costume designer for *The Importance of being earnest* which will be presented by the UAF Drama Workshop. Orchard spends at least three weeks to get the right look. Orchard said designing the show is doing the research and choosing the design elements that most clearly express the play. For instance you can set *Hamlet* in 1895 and you can set *The Importance of being earnest* in 1895, but you get two different shows out of it because you would be looking for different design elements. You do your research first, then start drawing and then you start shopping for your fabric and trims. She said you determine if you are going to make the costumes completely historically correct or are you going to exaggerate it. Cedzo said in deciding when to set the play Orchard and others wanted to enhance Oscar Wilde's own style and 1895 seemed natural. Orchard said the silhouette is real crazy and exaggerated for the time and that is what Oscar Wilde is writing about. She said the look for the period is blown up. There is an hour glass shape, there are huge sleeves, there are tiny waists, and skirts that are like triangles with a corset in the middle. Cedzo said after three weeks of research and six or more weeks to select fabric they then begin building the costumes. Finding fabric is a task in itself. Orchard said she could spend two weeks trying to find the right fabric. She has friends with people in the fabric stores who look out for her. The women's costumes are sewn here, but the men's costumes for plays are rented from Hollywood. Orchard said women's costumes are easier to make. When they do a show from the past two hundred years they don't have adequate men's wear. They rent for the men's clothing. Cedzo said backstage for *The Importance of being earnest* three dressers will pour and lace the actresses into tight corsets. Orchard said the bodice is the most important element for the silhouette. The bodice usually has a tight fitting garment completely underneath it. They line everything with muslin to make it stronger. Period costumes fit tighter than modern clothing. The big balloon sleeves have a tight fitting sleeve underneath everything. The sleeves are stuffed with netting to make them stick out. It is the same principle of spending hours on a pretty gathered skirt and then not having a petticoat underneath the skirt.

Karen Cedzo reports on campus activities.