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2005 Distinguished Achievement Award - Humanities

Mariann Verheyen '72

Seen any good plays, films, commercials lately? Well, if you have, chances are the costumes were designed by Mariann Verheyen. Now head of costume design for Boston University's School for the Arts Theater Division, Mariann has designed costumes for plays on and off Broadway, for Disney (in Orlando and for the cruise ships), for regional theatres in Atlanta, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Connecticut, D.C., Houston, Massachusetts, Pittsburgh, Oregon, San Antonio, etc.

After she graduated from St. Norbert College with an English major and minors in theatre and education, Mariann earned an M.F.A. in costume design from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. But her career really began at St. Norbert when Kelly Collum had her assemble her first costume design show in the Walter Auditorium's light booth (think "closet – my professional life could only go up from there"). She continued to participate in theatre at SNC, with much credit to Collum's direction and encouragement.

Since her first NYC design job at Juilliard, Mariann did 10 years of television commercials, then decided to concentrate on working with regional theatres. Subsequently, she has done over 50 plays and musicals, ranging from 11 productions of Shakespeare's work, to A Christmas Carol, Peter Pan, Glass Menagerie, HMS Pinafore, Long Day's Journey Into Night, Dancing at Loughnasa, The Dresser, Irma La Douce, Children of Eden, Annie Get Your Gun, and many, many more.

Mariann has also done a number of industrial productions, as well as commercial styling for more than 25 companies, including McDonald's, Hallmark, Time, Inc., Newsweek, Procter and Gamble, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Mattel and Tonka; in addition, she has worked with a number of production companies.

A busy person in her chosen career; Mariann has also contracted the teaching "bug" (I "absolutely love teaching"). For her, teaching has become "an extraordinary extension of my professional life." Although she never imagined that teaching would be as important as her costume design work, she now suspects it "will overtake my professional goals eventually." She wants to continue teaching, grow as a teacher and "help others learn from my mistakes."

Among Mariann's awards are Chicago's 2001 JEFF Award for the Costume design she did for

Shakespeare's As You Like It; the 1984 and 1998 ERNIE Award in Boston for Outstanding Costume Design in On the Razzle and The Mikado; the 1988 and 1997 Best Atlanta Outstanding Costume Design for Candide and Art of the Swindle; and NYC's 1983 Village Down Town Theater Award for Outstanding Costume Design in Blood Relations.

She and Miles spend most of their time away from work between April and October "vegging" on their tree farm in Connecticut. Boating and fishing in Rhode Island, cruising or just watching the sunset provide the much-needed respite and relaxation this busy lady relishes.

Busy as she is, as accomplished a career as she has created, this survivor of breast cancer intends "to keep learning to enjoy what life has to offer up... Life is short," she says, so "pay attention. Everyone's life is a story, be sure to be the teller of your tale...when opportunities to make life better are within your grasp, you are obligated to grab those opportunities and make the most of them." Sound advice from someone who has done just that!

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