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IWU Senior Interns for Tony Award-Winning Costume Designer

September 7, 2005

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Janessa Styck of Watseka, Ill., a senior theatre arts major at Illinois Wesleyan University, spent the summer of 2005 sewing doublets and petticoats as a stitching intern with the Glimmerglass Opera in Cooperstown, N.Y.

Styck, a graduate of Watseka Community High School, interviewed for the internship last spring at the annual South Eastern Theatre Conference convention in Greensboro, N.C., which she attended with other IWU theatre students seeking summer employment opportunities.

Founded in 1975, the Glimmerglass Opera celebrated its 30th anniversary festival season this summer with new productions of Mozart's *Così Van Tutte*, Donizetti's *Lucie de Lammermoor*, Britten's *Death in Venice* and a double bill of two one-act operas, Massenet's *Le Portrait de Manon* and Poulenc's *La Voix Humaine*.

The internship, which began in May and continued until mid-July, challenged Styck to achieve a highly professional standard of work. "I always felt like I was working with the best of the best," she said. In fact, over the summer, Catherine Zuber, the costume designer for *Lucie de Lammermoor*, won a Tony Award for her work on the musical *A Light in the Piazza*.

Styck found constructing costumes for the opera a challenge, even after three years of stitching for productions on the IWU campus. "[This summer] I was tailoring a lot of men's doublets, which could not even be 1/8 of an inch off," she said, adding that it was both intimidating and exciting to work with silks, taffetas and velvets that cost up to \$200 per yard.

In a play, the actors must adapt to their clothes, Styck explained. "If you put an actress who is supposed to be Queen Elizabeth into a tight corset, it will help her understand what it was like to live in that period." However, in an opera, "you can't push the performers into a costume. Corsets are just not meant for singing."

This fall, Styck will be the associate costume designer for IWU's production of the musical *Urinetown*, which will run from Oct. 4-9 in the McPherson Theatre.

After pursuing graduate work on the East Coast, Styck aspires to launch a career as a professional costume designer for both theatre and film productions. "I want to have two Tonys under my belt before I win my first Oscar," she said, joking about her ambition.

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