

Production took three months, 29 cast members, many behind the scenes

continued from SPARE TIME 11

for relaxing the cast, and listened to each member of the cast as problems arose.

The two stage managers, Goldie Grandy and Joey Wagner, attended each rehearsal, learning every aspect of the production. Grandy says, "Once the play is up on stage, we have to make sure all the details, the sound, lights, curtain, props, and actors are in the right place." This production, with its large cast and the small stage and changing areas, was a particular challenge.

The choreographer, Lynn Levvis, has been involved with dance all her life. Levvis danced for a short time professionally; and, as a physical education teacher, she taught dance in all her elementary school classes. Levvis has done the choreography and movement for five shows. In this production, she worked with four dancers, as well as the movement of various actors.

Levvis says, "I love working with seniors. It is a challenge to choreograph within their ability, but they enjoy the challenge and the positive outcome [of mastering a dance]." Jim Campbell, music director, was in charge of all the music rehearsals, directing the different parts and the solos.

tumes were designed and made by one person, Pat Dews. A seamstress and quilter, she became involved in the theater when she moved to Heritage Hunt.

Dews thought the costumes for this production, set in Rome, would be easy. But the director, says Dews, "clearly did not want sheets." In meetings, the two decided on different colors for various categories of people.

Dews brought back color samples from fabric stores, did a lot of research on the Internet, and studied some of the suggestions in the playbook. She then drew sketches of her ideas, with her long ago art-training coming to the forefront. Dews said, "The director gave me free rein."

Using some costume patterns, but mainly just sewing squares of fabric together, the costumes emerged, with decorations and trim contributing to the elaborate ensembles seen on the stage.

Dews said "I started buying fabric and sewing in January and didn't finish sewing until mid-April." Dews traveled as far as Winchester, searching for matching fabric, trim and accessories for the 40 costumes, using discount coupons and sales to produce the costumes economically.

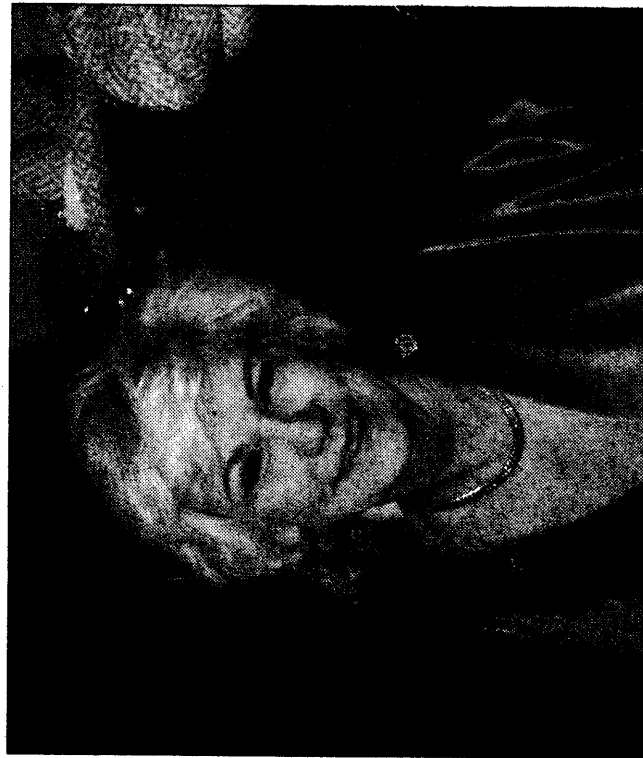
One group of costumes needed

the fabric in hand, she spent 20 to 30 hours a week at her sewing machine. Hats, wigs, and Roman sandals were purchased, with a group sandal order made through a lucky e-bay contact. Makeup enhances the costumes, and makeup consultant Sandy Iasiello worked some magic, adding scars to a fierce gladiator's face.

The setting is another important part of the production. Dave Milbradt agreed to design and build sets for the theater group because, he says, "I like a challenge." Using basic carpentry skills, he put together panels that were then covered in cardboard from mattress boxes.

The magical transformation into rooms, walls, and even, for one production, an airplane, begins with Lloyd King's painting. Milbradt says, "I build the panels in my garage and then carry them down the street, and Lloyd paints them in his garage." The set production started only in March after the weather warmed up. King, a commercial artist, also painted props, such as the picture behind a window and Roman-looking portraits on the walls.

It is an intense three months, but when the four nights of performances are finally over, there is a letdown. Joan DeBell, who was one



Pat Dews designed and sewed 40 costumes.

Nancy Johnson / the Bull Run Observer

lot of fun rehearsing, but it took a lot of time, some weeks almost every night."

Nanette Ross, who played a senator's wife, agrees, "The cast has a certain camaraderie and then a letdown when it is over." But they will always enjoy the photos, taken by another behind the scenes volunteer, Ed Knepley.

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