

Costume design

Date: 1980 (painted)

Artist/Maker: Tingey, Cynthia (costume designer)

Materials and Techniques: Pen and ink and gouache on paper

Credit Line: Given by Cynthia Tingey

Museum number: S.88-1999

Gallery location: In store



Public access description

Cynthia Tingey trained at the Regent Street Polytechnic where she won a medal for theatre design. She began working in the theatre in 1952. Her career included a five-year period as house designer for the theatrical costumiers, Bermans, as well as work on West End productions, department store exhibitions, and designs for over fifty films, but it was as a costume designer for pantomime, variety and cabaret that she became best known. She designed 15 of the London Palladium's annual Christmas pantomimes, providing costumes for well-known artistes such as Arthur Askey, Cilla Black, Cliff Richard and Tommy Steele. Throughout the 1950s, '60s and '70s she was responsible for the costumes for cabarets at many of the major London nightclubs and hotels, and she also designed summer variety shows, ranging from the London Palladium's extravaganzas to seaside specials at Blackpool and Great Yarmouth.

This design for a Sand Dance gives a good impression of the costumes in motion. Variety act Wilson Keppel and Betty popularised the Sand Dance in the 1930s: they sprinkled sand on the stage and danced in line, using movements that parodied the poses of Ancient Egyptian wall paintings. The routine was much imitated by other variety artists and comedians and the distinctive music and movements became well known.

Descriptive line

Design by Cynthia Tingey for the Sand Dance in Dick Whittington and His Cat, London Palladium, 1980

Physical description

Design for the Sand Dance in Dick Whittington and His Cat, showing three full length figures performing an Egyptian style sand dance in the manner of the variety act, Wilson, Keppel and Betty. To the left and right are male figures wearing calf length, red and white horizontally striped, short sleeved robes, red fezes and black ankle boots, in the centre a female figure in a pink veil and copper coloured yashmak, a brassiere top and copper coloured harem pants. The design is signed and dated.

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Object history note

This is one of a collection of designs for pantomime and cabaret, given to the Theatre Museum by the designer, Cynthia Tingey, who created the costumes for 15 of the annual London Palladium pantomimes. This design was made for the pantomime, Dick Whittington and His Cat, at the London Palladium, 22 December 1980. The production was directed by Lionel Blair.

Historical significance

An example of pantomime costume design of the second half of the 20th century and of the work of a designer who specialised in pantomime and variety design.

URL

<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O36460/costume-design/>

