

# *International Costumer*



Vicki Glover and Carole Parker, two colorful women, in the Loncon3 Art Show in front of Carole's display. Photo credit: Carole Parker.

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## President's Message

By Philip Gust

Welcome to this issue of *The International Costumer*. Guest editor Vicky Assarattanakul also edits the Madison Area Costuming Society newsletter, and recently joined the ICG Publications Board. Please join me in thanking her!

It's hard to believe that summer is nearly over! Summer is always a flurry of conventions, Renaissance Faires, historical re-enactments, and other costuming events that ICG members attend.

My wife Kathe and I spent early summer preparing for San Diego Comic-Con. It's just as large, with as many amazing costumes as you've heard. My article about entering the masquerade appears in this issue.

Unfortunately, we had to miss Loncon 3, but many ICG members made the trip to London. The beautiful costumes in the masquerade, and the ones worn by many attendees, showed great creativity and workmanship. Worldcon in Spokane, Washington is less than a year away, so start getting ready!

Speaking of getting ready, Costume-Con 33 in Charleston, South Carolina next May is closer than it looks! Kathe and I lay in a supply of audio books and work through fall, winter, and spring. How do you get ready?

I'm pleased to welcome "Miss Lizzy's Traveling Historical Fashion Show" as the ICG's first Special Interest Group (SIG). The July/August 2014 issue of *The International Costumer* has an article on SIGs, and one about "Miss Lizzy's" by its chair, Lisa Ashton.

SIGs are a great way to meet those with similar interests, share experiences, and learn from each other. Why not form a SIG around your favorite area of costuming? I look forward to more SIGs forming, and meeting up at Costume-Con!



Philip and Kathe Gust as the First and Second Doctor at Comic-Con 2014. Costumes by Kathe Gust. Photos by Carolyn Staehle.

## From the Guest Editor

By Vicky Assarattanakul

Greetings to my fellow costumers! I am the guest editor for this issue of *The International Costumer*. I joined the ICG in 2010, when the Madison Area Costuming Society became a chapter. In addition to editing a chapter newsletter, I also currently serve as the Vice President of our chapter.

Summer is the height of convention season for many of us. In this issue, we have a report on the Comic-Con masquerade, and our cover features a "sneak peek" picture of Loncon 3 from Carole Parker. In addition, our members prepare to attend a plethora of local and regional conventions.

Also in this issue, is an introduction from the ICG's newest chapter, Gem State Costumers, and a book review on Irene, an interesting fashion designer from the Golden Age of Hollywood. Finally, there is a memorial for Solveig Plueger, who passed away on July 13<sup>th</sup>.

While the number of conventions may dwindle in the fall and winter, the activity of the ICG members does not. The Madison Area Costuming Society will be busy preparing for the next convention, learning new techniques, reading books, and attending workshops. What will you be doing? I am looking forward to seeing what everyone will be up to in the coming months.

## Gem State Costumers Introduction

By *Tonya Adolfson*

*Gem State Costumers is the newest chapter to join the ICG, based in the Treasure Valley area of Idaho. The president and founder of this chapter tells us about them.*



This year, our local all-con, Fandemonium, which is not a specific genre convention, joined with the local, newly established branch of the ICG, the Gem State Costumers, to run the costume contest! As a result, we implemented a few changes:

- 1) Different categories. This year we implemented Novice, Journeyman, Expert, and Exhibition classes.
- 2) One on one pre-judging. Instead of trying to get all the info in an 18 second walk-by, this gives the judges a chance to ask questions and see their progress photos and documentation.
- 3) Post-judging discussion. Added this year is an opportunity to talk to the judges about what your score was and why you got what you got.

It's a chance to understand where you need to improve.

We are hoping this is going to change the way local costume contests are handled! The costume contest was the most efficient, direct, and well coordinated effort Fandemonium has had in a long time! We were awesome!

On our Facebook page, GSC members are focused upon Fandemonium and the costume contest. In addition to showing tons of pictures, we are talking about inspiration, original characters, and what we hate most about costume creation! When it comes to inspiration, everything from Sailor Moon to Dash Con is on the craft table!

Original characters are not exactly new to the GSC, but in our community, more folks are inclined to reproduce their favorite popular characters. Right now, the new Sailor Moon is big, and many folks have an Attack on Titan and/or League of Legends cosplay. Even My Little Pony and Pokemon are open to interpretation. However, Original Characters are on the rise and even have their own fashion show this year! I even got a question about how to document them for the costume contest! This is big progress for us. One thing we have become aware of, and advocating for, is the "Cosplay is not Consent"

movement. This is the concept that no matter what a person is wearing, they are still a PERSON and should show and be shown respect and ownership of their own body. Part of this advocacy is education. What is consent? Who can give it? Who can NOT? What behaviors to avoid and what is a predatory act versus an accident. Also being taught are self-defense techniques for those who want them.

Another thing to observe before pre-registering for a convention was looking at their harassment policies online. If the convention refuses to post one or people are saying they didn't respond well to previous incidents, avoid this convention. Also, listen to the forums and check the ads. If they feel like a predator's playground, DON'T ATTEND.

Good Twitter feeds to follow on this is Wil Wheaton (@wilw) and John Scalzi (@scalzi). They refuse to attend a con if they don't have a prominent and well-enforced harassment policy.

Thanks for reading about us! For more information, check out our web page at <http://www.gemstatecostumers.org/>.

## Entering the Comic-Con Masquerade

By Philip Gust

*Philip Gust entered the 2014 Comic-Con masquerade, and recounts his experience in one of the largest competitions in the United States.*

My wife Kathe and I attended Comic-Con this year for only the second time, and once again entered the masquerade. After our last time in 2006, we thought that once was enough, but some friends were putting together a Doctor Who themed entry with all twelve Doctors, and asked us to join them. We've known some of them for years, and a chance to work with this talented group of costumers was too good to pass up. For those who are curious about what entering the Comic-Con masquerade is like, here is our experience.

Even if you've been in other masquerades, entering the San Diego Comic-Con masquerade is a completely different experience. Comic-Con is one of the largest conventions anywhere. This year's attendance reportedly topped 130,000. The sheer scale is hard to imagine for those who have never attended, and hard to describe for those who have. "Overwhelming" falls far short of the mark.

The masquerade is one of the most anticipated events by attendees. It is held in a space that seats 4000 people, and there are several overflow spaces that together accommodate another 6000 people who watch via a closed circuit feed.

Those who want to enter must prepare months early. Entries are juried, and only a small percentage of those who apply are chosen. Applications are due by late June, but early entries are strongly encouraged because available slots often fill up by early April. This year, only forty entries were accepted.

Applications must provide detailed information about the entry, and include representative costume photos. Entries that have appeared before at smaller conventions can supply finished photos, but work-in-progress photos are acceptable for costumes that are being made for this event.

Many of the entries are groups rather than individuals, with an average of three to five people. A group like ours with twelve people is not unusual. The amount of time allowed on stage depends on the number in an entry: from one to two and a half minutes. Ours was a rapid-fire presentation that took less than a minute.

The biggest challenge to entering the masquerade is buying

Comic-Con tickets. It is a Byzantine process that requires registering in advance. On the sale date, those registered log in to a waiting area, and those who make it in are randomly chosen to buy tickets. Tickets usually sell out within an hour. Only three out of the twelve in our group got tickets this way.

Fortunately, the masquerade coordinator can facilitate purchasing tickets for those who are part of an entry that is accepted. Only a limited number are available and we were lucky to get the remaining tickets this way with such a large group.



Comic-Con 2014 Doctor Who themed entry "12!". I'm the "First Doctor" (back row, second from right) and Kathe is the "Second Doctor" (front row, left). Photo credit: Costume-Con International.

On the Saturday morning, we attended a mandatory orientation meeting run by long-time masquerade coordinator Martin Jaquish and his staff. Afterwards, we finalized our paperwork, turned in our audio, met with the sound and lighting engineers, and stored our costumes and props in the green room. We also signed up for a 10-minute rehearsal slot in the late afternoon on a stage of similar size.

The green room opened at 5pm, and many of us got there early to dress and apply makeup and wigs before the rush. Several volunteer professional makeup artists were on hand to help, and there were also makeup tables and mirrors for those who do their own. We were ready to have our judges' photos taken by 6.30 pm, and spent the time until the show admiring and talking with those in other entries.

When it was time to go on, our group was escorted through a winding maze of service corridors that went on forever to our place in line in the backstage area. When we were next up, we carried our TARDIS up the stage stairs, and we went on with our sound and light cues.

The next 55 seconds were a blur as the Doctors exited the TARDIS in pairs, like a clown car, to the bouncy Sesame Street "Pinball" jingle "1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12." The second time through, we each struck a pose on our count, and at '12' we pulled giant pink numbers '1' and '2' from the TARDIS and held them up on the final beat. Someone must have left the key in the ignition, because the TARDIS (manned by

our ninja) suddenly started flying off-stage, and all twelve Doctors madly chased after it.

It's nearly impossible to hear or see the audience from stage, so we only realized later that the crowd began cheering wildly the second they realized what was happening. They kept it up until the giant numbers went up, when they finally let out a roar loud enough for us to hear, and then kept applauding long after



Comic-Con Masquerade Medal. Photo credit: Costume-Con International.

we had chased the TARDIS off stage. It took a minute for emcees Phil and Kaja Foglio to regain their composure.

After stopping off at the photography area, we went back to the green room to watch the rest of the show. Judging took around 90 minutes. With so many amazing entries, we never expected to win anything, so we were surprised to be one of the last entries called to the stage, and shocked when we received "Judges Choice," one of the top awards in the show, as well as an honorable mention for recreation.

By then it was 1am, and everyone was way too tired to absorb it all. We just pitched in to take apart the TARDIS, retrieved our things from the green room, and caught the shuttles back to our hotels. It really didn't hit us until the playback event the next day, and even now it all seems unreal.

Should you consider entering the Comic-Con masquerade? I'd definitely recommend it, especially with a fun group of costumers who enjoy working together, an entertaining concept, and a brilliant mastermind to put it all together.

## Book Review Irene: A Designer from the Golden Age of Hollywood.: The MGM Years 1942-49

By Kathe Gust

*Kathe Gust tells us about an exciting new book about a prominent Hollywood costumer designer from the 1940's.*

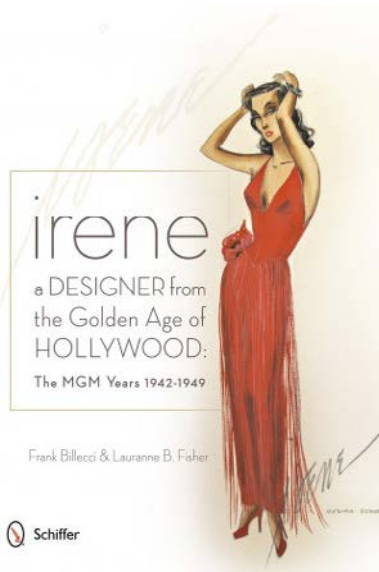
### **About the authors:**

Frank Billecci was a free-lance designer in Hollywood from 1983-1992. During that time, Frank designed for stage, independent films, and television productions. After leaving the field of entertainment, Frank returned to work in education.

Lauranne B. Fisher is the daughter of Virginia Fisher, Irene's personal sketch artist. Acting as the Fisher Family historian, Lauranne has spent hundreds of hours recording the memories of her mother.

### **About the book:**

Irene Lentz Gibbons, known simply as Irene, was an enormously talented and ambitious woman. During the 1920's she was an actress, but left that career to become a designer. Her



first husband and partner in her original design business, film director F. Richard Jones, got her started in both careers but died of tuberculosis soon after they married. Irene was left on her own to build a career and reputation that began as a custom dressmaker who freelanced on films for clients like Marlene Dietrich, Dolores del Rio, Ingrid Bergman, and Ginger Rogers. Her ability to make stars feel good about their costumes while presenting them in a way that satisfied their directors and studios, eventually resulted in her taking the helm at MGM as Executive Designer.

This book has a great deal of insider information from interviews with Irene's own sketch artist Virginia Fisher and her secretary Chrys Carter. Costume sketches made by Virginia Fisher during those years along with additional sketches from Irene's previous sketch artist Katy Bill, show the breadth of Irene's thinking and demonstrate her ability to design for particular stars' body types and style preferences.

Unfortunately the MGM she inherited from Adrian in 1942 was not the same as the one she may have envisioned when she finally allowed L.B. Mayer to coax her into taking the job. Much of the glamor was on the way out and lower budgets and less prestigious films were on the way in. After years of niggling annoyances and some draconian budget cuts

she and MGM were both to call it quits in 1949.



Virginia Fisher – Barbara Stanwick – B.F.'s Daughter - 1948

Battling her personal problems with depression, drinking and a less than perfect second marriage, she returned to couture where she was known for designing dresses in ultra-fine silk soufflé or bias-cut chiffon and business-like tailored suits cut to hug a woman's curves, with hand stitching and beautiful buttons. Vintage Irene pieces come up for sale occasionally and are priced around \$1,800 to \$3,800 when they can be found. Sketches also appear, but since film designs were frequently copied in multiples for the publicity department, getting provenance on them is important before purchasing.



Virginia Fisher - Ann Miller  
-Easter Parade -1948

Among the treasures of the book for costumers are the genuine sketches from films like *Gaslight*, *Easter Parade*, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, many of Esther Williams' swimming spectacles and the Thin Man series of films. These sketches are the originals. Many have never been exhibited

before and you will not find them reproduced elsewhere.

The book is particularly good at offering the reader a feel for the way a major film studio ran a costume department in the 1940s. As with Adrian and Edith Head, Irene received screen credit for work done by anyone in her department but the complete filmography included in the back of the book is clear about who actually designed which films regardless of the name on the screen.

It was very interesting to read how Irene, who was very good at designing sophisticated "modern" clothes would work with other designers such as Valles (menswear), Walter

Plunkett (historical) or Irene Sharaff (crowds and color themes) to pull a film together. Irene normally designed only for the female lead, and sometimes for other mature actresses in a film, but not the entire cast. Despite her contract with the studio, she was always aware that costuming any film was a team job.



Virginia Fisher - Claudette Colbert - *The Secret Heart* -1946

It is also evident that one of Irene's additional talents was her ability to recognize, inspire and promote other talented people. She was able to recruit and retain a loyal, committed and extremely productive staff. Those that did not

leave MGM to return with her to the new Irene Inc. went on to other film work and many are well known today.



Virginia Fisher - Ava Gardner - *The Great Sinner* -1949

This book is focused on the costumes and the department at MGM and less about the life of the designer. Although parts of Irene's personal life are touched on as they relate to working at MGM and her relationships with people there, it is not an in-depth biography. There are ample footnotes and the actual reminiscences pulled from the interviews are printed in orange

for the reader's convenience.

This is a highly enjoyable book for costumers with an interest in "old" Hollywood. There are enough tid-bits to keep the reader feeling that they do have an insider's view, but the real treat are the illustrations.

*Please use the following information to purchase a copy of this book:*

Irene: A Designer from the Golden Age of Hollywood: The MGM Years 1942-49  
Frank Billecci & Lauranne B. Fisher  
Schiffer Publishing, 2014.

Size: 9" x 12" | 214 b/w & color photos | 144 pp  
ISBN13: 9780764345555 | Binding: hard cover  
MSRP: \$50.00 / Amazon: \$33.17 - \$37.54

<http://www.schifferbooks.com/irene-a-designer-from-the-golden-age-of-hollywood-the-mgm-years-1942-49-5350.html>

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## Memorial for Solveig Pflueger

*By Nightwing Whitehead and Elektra Hammond*

*The costuming world lost a wonderful woman, Dr. Solveig Pflueger, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of July, 2014. She is remembered in the following article.*



Doctor Solveig Pflueger. Photograph provided by Nightwing Whitehead.

Solveig Pflueger was born in Iowa in America's Heartland on the 28th of May in 1947, lived the first years of her life in exotic Japan, and ended up in West Suffield, Connecticut for the last twenty years, until her death on the 13th of July

2014. In between, things get complicated.

Solveig was always interested in costuming, cats, language, and people. She was filled with boundless energy and was a chronic overachiever. Wherever she went, first traveling with her family (her father was in the military), then on her own, she learned the dialect and accepted the customs. Her first formal schooling was in England, where she happily studied Linguistics and played with clothes. She declined the opportunity to have J.R.R. Tolkien as her doctoral advisor, deciding to instead attend the University of Texas, where she both obtained a PhD in linguistics and became an MD. She had wanted to be a veterinarian, but an allergy to mice sent her in a different direction. She fell in love and married Howard Smith while at the university, but they both kept their "maiden" names. Their children, a daughter, Sigrid, and a son, Haldan, are both Smiths.

After moving to Connecticut, Solveig worked as a cytogeneticist and pathologist at Baystate Medical Center, as well as being instrumental in getting both the Munchkin and the Sphynx cats recognized as breeds by TICA (The International Cat Association) while she was serving as the chair of TICA's Genetics Committee. Her history with the Cat Fancy included writing TICA's Registration Rules and being named Judge of the Year in 1992. She worked with the NIH when they were sequencing the Feline Genome. She also worked with a number of



developing breeds, particularly those with interesting mutations, and was helping with the Tennessee Rex (among others) at the time of her death.



Photo © 1998 Ken Warren

Solveig Pflueger, 1998. Photo by Ken Warren, provided by Nightwing Whitehead.

When Haldan was still in grade school, he was in a play and told the director "my mom knows how to sew and can make the costumes." She also made the costumes when the ballet company Haldan danced with did a production of "Cats"—hand sewing fur at club meetings and cat shows. This was the start of The Lady & the Leopard, Solveig's costume and retail company.

Solveig had, as many another costumer, first made costumes for her Barbie dolls, then for her friends, but had left it behind to pursue other interests. Now, having a reason to delve back in, she was soon deeply immersed in the world of school and community theater in New England. When the growing collection of costumes she had created and bought threatened to overwhelm her house, she rented a warehouse.

All this new space allowed her to start buying out other costume supply houses, until the warehouse now holds such treasures as a set of costumes directly from one of the Broadway touring groups of "Cats," and enough sets of costumes to do five productions of "A Christmas Carol" simultaneously. In order to obtain such things as boots for "The Three Musketeers" in the sizes necessary, she would buy cases of assorted sizes and sell the "leftovers" at Renaissance Faires and Science Fiction Conventions. She would drive halfway across the country to pick up cats or costumes, if they

were interesting enough, or to go to an event.

This side business quickly took on a life of its own, with its own vehicle, huge tent, and gypsy-workers. But her real love was always for creating the best possible set of costumes for a given production. As much attention was paid to the seventh production of "Les Mis" as to the first. And if an item was suddenly needed that was in the stock to be sold at an event, it was pulled without hesitation and put to work on stage.

Possibly, the best way to describe what she was is by listening to those who were around her. --"She was beloved by our students and I know that she cared so much about them." (Mitchell College).

--"She certainly had a lot of fans in Connecticut theater." (New Britain Children's Theater).

--"We need to find that lady with the odd name who has the warehouse; she would be able to save us." (at a fabric store).

--"A magical place where costumes are born. A warehouse!" (upon seeing it for the first time).

As long as she is still talked about by those who had the chance to work with her or who were in a play she costumed, and until no one mentions the huge wonderland of a warehouse owned by the crazy cat-lady, Solveig Pflueger will be immortal.

## About the ICG

### **Membership Benefits**

ICG membership benefits include participation in local Chapters and in Special Interest Groups, voting rights, eligibility for grants, online forums, learning and volunteer opportunities, and the International Costumer.

### **ICG Online**

Visit the ICG website for current information and resources:

<http://www.costume.org/>

Join us on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/internationalcostumers>

Join the ICG-D Yahoo! group for lively discussions on costuming-related topics:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/icg-d>

Send comments and suggestions to the ICG board and standing committees:

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### **The Kennedy Memorial Archives and Gallery**

The ICG's Pat & Peggy Kennedy Memorial Archives is the world's largest archive of photographs, video and paper ephemera, spanning 70+ years of Science Fiction costuming. Exhibits include an online photo gallery (<http://www.costume.org/gallery2/>) and the ICGArchives YouTube channel (<http://www.youtube.com/user/ICGArchives>).

## **The International Costumer**

The *International Costumer* newsletter is published bi-monthly by the ICG. The current issue is for members only. Back issues are freely available to the costuming community on the ICG website.

### **Online Submissions**

We welcome short costuming articles, book reviews, event reports, and news items. Submit your copy as rtf, doc, docx or txt files to the International Costumer editor: [icg-newsletter@costume.org](mailto:icg-newsletter@costume.org). All graphics formats are accepted.

### **Contacting the Editor**

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