

## SPOTLIGHT ON: NANCY STEVENSON



Sometimes one of the biggest ‘players’ in a production isn’t found on the stage, but behind it. This is the person who puts the balcony in the “Wherefore Art Thou?” scene in *Romeo and Juliet*. Who transforms Cinderella from a raggedy waif into a glamorous ingénue worthy of a prince. Who gives Dorothy her ruby slippers, enabling her to go home again.

That person is the designer. It might be the set designer, the costumer designer, the lighting designer or sound designer – or all of the above. At Enter Stage Left, the primary person “behind the scenes” is set and costume designer Nancy Stevenson. And ESL is very fortunate to have her.

Nancy studied set and costume design and received her master’s of fine arts at Brandeis University, but she didn’t immediately pursue that as her line of work. Instead, she worked as commercial fashion designer for Lane Bryant and then as a graphic artist for a fire protection engineering firm. Eventually, however, her love of theater drew her back in (she had performed in Gilbert and Sullivan plays and as a member of the Sweet Adeline’s barbershop quartet), and she found herself painting sets for the Huntington Theater and Holy Cross College. Most recently she has been a costume designer for Wellesley College, where her “gorgeous” work on *Pride’s Crossing* and *An Ideal Husband* earned her nominations for the 2005 and 2006 Independent Reviewers of New England (IRNE) Award for costume design, respectively.

It is community theater, however, that holds a special place in Nancy’s heart. “There is a place for everyone in community theater, especially at ESL,” she explained. “I feel a special enthusiasm and energy there, and if something needs to be done, the people there are willing to pitch in and try it.”

Nancy became involved with ESL during the *Lullaby of Broadway* production. Since then she has worked on *Hooray for Hollywood* (in which she also performed), *Bye Bye Birdie*, and she recently worked on the USO Tribute show, *I’ll Be Seeing You*.

“When Nancy came to us back in 2004 for *Lullaby of Broadway* we had NO idea as to the depth of her talent,” said Kelly Grill co-founder of ESL. “She amazed us with her vision and how effortless it seemed to bring her vision to life. We have relied heavily on her since then to educate us on period costumes and the ins and outs of set design and construction. She has become a cornerstone of our organization and we don’t know what we would do without her!”

Nancy said her satisfaction in the theater comes from her connection with other people, and that also holds true for ESL. “I love the people in ESL, and am especially impressed with the three people that started it (Paul Champlin, Kelly Grill, and Mary Scarletta Rowe),” she stated. “They are passionate about their work and are willing to take risks. I think they are so brave!”

So the next time you feel transported to another place and time during an ESL production, it is no doubt due to the magical and talented work of Nancy Stevenson, costume and set designer extraordinaire.