

## **Rigging Onstage Instant Costume Changes for Magical Effects**

### **Tara Maginnis – Costume College 2016**

#### **Demonstrated Changes:**

- **The Tear Away Suit** (*Ramon*, "Variations on the Death of Trotsky", All In the Timing) and
- **The Tear Away Dress with Drop** (*Mrs. Trotsky*, "Variations on the Death of Trotsky", All In the Timing) aka Magnetic & Snap
- **The Flip Cape** (*Witch*, Into the Woods) aka Rigging with Elastic and Safety Pins
- **The Pop Open Cinderella Dress** (*Cinderella*, Into the Woods) aka eye tape and weed-eater cord

#### **Smaller Magician's Tricks (with possible costume uses)**

- Color Changing Vest
- Color Changing Bow Tie
- Color Changing Gloves
- "Dresscode" Changing T-Shirt
- "Self-Tie" Shoelaces
- Appearing Cane & Disappearing Cane
- Feather Flowers & Boas
- Pop Up Tie/Boiled Shirt Front with snap bracelet
- "Chapeaugraphy" hat ring improv tool
- Pop out spring steel hat
- Pop up Gibus/Opera Hat & "Card" design folding Gibus

#### **General Tips**

- All the costumes, especially the under-dressed costumes, are best made of thin but opaque polyester that refuses to wrinkle. If you are doing multiple changes, they all need to be made out of this or your performer will look like the Michelin Man, and the clothes will pop out looking wrinkly and ugly.
- Don't use Velcro for breakaway if you can avoid it. Snaps, crochet loops, pull cords & metal loops, breakaway zippers, and magnets are all superior unless you deliberately want ripping sound for an effect.

- The outside costume is nearly always the trick one. Often the spectacular one that may be underneath is 1/10<sup>th</sup> of the trouble and can even be store bought.
- Unless it is a basic breakaway or flip cape, the trick costume will nearly always take you 10X the amount of time as making a normal version of the same sort of costume. Build in time for a lot of trial and error, and redesign of the mechanism.
- You can make fairly easy breakaway costumes from store bought stuff if you buy items much bigger than your actor and slice and dice them to put in quick rigging.
- It is surprising, but true, that it is often easier to rig a longer “bigger” outfit to pop out of a smaller one.
- Hems drop better with steel curtain weight "chain" in them.
- Feathers and hoops can pop out into instant “bulk” in an underdressed outfit as they compact under a tight outfit well.
- Waist ties on skirts should be done with knotted bungee cord elastic. Do not count on regular string ties for maximum stability and easy removal.
- The simpler for the actor wearing it, the better. Don’t expect an actor in a performance to be able to do more than 1-2 simple pulls while staying in character, not tripping over the scenery, and remembering their lines. It is not fair.
- The complicated stuff is done by the costume staff in pre-rigging. It will take longer than you think. Any mistake can ruin the change, so train a single person to do it in his/her sleep by making them do, and redo, the rigging & breakaway a dozen times in a row so they master how to do it accurately, in their sleep, in the dark, etc.
- Don't rig most of it on the actor. Make an additional zipper closure that stays shut during the change that is what you use to put the actor in the costume
- Write down all the steps to get the actor in the rigging and follow your steps every time, in precise order to avoid disaster.

## **The Top Books & DVD's to Learn From**

**Instant Magic Costume Changes**, DVD & book by Monica "Monique" Monros, the first how to book exclusively on magic costume changes, and the first how-to video made on the topic. Has a ton of good information for both female (mostly) and male (fewer) changes, presented in a way that is

frustratingly hard to watch and read. This is clearly a homemade video and booklet by a magician, unintentionally funny in spots, yet it DOES have lots of really great information, and got the ball rolling on all the subsequent books and DVDs. One of the best values in price as well.

<http://magicmonros.wix.com/costumemagic>

**Quick Change: Magic Costume Changes for Men** and **Quick Change 2: High Speed Haute Couture Entertainment** both books by Sven Schoppenhauer (the magician known as "Lex Schoppi") and very well translated to English by Lee Alex (another important quick change artist) are the most detailed books on the topic, with multiple types of closings illustrated and explained. Pictures are plentiful but B&W which makes them less clear in spots. They are more expensive than the above, but dropped price recently down from over \$150 for the pair, to \$107, plus his book on male costume changes which has the most useful information for all types of changes, has just been added as an ebook for under \$50! Definitely worth the money. <http://www.lexschoppimagic.com/>

**The Art of Costume Changing by Yasuda, The Greater Magic Video Library, v, 59**, the most useful, well-produced DVD on female costume changes. Can be found at multiple sites reasonably priced, and if you try hard you can find a pirated YouTube type video online so you can see in miniature what you will get full size on DVD. However getting the DVD is still worth the investment. The most watchable of all the videos, reasonably priced at around \$40.

**Time for a Change** DVD by Lee Alex, is also a very easy to follow, if a bit slow paced, video on multiple male quick change. Lots of good construction secrets, plus tips for the wearer. Lee Alex also has invented a type of color changing vest that you may easily find cheap knock-offs of online, and he explains how to operate it in a video "extra" on this DVD you can find most places for \$35. There is also a book, for more money to go with it, in two different editions. I've got the first edition which is quite good, and the second edition supposedly adds even more info.

<http://www.magic2wear.com>

**Quick Change Secrets**, book by The World Record Holders (Natalie, Eli and Retonio), is the newest book on the topic. It is also very expensive, (around \$100 + shipping from Europe) but has 100+ good color photos showing construction details of female breakaway costumes and useful (and

fun) flip-book views of two breakaway changes in motion. The text is rather brief, and could definitely use a better translation to English, but it is highly comprehensible because of the very clear photos. In fact in places it is sometimes clearer than the far more detailed Schoppenhauer books because of the quality of the photos. It probably is not a first choice purchase, but definitely is desirable for someone having difficulty understanding things like the construction of the zipper trick, or how to pull off a costume without really great stop-motion images.

**Quick Change Pt 1: Men's Suit Transformation, Quick Change Pt 2: Women's Dress Transformation, and Quick Change Pt 3: Men's and Women's Transformation Costumes** books by Sos and Victoria Petrosyan. The first book shows many close up photos of sewing details of their snap tape method, with very brief instructions in English, Russian and German. The other two I've not bought. Very expensive for what you get, (\$55-\$66 for one, \$167 for all three + \$25 for shipping) yet these are the books with the most close-up photographed details on the actual sewing.

<http://www.costume-change-magic.com/shop> or <http://sosmagic.com>

**The Magic Hat Ring** by Mark Robert Scott explains how to do Chapeaugraphy with a wired felt hat ring <http://www.lulu.com/shop/mark-scott/the-magic-hat-ring-chapeaugraphy/paperback/product-20727615.html>

## **Websites with Useful Information:**

**Quick Change Artistry** - Has a bibliography that lists every single book and pamphlet ever written on the topic. Rest of the site is also great for historical info and links. <http://www.quick-change-artistry.com>

**Website of Sos and Victoria Petrosyan** Quick Change Artists that sell high end ready-made outfits, sewing notions, and expensive books. Their promotional videos are worth watching for ideas. <http://sosmagic.com>

**Natalie and Eli Quick Change and Flowers** Most useful for watching their act which is gob-smacking, also the only place to buy the book, *Quick Change Secrets*. <http://www.quick-change.ch/>

**Magic 2 Wear** Lee Alex' site, also sells ready made quick change clothing, his great how-to DVD and very expensive sew in ready-made magnet tape at <http://www.magic2wear.com>

**Chap-o** ready-made Chapeaugraphy rings <http://www.ourproductstore.com>  
type "chap-o" in the search box

**Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Feather Flowers**

<http://www.hmcmagic.com/everything.htm#everything>

**Lybrary.com** (rare out of print magic books sold in PDF)

[http://www.lybrary.com/magic-chapeaugraphy-c-21\\_49.html](http://www.lybrary.com/magic-chapeaugraphy-c-21_49.html)

**King Magic**

[http://www.kingmagic.com/index.php?main\\_page=product\\_info&products\\_id=113](http://www.kingmagic.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&products_id=113) the cheapest source for color changing ties (\$2.50) and vests (\$20), \$100 minimum purchase.

**China Magic** [http://www.52magic.net/catalog\\_49.html](http://www.52magic.net/catalog_49.html)

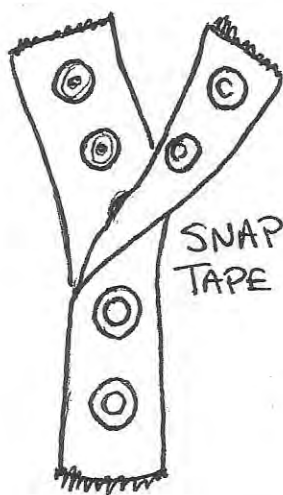
assorted quick change magic trick ready-made stuff at cheaper prices

**Dharma Trading Co.** <http://dharmatrading.com> the best dye and fabric paint retailer on the planet also sells silk and cotton dye/paintable “Foldable Sun Hats” that pop open from a small packet.

**YouTube:** <http://youtube.com>

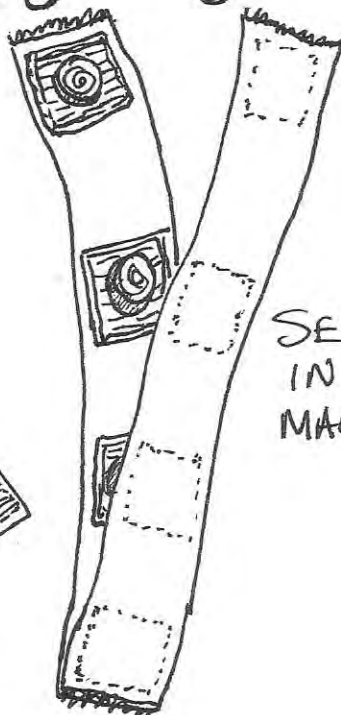
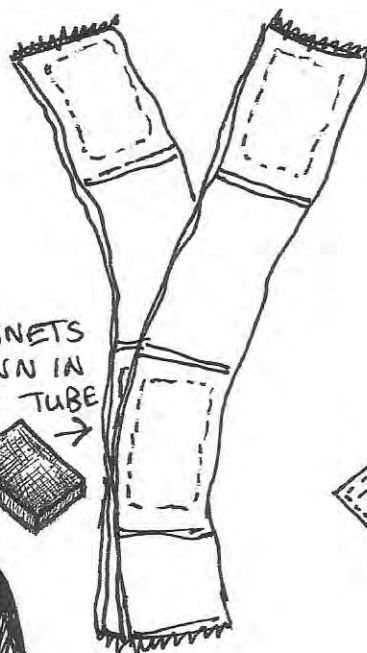
- Has lots of shorts on the various Cinderella changes, including the Broadway versions, school and community theatre knockoffs, cosplay fangirls, etc. that show helpful information. Ditto for Frozen change.
- You can watch various nerdy kids explain the "Dresscode" magic changing T-Shirt trick in a wide variety of ways, or, you can pointlessly spring \$25 and get a professionally made DVD at <https://store.theory11.com/products/dresscode-calen-morelli> that does the same.
- There are also endless amounts of magician quick change videos, including bits by nearly all the best artists in this area of magic trick. Obviously these don't show how the trick is done, only the act, but they are a vital component to understanding the books.

# Quick Release Rigging

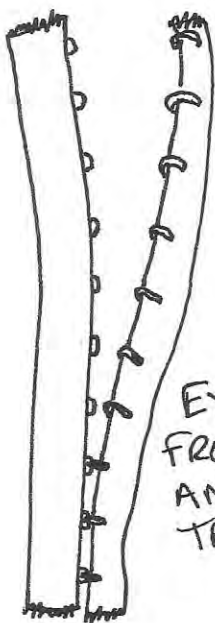


SNAP  
TAPE

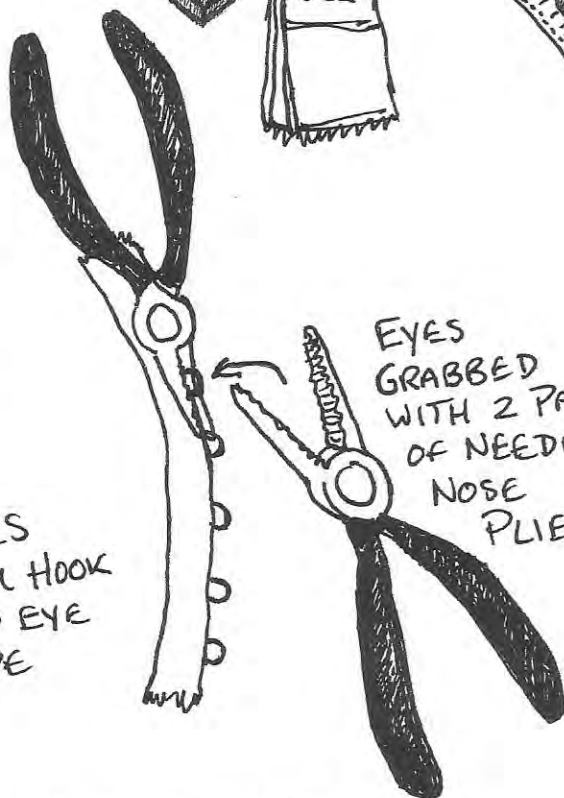
MAGNETS  
SEWN IN  
SILK TUBE



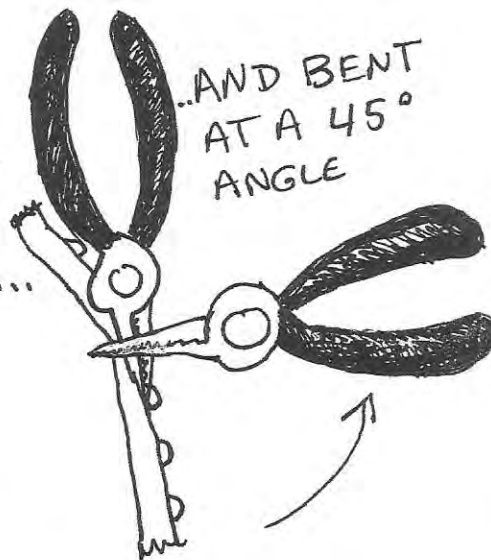
SEW  
IN  
MAGNETS



EYES  
FROM HOOK  
AND EYE  
TAPE



EYES  
GRABBED  
WITH 2 PAIRS  
OF NEEDLE  
NOSE  
PLIERS...

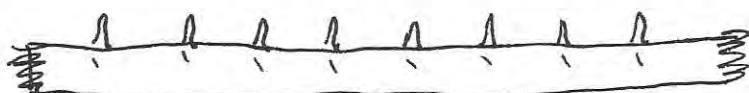


...AND BENT  
AT A 45°  
ANGLE

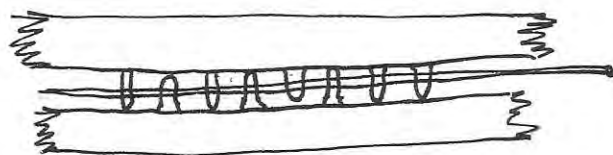
BENT EYE TAPE



TOP VIEW



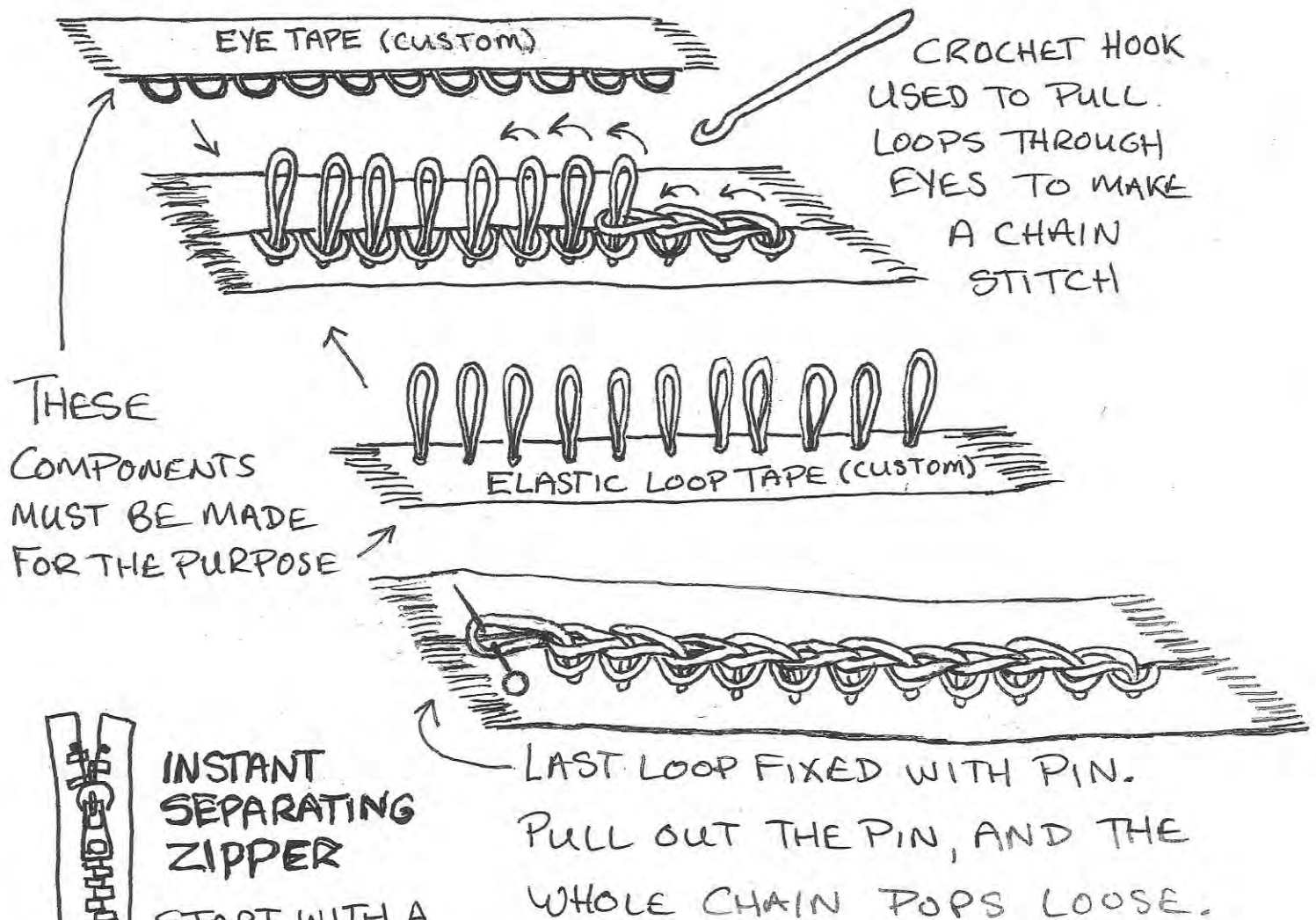
SIDE VIEW



← WEED EATER CORD

# For Break-Away Costumes

## CHAIN LOOP FASTENING



## INSTANT SEPARATING ZIPPER

START WITH A ORDINARY SEPARATING ZIPPER

REMOVE THE BOTTOM STOP WITH PLIERS

ADD RIBBON TO PULL TO MAKE IT EASY TO FIND

CUT ONE SIDE OF THE ZIPPER TOP 1-2" DOWN SO PULL CAN COME OFF

SEW STRAP + SNAPS TO STOP PULL FROM

SEW ZIPPER INTO THE GARMENT

COMING OFF TOO SOON

TARA MAGINNIS



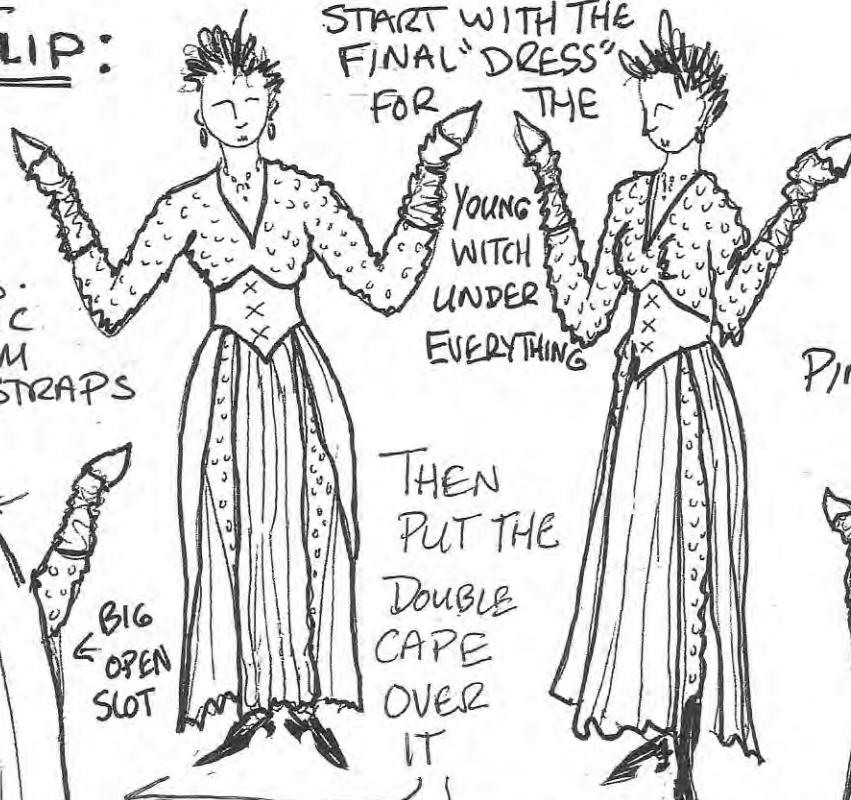
# THE CAPE FLIP:

ATTACH THE  
2 CAPES TO THE  
ACTOR WITH

HIDDEN  
ARM  
STRAPS  
MATCHING  
ELASTIC  
ARM  
STRAPS



PINS  
PUTTING  
2  
THINGS  
INTO  
ONE



START WITH THE  
FINAL "DRESS"  
FOR THE

YOUNG  
WITCH  
UNDER  
EVERYTHING

THEN  
PUT THE  
DOUBLE  
CAPE  
OVER  
IT

PUT THE 2  
PINNED TOGETHER



CAPES  
OVER

PINS

PINS

THE  
"DRESS"

CAPES  
GO WITH THE  
INSIDE -  
OUT, SO THAT  
WHEN IT FLIPS  
THE TWO OUTSIDES  
FORM INTO THE LINING +

FRONT  
CAPE WILL  
END UP ON  
BACK AND  
VICEVERSA

BACK OF THE CAPE

OLD WITCH  
ROBE  
GOES  
OVER  
THE  
DOUBLE  
CAPE

AND DISAPPEARS  
INSIDE THE  
CAPE WHEN IT  
IS FLIPPED



PINNED

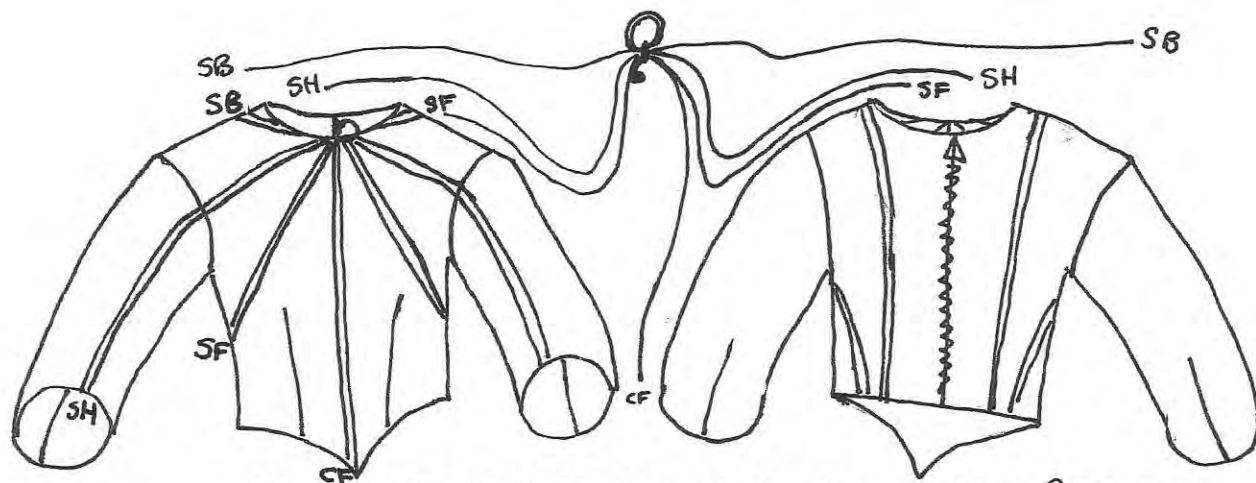
PINNED

GLOVES,  
WIG  
AND  
MASK  
ARE ATTACH-  
ED  
TO THE  
ROBE SO  
THEY COME  
OFF IN  
A PIECE

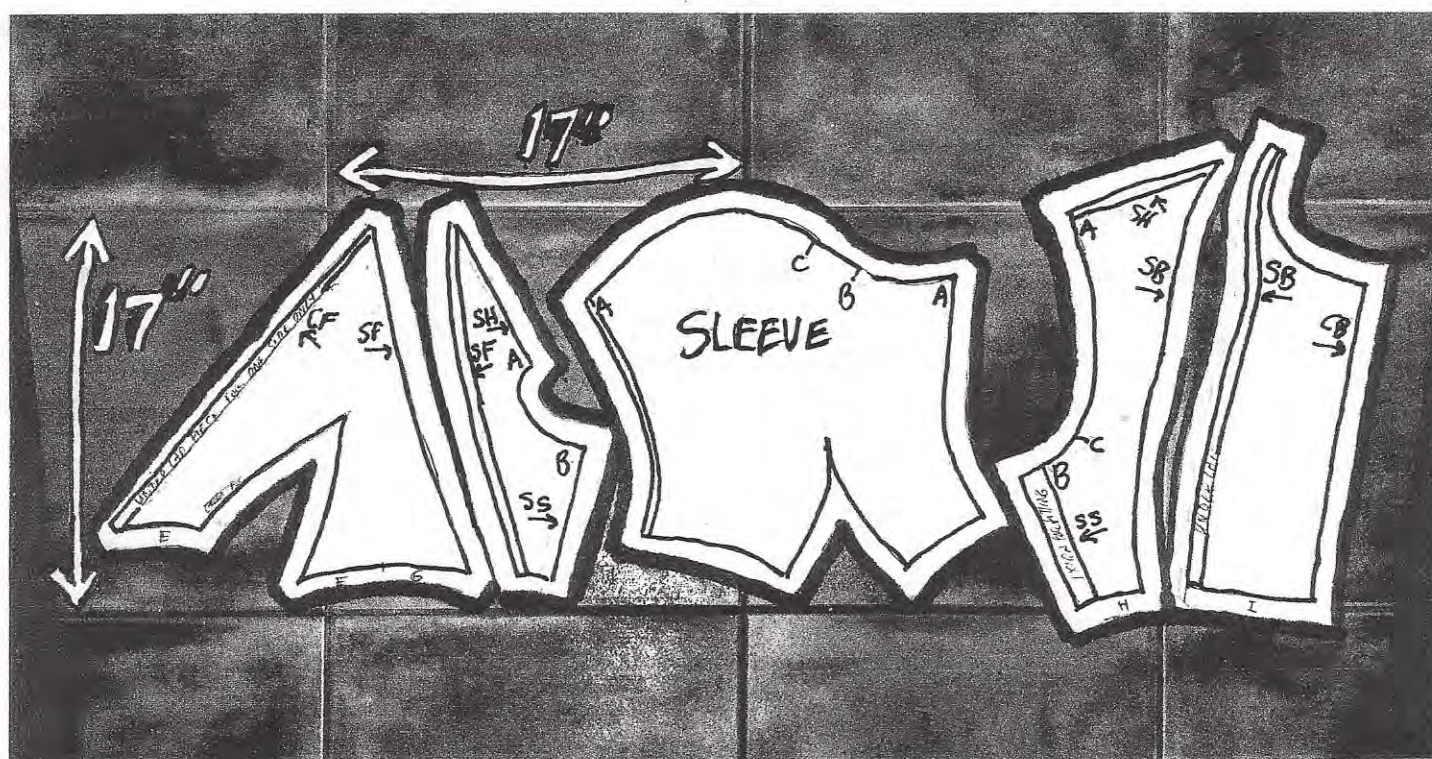


TO DO  
THE FLIP,  
PULL YOUR  
ARMS IN,  
AND PULL THE  
WHOLE THING  
UP BY LIFTING  
FROM THE FRONT  
BOTTOM AND  
PULLING IT  
OVER THE  
HEAD.

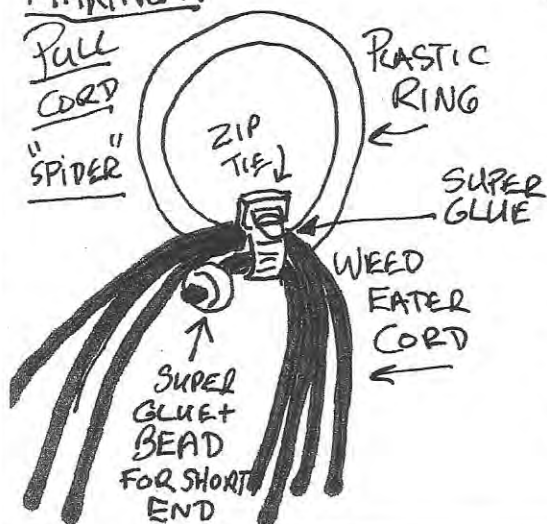




INTERNAL CONSTRUCTION OF CINDERELLA BODICE



### MAKING A



THE EXTERIOR OF THE BODICE IS HAND-SEWN OVER THE INTERNAL BREAK-AWAY RIGGING. ALL THE BREAK-AWAY SEAMS HAVE LIGHT BONING TO KEEP THE RIGGING STABLE, AND BENT LOOPS (FROM HOOK + LOOP TAPE) ON BOTH SIDES. AFTER TRIALS, THE SF SEAMS' RIGGING WAS DEEMED SUPERFLUOUS, AND SO THEY WERE MADE PERMANENT, AND REMOVED FROM THE RIGGING "SPIDER".