This is the first book to explore the complex relationship between theatre, fashion, and society in the late Victorian and early modern era. Beginning with Oscar Wilde’s subversive use of modishness in the 1890s, Kaplan and Stowell consider the reception of the “sex problem” play, stage images of the seamstress and shop assistant, the rise of the theatricalized fashion show, and attempts by Edwardian feminists to use both haute couture and the stage to challenge gender stereotypes and aesthetic conventions. Examining such diverse topics as the emergence of the society playhouse, fashion journalism, the role of the couturière-costumier, department store marketing, and the establishment of “dress codes” by militant suffragettes, the study provides a new context for assessing plays by established writers like Wilde, Bernard Shaw, Arthur Pinero, and Harley Granville Barker, as well as lesser-known figures such as Edith Lyttelton, Emily Symonds, and Cicely Hamilton. The book, with numerous illustrations from the period, will be of interest to students and scholars of theatre and fashion history, cultural studies, English literature, and women’s studies, as well as to playgoers and general readers.
THEATRE AND FASHION
Presentation Act V ensemble for Mrs. Patrick Campbell. Design by Handley Seymour. Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum from Theatre Costume Designs published by Emmett Publishing Ltd.
THEATRE AND FASHION

Oscar Wilde to the Suffragettes

JOEL H. KAPLAN
AND
SHEILA STOWELL
For our daughters
Jordan
Philippa
Isabel
Contents

List of illustrations ........................................... x
Acknowledgments ............................................. xii

Introduction ..................................................... 1

1 The glass of fashion ....................................... 8
2 Dressing Mrs. Pat ........................................... 45
3 The ghost in the looking-glass ....................... 82
4 Millinery stages ............................................ 115
5 The suffrage response ...................................... 152

Notes .......................................................... 185
Works cited .................................................... 202
Index .................................................................. 213
Illustrations

*Pygmaion.* Act v ensemble for Mrs. Patrick Campbell. Design by Handley Seymour. 

1. “Lady Windermere’s Fan at the St. James’s Theatre” (Lady, 16 March 1892).

2. “Dresses Worn in A Woman of No Importance” (Queen, 13 May 1893).

3. “Dresses Sketched in An Ideal Husband” (Queen, 12 January 1895).

4. *The Liars,* Act i. “Miss Irene Vanbrugh’s dress in shades of yellow” (Sketch, 13 October 1897).

5. *The Liars,* Act i. “Miss Mary Moore’s dress of pink and silver tissue” (Sketch, 13 October 1897).

6. Aubrey Beardsley, “Portrait of Mrs. Patrick Campbell” (The Yellow Book, April 1894).

7. Edward T. Reed, “Played Out; or, The 252nd Mrs. Tanqueray” (Punch, 5 May 1894).

8. Mrs. Patrick Campbell as Agnes Ebbsmith in Act i of The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith. Photograph by Alfred Ellis.


10. Mrs. Patrick Campbell as Eliza Doolittle in Act i of *Pygmaion* (Sketch Supplement, 22 April 1914).

11. *Pygmaion.* Mrs. Patrick Campbell in Madame Handley Seymour’s Act iii visiting ensemble.


14. Mrs. Patrick Campbell as Theodosia Hemming in *Warp and Woof.*
List of illustrations

15 The Act I undressing scene in Diana of Dobson’s.
   Production photograph. 109
16 Miss Valli Valli parodies the undressing scene in Diana of
   Dobson’s (Sketch, 25 March 1908). 111
17 “Paraders of Dream Dresses Before the Four Hundred:
   Lady Duff-Gordon’s Beautiful Mannequins” (Sketch,
   30 March 1910). 118
18 Madame Hayward’s mannequins and Mr. Windleshaw
   with the beehive bonnet of “la belle Hélène” in “The
   Madras House: Sketched at the Duke of York’s Theatre
   by H. M. Bateman” (Bystander, 23 March 1910). 133
19 “The Fair British Mannequin: From Madame
   Hayward’s” (Sketch Supplement, 3 June 1914). 135
20 The mannequin parade from Act III of My Lady’s Dress
   (Play Pictorial, 1914, 23:145). 146
21 Anita (Gladys Cooper) stabs the couturier Jacquelin
   through the curtain in Act III of My Lady’s Dress.
   Production photograph by Foulsham and Banfield. 149
22 “The Suffragette Nails her Colours to the Mast.” Anti-
   suffrage postcard. 154
23 The hat stall at the Women’s Exhibition at the Princes’
   Skating Rink, May 1909. Photograph by Christine
   Broom. 158
24 The Actresses’ Franchise League at the Women’s
   Coronation Procession, June 1911. 170
25 Madame Christine in How the Vote was Won (Sketch,
   17 November 1909). 177
26 Swan and Edgar’s advertisement for the NUWSS’s
   Active Service League uniform (Common Cause, 15 May
   1914). 181
Acknowledgments

The research for this study was carried out over a period of four years in a number of libraries and archives in North America and the United Kingdom. We would like to thank the following institutions for extending to us the courtesy of their facilities: the British Library, the British Library Newspaper Library (Colindale), the Mander and Mitchenson Theatre Collection, the Fawcett Library, the Garrick Club, the Arts Club, the Theatre Museum, the Museum of London, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Guildhall Library, Selfridges Archive, Harrods Archive, the University of London (Senate House), the University of Glasgow (Special Collections), the University of Bristol (Theatre Collection), the New York Public Library at Lincoln Center (Billy Rose Theatre Collection), the Forbes Magazine Collection, and the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center (HRHRC) at the University of Texas at Austin.

We are indebted to the following individuals for a variety of kindnesses, including assistance with research material, responses to queries, and comments upon earlier drafts of our work: Diane Atkinson, J. Conway, John Dawick, Anthony B. Dawson, Joseph Donohue, Bernard Dukore, Meredith Etherington-Smith, Richard Foulkes, Viv Gardner, Mara Gottler, Cathy Henderson, Claire Hudson, Russell Jackson, Dennis Kennedy, F. J. Lewis, David Mayer, Jan McDonald, Valerie Mendes, Margery Morgan, Robert Newman, Barry Norman, Kerry Powell, F. J. Redding, Eric Salmon, Ivan Sayer, Kay Staniland, Christian and Zita Viola, Peter Whitebrook, Jim Winter, and Jon Wisenthal. We are particularly grateful for the encouragement and support provided by Victoria Cooper and Sarah Stanton at Cambridge University Press, and for the services of copy-editor Christine Lyall Grant.

We would like to thank the following associations and institutions for allowing us to present work in progress under their auspices: the
Acknowledgments

Edinburgh International Festival, the Museum of London, the International Federation for Theatre Research, the American Society for Theatre Research, the Mid-America Theatre Conference, and the Universities of Glasgow, Leicester, London, and Manchester.

Plates 1–5, 10, 13, 16–19, 25, and 26 are reproduced by courtesy of the British Library and British Library Newspaper Library (Colindale); plates 11, 15, 20, and 21 by courtesy of the Theatre Museum and the Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum; plates 22–24 by courtesy of the Museum of London, and plate 12 by courtesy of the Forbes Magazine Collection, New York. Plates 6–9 and 14 are from the authors’ own collection. Quotations from the works of Bernard Shaw and Harley Granville Barker appear through the courtesy of the Society of Authors as literary representatives of the Estates of Bernard Shaw and Harley Granville Barker.

Material from this study has appeared in earlier form in Modern Drama, Theatre History Studies, British Theatre in the 1890s, ed. Richard Foulkes (Cambridge University Press, 1992), and Harley Granville Barker: An Edinburgh Retrospective, ed. Jan McDonald and Leslie Hill (Glasgow: Theatre Studies Publications, 1993).

Our research has been generously supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.