

# A Sicilian-Inspired, Hand Painted Vest in Much Ado About Nothing

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Director Chris Coleman will set his version of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* in the Sicilian port town of Messina. A minor but integral character is Dogberry, the incompetent constable, who unwittingly (and comically) discovers a plot to thwart true love.

When Costume Crafts Director Kevin Copenhaver took on the charge to design the show, he visualized Dogberry wearing a leather vest. But not any vest. A vest in the style of the meticulously painted *Carretto Siciliano*.

Not necessarily something hanging around in your average closet.

In order to achieve the desired look and feel, Costume Crafts Artisan Christine "Chris" Campbell was tasked with creating the intricate design by hand.

"It's based on the *Carretto Siciliano* style of painting, which is how they used to paint the carts in Italy," Campbell explained. These distinctive, brightly colored carts were generally two-dimensional featuring both wood carving and elaborate decoration down to the wheel.



The Carretto Siciliano style. Photo courtesy of Dolce and Gabbana

But this time, it's not wood. It's hand painting on leather, which needs to look good, be functional, and be durable enough for more than 40 rigorous performances.

"Hand painting is such a specialized technique. The [costume] drapers are assembling the vest, so they gave me the leather pieces before they are sewn together as it's easier to paint this way," continued Campbell.

### PreviousNext

To be as efficient as possible, she also experimented with a new technique. "I imported the motifs into Illustrator [a computer design program] and converted them for a Cricut



machine. It's like a mini die-cut machine; a lot of crafters use it....Then I made our own stencils.

“I'm using Angelus paints, which we usually use for shoes, but they cover lots of things really well. Then I'll apply patina and other techniques to give it a distressed look to make it look worn as though it's part of that character's story.”

Campbell makes it sound relatively easy, but the hand painted vest will take approximately 2.5 days just to paint, not including the design, fabric cutting, fittings and assembly.

The final piece will be on full display throughout the production, which plays through November 6, 2022. And, who knows, maybe the Milan Fashion Week will ask Dogberry to walk the runway.

## **DETAILS**

*Much Ado About Nothing*

Sep 30-Nov 6, 2022 • Kilstrom Theatre

Tickets









