

From Central to Broadway

STORY BY RHONDA OAKS
PHOTOS BY MEGAN WHITWORTH



Barry Doss takes a moment to drink a cup of coffee amidst the shuffling of designs and students.

After 20-plus years designing wardrobes for Broadway, Central native now teaching others at Sam Houston

To say that Barry Doss has seen the bright lights of a Broadway stage would be an understatement. He knows how to pursue his dreams, and he is currently arming students with the knowledge of how to pursue theirs.

Doss, 46, has a lengthy list of credits as associate costume designer and working in wardrobe on Broadway. With more than

20 years of experience in the professional industry within the Broadway and New York City communities, he has earned the distinction of being called a New Yorker, but is quick to say his heart is in Texas and his plans include working in both locations.

The high-caliber credits Doss has as associate costume designer include:

"Evita" (Drama), "La Bete" (Comedy),

"Red" (Drama), "Hamlet" (Tragedy), "Exit the King" (Comedy), "The Seafarer" (Original).

Doss has also worked in design or wardrobe on other productions, including: "Ann" (The life of Ann Richards), "Wicked," "Foreverman," "Hair," "Phantom of the Opera," The NYC Summer Play Festival, Dance Kaleidoscope, Trisha Brown Dance

FEATURE



Costume shop manager Barry Doss takes a hands-on approach when teaching his students.

“I want the students to learn how to do it all ... I love the whole process of choosing the fabric, working on the patterns, draping and custom-fitting the finished garments for the performers.”

BARRY DOSS
COSTUME DESIGNER

Company, “Steel Magnolias” and wardrobe supervisor and star dresser for actress Holland Taylor.

With those kinds of accomplishments, you might never guess that this calm, confident talent was born in Lufkin and is a Central High School graduate. He gives much of the credit for his success to two high school teachers.

“I fell in love with theater in high school,” Doss said. “John Mitchell was the first teacher that Central brought in who established an English honors program. He went on to teach in Lufkin for many years. But that one year he spent at Central was very significant in

my life. There were 18 of us who took his English course. As part of that course, he taught an introduction to theater and I was hooked.”

The next year, under the direction of Carrie Butler Swann, a theater department was established at Central. She recognized Doss as being multi-talented and attributes his success to natural talent, hard work, initiative and tenacity.

“She was my first theater teacher,” Doss said. “John moved on to Lufkin, but if it weren’t for him and Carrie, I never would have ended up on the path I have taken.”

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A sketch of a costume Barry Doss designed for "Hearts Do Roar" at Sam Houston State University.
Contributed

hard-working parents, Wayne Doss and Vicky Womack, Doss studied hard and qualified for scholarships.

Armed with the Nordan Fine Arts scholarship and scholarships awarded by Lufkin Industries, the Lufkin Art Guild, The Angelina Community Theater and the VFW, Doss followed his dad's advice and did his best. He graduated cum laude from Texas Christian University in 1991 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in theater and a minor in fashion and interior design.

In the years that followed, a network of friends, mentors and family provided what a college degree could not — a strength and stability with close family ties as he worked to find success in the big city.

When the opportunity to develop a theater and costume design program at Sam Houston State University was offered to him last year, he said it was too close to home to pass up. He currently serves as the resident costume designer for Stages Repertory Theater. In 2014, the program presented "Marie Antoinette," for which Doss built the

costumes.

With the ability to see a finished costume in his mind, he can also research and draw it, pattern, cut, drape, stitch and even paint it, if necessary.

"I want the students to learn how to do it all," he said. "I had to develop those skills in order to execute some of my designs. I love the whole process of choosing the fabric, working on the patterns, draping and custom-fitting the finished garments for the performers."

In addition to creating the dress for actress Holland Taylor to wear to the Tony Awards in 2012, he has also worked in costuming for actress Carol Burnett and designed one-of-a-kind wedding dresses for private clients.

Doss said his future goals include working at The Alley Theater in Houston, The Houston Ballet, The Zach in Austin and the San Antonio Ballet. At some point, he said he plans on returning to New York to realize another career goal.

"I want my own Broadway show," he said. "I will go back and be the lead costume designer at some point, not

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an associate designer. That is my goal. I know I will reach it because I am determined and I have the support of some wonderful colleagues, friends and family."

Until then, Doss remains a member of the Theatrical Wardrobe Union Local 764 and USA Local 829 United Scenic Artists, and has discovered a new talent along the way.

"The students at Sam Houston have been a great surprise for me," Doss said. "They are like a catalyst, having bridged the gap for me. I know now that I have this other thing, this other talent that I never knew I had, which is teaching."

Doss has advice for students who may be struggling to realize their dreams. It is pinned to his Facebook page and says simply, "Nothing can keep you from reaching your goals."

"I want them to get out of their own way and go for it," he said. "Never give up. Technology has made it easier for students today because they have everything they need at their fingertips. At some point, though, they have to put that computer aside, pick up some paper, a pencil or some scissors, and make a garment. You have to put your actions to your dreams. You have to get up and do something."✦