

My Costumery Apprenticeship with Ms. Victoria Mongillo

[Sophie Connell capstone project.mp4](#)

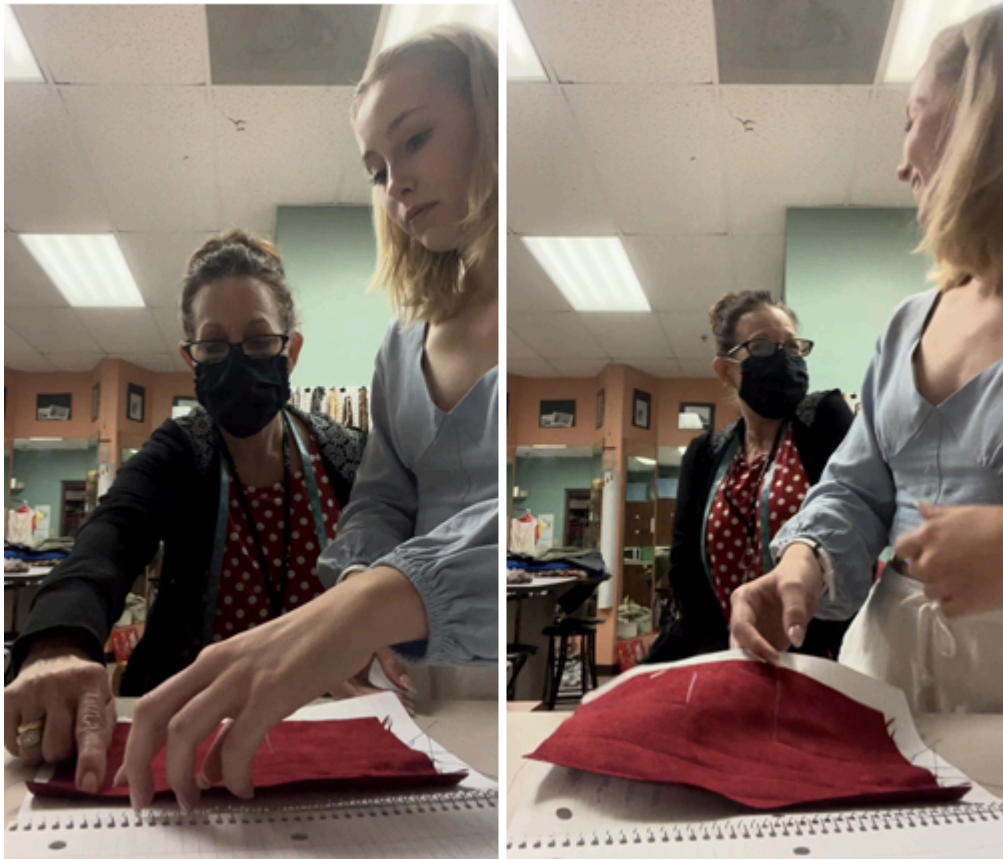
In all honesty, it has been extremely difficult to sit down and write this narrative; it means my internship is coming to an end, which deeply hurts my heart. But here I am, sitting at our table as the ever-ticking clock lets me know my time here is limited. This year, I had the pleasure of working alongside Victoria Mongillo, the Performing Arts Center (PAC) costumer for RBHS. Not only did I surpass our initial goals, but I learned from Victoria how to work with grace and treat every person as they should be; this internship has been an immense honor, and will forever hold a special place in my heart.

At the start of first semester, Victoria and I sat down to outline specific goals relating to construction, which often included sewing, so that I could work independently. These goals included an understanding of mechanical and electronic sewing machines and sergers, knowing how and when to use various threads and needles, listing the characteristics of woven and knit fabrics, having the ability to read a pattern accurately, and using a pattern to construct knit and woven garments. These seemed daunting to me in early September, but Victoria led me through a hands-on experience to help me attain the confidence I currently possess. Throughout the semester I also assisted with alterations, construction, pulling costumes, organization, and more.

I have learned the value in making mistakes, and using them to learn. In typical courses, mistakes mean you don't understand the content, and should study more; but in the costume shop, mistakes must be reversed, which reinforces the correct way to complete a task. For example, taking the time to pick stitches out of a hem because they weren't long enough to create a ruffle reminded me to always check where my needle is positioned and the length of the stitches.

I also had the privilege of working on four shows put on by the RBHS PAC this year. My experiences with "Little House on the Prairie," "Where the Lilies Bloom," "The Miracle Worker," and "The Bad Seed" have taught me how to handle high-stress situations, as well as many nuances of being a costumer. The day of the second show of "Little House on the Prairie," Victoria got sick. This left Maddie Torrez, Michael Ray and me in charge of hair, makeup, makeup checks, costume repairs, quick changes, and clean up. Victoria holds a special place in all our hearts, so we jumped into action and finished the night successfully. We were also working with many novice actors, so in addition to our sudden challenges, we also had to navigate conflicts in real time.

I cannot express the impact this experience with the wonderful Victoria Mongillo has had on my life in so few words. I can say, though, that her love for all students, attention to detail, and work ethic have made me a better person. Victoria and I checked in on each other each day, and I even grew to love her family and beautiful baby granddaughter, Margot. Victoria has not only taught me the ins and outs of being a costumer, but grace and compassion when working with others.



Victoria does not like to take photos, but here are some screenshots from a video of me explaining what I learned about straight stitches.