

Cynnabar Wassail A&S Bean Count Entry

Mistress Fionna

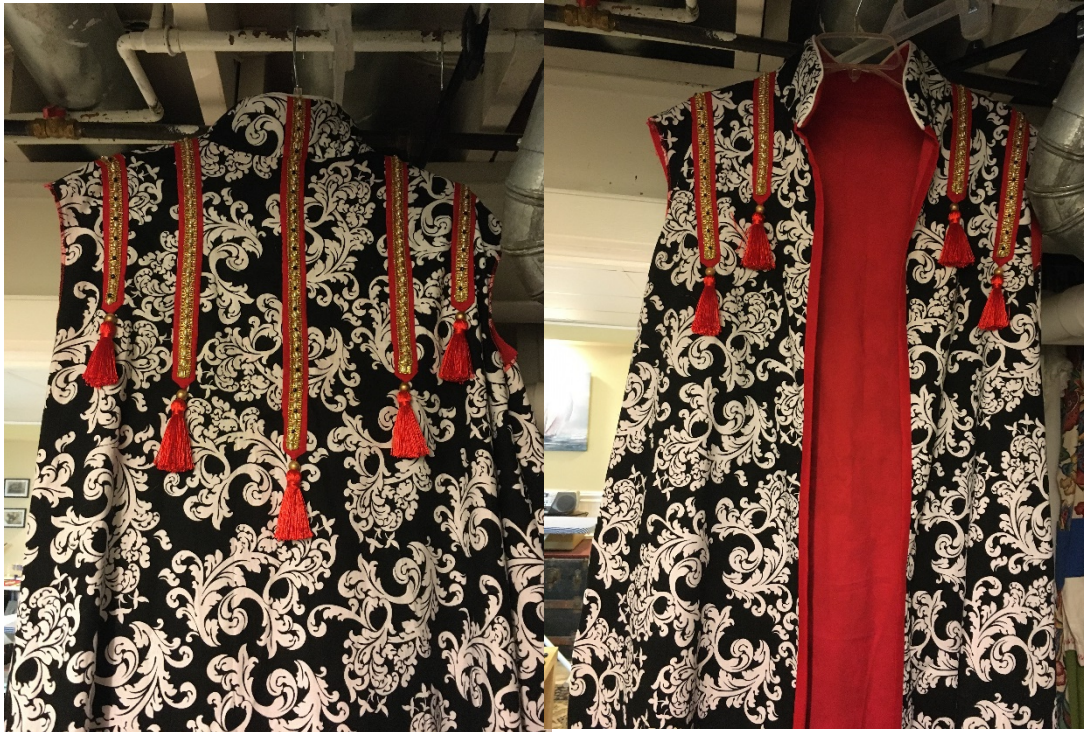
“Even if all you had was a stack of materials and a plan, that still counts as started for our purposes.”

Several years ago (2017, according to my journal) I bought this cotton fabric to make myself a loose gown. I could imagine it in my head. I even bought the lining fabric at the time, which hardly ever happens. I put it in the stash to marinate until I had the desire/ambition/time to make it. I knew I wanted a loose gown similar to the ones in Janet Arnold’s “Patterns of Fashion” but I wanted a straight front style rather than the cutaway front of the gown pictured on the left side of the cover of the book.



The nice thing about a loose gown is that the only place it has to fit is through the upper body. The rest of the body is, well, loose. Having made one many years before and being very familiar with the charts in the book, I knew the shapes I needed the pattern pieces to be. There was very little actual patterning. So one weekend during COVID isolation, I marked my fabric, cut it out and started assembling it.

The actual sewing of the gown was done on the machine for the most part. Once I decided I wanted to bead all the trim, that was done by hand. My design process may be unique in that I envision the construction before making a garment, but I don't always plan the trim placement precisely. Often that evolves as the garment takes shape. In the case of this gown, I wound up ordering things like tassels and metal clasps as the trimming took shape in my mind.



I did try one new-to-me technique on the sleeves of the gown. To keep the sleeves permanently “poofed” out, I added boning. I used heavy cable ties in place of cane, which was often used in period. The bones run parallel to the floor around the circumference of the sleeve. Another option to add shape to the sleeves would be cording but it would not give as structural a result. I will have to wear it for longer than just trying it on to see if I am bothered by permanently poofy sleeves.

I haven't worn the gown yet, but plan to wear it over a kirtle or a bodiced petticoat and sleeves. There is no support in the loose gown so there must be some in the layer underneath. Given that cotton was a luxury fabric at the time (even if I bought the fabric from the clearance table) and the pattern is showy, this gown is fairly formal so I will wear a farthingale (“hoop skirt”) with it most of the time. The loose gown was often worn at home, but as the example on the cover of POF shows, some were very fancy indeed.

And here is the final product:



