The Art of Costuming:

Interpreting the Character through the Costume Designer's Eyes

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Abstract

Creating a believable illusion through costume design is a very important aspect in a theatrical production. Every production in theater is the culmination of a collaboration of creative individuals who each have a very explicit role to play. Part of the success of a production depends on set designers, lighting coordinators, directors, producers, props masters, actors, etc. The idea is to create a believable new world that relates to the audience. The costume designer's job is to use all of the tools that are within their grasp to both research the best option for costuming and to actually construct the costumes. In order to do this, they must conduct research while working with the needs of the production team and the constraints that their products place on the costumes. The relationship between research, construction tools, and the abilities of creative peers gives the costume designer all that is needed to help define the characters in a production. All of these tools are used by the costume designer to polish off the character which helps to ensure the audience's correct interpretation of a production.

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Theater and Costuming

Famed Hollywood costume designer Edith Head once said, "A designer is only as good as the star who wears her clothes." Determining what *is* the role of the costume designer in defining the character of a production is a crucial question. Coinciding with this is an understanding of tools available to the designer and how they impact the final products.

Every production in theater is the culmination of a collaboration of creative individuals who each have a very explicit role to play in the process of creating each specific work of art. Without the work and research of set designers, lighting designers, directors, producers, and props masters, the full potential of a theater production would not be realized.

One of the most important components in creating a successful theater production is creating an illusion. The idea is to create a new world through characters to which the audience relates and through which they understand the idea behind the production. For the set designer, that means researching the setting of the story while still creating a functional area in which the actor can portray his art. For the lighting designers, that means using light to help intensify the mood and keep the audience's attention where it is meant to be. For the props masters, that means pouring through the script to determine what items are necessary to the production and how best to construct them. For the costume designer, creating a new world for the audience means enabling the actor to better adapt to their role in order that he or she is better able to portray the character.

On the practical side, the costume designer clothes the actor and ensures that the actor is able to perform without constriction due to their costumes. It is important to understand what enables them to decide the best option of clothing for the actor in each specific production. In addition, an understanding of the creative process they need to implement allows them to interpret the character without sacrificing the script. Lastly, an understanding of the tools and devices that they use to reach the illusion set forth within the script is important to a successful final product.

The Costume Designer's Research Process

The world of costuming requires the designer to investigate ways in which to achieve a desired illusion. This method varies from designer to designer, but there are several components to it that are necessary for every costume designer to follow. These components include the script, the theme, the time period, the character, the sketches, the tools, and the costume plot.

The Script

Research is imperative when designing for a production and it starts with a thorough reading of the production's script. Costuming may be a creative process, but it is still bound by the circumstance of the costume as prescribed by the script which includes such information as time period, and functional elements. The script is the costumer's playbook through which they start the creative process.

Since knowing the script is a monumental prerequisite to the correct execution of a costume, it is necessary that the costume designer read it more than once. In fact, "familiarization [with the play script and its characters] can only result from a careful reading--and often re-reading many times--of the script" (Motley, 1964, p. 11). The first

reading of the script gives a basic overview of the story behind it. Future readings consist of enhancing one's knowledge of the story more and also discovering various elements of the story that greatly affect not only the looks of the costume, but also how it is made, with what it is made, and placement of its parts. For instance, in the scene *The Weekly Volcano Press* in Act 2 of the musical *Little Women*, one of the characters says to another, "And take my shawl. Ragged as it is" (Knee, 2005, p. 76). Without having read the script, the costume designer would not realize his or her responsibility to provide a shawl for that specific character. Many other scripts provide much the same information in them with paragraphs specifically provided for the use of the costume designer in terms of what is required in certain scenes. Even so, the writer of a script is not required to provide the costumes; therefore, this information is provided at the script writer's discretion and serves merely as an aid for the designer to understand the vision of the writer for his characters in specific scenes.

Out of all that the script provides, most important is the basic information vital to each member of the production team. For the costume designer, this is especially important in regard to quick changes. A quick change requires the actor to change costumes quickly from one costume to another based on scene or character changes. The information about the scenes provided in the script enables the designer to know which costumes need to be removed and replaced easily and which costumes can be more of a permanent fit. The script also provides the number of characters, the setting, the number of scenes, and the actions performed in each scene. These are all general ideas that factor into specific details of the entire wardrobe of the play.

The Concept

Though the script is full of relevant material for the costume designer, the next component of their trade deviates from what is put forth in the script and relies on the creative vision or concept of the director. The concept of the play is the director's take on the writer's theme in the production. For example, when Mervin LeRoy sought to adapt *The Wizard of Oz* into a movie, "[his] philosophy was that any treatment of the source matter should be handled with the awed wonderment of a child" (Scarfone & Stillman, 2013, p. 22). His concept was to look at the translation of the book to screen as from the view of a child and how a child would see the events of the book take place. Also, the original interpretation of Dorothy showed her as a titanium blonde with a vast amount of makeup. However, due to the discretion of the director and his concept for the movie, Dorothy Gale became the simple country girl with little makeup and a childish hairstyle as portrayed by Judy Garland (Scarfone & Stillman, 2013).

This idea translates to the costume realm where the vision of the director greatly affects the final result. From desiring the play to be very abstract to wishing for it to include a lot of lace, director's concepts play directly into the work that the designer does. It is yet another parameter within which the costume designer must express their own creativity and it is also another way in which the audience is able to read into the character through the director's eyes.

In the same way, costume designers have their own concepts for their costumes. Both their creativity and expertise are required in order to cause their costume concept to coincide with the director's concept for the production. Though the director has a final say in a costume and gets to dictate certain aspects of costumes through their concept, the

costume designer is able to work within those parameters to develop their own ideas and interpretation of the director's concept. The costume designer's concept is revealed through the way that they choose to clothe each character.

The Time Period and Geographical Location

After defining the concept, the costume designer must then translate this costume into the time period and geographical location of the play. Time period is so integral that the move towards "attempts at historical accuracy in stage costuming" is actually credited to J.R. Planche (Richmond, 1960, p. 233), a British playwright who authored over 175 plays. Realism in historical costuming was not considered to be important until "the first decades of the nineteenth century" (Richmond, 1960, p. 233). Costumer Adrienne Martine-Barnes goes so far as to say that she became "rather an arrogant bore on the subject, though [she] never stooped to quite the rudeness of telling a woman in a Scaparelli pink satin Tudor she was out of period- however tempted [she] was" (1984, p. 25).

Defining a character within a time period enables the designer to communicate to the audience what the actor was going through in his or her lifetime. It communicates more than just a year or time frame, but delves into a study of prevailing views of a time and cultural norms for that time frame. This, then, not only educates the audience in the history of the time, but also sets the stage for the theatrical production. Therefore, the costume designer has to absolutely ensure accuracy to the period in which it takes place. This includes deciding such factors as whether or not ruffles were the prevailing fashion of the time. For example, "the Victorian lady wore gowns of prim, grayed hues while the Elizabethan lady was a splash of color" (Paterek, 1959, p. 28). This idea is predominant

in the representations of the Shakespearean era plays and their strict interpretation.

Another example arises from men's suits. During the time of the setting of the musical

Mary Poppins, the predominant male suit was either double breasted or a three button

suit. In deciding costumes for such a production, historical accuracy requires that the

costume designer keep this in mind for the men's costumes.

Geographical location is equally as important when creating the costumes for a

play. Clothing styles are very different from country to country. For example, the

costumes for the musical *Aladdin* are very different from those for *Oklahoma* no matter

the interpretation. The costume designer must realize that the setting is just as important

as the time period by perhaps even exaggerating the stereotypical nature of each country

represented in order to obviate the nationality or location of each of the specific

characters of a production. What would *West Side Story* be without the noticeably

different styles of the Puerto Ricans versus the Americans? Thus, costumes must be used

to enhance the heritage of the character wearing them.

The Character

"Through tattered clothes great vices do appear; Robes and furred gowns hide all.

Plate sin with gold and the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks. Arm it in rags, a

pigmy's straw does pierce it" (Shakespeare, *King Lear*, p. 64). This quote is among many

in which William Shakespeare attempted to convey the power of clothing to either hide

or unveil a person's true character. In this quote, he compares the clothing of a character

to his or her virtues. Thus, clothing speaks for the character.

Out of all of the components that a costume designer must consider when creating

or designing a costume, the character is the most important. The script, the concept, the

time period, and the geographical location set general parameters from which the

designer interprets what a costume should look like. However, after these items have

been set, the details of costuming are determined by additional factors such as mood,

class, age, gender, and personality.

        Mood and color. When costuming the character, the mood of the play affects the

type of costume that the character should wear. A general overview of the storyline and

the events of the production help the costume designer to define the mood of the play in

order to clothe the character. After establishing the mood, one thing that helps to better

express the mood of a character is color. Since different colors signify different things,

they help to expand the knowledge of the audience on the feel of a specific scene when

purposefully placed on a character. To reiterate, "color can carry important meaning and

can have an important impact on people's affect, cognition, and behavior" (Elliot 2014,

para. 1). In play productions, colors help the audience to instinctively feel a certain way

about a character or about the production itself.

        In dark productions such as *Sweeney Todd*, dark colors that have been neutralized

with cool greys and browns are used to clothe the actors. This, then, establishes not only

a feel for the character himself, but also a feel for the production in general. Likewise,

contrasting colors are used for contrasting characters. In *The Wizard of Oz,* the Wicked

Witch of the West is portrayed in the age-old black witch's costume with a pointed hat

while the good witch Glinda is arrayed in a "gown… made of layers of delicate pink tulle

sprinkled with 'northern stars' and frosty snow crystals" (Scarfone & Stillman, 2013, p.

84). This portrayal enabled the audience to tell the good character from the evil character

right away simply by looking at the colors in which they were covered. Therefore, when

creating costumes, it is important for the designer to understand what colors would best describe the mood of the character.

   Class. Another important feature of a character that the costumer must remember to find a way to express in the costumes is the class or social status of the individual wearing the costume. For instance, if a princess wore the garb of a maidservant, the audience would spend more time trying to figure out the roles of the characters than focusing on the actual production. In order to direct the audience's attention, the costume must fade into the background and assimilate itself into the setting and character. In fact, costume designers Jerrard Smith and Diana Smith (2012) have written that "a designer's work is never meant to draw attention to itself but rather to be a part of the fabric of the whole theatrical presentation" (p. 28). When expressing the facet of the character known as class, this fact is obviated. The actor must be able to show their station in life in the production and this is accomplished by a collaboration of the actor's abilities and the expertise of the costume designer in ensuring the accuracy or believability of that character's station in life or social status in their costume. For the costume designer, research into this part of the character means simply reading the character's description and using that information to create the costumes.

   Besides keeping the audience focused on the production at hand, defining class is important in helping to establish historical accuracy. Some productions have very specific characters, who, in their original time period, would be required by sumptuary laws to wear a specific type of clothing. During the Middle Ages, servants were required to dress their station so that no one would mistake them for anything else. In fact, "the theaters proved to be the one place where the sumptuary laws largely succeeded in determining

the apparel that people wore" (Lublin, 2011, p. 43). Therefore, deviating from class dress would lessen the historical accuracy of a production.

Texture. When deciding on which types of materials to use when constructing a costume, "the texture of cloths is fully as important as the color" (Ellsworth, 1917, p. 54). The texture of the fabric used in a piece of clothing speaks volumes as to the monetary worth and station of a person in everyday life let alone in theater. Laces and silks communicate affluence and wealth while burlap, plain muslin, and cotton communicate destitution and poverty. The costume designer should have a firm understanding of the looks that each kind of fabric has in the eyes of the viewer in order to correctly choose the types to use. Rough textures coincide with rough characters while soft textures coincide with soft characters. For example, a thief in a production would have cause to wear rough cottons while the affluent whom he was robbing would be clothed in satins. When a costume designer uses textures correctly, the audience unknowingly groups the characters wearing them into the certain class to which they belong, enabling them to define the character even more.

Age. A creative costume design should also suggest the age of the character. The age of the character can initially be determined by the costume designer by either the description given by the author of the play or by looking at the relationship of the characters in the play and reading the age cues therein. Many times, actors play in roles that are much younger or much older than the actors actually are or they play roles in which they age gradually. In any case, it is the responsibility of not just the makeup department, but also the costume designer to reflect this change in age. Through the use

of color, trimmings, patterns, etc. the costume designer can subtract or add years from an actor depending on the need for their character.

Historically, children have been clothed in easily removable and simple clothing while seniors have chosen clothing that is both sensible and warm. Again, the most exaggerated of stereotypes in this area best represents what the costume designer is trying to communicate through his or her costumes. However, this still must be accomplished with as little ostentatiousness as possible. Also, with the use of trimmings such as bows for young girls and caps for young boys, accessories can be used by the costume designer to reveal a character's age.

Gender. A fourth consideration in designing the costumes for a production is the gender of the character that they clothing. This character detail is usually easy to realize by the costume designer in the names of the characters and is also usually defined by the script. In the past, men played all of the roles in plays and, therefore, were left to use specific methods to train the audience to understand their gender. One of these methods was by using costumes. In the earlier Shakespearean theater, "before an actor… delivered his first words in performance, the audience would have seen how he was dressed and understood whether the character he was playing was male or female" (Lublin, 2011, p. 1). Though this is not practiced very much today, there are productions in which the story calls for a man disguising himself as a woman or a woman disguising herself as a man. In these cases, it is important to use the correct styles of clothing in order to complete this portrayal. For example, in the play *Les Miserables*, the character Eponine disguises herself as man to sneak onto the battlefront. Without the proper attire, this transformation would not work. However, using such tricks as loose clothes with rougher textures and

more obviously the use of men's styled clothing, the transformation is possible for the

costume designer and the effect causes the audience to grasp the situation much more

easily.

      Personality. The most important component when considering how to costume

the character in the play is their personality. Though often confused with the identity of

the character himself, the personality of the character has more to do with the

temperament of the character. The costume is one of the biggest clue-ins for the audience

as to the temperament of the wearer, even as it changes throughout a production. Unlike

the rest of the factors regarding the character, the costume designer must really read into

the script and know the specific characters before they can decide how the personality of

the characters would affect what these characters would wear.

      After deciding what kind of character with which they are dealing, the costume

designer is then able to decide what methods they would use in order to communicate

that personality to the audience. For example, an obnoxious character could wear loud

and ostentatious colors and styles while a quiet character could wear simple colors with

little frills. This step of defining a character ends up being very much in the creative

realm of the costume designer and is the area where there are few rules to dictate what

the designer must create. However, even while expressing their creativity, the designer

must remember every other component of the character that must be followed even in

their creative designs.

      A good costume designer realizes that a costume is not just a costume. It is a

reflection of the character on which it resides and must be "suited to the… personality of

the wearer" (Ellsworth, 1917, p. 37). If a character is sad, its costume should reflect that

in dull and dark colors. If it is an obnoxious and boisterous character, its textile's colors, patterns, and style should reflect the character's loud and obnoxious behavior. For instance, a bright red fabric could be used for an antagonist while a subtle white and blue fabric could be used for a character with a particular innocence about them. "Costumes are invaluable in providing information to the audiences about the story and the character being presented" (Smith & Smith, 2012, p. 29) and these costumes rely on the fabrics of which they are made in order to help accomplish that goal.

The Sketches

After the initial research, the designer is then able to start sketching their ideas based on the knowledge that they have gathered thus far. However, even in creating sketches, some amount of knowledge must be had regarding how certain fabrics cooperate with certain designs and how to draw specific design details in order to correctly express the costume designer's desires for the costumes.

When sketching a clothing design, the design details must be apparent to all members who are involved in the construction of the costume being sketched. For every detail, there is a specific way of expressing it in a drawing. For example, complicated features such as transparency, gathered fabric, fabric creasing, and pleating require drawing skills beyond basic knowledge (Lovell, 2011, p. 10-11). Also, giving the costumed figure a 3-D form by using highlights, lowlights, and shadows helps those looking at the sketch to determine the best way to translate from sketch to reality. Correctly learning these techniques helps the costume designer on the journey towards defining their character.

Besides learning to sketch design details, the costume designer must realize that certain fabrics act certain ways. For instance, thick wool will not gather easily. Therefore, if the costume designer is creating a design in which they desire to use thick wool, gathering it would not be a good idea. In this way, the costume designer must either base their fabrics off of their design or vice versa and still communicate this idea to those who are constructing the garment. Without this type of knowledge, a designer's concept for a character could easily get skewed by those lower down in the chain of command, thus skewing the audience's perception of the designer's concept. Depending on whether or not the designer has a design in mind first, this could also be a major factor in choosing the types of fabrics.

The Tools

The completion of a workable sketch follows with the knowledge and appropriate use of tools needed to make the sketch a reality. The tools of the costume designer are what enable the designer to transform their sketches into functioning garments. Because of this, the success of a design's transformation comes down to the efficient use of fabrics, patterns, notions, sewing machines, and a needle and thread.

Fabrics. As important as it is that a costume designer chooses the correct fabrics for their garments, there are certain qualities that makes a certain product perfect for the garment in which it is used. In the same way, certain qualities about a fabric cause the designer to know that it is the desired fabric for the garment. The types of qualities considered lie in the many factors that a costume designer must consider for every product that they put forth for a play production. Much detailed planning goes into each garment that each actor wears and it is during the research of this detailed planning that a

costume designer is able to realize what fabrics should be used for each garment. Some of the factors considered when choosing textile fabrics for a piece are how it works with the design of the garment, how it works with the silhouette of the actor wearing it, the fiber durability of the fabric, the effect that the color of the fabrics have in the different types of lighting used in theater productions, and the price of the fabric. The choosing of the fabrics is monumental in accomplishing a design and with all of the steps involved in fabric selection alone, even choosing a fabric takes a lot of research in the costume designer's quest to define the character.

Patterns. Though at this point in the process the costume designer has already formed an idea for what the costume should look like, patterns are a helpful tool in completing the process. Though no pattern is going to already look exactly like a designer's sketch, certain pieces help with sizing and the basic structure of the piece. All costumes are made with at least some of the basic pieces that patterns provide. These pieces then come together to form the various elements involved in the costume, enabling the costumer to use their creative process with a basic template.

The costume designer should also be able to use patterns to his or her advantage by creating their own pattern templates to either use for current productions or for future productions if the style that they desire is not available in a basic pattern. In this way, their creativity does not go wasted and their vision for their characters can be revitalized in a new way.

Notions. Another tool of the costume designer is the notions that they use to create their costumes. Notions are the small items attached to a piece of clothing to finish it such as buttons, clasps, zippers, etc. Notions can also include small tools that the

costume designer uses along the way such as marking pencils, pins, seam rippers, etc. Notions enable the costume designer to arrive at and complete their final product. Even when it comes to notions, however, special care must be taken as to what the costume designer decides to use. For example, some productions require quick changes between scenes where they need to change their current costume to another. If the actor is in a costume that has buttons all down it, the quick change could be near to impossible. However, if the costume designer has the forethought to use snaps or Velcro, the quick change is made easier and more possible.

Sewing machine, needle, and thread. Though very basic tools, in the hands of the costume designer, the sewing machine, needle, and thread literally hold together their costumes. Without these basic components, the spectacular displays of creativity that the costume designer is able to whip together would not be possible. Thus, even such a small tool can make a big difference in defining a character in a production through costume.

The Costume Plot

A costume plot is "a complete inventory… of everything that is required by the script and the designer for each character" (Emery, 1981, p. 4). In other words, it is the organization of all of the costume designer's work put into one document. It spells out every costume and accessory that is to be worn by each character of a production in each and every scene in an orderly chart.

When creating costumes for productions, it is not always easy to remember who wears what when and how they wear it. However, it is still the job of the costume designer to make sure that each and every actor has the correct number of costumes for the correct scenes in each production for which they design. Therefore, costume

designers use the costume plot to organize all of their work for the benefit of not only themselves, but also for the members of the production team whom it concerns and the actors who will be wearing the costumes.

The costume plot's function is to enable others to decipher through the myriad of costumes and accessories available and find the ones that are intended for each character. Without a costume plot, it would be very easy for the costume designer to forget how many costumes are required for each character due to various events occurring during the production such as day changes. It would also be very easy for part of a character's costume pieces or accessories to be forgotten. The costume plot is the dictionary defining each character's costume and as such lessens confusion backstage especially during the first few days of dress rehearsals. Last of all, when all is said and done, the costume plot helps to point out areas that the costume designer has forgotten to provide for in their definition of the characters through costume.

Costume plots vary from theater company to theater company. However, they have a basic structure that makes them recognizable despite their differences. Costume plots are arranged on a grid with scenes on one side and the characters of the production on another side. In each grid square, the character's costumes are numbered and recorded in order to show both the number of their costumes and at which point in the show that they will change. Quick changes are also recorded on costume plots in order to help the costume designer identify the costumes that must be made to suit them. This basic organization causes the costume plot to be a useful tool in the costume designer's hands.

Working with Cast and Crew

"Theater is a group art, and its highest expression comes through the combined efforts of a creative staff" (Paterek, 1959, p. 2). This quote explains how humans are able to best express their creativity as part of a group. Proverbs 15:22 says that "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed" (New International Version). In the world of theater, it is necessary that each member of the production team coordinate and cooperate with each other in order for the production to proceed smoothly and in order for it to bring the audience into the world of the theater and into the minds of the characters without a hitch. Specifically, the costume designer needs to work on the same time schedule as the rest of the team, which includes the director, the actors, and the other areas that are covered by the rest of the production team.

The Time Schedule

Each and every production has a time schedule to keep before and after the production actually starts. Strict adherence to this schedule enables the production team to use their areas of expertise to bounce ideas off of each other in order to produce the best that each member can.

The time schedule includes meetings that each of the heads of the team members are required to attend during which they discuss design details and hear the desires of the director for the production. Throughout the course of the numerous required meetings, there are due dates for the costume designer to follow. The costume designer must have the sketches in for approval by a certain time as well as the costumes prepared by technical week of the production in order for the actors to practice their parts in their costumes. This ensures that the costumes are prepared for the stage and that there are no

problems for the actors during their performance. Each of these steps within the time

schedule makes it possible for the costume designer's work to arrive at the best that it can

be in a time frame that enables the actor to benefit from the use of the costume.

The most important factor in the time schedule is technical week and the dress

rehearsals contained therein. During this time, the costume designer is able to really see

how their costumes both look and function. Because of this, they are able to redesign

pieces which require it or pull out and replace others. This is the last step between

creation and production. Therefore, it is a crucial moment to make sure between all of the

staff on the theater production that the costumes work both functionally and for the look

of the entire production itself.

The Director

"Every different director has another language" (Pak-Harvey, 2013, n.pag.). The

most important member of the production team is the director. The director has the final

say in everything that is produced by the members of the team. The director has the

power to cut any costumes that he or she so desires to but also encourages the creative

process of the team. Therefore, the costume designer must take into great consideration

the opinions of the director when designing and must remember that even the director is

not faultless or perfect in his decisions. An account from famed costume designer Earle

Luick proves this point:

> Not long ago, a director ordered some café dresses that we spent $250 apiece in
>
> turning out, and we were told, when we finished them, that the scene would
>
> require morning frocks instead, as it had been changed to take place before
>
> twelve. (Luick, 1933, p. 19)

Luick also makes light of the director's costuming opinions when he mentions that "when a director does not like a thing there is one way to silence him. Say 'You're silly. That's the latest thing from Paris'" (Luick, 1933, p. 21). However lighthearted this may seem, not taking into consideration the words of the director in regards to the costumes can lead to confusion and a need for the costume designer to rethink their entire character concept before proceeding again. Therefore, the costume designer must keep the director's concept and the director's specific instructions and desires for a production at the top of their list even within their realm of creativity in defining a character.

The Actors

Another factor that a costume designer must consider when designing is the silhouette of the actor that will be wearing the costume. According to Schrock (2013), "costumes should accentuate … instead of exposing… trouble spots" (p. 18). Since each and every person is shaped so differently from one another, it is important to realize how each and every fabric will drape on different bodily frames. For instance, a sleek silky fabric will show every curve of the body on which it hangs. For a slender woman this would not prove to be a problem. However, this fabric would not complement a shapely woman and would most likely not be used for such a woman even if she were to portray the same character as the slender woman.

Even beyond the silhouette, the costume designer must look at their actors and decide how to clothe them based on not just their shape, but also their looks in general. Color is highly important in defining a character; however, it is not meant to attract more attention than the character. Therefore, a costume designer must make sure that the color of the costume works with but does not distract from the wearer.

       The costume designer must also make sure that each "actors… [know] where to position their bodies to get into costume as well as to get back out" (Kuhn, 2010, p. 1). Without this knowledge, the actor's portrayal of his or her character could get skewed by their focus on understanding the garment rather than their role. At this point, the costume designer's work in defining the character through costume becomes negligible to the performance due to this distraction. Therefore, the costume designer should be careful to ensure that the actor knows his costume's ins and outs in order to keep in character and in order to allow both his and the costume designer's work to show through.

       Since theater productions are so varied in style, the costume designer must also take into account the type of production for which they are designing. When they are designing for a straight play, for instance, the designer's costumes can tend to be a little more rigid than if they were being used for a musical with numerous dance numbers. In other words, the actor must be able to move freely within their costume to the extent that the specific production requires. When it comes to musicals, the large dance numbers usually involved require a flexibility that other productions may not need. Attention to this detail is important to both the costume designer in the fact that the designer will have to repair less clothing and reproduce fewer costumes if they keep this in mind from the very beginning.

       When the costume designer finishes the garments for an actor, it is their chief desire that the garment will enable the actor to more easily adapt to the character. Before dress rehearsal, the actors may use various props, sets, and practice garments to get somewhat of a feel for their character and how their character would act in certain situations. However, when they are given their specific costumes for a production, they

get to see how the collaborative efforts of the costume designer with the director have

shaped their character in their own minds. Wearing the garments intended to exemplify

their character enables the actor to really hone in on their role and become one with it

more than they were capable of before. This is summed up by Sarah Kuhn (2010) in her

article *What Should Actors Know About Their Costumes?* when she says "I like to think

of a costume as an extension of the actor; they must work as one" (p. 1).

The Production Team

As only one part of the production team, the costume designer must remember

that there are others whose work affects their designs. These are the other members of the

production team and their work is just as important as the costume designer's work in

defining a character. Therefore, careful collaboration with every member of the team is

required especially in the areas of lights, sound, props, hair and makeup, choreography,

and set.

Lights. When considering the work of the lighting designer, the costume designer

must come to terms with how their fabrics will interact with the lights being used in a

production. No matter what a fabric looks like at the fabric store, it is a necessity that the

costume designer test the fabric color in the context in which it will be used. This is due

to metamerism which is defined as "when two colors match each other under one light

condition… but look different from each other in a different light" (Price & Cohen, 2012,

p. 169). This can also happen with only one fabric when it looks different in one type of

light than it does in another type of light. The effects of metamerism affect theater

productions in gigantic ways. Fabrics that are one color can look like they are a

completely different color under the lighting in a theater due to both the lighting and the

distance of the audience of the actual product. If a designer does not plan carefully, these effects could completely change their garment's desired look to something completely undesirable. The effects of metamerism are not the fault of the costume designer, but rather it is their responsibility to deal with them. In order to ensure that their interpretation of the character come through as he or she so desires, the costume designer must take the time to work with the lighting designer to test the fabrics that they are considering using for the costumes in order to make certain that the desired look is achieved.

Sound. Items like microphones require room within a costume in order to be concealed from the view of the audience. Therefore, the costume designer must also take into consideration the placement of the microphones on the actors and ensure that the necessary arrangements are made with the actor and the sound technician to enable the actor to be comfortable while wearing the microphone. Also, though microphone packs are strapped on underneath of costumes, they can cause a costume to bulk up in the area in which they are placed. Therefore, the costume designer must work to conceal this extra bulk in order that the desired silhouette is achieved.

Props. Props masters have the job of providing the objects required of the characters as prescribed by the script, the director, or the actors. These items can include guitar picks, kites, books, and much more. In creating these props, it is necessary for the props master to ensure that these props work with the costumes. For example, if a character in a play is required to play an instrument such as a cello in the production, their costume should reflect that by providing them the leg space to do so. Also, if one of the props is required to be on the character at some point, the costume designer must

know this in order to provide the necessary pockets in order to make this possible. This and many other ways is how the costume designer works with the props master.

Hair and Makeup. Another team that the costume designer must take into account is the hair and makeup team. In order to correctly portray the character, the costumes must match specifically the styles and color schemes that are used for both hair and makeup. Time period greatly affects the hairstyles and types of makeup used, but they must still match the costume that is worn. Therefore, the costume designer must plan for the makeup by making sure the colors and styles match each other. They must also plan for the hair pieces or styles used in order to determine hats, necklines of dresses, jewelry, and more. In planning this out, the costume designer helps to make sure that every element of the character comes out both accurate and believable.

Choreography. Though mainly concerned with the actors themselves, the work of the choreographer still greatly affects the work of the costume designer. The choreographer knows the range of movement that a character will be required to have in their costume as well as the needed durability of the fabrics for the costume as they will deal with a great amount of friction during the production and have to survive sweat stains during dance numbers and such. Without this information, a costume designer is subject simply to seeing the problems occur as the production is in dress rehearsal. However, with the information that the choreographer can provide, the costume designer can foresee potential problems and address them beforehand.

Set. Last of all, the costume designer must work with the set design in order to make sure that the actor is able to move freely throughout the set without constriction due to their costume. Therefore, the set designer must realize the constraints put on the actor

due to their costumes and the costume designer must realize the types of clothing that

would be apropos for the set provided. For example, if there is a staircase in the set that

the actor must either walk or run up or down, their range of movement and the length of

their dress must not keep them from accomplishing this. Throughout dress rehearsals, the

costume designer is able to determine if their costumes are constricting the actors and,

consequently, causing them to go out of character. With proper information from the set

designer, however, it is possible to avoid these problems and create costumes viable

within the set provided.

<p align="center">**Communicating with the Audience**</p>

The ultimate goal of the costume designer is to transform an ordinary person into

an extraordinary yet believable character set within a story that does not exist in reality.

"A costume speaks to the audience with words of silence" (Paterek, 1959, p. 2). Defining

the character in a play or movie is an attempt to communicate with an audience a specific

idea. The costume should be relevant to the time, feel, and character of the actor while

still remaining subtle enough to not steal the show itself: "Costumes are invaluable in

providing information to the audience about the story and the character being presented"

(Smith & Smith, 2012, p. 5).

The point of the costume is to be a part of the experience, sometimes bringing the

audience back thousands of years and sometimes bringing them to a futuristic society that

has not yet been realized. It is the goal of the designer to literally fabricate a new reality

for the audience in their definition of the character in all of the ways aforementioned.

Therefore, it is ultimately the culmination of deep research into a character and using the

correct tools in order to work with the entire production team that enables a costume

designer to accomplish their job in helping to create the masterpiece that is modern

theater.

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