



12 Costuming

In addition to establishing a time period, a costume reveals much about the personality of its wearer. Captain Hook's costume in *Peter Pan* indicates that Hook is proud, authoritarian, and vain.



The thing about performance, even if it's only an illusion, is that it is a celebration of the fact that we do contain within ourselves infinite possibilities.

—DANIEL DAY LEWIS, ACTOR

SETTING THE SCENE

Focus Questions

Why is effective costuming important to a good production?

What is color coding?

What is a costume parade?

What is the most important consideration in a period costume?

What is the key to believable period costuming?

How do you determine whether to rent, borrow, or make costumes?

How do you measure for costumes?

Vocabulary

color coding

swatch

costume parade

costume silhouette

costume plot

building

wardrobe manager

dressers



*C*ostuming is one of the integral parts of play production. The costume is not merely a means of characterizing a role as effectively as possible. In its color and silhouette, it is also a vital part of the total stage design. If the color of a costume is not in harmony with other colors on the stage or if it is not appropriate to the historical period of the play, it can destroy the atmosphere of the production, no matter how beautiful it may be in itself or how flattering it is to the actor. A wise director will therefore work very early in the planning stages of the production with the designer and the person in charge of costumes to be sure that each costume is appropriate in all respects.

Effective Costuming

*F*ROM THE PROS

"On the way to the wardrobe, I thought I would dress in baggy pants, big shoes, a cane and a derby hat. . . . When I entered [the hotel lobby set] I felt I was an impostor posing as one of the guests, but in reality I was a tramp just wanting a little shelter. I entered and stumbled over the foot of a lady. . . . Behind the camera they began to laugh. . . ."

—CHARLIE CHAPLIN,
ACTOR

A costume should express the personality of the character. It should reveal social status, tastes, and idiosyncrasies. It should aid the audience's understanding of the actor's relationship to the other characters and to the play itself. The costume may be in harmony with others onstage or in strong contrast to them. **Color coding**—matching characters by color or pattern—can provide a subtle means of identifying members of the same family, the same group, or pairs of lovers.

In any production, the effect of a costume on both the actor and the audience is what counts onstage. Since costuming is a part of the total design of a production, actors usually have little to do with the design of their costumes. The taste of the director and designer, not the actor, must govern the choice of material and color. Ultimately, the meaning of the play must control all costume decisions.

Often, in high school productions, which almost always have limited budgets, costumes are designed or rented only for period or stylized plays. For contemporary plays, student actors

These ancient Greek costumes are historically accurate, yet simple to make.



Medieval garb for both men and women of the upper class often included an elaborate headdress. These costumes are typical of 15th-century dress in Burgundy, now part of France.



are frequently asked to find something from their own wardrobes. This works if the student is portraying someone of the same age, personality type, social position, and so on, but this is rarely the case. For most plays, the actors' personal wardrobes cannot provide suitable costumes without some modifications. Ideally, then, all costumes should be designed or provided for all actors in all plays.

Inexperienced actors are usually reluctant to appear as anything but attractive on the stage, forgetting that the audience should react to the characters within the context of the play, not to the individuals playing the parts. No director will ever deliberately insist on unbecoming or ludicrous lines or colors unless they are necessary to the correct interpretation of the play. The psychological effect of being comfortably costumed, however, greatly assists an actor's work. Understanding the theories of costuming helps actors cooperate intelligently in wearing whatever is designed for them in their roles.

COSTUME DESIGN

The first step in costume design, as in all phases of theater production, is to study the play carefully. The costume designer should then meet with the director, scenic designer, and technical director to discuss costumes that will fit the theme, style, period, colors, scenery, lighting, and budget. Together they can then choose materials for costumes. Measurements of the cast should be taken and preliminary sketches should be made.

CUE

Long and flowing costumes can be a safety hazard. Designers should avoid them unless the play requires them. When such costumes are essential, actors should practice walking in clothing of the style.

The stripes, rigid shoulders, and detailed collars make these costumes identifiable as English Tudor dress from around 1530.



CUE

Ask the designer to modify your costume if you have any safety concerns. Make sure that your costume will not make you fall or overheat under hot lights. Masks should allow you to breathe easily and see clearly.

Before costumes are sewn, fabric samples, or **swatches**, should be tried under the lighting planned for the show. The lighting might be changed, however, and it is almost always the costumer who must make adjustments. Once the fabrics are selected, the costumes can be sewn and fitted. A wise costumer will have actors wear the costumes under the lights again before making the final fitting and adding the trim. This is called a **costume parade** and is part of the production schedule. Once each costume is completed, it should be checked one last time under the lights before the dress rehearsal.

When designing costumes for a historical or period play, keep in mind that a historically accurate costume is not always

Familiar details can subtly make period costumes seem less foreign to a modern audience. These actors' contemporary hairdos will add a familiar touch to their Restoration costumes from around 1660.



essential; it might even have a negative effect on the production. Authentic costumes, especially those that expose parts of the body, such as Egyptian, Greek, or Roman costumes, might make a particular actor uncomfortable. It is better to adapt the costume to the actor than to insist on historical correctness. Every historical or national costume has two or three identifying characteristics that are enough to give the impression of the era or geographical region. A collar, cape, belt, or hat may be all the audience needs to accept the costume as being of a given time and place. The addition of a few accessories such as jewelry, handkerchiefs, or gloves will make the costume seem complete.



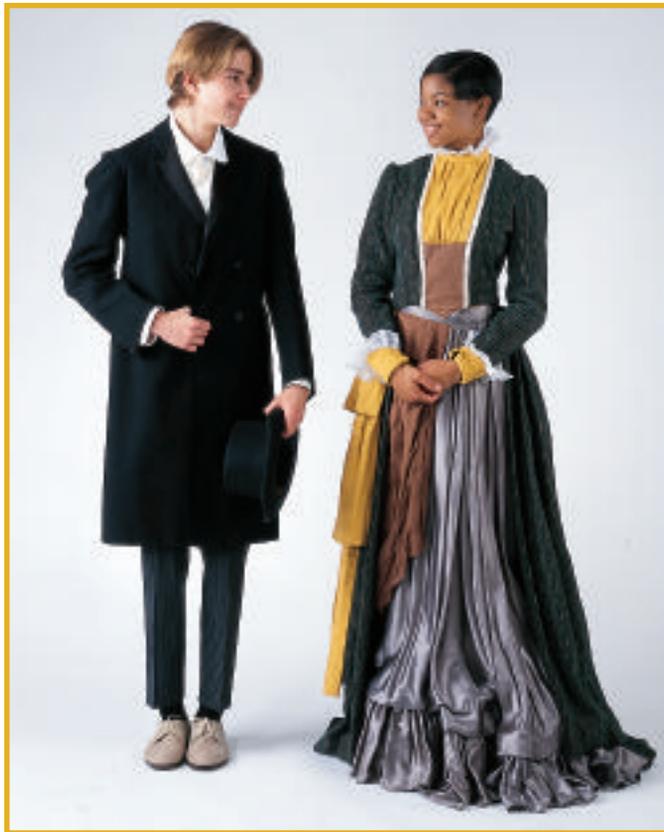
These Colonial American costumes are complete right down to the buckles on the man's shoes. They date from around 1775, or the late eighteenth century.

Attention to the complete effect is essential to a production. Inappropriateness in details such as shoes, hats, purses, fans, jewelry, and parasols can ruin the harmony of the design and mood of the play. Any masks, wigs, and hairpieces must also contribute to the total effect.

All accessories should be obtained as early as possible so that the actors can use them during rehearsals. If the real accessories are not readily available, actors should have appropriate substitutes. Several weeks of rehearsals are necessary for an actor to appear natural when using accessories such as opera glasses, a monocle, a sword, or a cane. When such accessories are added at the last minute, actors might look and feel awkward. They might also discover that their well-rehearsed stage movements no longer work. For example, an actor who will be wearing a costume with a wide hoop skirt might not be able to maneuver through narrow passages; nor will she be able to get close to another person or object without the back of the hoop tipping up embarrassingly. If the hoop skirt is not available during rehearsals, a hoop alone might be used to create the same effect.



The time period from the late eighteenth century through the mid-nineteenth century (about 1850) is characterized by a wide range of clothing, from the formal attire shown in the two photos here to the fur hats and buckskins worn by traders.



Simplicity of both design and color characterize these 1890s costumes.



These costumes from 1905 feature a straw boater and a cane for the man, a hat and short cape for the woman.

When designing costumes for a cast of characters, costumers should remember that not everyone follows the dictates of fashion. While some people dress in the height of fashion, others continue to dress in styles from previous years or choose classic styles that change very little over a period of years. There are those who wear offbeat, unusual, or bizarre clothing that suits their nonconformist personalities. There are still others whose economic status does not allow for a new wardrobe every time the styles change. Accordingly, play characters who are old-fashioned, conservative, offbeat, or eccentric should be dressed in costumes that reflect their characteristics.

COSTUMERS' CONSIDERATIONS

- the kind of action that will take place
- the comfort of the actors
- the ease with which a costume can be put on and taken off, especially when costume changes are necessary
- the durability of the design and fabric
- the historical period of the play
- the total design of the production
- the director's conceptualization of the play

By 1910 women's dress had begun to reflect the influence of the automobile; silhouettes were much simpler and skirts shorter, to facilitate gracefully entering and exiting a car.



The total design of the play determines whether the costumes should be stylized. Some period plays adapt well to modern dress. Formal attire (tuxedos and evening gowns) can be worn for many plays, particularly classical tragedies. Flowing robes, mosaic patterns, or variations in black and white fabrics may also be used for certain stylized plays.

Application ACTIVITY

You are the costumer of an American play set in the present. In this play, two young people from totally different backgrounds meet and become friends. For each of the following characters, draw or describe a complete costume that would help the audience recognize the character's personality traits. If you choose to draw the costumes, label the different elements of your design. Assume the teenage characters are your age.

- teenage girl
- teenage boy
- the girl's grandmother
- the boy's father

CUE

A costume may become more comfortable as you develop a better understanding of how the costume contributes to your character's personality. However, if a costume still feels uncomfortable after several rehearsals, speak to the director about modifying the costume so that you feel more at ease onstage.

APPROPRIATENESS

Each historic period has its own distinctive line and form in dress, which is called the **costume silhouette**. Look carefully at the silhouettes in this chapter, and notice that each period has its own characteristics. If a costume does not recreate the basic silhouette of the period, it is not effective, no matter how beautiful or elaborate it might be. The cut along with the style and material must be appropriate to the social background and period of the play. This is a very important principle.

Small details become important onstage. For example, long skirts are more graceful than short ones, especially when the actor is seated. Draped scarves and stoles are very effective if they are skillfully handled. Trimming, to be noticed, must be somewhat conspicuous. Lapels and pockets may be outlined with trim so that they can be distinguished from the jacket.



The 1920s marked a drastic change in fashion. Women's hemlines now displayed not only ankles but also calves for the first time, and hip-level sashes were often worn.



Compare this woman's costume from the 1930s and the woman's costume from the 1920s. The 1930s dress is much more conservative.



By the 1940s, women had begun to enter the workplace in greater numbers, and their clothes reflected that fact.

On the stage, certain problems of dress are also intensified. To avoid problems, an actor should check his or her appearance in a full-length mirror at a distance to get a proper perception of how he or she will

appear onstage. The director should observe every costume from various parts of the auditorium. Costumes should fit well and bring out the best physical characteristics of the actor—unless a particular role dictates otherwise. It takes time in rehearsal to make a different style of clothing feel natural. The actor must not be self-conscious in the costume if it is to look authentic. Sometimes high school performers “pull back” in their roles because they feel ill at ease in their costumes. A director must be sensitive to the feelings of the actors and not ask that they wear costumes that might make them feel embarrassed or uncomfortable.

No matter how appropriate the costume, the actor must learn to wear the costume properly. He or she must seem natural and at ease, knowing the maximum stretch or reach allowable, how to turn and sit, and how to remove scarves and gloves or snap a fan.

COLOR, LINE, AND MATERIAL

Costume designers must treat every character in a play as an individual. Each character’s costume must somehow reflect that character’s station in life, personality, idiosyncrasies, or philosophy. At the same time, all the costumes in a play must go with each other in basic design. The color, line, and material of the costumes all contribute to this basic design.



In *Beauty and the Beast*, the color, line, and material of the Beast's costume suggests that there is more to this character than one might have expected of an animal—such qualities as style, elegance, wealth, and taste.

Costumes for contemporary comedies, farces, children's plays, and fantasies are normally made of light material in bright or pastel colors. Restoration comedy calls for costumes made of satins, laces, and brocades, and the costumes usually exemplify an overemphasis on style as much as the characters themselves do. High comedy often deals with characters of taste and social grace; costumes for these fashionable characters require careful selection of color and material and also special attention to line.

In realistic plays, designers can use almost any material that will create costumes suitable for the characters' personalities and for the overall stage picture. In symbolic and allegorical plays, audiences tend to assume that the costumes are part of the symbolic meaning of the play. Therefore, extra thought should be given to the fabric, texture, and pattern of costumes for these types of plays.

The color of a costume has a lot to do with how the audience responds to a character. A pale yellow will make an actor appear young and light in spirit. Maroon suggests martyrdom and suffering. Refer to the list on page 422 for additional emotional values of colors.

▼ CUE

Costumes for tragedies are usually made from heavy materials in muted or dark colors in order to convey the desired somber effect to the audience.

The costumes for *Starlight Express* utilize a variety of materials that include padding and roller skates.



In general, blondes should wear cool colors, with touches of warm color contrast, and delicate designs and materials. Dark-haired performers should wear warm colors; they can risk brilliant fabrics and stronger color contrasts. Ordinarily redheads should emphasize their coloring by wearing yellow, orange, green, and golden brown.

Designers must keep the individual actor's body shape in mind when creating a costume. Garment lines should harmonize with those of the body without constriction or exaggeration. The following chart shows costume features that can affect the appearance of a character onstage.

Costume features that slenderize	Costume features that add weight
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • long, vertical lines in costumes, hair styles, and hats • black, dark, muted colors • subtle patterns • non-lustrous materials • dark velvet (absorbs light; takes off pounds) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • horizontal lines in costumes (especially at the shoulder), hair styles, and hats • white or light colors • bold patterns • light, glossy materials such as satin • long clinging skirts, high hats, and V-necks

Stage lighting is another important consideration when selecting costume fabrics. Prints must be carefully tested; stage lights turn small or pale patterns into an undefined mass of color, which may create a grotesque effect. Texture not only determines the outline of the costume but also

COSTUME PLOT FOR:							
CHARACTER	SCENE	COSTUME DESCRIPTION	MEAS. CARD	1ST FITTING	COMPLETE	OUT	IN
JULIE (CINDY PHELPS)	I, i	BLUE CHECKED GINGHAM PINAFORE W/WHITE BLOUSE AND WHITE APRON. WIDE BRIMMED STRAW HAT. WHITE PARASOL	✓	✓	✓	✓	
"	I, ii	LT. GREEN COTTON BLOUSE WITH PUFFED SLEEVES. PINK SKIRT W/BUSTLE. BLACK PURSE		✓	✓	✓	

This form can be expanded to include columns for type, amount, and cost of materials.

contributes to the effects of a material under the lights. Heavy or soft materials, such as velvet, burlap, cheesecloth, and flannel, react well under stage lighting; these more inexpensive materials often appear richer than many costly fabrics. Drapery material and even carpeting have been used for costumes for this very reason. Knitted materials drape beautifully and cling to the figure, emphasizing lines.

Oilcloth, cardboard, plastics, rubber sheeting, felt, and other similar materials, including the special plastic molding materials now available, can be used for trim, accent features, and appliqués. All sorts of familiar materials can be utilized in creating bizarre or unusual outfits.

A **costume plot** should include every costume in the production. It should describe the colors, fabrics, and accessories for each design. Ruled columns placed next to the items in the costume description can be used to check off each listed task as it is completed. Such plots help assure that the costumes are ready before dress rehearsals.

Application ACTIVITY

Working in groups of three or four, select a familiar play. It might be a contemporary comedy, a Shakespearean tragedy, a farce, or any other play. Decide on the personality traits of the main characters in the play. Then create a fabric book containing swatches of cloth that show the colors, patterns, and textures you would choose for each character's costume. The swatches can be glued or stapled to the pages of the fabric book.

Obtaining the Costumes

One of the first problems a costume manager faces is deciding whether the costumes are to be rented, borrowed, adapted from thrift store clothing, or made. This decision must be made in time for the costumes to be collected with a minimum of effort and expense.

RENTING OR BORROWING COSTUMES

If you decide to rent costumes, be careful. Rented costumes are very expensive. Many costume companies will not have what you want or all that you need when you need it. Be particularly cautious when suppliers say they do not have quite what you requested but will fix you up with something just as appropriate.



Modern productions such as *Godspell* often do not require intricate costuming. In fact, many of the costumes for this production can be created by the actors themselves, using simple leotards as a base and adding details from thrift stores such as collars, suspenders, and hats.

If you send out of town for costumes, be prepared for a few surprises when the costumes arrive. The first surprise may be that the costumes do not fit properly. This is usually due to inaccurate measurements. The costume manager needs to know what measurements to take and how to take them. The diagram on page 497 provides instructions on how to measure for proper costume fit. Some costume houses will send costumes that are in poor condition. Substitutions are common; accessories may not be what you expect; and the use of interchangeables—such as using the same hat for several purposes simply by changing the identifying trim or badge—can result in a sameness you did not anticipate. Period boots and shoes should be part of the complete costume. Many costume houses send boot covers to be worn over regular shoes. Boot covers make poor substitutions for boots because they do not look natural when an actor walks. Also, boot covers make dancing almost impossible. Wigs are usually considered part of a rented period costume. “Perforated” wigs made of human or animal hair are much preferred to cloth-based synthetic wigs. Only when you deal with very large firms can you hope to get the footwear, wigs, colors, or patterns that you need. Otherwise, you take what they have.

One of the chief drawbacks of rented costumes is that they might be available for only one dress rehearsal or at most for only forty-eight hours prior to the first performance without additional charge. Most costume houses charge an additional fee for each performance day after the opening night. Some, however, will quote a flat rate per week including dress rehearsals and performances. Rental costumes are never available for publicity photos unless you rent them for that purpose. This can be done only if you are dealing with a local company. In general, all costume orders should be placed well in advance of dress rehearsal and performance dates. This means that measurements must be taken shortly after casting. Before committing yourself to a costume house, check to find out how far in advance orders must be placed. Your schedule might not allow for ordering from costumers too far away.

With so many reasons against renting, does renting make sense? It frequently does because appropriate costumes can enhance the overall quality of a production. Formal evening dress (especially in period styles), military or ceremonial uniforms, unusual national costumes, medieval armor, and certain special properties such as muskets, raccoon coats, tiaras, and top hats are often unobtainable from any other source.

If you do rent, often it is best to deal with a large firm or, better still, two reliable companies. The choice of costumes of an individual company for certain historical periods is usually limited, and you do not want your



CUE

Some leading costume houses can provide you with costumes actually worn in the Broadway production of a play. Such elaborate, expensive costumes are normally far beyond the budget of most high school productions, however.



Preliminary sketches of costumes should suit the play's theme, style, period, colors, scenery, lighting, and budget.



audiences to tire of seeing the same costume over and over again. If at all possible, the director, designer, and costume manager should go to the costume company personally to select the costumes to be used. If you do not rent, there is always the temptation to take the easiest, cheapest route, which usually means making numerous substitutions or using apparel completely unsuitable for the play.

Having the members of the cast buy or borrow their own costumes might seem to be the simplest method of costuming a production, but it seldom is. It is very difficult to obtain garments that will achieve the planned and desired effect, even those that at first seem easy to get. In period plays, suitable costumes lent by generous friends are apt to be valuable and fragile, and no assurance can be offered that they will not be soiled or torn. Makeup stains that will not come out, delicate lace that is snagged, and materials that disintegrate under the strain of a performance are hard to explain to the owner of such treasured heirlooms. If a play calls for modern costumes, borrowing might be a possibility. If you must borrow costumes, treat them carefully.

On the positive side, when actors borrow or buy their own costumes, there is little or no cost other than the cleaning of the borrowed costumes. As previously mentioned, it is not easy for students to look older in their own clothes, and seldom do the wardrobes of character and actor match. Also, the actor might be especially careful with a purchased costume or one that belongs to a friend or relative.

FROM THE PROS

"One needs to do a fair amount of breaking down—hanging costumes up soaking wet, with rocks in the pockets and so on, and working in a little imperceptible wear and tear here and there, just to make it all look lived-in."

—TONY WALTON,
COSTUME DESIGNER
FOR *A FUNNY THING
HAPPENED ON THE
WAY TO THE FORUM*

Application ACTIVITY

Look through the phone book, and make a list of costume houses. Then call two or three places to find the following information:

- types of costumes available
- rental fees for a full production
- how the company rents (by day, week, month)
- how far in advance an order must be placed
- if the company will deliver and pick up the costumes
- charges for damaged or lost articles

MAKING YOUR OWN COSTUMES

Building is the term that costumers use for making costumes. It almost always is preferable to renting and borrowing. The cost of making costumes might be about the same as, and sometimes a little more than, the rental fee; however, the major difference is that in the end you have exactly what you want and welcome additions to the costume wardrobe, rather than just a high bill for costumes that must be returned.

CUE

A wardrobe room is essential for making, storing, and caring for costumes. If your school does not already have a wardrobe room, work with classmates to establish one. Stock the wardrobe room with costumes, accessories, materials, and other necessary supplies. Spread the word around the school and community for items you could use to establish a well-stocked wardrobe room.

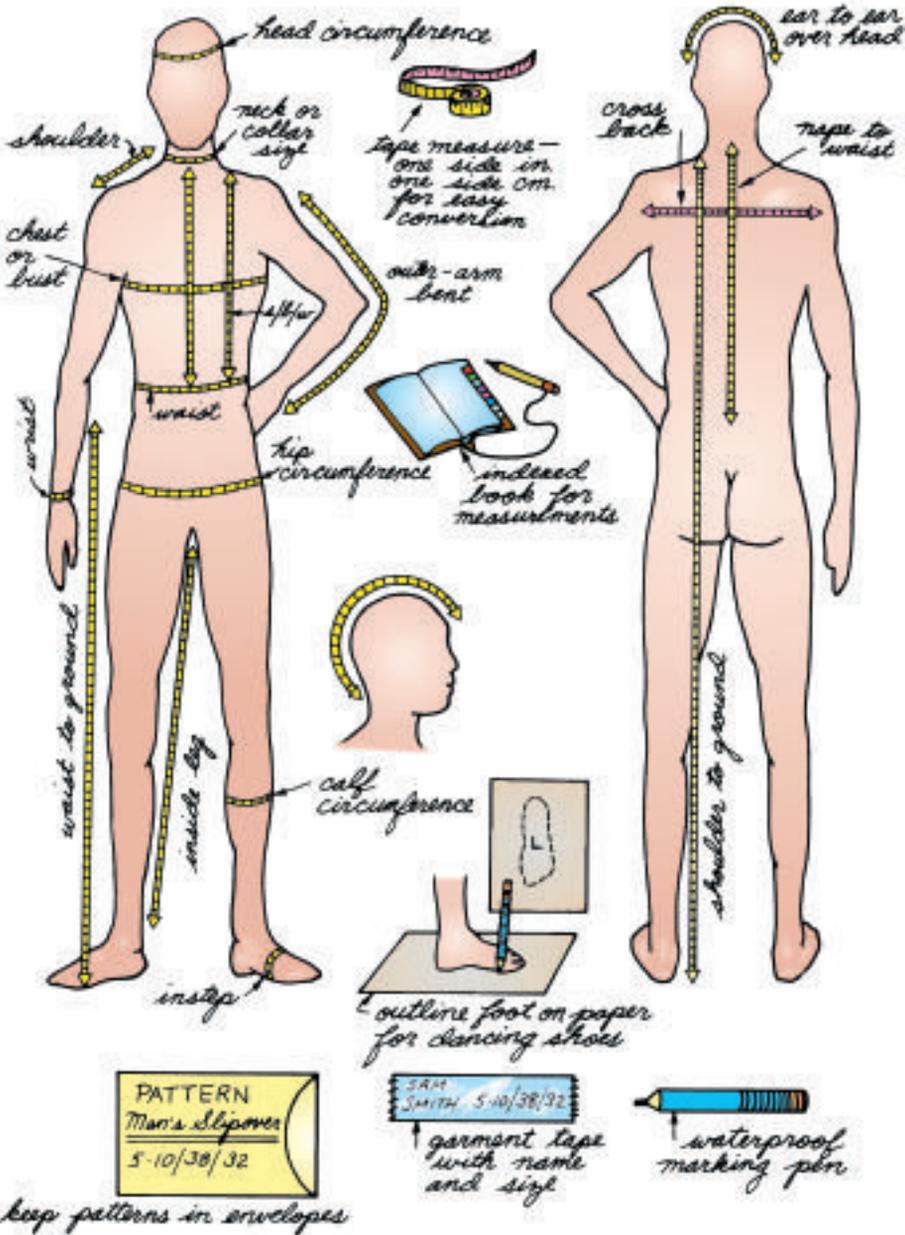
There are other good reasons for building. Those students who design and make the costumes gain valuable experience and have the pride and satisfaction of seeing the part a good costume plays in creating an effective stage picture. A more uniform pattern for the play in both color and line is possible, and the costumes are made to fit individual actors. Both the costumer and the actor take a personal interest in this facet of production, and can develop a mutual respect for each other's contribution to the play. It is exciting for the designer, as well as a relief to the publicity director, to have the actual costumes available for publicity photos. It means that the publicity director can set up a poster featuring real scenes from the play.

When you are ready to make costumes, individual sketches and costume plots should include notes on the kind, amount, and cost of materials. Dyeing material creates a more satisfactory and unified costume scheme. However, it requires skill in a complex activity, a place for dyeing, and people willing to work until the job is completed. Before the dyeing is done, patterns should be cut to the exact measurements of the actors and be approved by the director, scenic designer, and actors. When all material has been dyed and checked under the lights, it may be cut from the patterns and sewn together.

IMPORTANT MEASUREMENTS

- For women
height, bust, waist, hips (approximately seven inches below natural waistline), back of neck to waist, waist to shoe tops, across back from shoulder to shoulder, and arm length from top of shoulder to wrist
- For men
height, chest, waist, inseam, back of neck to waist, across back from shoulder to shoulder, collar size, and arm length from top of shoulder to wrist

TAKING MEASUREMENTS





The costumes of the quintet that make up the chorus in *A Little Night Music* work with the scenery to project the desired effect: one of blending together while still maintaining each person's individuality.

CUE

When old clothes are used for costumes, make sure that they have been thoroughly washed or dry cleaned, for safety's sake.

The completed garments must be strong enough to stand the strain of rehearsals and performances, but they do not necessarily require elaborate, ornamental sewing. Pinking edges and basting rather than stitching are quite acceptable for much of costume making. Details, such as a row of buttons, are usually nonfunctional or “dumped” in order to save sewing time and facilitate quick changes. **Velcro™**, strips of material that adhere to each other instantly when pressure is applied, can replace unreliable zippers and can allow for the fast removal of costumes. Costumes for dancers need extra material or stretch material under the arms for greater freedom of movement. For that matter, all costumes should be built with extra material in seams, darts, and hems so that the costume can be altered for another actor in the future. Do not build a costume that will fit only one person if you plan to use it again.

Never overlook the possibility of making over old clothes or revamping old costumes. Thrift stores are often gold mines for old clothes that can be altered into costumes. It is a good practice to save fabric remnants for trim or accessories or for additions to a costume of the same material at a later date. Men's old suits can be cut and remade into cutaways without a great amount of work. Even beautiful hats can be made from a few materials, a little imagination, ten minutes in the library, and considerable patience.

The main emphasis in costume planning should be on the total effect as seen from the auditorium. A costume cannot be judged by its design alone. The costume must be observed in action onstage with the correct scenery and lighting. Costume design and construction are challenging, but the effort is rewarded by the achievement of an artistic production.

Caring for Costumes

After the costumes have been obtained, they must be cared for during rehearsals and performances. A competent **wardrobe manager** should be chosen. The wardrobe manager will keep a costume plot as shown on page 491 and will choose responsible assistants in all the dressing rooms. Assistants, called **dressers**, help the actors with their changes, hang up clothes, keep all accessories close at hand, and see that everything is returned in good condition after the performance. The wardrobe manager sees that every costume is complete, in good repair, and identified by character and actor. Actors should have a designated place for their costumes, such as costume racks marked by tags or dividers. The wardrobe manager checks with the cast for problems that might have developed with zippers, rips, and the like, keeping needle and thread and a few handy supplies like hooks and eyes, buttons, Velcro™, and elastic on hand during all performances. An ironing board, steam iron, spray starch, and a glue gun should also be readily available.

After the performance all borrowed clothing should be dry-cleaned or washed before being returned to the owner. Also, the wardrobe manager should see that all school costumes are cleaned and stored. However, before any costume is returned or stored, it should be checked carefully for any needed repairs. After almost every production, some costumes will need to be repaired or, in extreme cases, replaced. Some makeup, powder, spirit gum, and nail polish are almost impossible to remove. Torn fabrics can seldom be mended satisfactorily. The cost of any repairs or replacements should be included in the budget. Each actor and the costume director must personally see that every costume, accessory, and all property is returned in the condition in which it was received.

Application ACTIVITIES

1. Work with a partner to compare the costs of renting, buying, or building costumes. First select a play; then, using a chart, list the main characters, their costumes, and the cost of each option for obtaining the costumes.
2. Make a checklist of a wardrobe manager's and an actor's costume responsibilities. Display the poster in your wardrobe room.

CUE

Dressing rooms should be covered with paper if long trains or fine materials are worn. Protruding nails, unexpected steps, low ceilings, and other backstage hazards should be eliminated or clearly identified.



CHAPTER

12

REVIEW

Summary and Key Ideas

Summarize the chapter by answering the following questions.

1. What can a costume reveal about a character?
2. What is color coding? How is it used for character identification?
3. When in the production schedule should a costume parade take place?
4. When could the attempt to create historically accurate costumes have a negative effect on a production?
5. What is a costume silhouette? Why must it be accurate for costumes to be effective?
6. List the important measurements for men and women.
7. What are the positive and negative aspects of renting costumes?
8. What are the major benefits of building your own costumes?

Discussing Ideas

1. Costume designers recognize that styles change over time. Discuss styles that have been popular during the last five years.
2. Discuss the problems you might encounter in your own school if you chose to rent costumes. Decide if renting would be practical.
3. Discuss the feasibility of building your own costumes for a production. How would you proceed? Whose help could you seek?

FOCUS ON

Period Clothing

Learning about period clothing can give you insight into the lives of people in different cultures and eras. Clothing reveals much about an era's material conditions, social divisions, and values.

Evaluating Costumes Using the Internet as a launching point, do research into the clothing people wore in the United States at the time of the Civil War. Then watch at least two movies, television shows, or live plays set during that time. With a partner, discuss the role that costumes played in each production. Were the costumes historically accurate? Did

the costumes make the productions more believable? Did the costumes enhance other elements of the productions, such as the acting? Write a brief summary of your discussion.

Exploring Careers From what you've learned, how important do you think it is for a costume designer to understand the history of clothing? What else might designers need to understand? Do research to learn about the training that costume professionals typically receive. Share your discoveries in a short presentation to the class.

REVIEW WORKSHOP

COSTUMING

INDEPENDENT ACTIVITY

Show, Don't Tell Costuming serves multiple purposes in a play. In addition to indicating the historical period, the clothing that a character wears can illustrate his or her age, social status, occupation, and state of mind. Costuming may also indicate a character's relationships with others and may reinforce the dramatic tension in the play. Keeping

these things in mind, choose a period play and imagine that you are the costume designer. Decide what costumes the cast will need and how the costumes should look. You might want to make sketches of some or all of the costumes. Suggest colors, fabrics, and accessories for the costumes you design. Then create a costume plot for the cast. Some of the plays that you may want to consider include *The Tempest*, *Tartuffe*, *The Octoroon*, *The Three Sisters*, and *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

Cooperative Learning Activity

Representational Costuming

With a group of your classmates, choose a modern play that interests you, such as Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*, Bertolt Brecht's *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, Eugène Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano*, or Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming*. Read the play aloud together and discuss the conflict, characters, atmosphere, and theme. The group should choose a specific scene to dramatize, and each person should choose a character to portray. Without discussing costuming, group members should bring to class several articles of clothing and accessories that represent their characters and aid in their characterization. Discuss each article's suitability, and present a "dress rehearsal" for the rest of the class.

Across the CURRICULUM Activities

Sewing/Tailoring Your drama class is planning to do a production of *My Fair Lady* for the local

elementary schools. Because some actors will have to play dual roles, as both Cockney men and women and ladies and gentlemen at Ascot, the director has asked you to come up with some ways in which costume changes can be accomplished with a minimum of effort and expense. Design a basic costume that can be used for these two different roles with only minor additions or subtractions.

History Building authentic-looking yet practical and comfortable historical costumes is a goal of costume designers. Do some research into the clothing styles of your favorite period in history. Then make some suggestions on how to achieve authenticity as well as practicality. Accompany your suggestions with sketches or a model.