

POLICY NUMBER: 6.10	DATE ADOPTED: Draft
POLICY TYPE: Job Descriptions	DATE AMENDED:
POLICY TITLE: Costumes	

Costumes

Accountability

The Costume Designer is accountable to the Director and works within the terms of the Costume budget. Others on the costume team work under the supervision of the Designer.

Types of Productions

Different types of production make different demands on the costume department.

Small Costume Show

- Up to about 10 – 15 complete costumes
- Modern time frame – 1940's +
- Some of the costumes can be found in our costume room, other theatres' costume rooms, thrift shops, or purchased new.

Large Costume Show

- More than 20 complete costumes
A musical or pantomime, where most of the costumes are very specific – most if not all will need to be made.

Period Costume Show

- Any number of costumes
- History of costume research required
- Historical period costume patterns need to be purchased or drafted
- Historical fabrics need to be researched and acquired
- Historical construction methods may need to be used in building the costumes.

Costume Crew

Costume Designer is needed for all productions. For many plays, this person needs knowledge of fashion, history of fashion, understanding of the purpose of a theatrical costume and how it relates to the play. It is an asset to have sufficient drawing skill to communicate design ideas to the director.

Costume Patternmaker is needed for a large or historical play type (might be the costume designer). For a large cast musical or pantomime, this person is:

- able to alter commercial patterns and adapt them to realize the director's concepts.
- able to obtain an accurate fit to costumes.
- able to work directly with the sewers in constructing the costumes

For a period costume play:

- has the ability to draft historical patterns from a picture and cut fabric to realize the accuracy of the designer's concepts
- is able to obtain an accurate fit
- is able to work directly with the sewers in constructing the costumes

Seamstress(es) needed for all productions. For a smaller cast modern-day play (1940 to present), the seamstress is able to do alterations on present-day clothes or construct present day clothes from a commercial pattern. For a large cast musical or pantomime the individual is a good sewer and is able to adapt a commercial pattern and possibly sew with more difficult fabrics. For a historical costume play, is able to take the fabric pieces and put together the costumes using theatrical/historical techniques with no written instructions. (*This is not for the beginner home sewer.*)

Dresser is required during the run of some plays to deal with quick changes and general maintenance of the costumes, i.e. repair and cleaning. The Dresser is able to sew and mend costumes and has access to laundry facilities. *If the dresser does not have these abilities then they must find others to work with them who are able to do these things.*

Depending on the number of actors, number of costumes, style of the play (historical, modern, fantasy etc.), desire, time commitment and skills of the persons interested in the 'costume' position, many of these jobs can be combined.

Pre-planning

The size of the task is determined and the nature of costume crew is identified – costume designer, patternmaker, etc. The costume designer is directly responsible to the director.

Planning

For the costume designer:

1. Read and understand the play. Make notes of specific costume changes or reference from the script.
2. Discuss with the director, set designer, and lighting designer as to interpretation, style and mood of the play.
3. Discuss specifically with the director as to interpretation, style mood and basic concepts of the costumes.

4. Plan how many costumes will be needed. Prepare sketches or pictures 'mockups' of designs of costumes. (These sketches will reflect the 'ideal' – as if you had all the time and money in the world.)
5. With Theatre Costume Mistress see what is available to use in our costume room. If you find items there, adjust sketches and plans accordingly. Other equipment available in costume room: jewelry, hats, footwear and purses.
6. Check other costume sources. Other theatre groups are Asparagus (Armstrong), Powerhouse (Vernon), Caravan Farm Theatre, Theatre Kelowna, Actors' Studio Kelowna, Shakespeare Kelowna
7. At this point a costume budget can be determined.
How many costumes are already available (rented) \$
How many can be begged or borrowed \$
How many can be purchased from thrift stores \$
How many will be purchased new \$
How many will have to be made (this will involve costing out the fabric and notions for each costume) Present this outline to your producer so an accurate budget can be established. This must be done ASAP (within first week or even prior to auditions). At this point final costume sketches can be prepared to reflect any adjustments to fit within the budget. Check these final drawings with the director.
8. On each costume sketch, mark where each costume piece is coming from including accessories (e.g. borrow, buy, make). At this point you will have a very specific idea of the number and ability of the costume crew required for the job.
9. Check with the producer about purchasing methods and make the costume crew aware of these methods (Charge at Fabricland; elsewhere – pay and be reimbursed).
10. Prepare a costume plot chart using a grid system sketching each character's costume in the appropriate place according to scene or French scene (a scene within a scene).
11. Timeline chart – from the Google calendar that has all the dates for everything to do with the play, make a production chart of costume due dates e.g. rehearsal costumes needed, costume parade, first technical rehearsal etc.

Working

1. Begin this process by having a play reading with the whole costume crew so they will all know what they are doing and why. This can often be done in conjunction with the cast reading of the whole script.
2. Measure the actors.
3. Obtain necessary rehearsal costumes as soon as possible from the costume room or Thrift shop. (Rehearsal costumes that are similar in style to the final costume, e.g. long skirt, short skirt, dress shoe, high heeled shoes, suit, jacket, overcoat, hat, additional stuffing etc.) As rehearsals progress the costume

coordinator designer should be told of costume needs that may come up during rehearsals, so keep asking about this.

4. Collect chosen costumes from the costume room, leaving a list for the costume mistress. Begin the search and buy other costumes needed. Generally, actors are responsible for their own underwear, socks, pantyhose, unless the play requires specifics. If so it is most often easier to have the actor buy these and be reimbursed.
5. For a large sewing costume play begin by searching out the fabric stores and buying. Work the costume fittings in and around the rehearsals. A rehearsal schedule is always posted on the Google Calendar on our website.
6. When costumes are ready they may be introduced into the rehearsal process, as the director will then get a feel as to the costumes instead of seeing them all on the first technical rehearsal. However, make sure that this will not abuse the costumes.
7. Attend appropriate rehearsals as time permits. The sewers should sit in on the odd rehearsal and get a feel for how the costumes look.
8. Attend all production meetings called by the producer.
9. Have dressers available as requested for rehearsals.
10. During technical rehearsals (the last week before opening) be present to receive notes from the director and take notes for your own use.
11. Arrange for an adequate number of dressers and make sure they are aware of their duties.
 - Costume maintenance – repairing, laundering, and pressing before each show.
 - Backstage changes – where and when these take place – be sure actors are aware of how these are done. Sometimes they need ‘practice time’.
12. Arrange for adequate storage of costumes in the dressing room.

Run

Once the show is running, the job of the costume designer, patternmaker and seamstress is complete, although they may choose to become the dressers or running crew.

1. Make actors aware that there is to be NO eating, drinking or smoking in costume. There may be smocks made available to cover costumes during intermission. The actor should wear no costume piece home.
2. Regular costume maintenance must be done – repairing, laundering, and pressing before each show. Things can happen to costumes during the play and there needs to be someone to look after emergencies.
3. Ensure that actors know that their costumes and accessories must be accounted for in their proper places after every show.

Strike

After the play, everything must be put back where it was found.

All costumes must be taken to the drycleaners or home to be laundered and then returned immediately to the theatre costume room, costume rental companies, and the individuals who loaned costumes. Shuswap Theatre has an account with Family Dry Cleaners so when taking costumes in to be cleaned make sure they realize it is from Shuswap Theatre. The cleaning expense will be part of your budget. (Be sure to collect these items from the drycleaners when they are ready.) Any purchased or 'built' costumes will go to Shuswap Theatre's Costume Mistress.

Submit final expenses to the producer with all receipts and bills as soon as possible.