FIGURE 8.1 *The Witch and Rapunzel from leading UK contemporary dance company balletLORENT's* Rapunzel, *which toured the UK to much acclaim in 2012–2015. (Costume design by Michele Clapton. Photo by Ravi Deepres.)*

CHAPTER 8

SHOW BUSINESS: NO ONE CALLS IT "SHOW ART"

Holly Poe Durbin

THE INFLUENCE OF COSTUME DESIGN

Many people encounter the power of wearing costumes for the first time without knowing it: playing some form of make-believe. It is natural for children to imitate what they see, creating their own costumes with items at hand. In the contemporary world the first characters and images they see are some form of media entertainment. Children first imitate their media heroes with logo clothing, character kits, and Halloween costumes. Most traditional Halloween "guising" costumes came to North America with European immigrants in the early 1900s and at that time emphasized the holiday's folk origins in devils, ghosts, and monster costumes. These early Halloween costumes were made at home using simple found elements. In the 1930s American companies began mass producing costumes for sale in stores as trick- or-treating swept the country. Children drifted away from folk characters in which they no longer really believed, switching to favorite characters from comic strips, radio, and movies.

The first film costumes to be licensed were Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* characters,[1] and this trend has grown stronger in the current media-saturated culture. It is testament to the imaginative power of effective characters and costumes—people want to identify with unforgettable characters. The phenomenon is also proof of the great powers in American retailing. Trend studies of Halloween costumes show that by the 1990s, increasing numbers of costumes were sold to adults, and Halloween ranked second only to Christmas as an economic marketplace. The National Retail Federation noted that, in 2014, over two-thirds of Halloween celebrants wore some sort of costume and total spending on all Halloween goods sailed past the $7 billion mark.[2] Today, the vast majority of regular clothing for children includes some branded elements or references to entertainment persona, some even including wings, princess dresses, or full superhero garb available for everyday wear. Beginning in the 1980s, a large percentage of the American adult clothing market also included some marking identifying the wearer with an image—a sports team, a small jockey on a

FIGURE 8.2 *Two early cartoon characters illustrate fantasy characters used to market a persona. Richard Outcault's 1902 cartoon character Buster Brown became the official mascot of the Buster Brown Shoe Company. Clothing retailers subsequently called this style of suit a Buster Brown. His sister Mary Jane gave her name to the flat shoe with an instep strap. (Courtesy of Digital Comic Museum.)*

horse, or a fashion name. In the 2000s, this adult identification with media characters went one step further, allowing people to personally interact with their favorite media characters through imitation using cosplay and live action role playing (LARP). Clothing merchandising licensing creates billions of dollars in the United States alone, with Disney leading the way. In 2013 the Disney Consumer Products division launched fashion apparel for adults with Spanish retailers Mango and Zara featuring Disney and Marvel characters. These companies are banking, in no uncertain terms, on the communicative power of clothing to craft and present a character.[3]

Widespread familiarity with one form of costume is a double-edged sword for professional costume designers. Many of these everyday costume items are made very cheaply to compete in the mass market, or are the result of imaginative but amateur do-it-yourself projects. The average person has been conditioned to believe, therefore, that the costumes are hastily or poorly made with affordable retail fabrics and relatively little formal training. No other aspect of entertainment consistently competes with such a juggernaut of cheap materials and ideas. Yet the average person has done enough carpentry to know it requires skill and dangerous equipment; they would not touch electricity or design their own lighting; many cannot successfully operate their own computers, much less create complex automation or special effects. As a result, professional costume designers must extensively educate their producers and colleagues on what they do, and how much training and practice goes into creating an effective character and costume design.

The Costume Design Profession

One of the dichotomies of any creative work is the inevitable push and pull between producing creative work and staying in business long enough to present that work to an audience. Those two elements can sometimes seem like polar opposites, and they form the most basic challenge many creative organizations face. This need to mind the financial bottom line provides one of the oldest sentences in Hollywood, uttered to almost every beginner "They don't call it show *art*, kid. It's show *business*." There are famous stories of wildly original and creative people burning and crashing in the business, and producers can be extremely leery of creative geniuses who may be too expensive or disorganized to support. On the other hand, there are just as many—or more—examples of mediocre, formulaic shows guilty of "bottom line" thinking; proving that leadership by a committee of accountants can sap the creative life from any project.

> "Costume designers create and shape the characters alongside the actors. They also directly influence and shape the aesthetic of the movies with palette, print, and silhouette choices. I feel that the costume designer should start at the same time as the production designer. Usually these two department heads work closely together on the palette and visual tone of the movie."
>
> Sophie de Rakoff [4] from *Film Independent*

Costume designers must also find a balance between creativity and the extraordinary amount of organizational work and project management needed to complete a project. How do costume designers approach this? "Everyone finds their own way. You could ask that question of five of us, and each person will deal with it differently," explains costume designer Isis Mussenden,[5] whose work includes costume designs for *The Wolverine*, *Shrek* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. "You are, no matter what, the head of your department. You are responsible creatively and logistically to pull it off. That is your job."

Beginning a career seems mysterious to many beginning costume designers. How to break into the business? What aspect of the business is right? Like many professions, the entry-level jobs are key, and job applicants may have to be willing to go to the city or location where much of their desired industry is concentrated during summers, internships, and first jobs. Many jobs in the field are not advertised, so knowing *where* to look for those first positions is daunting. This chapter will discuss many aspects of the costume design profession so that early-career costume designers can expand their thinking about where to look for those first jobs.

Costume design itself does not have a central clearing house that operates across all levels, as does the American Medical Association. Instead, there are disparate unions, associations, and businesses that identify with their media type, such as film or theater. Costume design is one job *within* that larger practice. One example is the Themed Entertainment Association, a central entity for companies that create immersive or environmentally based entertainment. Companies that specialize in that style of work look for costume professionals with experience in themed entertainment, and the special requirements that those projects require. Those interested in special practices such as creating ballet costumes or theme park **walk-around** characters will have to work with established providers to learn the techniques from the ground up. There are certainly exceptions to this rule, such as star costume designers with a recognizable point of view. Producers *will* seek that particular designer to bring their

voice to a new project, regardless of medium or location. But the vast majority of costume designers work within the parameters of a specific practice, develop specialties, or cross between related areas such as many types of live theater, or film and TV, or live theater and themed entertainment. There are increasing exceptions to this rule, and the boundaries are getting thinner every year as technology redefines entertainment.

As with all professions, networking within each application is key. Broadway producers rarely call a designer based outside of New York out of the blue, unless they have a track record proving knowledge of the process, finished work that a producer can see, and a name that keeps popping up. A Los Angeles based producer, for instance, will rarely call a costume designer based in Memphis to give them a big break unless there is a pre-existing connection through colleagues that vouch for the designer. Thanks to the proliferation of regional and university theaters, nationwide film locations, local and online video programming, and themed entertainment venues, more entry-level opportunities are available across the country that will lead to connections, or provide engaging creative careers outside of the major markets. All jobs, however, require some sort of track record, contacts, and/or experience so that the beginner can prove their capability and demonstrate potential.

Karen Weller,[6] a costume designer and partner in the themed entertainment design company The Costume Connection, advises the aspiring designer to keep an open mind about entry-level positions. Working in vintage stores, fabric stores, stitching for local theaters, and taking advantage of the wide array of summer theater opportunities are all excellent ways to build a foundation. "Of course, in order to advance within the field, one needs to sharpen leadership abilities and financial expertise. At the risk of taking the glamor out of the creative aspects, it is a business and as such must operate efficiently and economically—with regard to both materials and labor—whether you are producing a one-time parade experience, or an entire theme park with many attractions and entertainment venues. Those experienced in theater are no strangers to the concept of balancing time, cost, and quality in the pursuit of a successful product."

Working up the ladder in a costume shop or wardrobe department is the best way to learn the basic skills any designer will need. Learning the construction process and fitting methods sharpens a designer's skills to assess work quality and budgets. Juggling fitting schedules with sometimes conflicting labor requirements teaches the young professional how to interact with rehearsals, union rules, and goal setting. Purchasing fabrics and garments introduces the young designer to sourcing methods and departmental accounting. Working in a rental house or costume stock teaches how to categorize historical garments accurately and to properly assess the time involved in pulling garments. Rental houses also offer the opportunity to study many finished garments and other designers' methods. Salvador Perez, the President of the **Costume Designers Guild (Local 892)** notes: "I started as a stitcher and worked my way up from stitcher to workroom supervisor to assistant costume designer then started to costume design. I even worked as a set costumer once on a non-union film. . . . A great costume designer should have worked their way up. It will give them the experience and knowledge to be a better costume designer."[7] Most beginning designers will combine several of these approaches to support themselves and to learn from others, overlapping all manner of jobs. "I would assist, then stitch in the shop, then go do a low budget show on my own in a small, controlled environment" recalls film costume designer Mussenden,[5] who began her career working in New York theater under Jane Greenwood and Ann Roth.

During a recent gathering of costume designers to discuss the future of their profession, one successful designer noted: "The best way to look at a career is to consider the entire arc—you will spend three to five years, say, in a shop learning the ropes of construction and fitting, and as a shopper or costumer in stock learning about ready-made garments and how each brand really fits. Learn to tell the hallmarks of quality in garments, and make contacts. Then branch out to assisting a designer on the next logical step on the trajectory. No one will be a successful designer right out of school." Another noted "I probably wasn't a really good assistant designer until I was in my 30s. It takes a lot of judgement."

There has never been a wider array of arts and entertainment forms using the talents of professional costume designers. Costume designers now choose to work in every kind of career, such as educating or empowering community members using theater as an outreach tool, as does the Cornerstone Theater in Los Angeles. Designers create haunted house experiences in Halloween attractions all over the United States; or touring spectacles such as ice shows and circus performances; or they use costumes as an immersive education tool in historical re-enactments and museums. Other designers pursue traditional forms of entertainment such as ballet, opera and plays, films and TV, theme parks and attractions, online series, animation, video games, or cruise-ship shows. And increasingly, costume designers must understand the financial and technical requirements of more than one venue or platform, as many areas of entertainment blur the lines that used to separate different kinds of stories.

FIGURE 8.3 *Costume design by Alan Armstrong for Sir John Falstaff,* Henry IV Part I, *Repertory Theater of St. Louis, MO. The rendering includes the swatches of fabric, suede and leather, for the construction of a very detailed costume. (Courtesy of Alan Armstrong.)*

The Artist's Point of View

Regardless of the art form costume designers work within, their artistry remains the same: the costume designers' canvas is the performer and the subject of their art work is the script**.** Costume designers create characters with complex personal histories using the language of clothing the audience will consciously or subconsciously understand. The characters must believably inhabit a visually unified story world created in collaboration with the director and other designers on the team, following visual rules set up for that story. No single element can stand out, unless intended to do so. But designers are not just literal interpreters of the storyline. A designer's work is always an interpretation of the intent, or an illusion. Realism on stage or screen is not truly real. The costumes often fit better than in real life, accommodating movement and fast changes. Duplicates are used to counteract damage. The color palette and textures are tightly controlled, and each garment contributes to the dramatic intent of a scene.

Creative teams express an *artistic point of view* when they create each story world, often beginning with where the story falls on the spectrum of realism to exaggeration; and this decision will communicate strong visual clues to the larger themes of the work. Audience members often fail to realize the costume designer is expressing an artistic point of view when making these decisions, particularly when the costume design suits the story so well. "You would have to be standing in the middle of Macy's not to have a point of view," declared the Oscar and Tony winning costume designer Ann Roth,[8] whose specialty is building believable characters with actors such as Meryl Streep, Nicole Kidman, and Gwyneth Paltrow. For *Places in the Heart,* a 1984 film set on a farm during the Depression, Roth fit actress Sally Fields into a correct period 1930s girdle as her character, Edna Spaulding, goes into town to request a bank loan. Roth knew that women in that era would have wiggled into the proper girdle to be seen in town, and this would affect the way they walked and sat down. How does this decision express an artistic point of view? This film was widely admired for its authenticity and film critic Vincent Canby praised this work for its "junk detector" or the ability to recreate American life at that time.[9] Another director–costume designer team might take a different approach toward the same material. They may choose to suggest people in other eras were just like the contemporary audience; for that point of view true period garments and more formal movement would be incorrect. This interpretation might call for a mixture of period and contemporary styles, or characters that wear contemporary costume with period-inspired elements. This type of decision is a subtle, yet very powerful version of artistic point of view.

Costume designer Colleen Atwood is an example of an identifiable point of view. She often works with stories featuring off- kilter characters who do not belong in a world that values conformity; her characters embody traits of gothic misfits or even lovable monsters. Yet it is the so-called normal people who might turn out to be the monsters. The 1990 Tim Burton film *Edward Scissorhands* contrasts these two types of worlds most clearly: Edward, the childlike misfit, tries unsuccessfully to fit into a candy colored suburban neighborhood of tract homes and trapped minds. The characters are a conglomeration of exaggerated mid-century archetypes who wear bright colors, creating a world just exaggerated enough for the audience to believe that a Frankenstein-like character could exist. Atwood's work on *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events* (2004) with director Brad Silberling, carries this gothic exaggeration even further, commenting on a fear-mongering mainstream society. Atwood is a master of the color black, a notoriously difficult color to use in film as it often obliterates details. Her costume design for *Lemony Snicket* is a masterful interpretation of the gothic genre.

FIGURE 8.4 *Johnny Depp as Edward in* Edward Scissorhands. *(Director: Tim Burton. Costume design by Colleen Atwood. Courtesy of Beijing New Picture/Elite Group/The Kobal Collection.)*

> "When I read a script and start to think about a character, a hazy picture forms in my mind which I then try to clarify on paper, working around it until I get the effect that I want. I see the character first of all in shapes and colors, and the details come later."
>
> June Hudson, Costume Designer for *Doctor Who*, from *Reading Between Designs*, p. 7[10]

An example of a visual point of view carried to an extreme is the color scheme used by director Yimou Zhang in the film *Hero* (2002) with costumes designed by Emi Wada. The film tells the story of an assassin overcoming powerful rivals in three different versions. Each iteration tells the story from a different point of view until the audience pieces together the truth. As the story repeats, the color scheme changes utilizing a grey monochromatic scale, one significant black and white sequence, saturated red and yellow scenes, and azure blue and green. The conclusion appears in white, as all embellishments and deceptions strip away to reveal the truth. Director Zhang planned the colors for purely aesthetic reasons, but the effect was so powerful cinema fans speculated widely about symbolic meanings for each choice, finding their own deeper interpretations in the work.

Costumes Designs Amplify the Truth

Costume designers bring another essential skill to each project: a sophisticated understanding of story mechanics. Why is each character in the story?—to act as the voice of reason; or to provide an element of chaos in an otherwise orderly world? Should the audience trust this character? Does an innocent-seeming character turn out to be a surprise villain at the end? Triggering the correct emotional response from the audience at the right moment is a key part of creating an effective story. Roth recalled the huge effect entertainment costumes had on her, as a

FIGURE 8.5 *Maggie Cheung as Flying Snow and Zhang Ziyi as Moon in* Hero/Ying Xiong. *(Director: Yimou Zhang. Costume design by Emi Wada. Courtesy of Beijing New Picture/Elite Group/The Kobal Collection.)*

child, when she first saw the costumes in a 1941 musical movie titled *Sun Valley Serenade* starring Sonia Henie, a Norwegian Olympic champion figure skater turned Hollywood star. "They were utterly glorious and contributed immeasurably to the spirit of the picture. I had no idea who designed them, but I think of them still. Truly great costumes amplify the truth of the tales they tell with compassion and specificity. They should distill and heighten reality; after all, we have only two hours to illuminate entire lives."[11]

It is easy to understand showy costumes, and to be impressed with fantasy projects. But many projects feature contemporary costumes, and some audiences wonder if using contemporary clothing is costume design. "Contemporary costume design is often overlooked" designer Anna Wyckoff acknowledges in the *Costume Designers Guild* magazine (p. 26); and many costume designers have also noted the lack of understanding for what they contribute to a contemporary story.[12] Aggie Guerard Rodgers (*American Graffiti*, *Cacoon,* and *The Color Purple)* notes (p. 24): "I am the costume designer on every show I'm on. Whether I'm going to [clothing store] Maxfield Bleu or having it made in a shop, it's still my design. I feel very strongly that even if I shop the entire show, what I'm doing is using—let's say ten other designers' work—I'm using their art for my art."[13] Designer Mark Bridges reinforces this point, describing his approach to *Fifty Shades of Grey.* The much anticipated film version of the hit book would face a very opinionated audience with preconceived ideas about the characters: "It was a big responsibility to either be true, or to allow the costumes to be nonspecific enough that the audience finds them possible . . . The way I approached this film was to try to illustrate who the people are while trying to give it a timeless quality." (p. 26).[12] Bridges, and many other costume designers, say they try to avoid overly trendy or identifiable fashions because they will quickly date a film. Studios invest millions of dollars in a story they hope will play for years across several platforms. A classic, more timeless look will stretch the life of a film, as well as ring true with millions of audience members around the world.

Costume Designer Renée Kalfus describes her approach to contemporary costume for the most recent film version of *Annie* (p. 28): "Every single piece of clothing was built, overdyed, manipulated, torn, then re-sewn, patched, and embroidered to have the look of hand-me-downs. I worked the same way I would work on a period film." She also created a color to overdye the clothes that she dubbed "ten years of bad laundry" to unify the costume color palette. This is "part of what we try to do . . . We try to heighten elements, even when they are real."[12]

The Goals of Costume Design

- Create characters with complex personal histories using the language of clothing.
- Create a visually unified story world in collaboration with the director and other designers.
- Express an artistic point of view appropriate to the project.
- Enhance the story by eliciting emotional responses from the audience.
- Balance both the creative and logistical demands for the specific project.

THEATER FOR EDUCATION, OUTREACH, AND COMMUNITY ACTIVISM

Luis Valdez, director, actor and playwright of many plays including *Zoot Suit* and the film *La Bamba*, tells the story of how a mask made by a teacher for a school play transformed his life. As a child, his parents were migrant farm workers, and young Luis started working in the fields at the age of six. During one very short stay in first grade, a teacher transformed one of his rare personal possessions—a brown paper lunch sack—into a paper-mâché painted mask that riveted his imagination. The teacher built a costume and enlisted him to act a role in the school play. But the day he was to perform, the family was evicted from their labor camp after the cotton harvest and they climbed into their truck to drive away. "I felt this hole open up in my chest, it could have destroyed me . . . and that hole became the hungry mouth of my creativity . . . I took with me the secret of paper-mâché. That six-year-old is still alive in me, and with that, the anger, the residual anger of being kicked out of the labor camp . . . and for the last 65 years I've been pouring out plays and scripts and poems and stories." (p. 13)[14] He went on to found *El Teatro Campesino,* one of the earliest contemporary outreach theatres working within its community for social justice.

"Any theater that has a result in mind is not having a conversation."

Michael John Garcés,[15] Artistic Director of the Cornerstone Theater Company

As seen in its effect on Valdez, the power of a live performance on young minds is immeasurable. Theaters and the costume

designers who choose to work in this rewarding field wish to focus on social issues, cultural conversations, personal empowerment, or other imperatives. Costume designs range widely; from elaborate portrayals of period or cultural garments to the use of non- traditional materials or upcycled found objects; or work with everyday garments to suggest illusions of fantasy. The Cornerstone Theater Company is one of the oldest community-based ensemble theater companies producing new plays using a unique collaborative process between theater professionals and members of the community. Their work equates aesthetic practice with social justice, artistic expression with civic engagement, and access to creative expression with individual and community health. They produce both single plays, and projects in extended series, such as the Justice Cycle or the Hunger Cycle. Plays such as *Flor* explore migrant labor issues through an imagined meeting between generations of contemporary workers from Mexico and the depression-era workers fleeing the Oklahoma dust bowl; and *Touch the Water* blends contemporary characters with Native American myths to explore urban environmental issues.

Cornerstone is currently working on a six-year cycle of nine new plays addressing food equity, food availability, urban food deserts, food addictions, and the redemptive power of feeding the community.

Another company actively engaged in community health is Kaiser Permanente, a managed healthcare and insurance provider, whose doctors and nurses see the direct result of poor food supply or dietary disasters in their communities. They have created a Community Benefits Division to address a wide range of public health issues, including an Educational Theater featuring professional writers, directors, actors, and designers. These short plays and workshops are carefully adjusted to the developmental stages of primary, middle school, and high school students. Troupes of professional, full-time actors travel to schools and community centers performing completely free of charge.

FIGURE 8.6 California, The Tempest (Bridge Tour), *Cornerstone Theater Company. (Director: Michael John Garcés. Costume design by Garry Lennon. Photo courtesy of Cornerstone Theater Company.)*

> **"If an audience member tries to steal the shoes backstage after the show, then we're doing something right."**
> **Michael Millar,[16] Production Manager, Kaiser Permanente Educational Theater**

This careful calibration to childhood development includes not only the format and subject matter of the play, but also the type of design that will appeal to children at each stage of growth. "Kids are very sophisticated and visually acute," explains Michael Millar,[16] the Production Manager overseeing five professional touring programs in Southern California. "They will disengage if we give them any reason, or if they don't see themselves in the characters," he notes. The educational shows cannot scrimp on production values, because "our competition is TV, video games, movies, and game shows." Costume design plays a crucial role in this form of theater to create empathetic characters, and this challenge is most acute among middle school and high school audiences. Costumes must accurately reflect up-to-the-moment school trends. "If Ed Hardy t-shirts were popular last year, we can't use them this year because the kids *know*. We make arrangements with local high schools for our costume designers to shadow students, to learn what the kids are doing and saying now." The result is student audiences that are excited, engaged, ask questions, and even ask for help because they see themselves in the characters. "The kids will listen to what our actors/health educators say—not their teachers or parents."

Millar hires approximately nine designers each year to create or update educational theater tours. Although located in Los Angeles and surrounded by designers with film, TV, and music video experience, he prefers to hire applicants with a theater background. Those with theater experience understand the unique challenges of building a live story well—the value of smooth scenic transitions and costume changes, durability for touring, and perfect timing. Shows must fit into a school's class schedule; even with sophisticated equipment and support systems, shows are always constrained by curtain times. "There's no stopping the camera in live theater," Millar emphasizes.

FIGURE 8.7 *Costume design tear sheets specifying the use of sourced garments for* The Amazing Food Detective, *Kaiser Permanente Educational Theater, Southern California. (Costume design by Jessica Champagne- Hansen.)*

Other forms of educational or community theater include teaching or creating shows in after-school programs, performing arts schools, colleges and universities, or small Theater for Young Audiences touring shows in regional theaters. One creative challenge that education costume designers must embrace is the non-realistic intent of casting decisions. Commercial theater, film, and TV casting agents must consider outward attributes such as age, gender, body type, or visible attributes when casting. Educational or community casting decisions may favor intangible attributes, such as restricting the casting pool to just students in one theater program who are about the same age range, or opening the casting call to include members of a target community, or casting performers who are much younger or older than the characters they will portray. Performers may have advanced training or no experience at all. The educational or activist costume designer must develop skills to work with their specific cast of performers, usually employing some form of stylization in the design. Other skills include the ability to change an actor's physical attributes with padding, visual tricks, or make-up to transform the performer into character.

Educational and activist theater offers other challenges for the costume designer. Educational theater often tries to give as many students as possible the opportunity to participate in the performance, dividing roles between actors, or creating larger ensembles to fill out the acting roster. Many commercial or regional theater producers will seek to do just the opposite: combine or eliminate roles without jeopardizing the story in order to avoid additional salaries. Educational costume designers

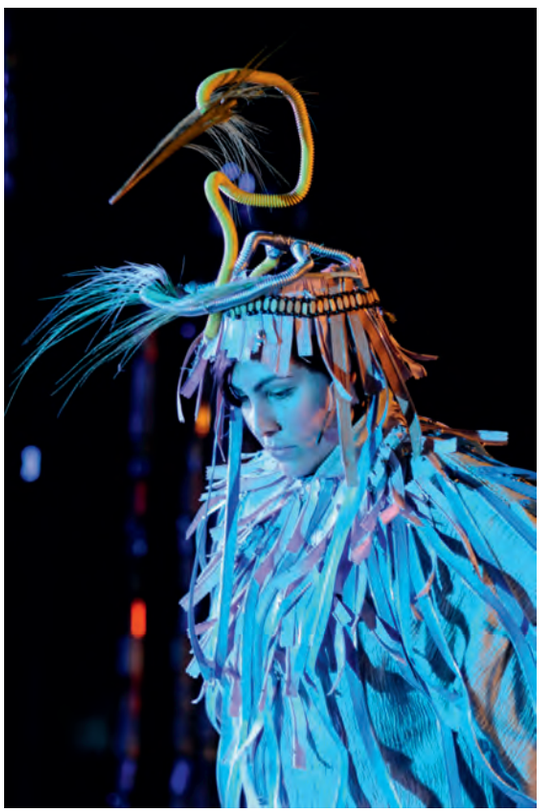

FIGURE 8.8 Touch the Water, *Cornerstone Theater Company. (Director: Juliette Carillo. Costume design by Soojin Lee. Photo courtesy of Cornerstone Theater Company.)*

will find themselves creatively stretching their budget and instituting organization systems to accommodate unusually large casts or additional performers added late in the rehearsal, or crews that are learning skills on the job.

This performance field is experiencing rapid growth, and is sometimes called Applied Theater or Participatory Drama. Recently expanding into other media formats, digital technology allows ordinary people to create video telling their own stories or documenting their own experience and heritage. Facilitators provide the funding and a framework, often teaching members of the community to create stories themselves, or creating alongside members of the community. Some applications include using theater, film, and puppetry with therapeutic goals in prisons, hospitals, rehabilitation centers, and marginalized communities. Designers working in these circumstances can be responsible for more than just costumes, taking on a wide array of creative, therapeutic, or producing responsibilities. These stories also provide more opportunities to create items that cross the boundaries of costumes, to include crafts and props such as puppets and masks.

Many cities have experimental or radical theater companies offering similar opportunities to interested designers. Increasing numbers of cultural anchor institutions also explore performance as an agent of change: universities, performing arts venues, and museums sponsor this style of outreach, or are increasingly interested in doing so. There are a few training programs available to those interested in developing such approaches, ranging from short workshops to masters degrees.

The internet offers opportunities to designers that go well beyond designing avatars and characters, and may have widespread implications for applied theater. One example is the widespread adaptation of *Second Life*, a rich avatar environment, to serve as host for educational communities. Experimental online works include groups creating scenes caught on a network of security cameras to question the pervasive use of cameras in public places; and a massive online text-based chat room drama by the Hamnet Players. One experimental educational work was titled *To the Spice Islands*, at Charles Sturt University with campuses throughout Australia. The story was inspired by the wreck of the Dutch ship *Batavia* off the Australian coast in 1629. Students took on roles as marine archeologists to piece together the historic events, creating an experience that was deeply meaningful to the participants. These kinds of stories are told without an audience, and indeed it may be that no one ever sees the story in its entirety.[17] These online experiences are in their infancy, but are causing interest as a future component of education, activist or applied theater, and costume designers interested in this area will be part of creating a new form of entertainment.

CREATING COSTUMES FOR COMMERCIAL THEATER

When the average audience member thinks of commercial theatre, they might think first of London or **Broadway** shows and the large touring companies of musicals winding their way across the country. The American Theater Wing's annual Tony Award is the official "face" of live theater, luring over 15 million viewers to the TV broadcast, so the general public might use the term "Broadway" incorrectly to mean any professional production in New York. But that term actually applies only to the 40 professional theaters located in the theater district and Lincoln Center in Manhattan. Although located within a small footprint on the map, Broadway shows wield a powerful impact on the American cultural landscape.

In the last decades, the practice of commercial theater has broadened to include new entities such as a global entertainment corporation headed by the Walt Disney Company, Cirque du Soleil, and even cruise-ship lines producing reduced versions of Broadway shows. Hence a more relevant division for understanding American theater is the distinction between professional commercial theater and professional not-for-profit theater.[18] Commercial theater, whether based in New York or elsewhere, is typically created by a partnership or corporation founded to produce one work at a time or one genre of work.

Many audiences experience commercial theater by seeing one of the numerous shows produced by Cirque du Soleil. Cirque is a privately held entertainment company whose shows reach millions of people each year. Their shows tour in stadiums or custom-built tents, and offer permanent companies in Las Vegas. Cirque du Soleil has a reputation for promoting people from within their ranks and they pride themselves on the same family feel created by traditional circus performers throughout time. Many Cirque employees begin in crew positions that offer a wide range of experiences, particularly in wardrobe. Dressers participate in the repair of unusual costume items and accessories

FIGURE 8.9 *Arthur Kennedy, Mildred Dunnock, and Lee J. Cobb in the original Broadway production of* Death of a Salesman, *1949. (Director: Elia Kazan. Costume design by Julia Sze. Photo by Eileen Darby. Courtesy of Broadway Photographs, The Shields Collection, Dr David S. Shields, McClintock Professor, University of South Carolina.)*

that can teach a number of special skills unique only to the Cirque experience. Learning their approaches and systems is a crucial step to advancement.

More and more plays transfer to New York for **Off Broadway** or Broadway runs from regional theaters, and some take the original design team with them. A regional theater may also hire a New York designer to work on their initial production, and then take it to Broadway. The Broadway community can be somewhat cozy, and producers and directors keep an eye out for the designers who have good reputations for delivering work that

FIGURES 8.10 & 8.11 (top) *Costume rendering for the front and back of Joseph's coat, designed by Jennifer Caprio, for the Andrew Lloyd Webber/Tim Rice* Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat *national tour. (Courtesy of Jennifer Caprio.)* (bottom) *The finished robe, in collaboration with Projection Designer Daniel Brodie. (Photo by Daniel Brodie.)*

they admire. The costume designer who wants to work with Off Broadway theaters or on Broadway itself will find most success by moving to New York. Many early-career designers begin as shoppers or in other positions for one of the costume houses, or as rentals workers for a rental house. Once they learn how to put together a show in New York, they can become effective assistants to more established designers. Aspiring designers combine these jobs with designing shows of their own in small budget **Off-Off Broadway** theaters. Every business is unique, but New York theater can feel like an especially small community.

Martin Platt,[19] a producer of the most recent revival of *Dames at Sea* and the Tony Award winning *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* worked extensively in regional theater before moving to Broadway. He notes some differences between working commercially and working in a regional theater; a main difference being in how creative teams are assembled for a project. For Broadway shows: "The author has to approve everybody, although they don't usually weigh in much on the designers. They are more concerned with the director and choreographer—but they do have to approve the designers eventually." The director, choreographer, and producer approve the designers more specifically by suggesting people with whom they have worked before, or the team will try "brainstorming." For *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike,* Platt notes, "We talked about several designers we thought would be right for the production, and the best mix on the team." To make it into this brainstorming conversation, a designer has to have a body of work that the producers or directors know, or be known by other designers already on the team. Producers must also consider who will "work well with the director's personality, and really enjoy doing the show." Once the author approves of the director and likely design teams, then the director has final approval over casting and the actual designers that will be hired. Producers are involved in every step of the process, sometimes more overtly, but often in the background. "Producers can veto a choice, but they can't impose people unless there is a special concern." Platt notes, "Producers can fire anyone, too, without the author's approval. But they can't hire a new person without the author's approval."

Platt also offers insights into attributes costume designers working at this level should possess. "Working on Broadway, the stakes are higher" he explains. And, for any project, "the designer has to be right for the show. No one can direct or design every show that comes along." Part of maturing in this business is "turning down work that is *never* going to bring out the best in you." Platt explains that high visibility and high stakes also require excellent communication skills. With so much money invested in a show, producers and directors want to know exactly what a show is going to look like. "So we look for somebody who will get what you are saying." He notes that a costume designer must be able to parse what a producer, director, and creative team really *mean,* not what they are saying: "Which is frequently not the same thing," he admits.

> **"Besides having all the general skills—like the encyclopedic knowledge of costume and history—communication skills are the most important thing a costume designer can have."**
>
> **Martin Platt[19] from a personal interview**

Mastering communication and knowing your own voice comes with experience. After decades in the business, Platt has a word of caution for costume designers; "I don't think designers always know how little some of their partners know about costumes: the process, how to read sketches. There are directors and certainly a lot of producers who don't know how to do that." Of course, there are some with a firm grasp on all the aspects of a show, but a surprising number do not have any experience with costume. Platt sees that problems begin when "everyone approves sketches and then the costume appears, and no one understood it would really look like *that.*"

Platt acknowledges that costume designers invest a lot of their training in learning to create renderings, and they often go to great lengths to draw effective illustrations. But a drawing may not always be the best communication tool. "Their collaborators don't know what questions to ask, such as "Is this costume heavy?" Then the actor puts it on, and now the actor can't move in it and everyone is surprised, even though there had been a swatch attached to the sketch, and everyone dutifully felt the swatch." He suggests spending time to find a way to make the sketch come alive for the rest of the team, or spending less time trying to create impact with just an illustration style. He prefers to see good character work in a sketch, but he often sees sketches that feature movement, especially with women's costumes. "That's not what the costume is going to look like when the actor is standing on the stage talking or singing for 45 minutes. That's what it will look like in a twirl they will do just once." The rest of the time, he notes, the costume will hang like a limp rag. "You want to see what the costume will really look like—not exaggerated with sparkles flying off."

Platt notes another element of working in commercial theater: "the only goal is to make the show as good as it possibly can be. Nothing else is important." Whereas in many non-profit

FIGURE 8.12 *Fay Templeton as Gabriel in a production of* Evangeline, *1885. Even in its earliest days, glamorous costumes were an important visual element of Broadway musicals. The producers of* Evangeline *first toured a limited production in order to raise money for the elaborate costumes required in the New York production. (Photo by Napoleon Sarony, Harvard Theater Collection. Courtesy of Broadway Photographs, Dr David S. Shields, McClintock Professor, University of South Carolina.)*

theaters there is an over-riding sense of "that's good enough" because there are finite resources, or the theater is bound to certain rules from their Board of Directors, or the next show has to move into the shop by a certain time. The typical non-profit theatre works with a fixed budget, regardless of whether that budget is adequate to produce the show. A large regional theater may be able to commit $5,000 to a small cast, modern dress show, while a smaller theater may have $5,000 for 150 costumes. The budget is based on the theater's own history or financial situation; perhaps they have a lot of costumes in stock to reuse, or previous designers have consistently delivered budgets cheaply by begging and borrowing costumes. The costume designer is expected to conform to the needs of the budget rather than the best way to design the show.

In commercial theater, "... it is so hard to put things together financially," Platt explains. The budget is also fixed, but on a different level. Platt reveals that the costume budget for the current production of *Dames at Sea* could be, for example, around $150,000. "That is really the number, and you really expect your production manager and the designer to work toward that number for you." But, once well into the process, "... if something is not working, you change it. And you change it again. And if every time you make a change, it's another $5000 or $10,000 for costumes for somebody, you can't *not* do it." The producers and investors have saved an extra $1 million or so to cover all changes, because changes are inevitable. "If you get it wrong, the investors lose their money, and you don't get to do your next show."

Commercial production companies approach costume logistics in many ways. At one end of this spectrum is Cirque du Soleil, who maintain a large resident costume shop with 300 artisans in their international headquarters in Montreal. But most other commercial theater producers subcontract the work to individual costume shops. While many of these shops are located primarily in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, there are regional shops starting to build a business because costs are more affordable outside large cities. Costume designers must be very savvy in leading projects through several shops at one time. It is not uncommon for the menswear to be built in a tailoring shop, the women's wear contracted to another shop, and specialty, crafts, or dance costumes built by yet a third business.

Many costume designers start their careers in one or several costume shops, apprenticing as shoppers, assistants, stitchers, or dyers. Along with learning materials and purchasing, these positions allow an early-career professional to learn how to negotiate different personalities and timetables. Some large shows are now sending garments overseas for specialty work such as beading, and this may continue to grow for projects with enough lead time to allow for the extended shipping time.

CREATING COSTUMES FOR NON- PROFIT THEATER

The New York theatrical establishment effectively dominated the creative content and allied arts, such as costume design and manufacture, until the mid-20th century. Although there were a few early theaters around the country now known as the Little Theater movement, by the early 1950s many theater artists began to question this monopoly in earnest. Artists such as Margo Jones in Dallas and Zelda Fichandler in Washington DC thought (p. 25) "... something was amiss. What was essentially a collective and cumulative art form was represented in the United States

FIGURE 8.13 *The Old Vat, Arena Stage, 1956–1961. Regional theatre pioneer Zelda Fichandler and founders of the Arena Stage convert part of the Old Heurich Brewery into a 500 seat theater-in-the-round, 1956. (Courtesy of Arena Stage.)*

by the hit-or-miss, make-a-pudding, smash-a-pudding system of Broadway production."[20] These pioneers created theaters around the country to present professional productions, taking advantage of relatively recent legal changes for establishing not-for-profit organizations. Their mission was to fully produce shows in-house, as part of mixed seasons offering some new work and some classics.

By the 1980s large regional theaters had matured. They began to complete the circle by sending original works back to New York for their Broadway debut. One particularly prolific theater was the LaJolla Playhouse, developing 13 plays that moved to New York, such as *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, *Dracula,* and *Jersey Boys*. The regional movement gained so much notice that in 2003 *Time Magazine* extensively covered these theaters in an article sensationally titled "Bigger Than Broadway!": "Many have gleaming new theaters, with two or even three stages, and state-of-the-art production facilities that put to shame the cramped old boxes on Broadway." The article notes "these companies are pursuing whole chunks of the repertory that New York, with its commercial pressures and unforgiving critics, largely ignores. And local audiences are getting a better taste of the possibilities of theater than most New Yorkers get in an entire season."[21]

By 2014 Theatre Communications Group (TCG) counted over 1,700 non-profit theaters representing a large artistic and employment opportunity for theater artists of every type.[22]

Some of the larger theaters established their own costume shops, and many current professionals began their careers in regional theaters that perform during the summer or across the year. Early in the regional theater movement many directors, actors, and designers were part of a permanent resident company. Many theaters have moved away from this model and now pull their creative teams from a national pool, holding auditions in cities such as Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York, as well as their own local communities. Many theaters are large institutions responsible for producing a season of plays, administering the business and physical assets such as multiple buildings, raising money to subsidize expenses, offering community or educational outreach, and even offering training programs for students. Each area offers employment opportunities, with costume personnel involved in many of these functions.

A THEATRICAL MACHINE

The **artistic director** has responsibility for planning each season and hiring directors for specific shows in the season. The theater artistic director or **production manager** will sometimes match a costume designer to a director, or approve a director's request to use a specific team of designers. Most theaters try to maintain a careful balance between local and out-of-town designers, and can be generous in giving designers their first significant jobs, particularly in the outreach programs or smaller studio theaters. Many costume designers have worked their way through the regional or summer theaters, beginning in the costume shop to learn every aspect of the field, gaining experience and contacts along the way.

Regional theaters are sophisticated producing organizations that move complex puzzle pieces to create large seasons on time, under budget, and aspiring to a high level of artistry. The Repertory Theater of St. Louis and the Cincinnati Playhouse are excellent examples of the complicated theatrical machinery required to produce full seasons. Both maintain a complex operation with multiple venues: a bigger main stage theater for larger or more mainstream plays, a smaller studio theater for experimental plays or new works, and a touring Theater for Young Audiences season. These organizations also oversee satellite spaces for storage or scenic construction. A small resident staff works on several projects at once, employing overhire workers for large shows, and scaling back the operation for smaller shows.

Alphabet Soup: Interpreting LORT, TCG, and USA

Each theater develops a distinct personality influenced by its leaders and home community. While most present a mixture of genres during the performing season, some prefer to commission new or edgy work, others offer more musicals, or a mixture of classics. Some operate as mini-Broadway houses, producing some of the latest New York hits for their home audience. In its 2003 article on regional theater, *Time Magazine*[21] reported: "One of the things you find is that there's a low level of audience pretension," says Richard Greenberg, who has developed plays like *Three Days of Rain* and *The Violet Hour* at South Coast Repertory in California's Orange County. "There's a receptiveness about the audience. Their responses are pure. And that's especially good early on, when you're not so sure." While it may be impossible to categorize all regional theaters as a whole, it can be even harder to research such scattered venues for possible employment opportunities. Finding jobs requires some detective work; it is most useful to begin with the theater associations. The League of Resident Theaters (**LORT**) and **Theatre Communications Group** (TCG) are two of the largest. LORT is the largest professional theatre association in the United States and operates as the legal entity for negotiating bargaining agreements with its counterpart organizations, **Actors Equity Association** (AEA), **Stage Directors and Choreographers Society** (SDC), and **United Scenic Artists** (USA)—the union representing theatrical designers. Before LORT, individual theaters used to create their own contracts for all talent resulting in wide variances and practices.

LORT currently consists of 74 member theaters with an established category system to affiliate similar theaters into groups; most categories use the average box office receipts and seating capacity as a way to determine group membership. The categories include A, B+, B, C (C1 and C2 options available) and D. These categories help theaters identify other institutions with similar concerns, and create a universal system for setting a range of directing fees, acting and stage management salaries, and designer fees for each category. Both LORT and USA list current bargaining agreements on their websites; USA also posts the rate sheets sorted by region and the type of project.

TCG is a wider membership and advocacy organization including theaters, individual artists from every aspect of live theater, educators, and students. They offer publications such as books, scripts, and the magazine *American Theatre* which features a play script in each issue along with a list of member theaters and their current work. TCG also publishes **ARTSEARCH**, a premier job listing service featuring over 3,000 job postings per year in regional, educational, and summer arts organizations.

FIGURE 8.14 *Costume design for the Porter in* Macbeth. *(Watercolor, Prismacolor, graphite and relevant research. Costume design by Alan Armstrong, Alabama Shakespeare Festival. Courtesy of Alan Armstrong.)*

Resident Costume Shops

Regional theaters serve as a major training ground for costume professionals; seasoned professionals guide the beginners on their team, and early-career costumers learn professional practices. Many theaters maintain a resident costume shop; those located in large labor markets often keep a small cohort as permanent staff, hiring additional positions as needed for specific shows. These positions are called "overhire" jobs, or sometimes "jobbing out" if the costume maker works in their own studio. Staff and overhire positions include drapers, tailors, dyers and fabric painters, milliners, specialty crafts artisans, first hands and stitchers, shoppers, and general organizational duties. Many designers who ultimately work in other fields such as film or themed entertainment got their start in a non-profit theater.

If a theater is located in an area with a smaller available labor pool, the costume shop might choose to hire a larger full-time staff with needed specialties in order to ensure that they are always available. While this was, at one time, a common practice, many shops now pursue the opposite strategy. They hire fewer specialized personnel, instead preferring those with organizational and general skills who can do a number of jobs, and keeping only a skeleton crew of skilled labor. The rise of the internet store is changing how costume designers source garments. Within the last five years, a number of costume makers have debuted sophisticated and reliable services online, making it possible to order both custom-made and ready-made garments for historical or contemporary shows. And, conversely, it is also possible for a theatrical costume maker to augment their income or leave the employ of a costume shop altogether to establish their own business.

FIGURE 8.15 *Online store "Lucky Zelda," created by theatrical costume draper Catherine Esera, features her line of custom-made and vintage items. (Screen capture by Holly Poe Durbin.)*

Oregon Shakespeare Festival is a well-regarded large theater organization: in 2003 *Time Magazine* named it one of the top five regional theaters in America.[21] Many costume designers, shop managers, and shop staff began their careers as apprentices or in entry-level jobs here or other places like it. Oregon Shakespeare mounts 11 to 12 shows in a rotating repertory model with an approximate total of 900 performances per season. Their location, large shows, and commitment to high production values mean their costume department employs over 70 people as costume designers, assistant designers, organizational and management positions, and costume construction positions such as draper, tailor, first hand, stitcher, crafts and dyer, along with wardrobe crews to run the performances. A comprehensive program of fellowships, assistantships, internships, and residencies offers outstanding opportunities for many levels of beginning career theater artists.

A medium-sized regional theater is the Cincinnati Playhouse, producing 11 shows on two stages; the Marx Theatre with a seating capacity of 626 and the Shelterhouse with a smaller stage and more intimate seating of 225 patrons. A typical season might include a small two-person show, a very large holiday show such as *A Christmas Carol*, and a variety of new works, family programming, and recent Broadway hits.

Costume Shop Manager Gordon DeVinney is ultimately responsible for planning the entire season of shows, as well as scheduling the labor and resources for each show, and working with the individual designers. The Cincinnati Playhouse and the Repertory Theater of St. Louis share co-productions, and in that case he and the costume shop manager in St. Louis are responsible for all the logistics of those projects. He is responsible for delivering each project to the stage on time regardless of production or rehearsal challenges. The costume shop employs a small resident staff and DeVinney augments that with extra people from the local area. Like many theaters, the costume department operates in two shifts: a day crew in the shop builds shows, and the night crew runs shows in wardrobe, hair, and makeup. He will also utilize makers in other cities, such as a tailor in Chicago, sending suits back and forth for fitting and finishing. Entry-level jobs for the Playhouse include stitchers, first hands, and general costume stock and shopping assistants. DeVinney is a costume designer too, and may design one or more of the shows in the Playhouse season, or special events throughout the year.

FIGURE 8.16 *Period ladies jacket for* ShipWrecked!: *understanding proper fit is an essential element of successful costumes. (Draped by Cindy Witherspoon, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park. Photo by Holly Poe Durbin.)*

One example of a smaller regional theater is the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles. Its main stage venue, the Gil Cates Theater, seats 512 and its smaller flexible space theater seats a maximum of 149 people. Located on the west side of Los Angeles, it has access to many support resources, such as rental houses, made-to-order costume shops, vintage suppliers, and many freelancers working on a show-by-show basis. There is only one resident costume staff member, the wardrobe supervisor. Each costume designer works with the wardrobe supervisor to define the needs of that specific project—where will made-to-order items be built? Who will do alterations? Does the theater have a regular relationship with a wig maker or dyers, or should the costume designer call on their own network?

Many regional theater costume shops will work with interns, although not all have the resources to offer well paid internships and those with a small staff may not have a formal structure to extensively teach interns. However, there is a lot to be learned by being in the room with working professionals. Volunteering with a regional costume shop while still in college is an excellent way to get an introduction to the kinds of jobs and skills that costume shops use.

Summer Theaters

Some professional costumers swing between two regular performance seasons: a regional theater that operates from fall through spring, and a summer theater or opera season. Summer theaters offer classic training methods, and many designers begin their careers in this way. Some summer theaters are also members of LORT or TCG and will be listed on their websites, but others may not be members. A comprehensive list of summer theater opportunities can be found on the websites of the Educational Theater Association or Cengage Learning.[23] Summer festivals and theaters run the gamut from large, fully professional organizations, to semi-professional or educational endeavors employing large numbers of students and theater educators. An understanding of the LORT category system can help the early-career professional to climb the ladder from a smaller theater to a larger one in order to advance their skills and network.

Working for a summer theater is the traditional entry-level route for most people interested in live theater. The creative team and department heads do the vast majority of planning and hiring before the season begins. Directors, actors, designers, and shop and show running staff then converge from all around the country to work on a condensed season, presenting multiple shows rapidly. College students have the opportunity to work with more experienced mentors, and try several types of jobs during the course of the season. They observe the kinds of jobs they might like to have in future, and what kind of skills those jobs require. These summers often feel like a trial by fire, but they teach advanced planning methods, and how to streamline process. People may leave early for other jobs, and those left behind often step into a new promotion to fill the gap—a time-honored way to work up the ranks, and learn every part of the costume design process.

Independent Theater Companies

There are many more theaters than those presenting a full regional theater season, or those that belong to LORT or TCG. There are also a large number of independent theatre companies doing excellent work who do not own buildings, and must rent their performance spaces. New York has a lively Off Broadway, Off-Off Broadway, and **Showcase Theater** scene,

FIGURE 8.17 *Costume design by for Mrs Ann Lovely in* A Bold Stroke for a Wife. *(Collage with watercolor, pencil, fabric, lace, and photocopied elements. Costume design by Alan Armstrong, Alabama Shakespeare Festival. Courtesy of Alan Armstrong.)*

FIGURE 8.18 *Paul Kalina, Adrian Danzig, and Molly Brennan in* 500 Clown Frankenstein. *(Costume design by Tatjana Radisic. Photo by Michael Brosilow.)*

and Los Angeles supports a large 99-Seat Waiver movement. Many of these companies have permanent company members or work with a coterie of like-minded artists to develop shows. Independent theaters may not pay enough to fully support the designers or actors for each project, but this system offers a classic way to get a "foot in the door;" making connections, getting your work seen, and meeting others working in the area who may help with future work.

Independent theaters are excellent resources for an early-career designer, but it often requires tenacity and face-to-face meetings to find a position. Many of the jobs are secured through word-of-mouth or local connections, and some producers advertise through networks geared toward their own region, such as the online services OffStage Jobs.com, where jobs are sorted by location. An internet search of organizations such as The Institute of Outdoor Theater (a member organization serving Shakespeare festivals, musical theaters, and historical dramas), and The Shakespeare Theatre Association (listing over 100 members worldwide), can help an early-career costumer to create a list of theaters to investigate. Some theater companies book their performances through touring organizations to play on college campuses and other community venues. The following additional sources maintain job boards accessible for free or through a subscription:

- The Southeastern Theater Conference (SETC)
- United States Institute of Theater Technology (USITT)
- StageJobsPro.com
- Indeed.com: Backstage Jobs
- OffstageJobs.com
- Theater Communications Group
- Opera America.

COSTUME DESIGN FOR OPERA, MUSICAL THEATRE, AND DANCE

There is an old saying that when emotions grow larger than words can express, characters burst into song. And when singing is not enough, they break into dance. John Adams, a renowned composer and conductor said "Opera is the art form that goes to the max: it is the most emotional, it goes the furthest . . . music is, ultimately, about *feeling*. And that may be why people go the opera house."[24]

Opera and dance are international art forms; different companies around the world may share the same singers or dancers for their roles. Directors and designers may also be international, following a production from one opera house or theater to another, and dance companies often undertake extended national or international tours. Opera companies often share resources and ideas so all may benefit. Many opera companies are members of Opera America, the member service and advocacy organization. They publish an extensive website of resources, including job listings, grants, and a design contest for early-career design teams, as well as publishing the magazine *Opera America*.

Opera combines all the performed arts in one performance: song, music, acting, and historically, also dance. Dance is a more varied art form, with companies specializing in specific styles. Dance/USA is the largest membership service and advocacy organization with 500 member groups. Musical theater and operetta have a long history and many styles of presentation, including film musicals. Musicals form a large part of the Broadway experience and for many theater goers, the musical *is* Broadway.

Like opera and dance, revivals of classic works are common with creative reimaginings an enjoyable part of the experience for its fans. Just as with opera, there is a great deal of written literature for aficionados to study about the art form. The National Alliance of Musical Theatre (NAMT) is the member service and advocacy group that provides resources and information.

The most well-known opera companies began as temples of 19th century grand opera tradition, such as the Paris Opera, La Scala, the Royal Opera in London, and the Metropolitan Opera in New York. These companies play to very large audiences with seating capacities as large as 2,000. Such large scale performances require great vocal and orchestral power, and compelling production values. The spectacle of opera has been an important part of the grand opera tradition. Musical theaters and ballet may also fill large stages, but the seating capacity of the theater is seldom as large as grand opera.

Unlike many plays, there is a very well-known repertoire for opera, ballet, and musical theater and fewer new works debuting each year. Audiences can be quite sophisticated, learning about a production before they see it in performance. They may well have seen other productions. Opera is the one art form where audiences are accustomed to listening and watching works performed in languages different from their own. The extensive training and smaller pool of singers and dancers performing this repertoire means that many opera companies must draw from an international pool of singers. Casting for vocal range and dance skill means that many traditional casting factors may be overlooked, such as age, physical type, and nationality. These elements directly affect the costume designers approach to any project. For instance, it is much more common to work with middle-aged opera singers cast as young ill-fated lovers than it would be in theater or film.

Casting variations are more acceptable in all the musical arts because the suspension of disbelief is already enormous: characters are singing or dancing—feats we seldom see in daily life. The dramatic situations are heightened to match the presentational format of performance. Costume designers must be proficient in designing for music: the mood or intent may be more evident in music than the libretto. Much is determined by the length and placement of the music, and all action must occur with split second timing. While musical traditions may dictate specific approaches, design for music is in many ways more freeing. There is usually more emphasis on emotional impact, glamor and figure correction, and fabrics and trims that reflect light or float with movement. Costume designers creating these art forms will have two visionary voices to collaborate with; the stage director and the choreographer.

FIGURE 8.19 *Michael Dean singing the role of Araspe in Handel's opera* Tolomeo. *Costume design by Bonnie J. Kruger for the International Handel-Festspiele in Göttingen, Germany. (Photo by Bonnie J. Kruger.)*

Opera, Musicals, and Dance by the Numbers

All forms of musical performance may feature a large chorus or ensemble. If the music calls for a powerful effect, the chorus or corps can be an extremely large presence, from 20 to 100 people, and this creates a unique challenge for the costume department. Before approaching the design, the intent behind these numbers should be clear. Does the chorus or corps represent one voice or character, such as a group that that will perform in unison? If that is the case, do the costumes closely resemble each other? Or is the chorus or corps a group of individual characters, such as all the town folk in a village or guests at a party? If so, are the costumes visually different from each other? Will the costumes be rented from another production, and what is the best way to create components for so many costumes? Smaller or experimental companies have begun approaching shows differently, deliberately trying to change the need for a large chorus. They may ask a chorus to sing offstage, or create a reduced ensemble. Some opera companies will only present works that feature small cast sizes, or experimental works. A costume designer may be asked to create new solutions as part of reconceiving an opera.

Designing for musical performance requires complex logistics over the life of a production. Ensembles of matching costumes are usually required, and there are specific approaches in the costume design that may be determined by the script or by traditions set by the original production. There are many technical considerations working with singers and dancers. Some productions are conceived as co-productions (often shortened to "co-pros") between partner companies in order to help offset the very great investment in costumes. Companies may also create a new production knowing they will revive it several times over the next ten years, again recouping more from their investment.

The costume designer may have to design costumes which will look appropriate for several different singers or dancers contracted for a role over time. And some co-pros can take years to make the appointed rounds of venues, with the costumes starting to show wear and tear. Dance companies may tour repeatedly, with little money to replace ageing or ill-fitting costumes. Anticipating these circumstances can be an important budget- and labor-saving device, as well as ensuring a less stressful transition from company to company.

The costumes may be kept to be rented out as a full package to other opera companies, or eventually sold to rental houses such as Malabar Ltd in Toronto, Canada. A look at the Malabar website reveals over 100 opera productions for rental, with several operas listed more than once in order to accommodate completely different designs or eras. Opera America and Dance/USA provide a resource library of costumes and scenic packages available for rental from all its member companies.

Costumes may be periodically refreshed and replaced, but planning for longevity and frequent alterations is a crucial aspect of any opera costume design. Opera and ballet productions take on a long life for many reasons. First, the effort to design and make large numbers of costumes is labor intensive. "Most opera productions require one to two years' lead time," says costume designer Dunya Ramicova,[25] who has designed dozens of operas. The time to procure principal singers, cast the company, obtain a slot in a performance season, search for resources, and rehearse an orchestra and chorus all add up to a much longer preparation period than many live theater events.

Opera fans all over the world will follow the designs of a particularly exciting new production in *Opera News* or the *Opera Magazine,* and subsequent productions may be influenced by the initial interpretation. "Working with a new opera or play is my favorite kind of design," notes Ramicova. "[This kind of new work] . . . is breaking new ground and frequently one's work sets the standard for all future productions."

FIGURE 8.20 *Costume design for Zoroastro in Handel's* Orlando. *Designed by Bonnie J. Kruger for the International Handel-Festspiele in Göttingen, Germany. Kruger has created a number of opera costumes in the same Baroque style. Remaking items from this inventory results in a unified approach for her productions and allows the producers to recoup their investment. (Courtesy of Bonnie J. Kruger.)*

An opera, dance, or musical theater company's resident costume director or costume coordinators can play a strong role in planning large scale projects: researching rentals for partial or full packages; fitting large numbers of singers at once; overseeing specialty costume builds and footwear; and managing a large costume stock and rentals to other companies. A costume director may be deeply involved in future season production planning; traveling to other companies to assess the suitability of a rental package; and assessing future workloads. Costume directors also need to possess advanced design skills in order to build new costumes for principal singers or dancers that must match an existing package, or to revive a prior production after the original designer is no longer available.

Musical performance companies all have their own personalities, as do regional theaters, but most strive to offer

FIGURES 8.21 & 8.22 *Costume designs for a production of the opera* Tosca: (left) *Baron Scarpia and* (right) *Tosca. (Costume design by Jennifer Caprio, Mill City Summer Opera, 2014. Courtesy of Jennifer Caprio.)*

a balance of experimental and traditional work, appealing to both the more sophisticated audience members who have seen multiple productions, and also to the new audience members who would like to see a traditional classic for the first time. Many opera and dance companies have large community outreach or education components, offering performances in schools or in underserved communities. These smaller projects are an excellent way for an early-career designer to begin work in this art form.

Repeated Performances

Opera has a repertoire well known to many of its audience members. There is a natural tension between upholding performance traditions and wanting to explore new areas of the work; yet opera audiences have come to expect new productions of favorite traditional works. Director Jonathan Miller dedicated an entire book to exploring why some types of performances are revived over and over, with ballet, Shakespeare's plays, and opera notable examples of this practice. "It seems to me precisely because [they] are interpretations, rather than copies, that they have survived . . . The work has enjoyed an extraordinary afterlife unforeseeable by the author at the time of writing." (p. 55).[26] Many opera companies may feature the same titles at the same time, but upon comparison each production will be very different.

Opera designers in particular must be adept at envisioning how the same story can be told in new ways. One recent example of this principle at work is the Los Angeles Opera's two recent versions of Mozart's *The Magic Flute;* a fairytale featuring exotic creatures and locations that presents the opportunity for wildly imaginative interpretations. Seeing how each new production will present this favorite story is part of the fun for audiences, and can bring prestige to individual opera companies. During the 20th century, some opera companies invited famous artists or designers not normally associated with stage design to create a new production of this opera. Each is so distinctive that they are referred to by the artist's name, rather than by

the stage director. Notable designs include: a 1967 Metropolitan Opera production designed by painter Marc Chagall; a 1978 Glyndebourne Festival Opera production with sets and costumes designed by painter David Hockney; a 1981 Houston Grand Opera production designed by beloved children's book author and illustrator Maurice Sendak; and, more recently, a 2012 Washington National Opera production designed by Japanese ceramicist Jun Kaneko.[27] The Los Angeles Opera, in turn, invited Gerald Scarfe, a British political cartoonist known for his puppets and art direction, to create *The Magic Flute* for the 1993 season. It featured costumes that created larger-than-life silhouettes, enlarging the singers' bodies. The bright colors and addition of black lines on many edges called to mind his work as an illustrator. The LA Opera scheduled a fifth revival in the 2013–2014 season, but at the last minute substituted a new production created by Barrie Kosky, Susanne Andrade, and Paul Barritt for the Berlin Komische Oper in 2012. First spotted on a scouting trip in Germany by the President of the LA Opera, this new production was inspired by the silent movies of the 1920s and 1930s and seemed the perfect fit for the home of Hollywood. It combined animation with live action, and featured stunning scenes of singers interacting with hand-drawn animated characters.[28]

Opera and dance creators are well in the vanguard of experimenting with new forms or technology. One interesting new production includes *Hercules vs Vampire*s. Opera Theater Oregon partnered with Portland based Filmusik to combine a 1961 Italian film originally titled *Hercules in the Haunted World* with live singers and orchestra. The creative team theorized that the stories used in low budget cult cinema were just as outsized and dramatic as many classic opera plots. The production included the full movie, starring the 1958 Mr Universe bodybuilder Reg Park, screened behind live singers in what Opera Oregon terms "Operascope." The new commissioned score by Patrick Morganelli was substituted for the film's original soundtrack, with dialogue sung by live singers at the same time as the characters on the screen spoke. The performance offerings included related events such as a costume party, and popcorn vendors did a brisk business in the lobby. The performance was a sensation with critics that drew enthusiastic youthful audiences and also appealed to a film-industry crowd. Film director Mario Bava's work was "Low-budget but no joke . . . [he] put his mad stamp on Quentin Tarantino, Tim Burton, the Beastie Boys, and Joe Dante."[29]

Opera and dance have long been presented in a festival atmosphere, many performing during the summer. Festivals are a good way to see or work on several projects in a short period of time. Some companies use the festival to present fully produced work in repertory, others create chamber pieces or debut new works. Opera festivals must hire a costume staff sufficient to present several works in repertory, and this can offer excellent training. The Santa Fe Opera maintains a particularly well-regarded Apprentice Program in their large costume, crafts, and wig shops.

COSTUME FOR FILM, TV, AND THE WEB

Film costume design has experienced a renaissance in publicity not seen since the Hollywood Studio era, thanks to the extra materials on DVD releases of films; the tireless efforts of the Costume Designers Guild; and the recent proliferation of blogs by film costume aficionados or designers themselves. Mussenden,[5] a film costume designer (including movies such as *The Narnia Chronicles, Shrek, Shrek 2*, and *Wolverine*) explains: "In the 90s we were starting to realize if we don't publicize ourselves, no one is ever going to know what we do. We were constantly asked 'Do the actors bring their own clothes?' The publicity *has* gotten the layman to understand what we do, and to understand the complexity of it and how much we're involved." Worldwide exhibitions of film costumes have also contributed to public understanding of the costume design process.

Until recently, anyone interested in working in film had to move to Los Angeles or New York to break into the business. But that is no longer the case, with production companies and studios established in Canada, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, New Mexico, and Texas. In 2013 Louisiana lured the most major studio films and larger independent productions. California and Canada ranked second, but more than 40 states in the United States and 12 other countries offer tax credits and other incentives to entice film makers.[30] More locations mean that more people can work in film without having to move to one central location, and more than 1,000 Film Commission offices have opened across the United States to assist film makers with local crew, locations, and other production support services. Film crews can now create an entire career away from New York or Los Angeles, or gain experience before deciding to relocate to a major market.

Film costume design has evolved away from the studio system of the golden age, where resident and guest designers worked with a large workroom staff and huge costume stock to create films. When the studio system dissolved in the 1970s, many independent production companies sprang up in their place, and the studios themselves now concentrate less on production and more on development, deal making, and distribution. Some production companies organize to create a single film, intending to dissolve later. These companies do not want to invest in assets or equipment, and each film is financed separately. While it can take years to negotiate the development process, as soon as the

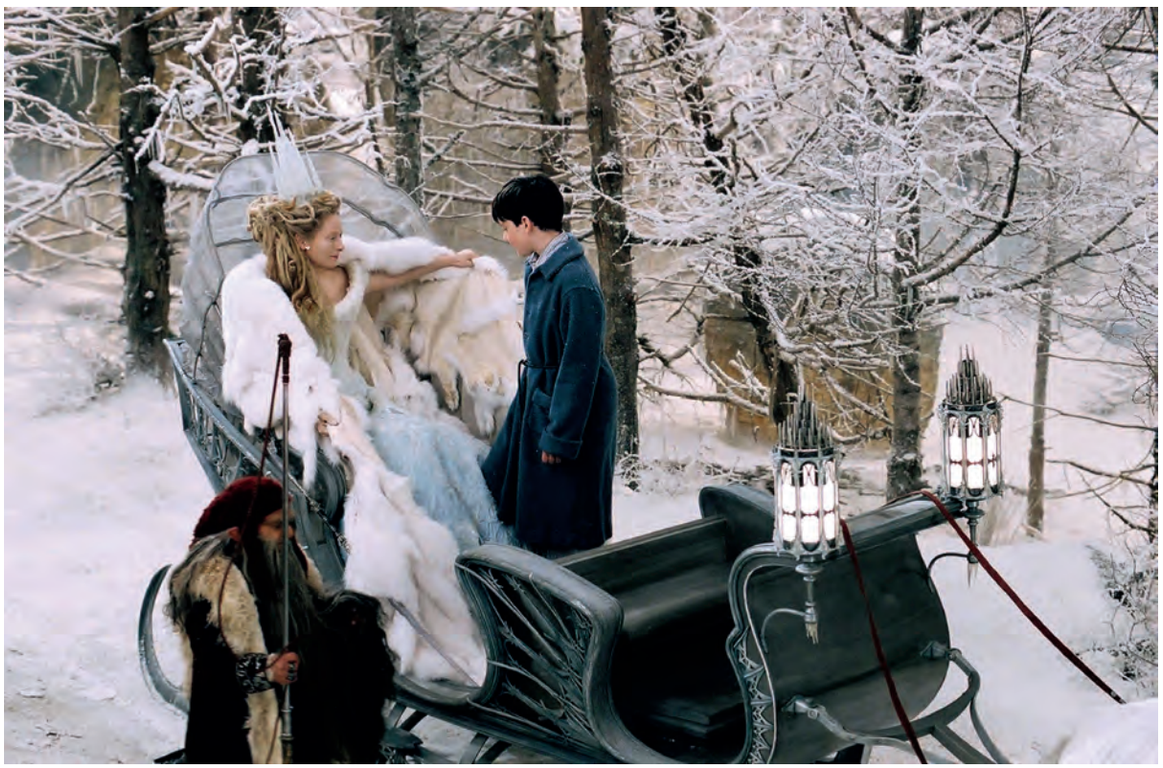

FIGURE 8.23 *Chronicles of Narnia:* The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe, *2005, with actors Tilda Swinton and Skandar Keynes. (Costume design by Isis Mussendon. Courtesy of Walt Disney Pictures/Walden Media/The Kobal Collection/Bray, Phil.)*

money is put together, a huge company of people must swing into action to start up, prepare, shoot, and wrap in a matter of months. That may mean building the infrastructure from scratch each and every time the designer begins a new project. Lead times are decreasing and locations are more far flung, so costume designers have to deploy a team and marshal resources rapidly. Hence, a designer's ability to manage logistics, as well as the artistic concerns, is a key element of each job. Producers may be absolutely unaware of the costume process and its needs, yet they perform a more overt presence in daily operations by micro-managing or sometime refusing to use resources or methods proposed by the designer. With all these pressures, costume designers try to work with valued team members again and again; they have to trust their crew to handle a lot of tasks efficiently. TV shows produce on an even faster cycle, with each episode put together within a 7 to 10 day production period. Recently, TV shows have started shooting several episodes simultaneously, contributing to an even more hectic pace.

Two people generally head the costume department: the costume designer and the wardrobe supervisor, and both are equally responsible for delivering the costumes to the camera on time. As Mussenden[5] explains "You are, no matter what, the head of your department. You are responsible creatively and logistically to pull it off. That is your job." Television designer Chrisi Karvonides-Dushenko (who worked on *American Horror Story*) notes that demonstrating an understanding of the logistics can be part of the interview for some projects: "If I can't propose *how* a show can be done in the interview, then I have no business being in the room."[31] Indeed, the job is so complex that "the personal characteristics of a successful costumer in terms of intelligence, problem solving ability, creativity, management abilities, and leadership abilities are such that, if they were so motivated, they are capable of running a large country," designer Stephanie Schoelzel notes wryly.[32]

Daunting as it may sound, costume design for film is a rewarding career that many would like to try. New technologies

FIGURE 8.24 *Triphammer, a recurring character in the streaming series Powers for Sony PlayStation Network. (Costume design by Wendy Greiner. Illustrator: Mariano A. Diaz.)*

in digital design and recording are encouraging more crossover projects between film and live performance, and hence many costume designers may work in some aspect of film regardless of the medium of the final performance. Every designer approaches this amalgam of logistics and art differently: "Some go right to the color palette first . . . some people are drawn to the lead character first." Mussenden[5] continues, "I can't begin until I have an end. What is the truth in this script? What story are we trying to tell? I approach it very much like an actor or a director. I can't even think about a piece of clothing until I break down the script. How many days, where we are, the economic level, and how many changes they have. It's different if they have three changes or 42 changes—the stakes are higher, then . . . Some people leave it to their script supervisor to break down the script, but I can't do that. It's part of my process. Until I know whether the big change is a three-minute scene or a forty- minute one, that's when I know where I'm telling my story. And . . . how to spend the energies and money." Costume designer Sophie de Rakoff (who has worked on *Legally Blonde* and *Legally Blonde 2)* notes that: "Ground Zero for all costume designers is character and how to realize this. When you know your character, you know their wardrobe. [For this reason] Costume designers often have a very intimate relationship with the actors, sometimes as intimate as the director's."[4]

> **"I truly believe everyone needs to know Illustrator or Photoshop. That is a prerequisite. I find that a young person coming into the business that doesn't understand that—there is no excuse."**
>
> **Isis Mussenden[5] from a personal interview**

Mussendon[5] has advice for those looking for entry-level positions in film costume design. "They need to organize information well. How to organize, how to shrink files and send them in the best resolution for an iPad—that's how all information is shared these days." Technology is also used to tinker with fitting photos: "Directors and producers can't read a fitting photo, and do not understand that the part sticking out with the safety pins will be gone. They worry the actor will look fat, when they are really looking at extra fabric." She uses an assistant with Photoshop skills to smooth out the alterations on the photos to show what the costume *will* look like when it is finished. "I choose the best photos, and they organize [the presentation] and send it on to the director. And it's a good check for me, to see the decisions I made will work." Although the Technical PA position is relatively new, and is not yet regulated by any union, it is an ideal way to join a design team and learn the ropes. For example, the TV series *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* hired a technical PA to screen-capture purchased clothing from online sources and wrap those garments around the actors' bodies in Photoshop in order to communicate what the characters would look like to the director, producer, and actors.

Although Mussenden is comfortable with many aspects of digital work after working on *Shrek* and *The Narnia Chronicles,* she points out that the costume design profession is in transition, with many established designers unable to use the required software. "They don't have time to sit down to learn it. . . . Young people entering the profession can get jobs if they demonstrate those skills. Everyone needs a person to do all that." Those interested

in costume supervisor work have to be proficient in at least one costume management software program, such as CostumePro™ and CPlotPro™. The latest innovation, SyncOnSe™, is available as a free download to individuals, who can learn to use it on their own or take a number of workshops. Costume designers working in independent film with a smaller team may have to use this software themselves in order to manage their department.

Another skill costume designers must master is an understanding of fitting and construction. While they may never do these tasks themselves, a clear understanding of construction will help a designer to achieve a final look through their fabric choices, and their understanding of the human body. Like many designers, Mussenden started her career in a theatrical costume shop. Her first job was stitching for the New York Shakespeare Festival. "You learn the human body by draping it, and drawing it," she notes. "You can flat pattern to your heart's desire, but until you see what the fabric is going to do, you can't tell. Will it bounce? Is the skirt going to look twice as wide because of the fabric, or will it fall like a wet noodle?" After working with the head draper, she was spotted by Jane Greenwood, who hired her to work in her office, the Costume Depot, for seven months. "She taught me how to research, [and] how to pinpoint [exactly what the costume should look like]."

At the beginning of their career, costume designers may work for free on small student films or short independent projects, while augmenting their income with crew work on other films, or working in costume rental houses, or indeed any number of day jobs. These first jobs teach the beginning professional how to anticipate the pacing of productions, how each item will appear through a camera lens, how the typical film arranges into departments and responsibilities, and how to communicate with the other personnel. With experience and connections, early-career designers then transition into low budget independent film, commercials, and music videos, also joining another designer's team on higher budget projects as they progress in the field. Designers post their reels online to document their working style. Mussenden notes that she spent ten years working her way up through the system, and there are many new opportunities now available through web series. For many designers, these early assignments are usually working with contemporary clothing, and they will soon learn several 20th century decades or genre styles, such as mastering the immediate character identification necessary for episodic stories like TV sitcom *The Big Bang Theory;* or learning to create the more complex character arcs evident in longer feature films.

For those wishing to start a career in film and TV, designers Holly Cole and Kristin Burke have written a definitive book explaining the entire process, entitled *Costuming for Film: The Art and the Craft*,[33] with over 570 pages of detail. For a shorter introduction to the theory of film costume design, consult Richard La Motte's book *Costume Design 101: The Art and Business of Costume Design for Film and Television*.[34]

Costume Designer, Costume Stylist, Wardrobe Supervisor, Costumer, Concept Artist

Throughout film history, there has been a grey area between the roles of costume designer, costume supervisor and, with the advent of films derived from comics or fantasy franchises, the concept artist. From its earliest days, film costume designers were used to create elaborate period looks for high budget films based on literature or stage plays. These were called "prestige" films, and they often featured famous stage stars appearing on screen, such as Sarah Bernhardt. One designer who created both sets and costumes was Natasha Rambova, who is credited with introducing the Art Deco visual style to the American mass public in the 1921 film *Camille*.

Each studio established costume manufacturing workrooms to create these films and costume their stars. At the same time, they also maintained large wardrobe inventories of garments to use in contemporary dress films or low budget projects.

FIGURE 8.25 *Film still from* Camille, *1921. Art Direction and Costume Design by Natasha Rambova. (Metro Pictures Corporation. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.)*

Background characters, if not fully designed for the production, were costumed by the Wardrobe Supervisor and their staff, titled Costumers. Costumers worked in the studio warehouse and were authorized to pull together character looks using items in stock. Other costumers worked on set to handle and maintain the costumes during shooting and wrap. Studios did not always assign a designer to their lower budget films, instead substituting a wardrobe supervisor and costumers. This historical split of duties creates a tension still alive today, when a producer tries to cut expenses by eliminating the costume designer or releasing them early from a project, opting instead to use a wardrobe supervisor to assemble costumes from available sources.

In recent decades some projects have adapted a position created in the fashion and print professions: the Stylist. The stylist crafts marketable images using existing fashion or costume elements and is an essential part of promoting fashion in print or on the runway. Commercials, music videos, and red-carpet gowns were the initial crossover media for stylists who became costume designers. Arianna Phillips' career as a costume designer owes much to the impact she created as Madonna's stylist.

The latest development to muddy these waters is the immense popularity of film series adapted from branded characters, such as comic book superheroes. Many of these characters are initially drawn by concept artists during the story development phase, perhaps even before a script is finished. When the project has a green-light, a costume designer may be handed a series of sketches to bring to life, or may be asked to design costumes for all the human characters, but not be involved in the superhero costumes. One costume designer who has negotiated this ground well is Alexandra Byrne, who designed the costumes for *The Avengers* and *Guardians of the Galaxy*. She explains that adding a human actor into the mix will change everything. "You always, always start with the comics . . . Marvel has a visual development team and they are the experts on the comic book characters. But, also, the crucial part of creating one of these characters is the casting. So, you can draw and draw

FIGURE 8.26 & 8.27 *Two characters in the* Powers *comic series, and a streaming series on Sony's PlayStation Network.* (left) *Zora (Costume design by Wendy Greiner; Illustration by Liuba Randolph).* (right) *Retro Girl (Costume design by Wendy Greiner; Illustration by Oksana Nedavniaya).*

away, and design and do all you want—until you've got your casting, you don't know what the physicalization of this character is going to be . . . and making it into a practical action garment becomes another whole thing."[35]

COSTUMES AND ANIMATED PERFORMANCE

Animated characters as we now know them have come a long way since the first one in 1911, Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo*. The character and costume were developed as one concept expressed largely through exaggerated silhouette and hand-drawn lines. Costumes served as iconic identification, much like a clown suit, and most early characters did not change their clothing from story to story. One exception to this approach was *Betty Boop*, created in 1930 as a spoof of Jazz Age flapper girls.[36] Although she wore an iconic look—a strapless, short dress with a garter—she would also wear entirely different costumes for certain plots, such as a grass skirt with only a lei to cover her torso.

Traditional, or hand-drawn, two-dimensional animation emphasized fluid movement to create the illusion that characters had come to life. The technique relied on simplification to work properly. Characters were not dressed with much regard to historical or cultural accuracy, and a look back at some of the original animated stories strike contemporary audiences as culturally insensitive. The role of costumes on characters began to change dramatically with the advent of CGI (computer generated imagery). "There is a growing awareness in animation (overlapping into live-action CG animation) that clothing on animated

Unraveling Costume Job Terminology

- Costume Designers: create both the individual characters in a story and the overall picture of texture, color, and tone for the larger costume conceptual approach. In film, they function as one of the two Department Heads, with the Wardrobe Supervisor. In live theater, the Costume Designer often also creates the makeup and hair styles, working with makeup and hair artists to complete those looks.
- Assistant or Associate Costume Designers: work with the Lead Designer to complete a specified aspect of the design, as defined by each association. Some examples include assisting with sourcing, or taking charge of specific types of costumes such as a chorus, military uniforms, or menswear.
- Stylists: use existing fashion garments and costume elements to create marketable images in the fashion print or on the runway, or to create a wardrobe for a specific person or special event.
- Wardrobe Supervisors: work as the financial and operations part of a film team, responsible for daily operations, logistics, and personnel. In live theater, a Wardrobe Supervisor may be another term used for a Costume Director, particularly for theaters who do not employ a full-time staff. Touring productions use a Wardrobe Supervisor to accompany the tour to oversee local or traveling crews and to maintain the costumes.
- Costume Directors: usually employed by an institution as the Department Head. They have more extensive duties than a Costume Shop Manager, including strategic planning for multiple or large scale projects, some design duties, and budget forecasting and tracking.
- Costumers: perform different functions depending on location or medium. In live theater, a Costumer can be a general term for crew members working in the costume department. Themed Entertainment Costumers oversee the costumes in a particular attraction or live show. Film Costumers operate in several ways: handling garments in a rental warehouse; pulling character costumes under the direction of a Designer or Wardrobe Supervisor; preparing film costumes in a staging area; or operating on the set of a film or photo shoot to dress actors, and handle and maintain costumes in front of the camera.
- Costume Illustrators: create renderings under the direction of a Costume Designer to communicate the finished look of a character. Union Illustrators are represented by the **Costume Designers Guild**.
- Concept Artists: work as part of the pre-visualization process for a film, video game, or animation. Originally derived from the process of creating film storyboards or comic books, the position transitioned into use for complex fantasy projects requiring lengthy visual development, such as animation or themed entertainment. Concept Artists may define the general approach for branded assets (characters), such as superheroes, before a Costume Designer joins the team.

characters can no longer merely be part of the graphically-silhouetted character itself. [Technology had now] necessitated treating clothing as almost a separate entity with its own properties and behaviors." observes Jean Gillmore, the costume designer for Disney's *Frozen*.[37]

Ogres are Like Onions

One landmark breakthrough for animated characters was the Dreamworks hit *Shrek*. The project required three years to make and incorporated more sophisticated facial animation, combined with a more complex background and a larger number of effects, than any animated film before it. The visual style consciously combined stylization and the illusion of realism to strike the right visual balance in a story that combined human characters with fantasy and animal characters. Visual effects supervisor Ken Bielenberg explained the overall approach: "There are so many things that go into creating believable humans. The audience is not terribly forgiving of human characters because everyone consciously or not is studying human behavior every day. And if we don't get the major aspects correct, something is going to feel wrong. One of the things we have to do is . . . find the level of stylization that would be appropriate for the design of the film. It seems like it would be obvious looking at the end product, but it wasn't obvious at the time . . . We weren't trying to make a photo-real movie, it was a stylized realism."[38] The skin and clothing textures were legendary accomplishments, as soft surfaces are the most difficult to create with CGI. Bielenberg continues, "The clothing was a big challenge . . . We decided to do tight fitting clothing using our proprietary tool—layering clothing is fairly difficult. We had to figure out getting the right things to wrinkle as the characters move."

> "That was how it started—Fiona's skirt was the first piece in CG animation to work independently of the anatomy. And from there we took off."
>
> Isis Mussenden[5] from a personal interview

FIGURE 8.28 *The characters Shrek and Fiona in the animated film* Shrek. *Fiona's skirt was the first costume piece in CGI animation to move independently of the underlying anatomy. (Courtesy of Paramount/The Kobal Collection.)*

Veteran film costume designer Mussenden[5] designed the costumes for both *Shrek* and *Shrek 2*. The technology was in its infancy, and she helped to develop some of the new techniques. She notes that in animation the creative teams "drew everything and fed it to the animators . . . that were creating the software for rendering fabrics; and educating them on trims." Mussenden had to learn to work with animators who began with a maquette of the body. Before *Shrek*, every costume had been moved by the three-dimensional framework of anatomy below it. The costume, in other words, was a type of layer over the figure, explaining the tightly fitted clothing with a few wrinkles added that most animated characters wear. But the Shrek creators wanted a more realistic approach. "They knew Fiona was going to wear a dress which moves independently from her anatomy [but] they did not know where to begin," Mussenden recalls. One of the *Shrek* producers had worked with Mussenden years ago on another project and asked her to help them bridge this gap. "So I started with Fiona's dress. I made a one-quarter scale pattern for the skirt. They needed to know what the volume was, because it was 3D not 2D. Where does it hit on the hip, and where does it move out? Where is the fullness? We worked with a dancer, and I worked with a pattern maker. So I would design and we would pattern and we'd give them patterns with all the seams at the one-quarter scale. The seams were labeled A to A and B to B, C to C, D to D. And they would match it up on the computer."

Background characters in animation function somewhat like those in film; they have a less specific look. In animation, they are called *generic* looks. "I would build a file of three silhouettes of skirts, two silhouettes of blouses, four sleeves—almost like Colorforms—to put together." As the animation progressed with a need for 200 people outside the castle, Mussenden would assess the scene requirements. She determined if the audience will see the first 20, or first 50, background characters: beyond that, "We're going to see a lot of heads, so we need more headdresses." She was a stickler as regards making the generic crowd appear to have individual characteristics, and used the usual design tools: "One was silhouette, just like Costuming 101, then texture and color. Those were the three things I needed to concentrate on—just like I would in a live action film. I took a lot of my live action sensibility and used it in CG animation to make it interesting; and I took my CG animation knowledge, which is how to multiply things, and took that back to live action for *Narnia*."

Animation is a complete design experience that few real life costume designers get to practice; creating the shoes, the jewelry, and every textile pattern from scratch. But even in this process there are limitations: "You have different parameters of things you can and can't do. As my producer would always remind me 'It's not that we *can't* do it, but *that* [idea] would take 100 hours of time whereas *this* [idea] would take four.' So it was a budgetary thing. But at the same time, I didn't have to make 17 skirts because it was live action and there are so many stunt doubles and photo doubles,' Mussenden notes.

Each new animated film wants to incorporate a higher standard in detail and believability. Claudia Chung, the Simulation Director for Disney's 2012 feature *Brave*, discusses their method for creating virtual clothing. Using the same method Mussenden described for *Shrek*, the *Brave* animators modeled the garments in three dimensions first, and then virtually sewed the garments together around the characters body. "All our tailors take actual sewing classes . . . Our tailors have their own identity. They think of themselves as tailors. If you look at the way we credit them, we credit them as tailors or simulation artists. What I have noticed over the last ten years is that more and more people are choosing tailoring or simulation as a discipline . . . I'm hoping even more people become interested after *Brave*," Chung says.[39]

One hundred years after *Little Nemo*, Disney's animated feature *Frozen* became "the most elaborate costume-animated CG film to date," says Art Director Mike Giaimo. Two sisters grow from childhood to adulthood, navigating difficult social dilemmas and adventure. The costume changes follow live theatrical tradition, rather than the animation tradition of establishing iconic looks. This costume design process is thoroughly documented in *Tyranny of Style*, a blog dedicated to the study of costume design in entertainment. Art Director Giamo brought in Jean Gillmore to create the characters' extensive wardrobes. Gillmore began her career as a Character Designer, a position that is a cross between Animator and Concept Artist. "This was not a titled position for me on this picture—you'll find me lumped in with the other Visual Development artist credits," she explains. "I never set out to be a Costume Designer for animation . . . but I always had a love and interest in historical/ethnic costume . . . so was often handed the task of researching the period/place for details. On top of my animation career, I used to design and sew costumes to wear on the side, so that too taught me a lot about construction and materials. Guess it was fate."[37]

The design process for *Frozen* followed the usual steps of gathering research that helped Gilmore to understand and translate a high level of detail using "innumerable photos and odd pieces of actual garments and trim . . . My general approach was to meld the historic silhouettes of 1840 Western Europe (give or take) with the shapes and garment relationships and details of folk costume in early Norway, *c.* 19th century . . . At one point I gathered some images of the crisp, graphic shapes typical of

Dior fashions, thinking maybe that would help Mike [Giamo] articulate . . . his shape language for the entire picture. It did."

Video Games Reinvent Reality

"If you're not screaming at the screen, whoever made that game might not get to make another one" says the game designer and producer Tom Meigs. While this may be a slight exaggeration, he lists the goals for the typical game as "developing innovative, re-playable, highly addictive, and lasting play."[40] Now considered in its seventh generation, gaming is maturing; with story and aesthetic points trumping sustained action.

Game development and design, just like performance genres, is a complex web of interdependent functions created by very large teams. Character design is an important part of consumer appeal, and costume design is a specialty as technology evolves to feature more realistic detail. Rockstar Games, a leader in the game industry, hired a costume designer for *Grand Theft Auto Five*. They turned to Lyn Paolo, an Emmy Award winning TV designer (for example, *Scandal*, *Homefront*, and *The West Wing*), and her experience is documented on the costume blog *Tyranny of Style*. Rockstar Games kept most of the details a secret to protect their game until its release date, so Paolo worked from detailed concept boards. "We scanned the real people in real time and in 3D into the computers and those images were then altered, adjusted for the game so one person could become several people."[41]

"Once we have the concept boards, we then discuss each character with the design team [then] I went to work finding an array of clothing that defined each character," Paolo described her process. After she sketched what the characters would wear, the animators made 3D scans of each person in the game. "We created a database of many accessories so that Rockstar would have a lot of images to pull and add to each character as the game progressed." Paolo compared the process to designing a film or TV show, noting: "It is not as complicated in terms of alterations because often before a character is scanned, we can just pin clothes and not have to alter them in such a detailed way as I would on a show . . . Fit is not as important and we can tweak things." The animation process allowed her the opportunity to change color and tone after each character is scanned.

The newest digital innovation widely available to costume and character designers is Marvelous Designer, a three-dimensional pattern-based design tool, using the idea of digital tailoring that has been described by Mussendon and Claudia Chung. It was used to create the character designs for the game

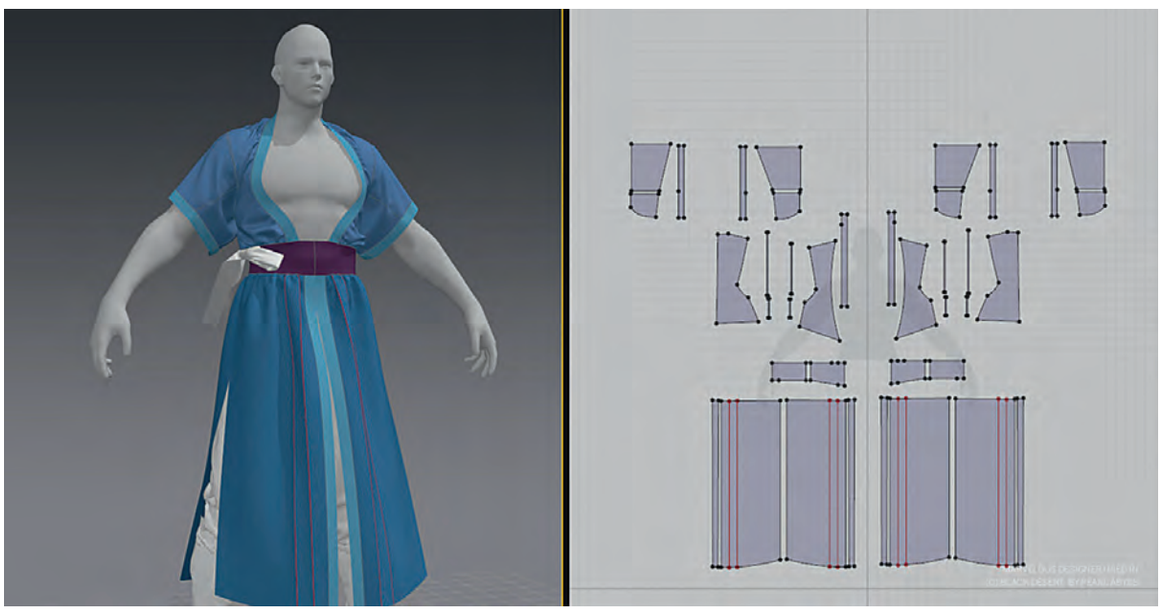

FIGURE 8.29 *Software company Marvelous Designer created many innovations that allow designers to wrap garment patterns around a virtual character to create a costume. (Senior Character Artist at Pearl Abyss: YoontekOh. Screen capture courtesy of Marvelous Designer, CLO Virtual Fashion Inc.)*

Assassin's Creed Revelations and *Unity* and by Weta Digital Studios to create background characters in *The Hobbit*. This software is unusual in that those with an understanding of garment patterns and how clothing is worn will have a distinct advantage when learning how to use it. This approach may be the future of costume design for many styles of projects.

COSTUMES FOR THEMED ENTERTAINMENT

Those who work in theme parks can easily explain their job satisfaction. "The best live theater show I ever did was seen by maybe 20,000 people. But the smallest thing I did for a theme park touches millions of lives around the world—my work is in their family photos!" explained one costume designer who works in both areas. Karen Rivera,[42] the Head of Costume Production at Universal Studios Hollywood, noticed that when the Transformers characters walk into the park every day "Everyone wants their pictures taken with them! They are so unique and they have been done so well, even adults become children again. And that's the idea—to present world class entertainment." In a time saturated with small media devices and blurring distinctions between professional and amateur content, themed entertainment offers well-executed playful human interaction.

Themed entertainment is a broad term encompassing a global industry more accurately referred to as *experiential entertainment*. The Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) describes their nearly 1,000 members as the creators, developers, designers, and producers of compelling places and experiences. Once limited to a few parks and attractions, this form of entertainment expanded rapidly during the 1980s to include all manner of destinations: resorts, restaurants, casinos, cruise-ship lines, museums, discovery centers, zoos, haunted houses, and retail stores. For decades, the industry leader in immersive themed entertainment was the Walt Disney Company, when the 1955 opening of Disneyland transformed the successful animation, TV, and music studio into pioneers of a new form of entertainment. Industry insiders currently argue that Universal Studios may have set a new high standard with the 2014 Diagon Alley expansion of The Wizarding World of Harry Potter in Orlando, Florida. "Historically, Disney set the standard for immersiveness and Universal led the way in the visceral," notes Kile Ozier, a Creative Director and Concept Developer, "but with the opening of the Harry Potter attractions, the bar has been raised".[43] Many major theme parks created unique identities to appeal to different markets. The Walt Disney Company expanded to six resort destinations featuring their unique interpretation of traditional fairytales. Universal Studios expanded to four resorts capitalizing on their historic role in movies, but Legoland also appeals to children and the eternally young, while parks such as Magic Mountain and Six Flags specialize in thrill rides and roller coasters set in themed environments.

FIGURE 8.30 *Costumed characters Optimus Prime and Bumble Bee from* The Transformers® *appear at regular intervals to amaze their fans in the Universal Studios theme parks. (Photo by Prayitno Hadinata.)*

The Experiential Story

"Experience design is largely non-scripted," explains Phil Hetema,[44] who has directed the design and production of theme parks, rides, and shows for over 35 years. Writers or producers provide a guiding narrative, but designers must be excellent interpreters in order to create the final experience. The immersive experience must be "immediately accessible to the audience through non-verbal, emotional impact," Hetema notes, "we must rip you from your world and put you in ours." Experiential design, he explains, is one of the most collaborative design fields. "It's not a linear process, it is interdisciplinary, somewhat like a jazz band with all members improvising, or like creating a video game where there are multiple purposes." Experiential design, therefore, is creating an entire world for the visitor to step into, and telling a story with

visual clues. "It is a constant battle between complexity and clarity. And good design is born from that reasonable conflict." Costume designers also negotiate the unscripted nature of a project; they must work with all the information their audience already knows about each character.

Experiential storytelling differs dramatically from much traditional live theater that relies on a fixed playing space. The theater audience sits around a poetic space, and performers enter to act parts of the story. Jumps in time or place are designated by pauses in the action, dimming lights, new scenic elements brought into the space, or other transitions to reset the space. Experiential entertainment is structured the opposite way—every sequence of the story is set into its own fully developed environment. The audience travels through the story on a designated path or track, and seeing ahead on the ride or path is like peeking ahead in a book. These architectural roots for stories can now be seen in themed restaurants, museums, and shopping malls.

Just as with commercial theater or film, themed or experiential design is irrevocably intertwined with financial considerations that must be duly considered from the start. The successful designer will determine early in the process what factors drive the decisions. Is it *time*: a schedule that cannot fall behind? This might be the case for seasonal attractions such as Halloween haunted houses, when an attraction that opens 30 days late is of no use, no matter how innovative the design details. Another version of this scenario is a themed environment project nearing its construction completion that must add live shows or other costumes late in the overall process. Is the driving factor *quality*: a client may be looking for a flagship experience. Such was the case for The Wizarding World of Harry Potter, whose high quality versions of the worlds created for the most successful book and movie franchise in history drew millions of visitors from around the world, setting new attendance records. Author J.K. Rowling and Universal Studios understood that disappointing a global constituency of All-Things-Harry could have ruined the entire brand for millions of people. Or is the driving decision *cost*: there may be an admission price point the producer cannot cross, thereby limiting the amount of short-term investment. In this case, the designer must consider ways to get as much of the budget in front of the audience as possible, instead of making decisions that could be too expensive over the life of the project.

"At the risk of taking the glamor out of the creative aspects, it *is* a business and must operate efficiently and economically—with regard to both materials and labor—whether you are producing a one-time parade experience, or an entire theme park with many attractions and entertainment venues," explains Karen Weller,[45] a costuming veteran who has worked with Universal Studios in Japan and Singapore, and is currently a partner in The Costume Connection. "Those experienced in theater are no strangers to the concept of balancing time, cost, and quality in the pursuit of a successful product."

The Design Development

Themed entertainment projects are enormous undertakings that can require years to fully develop and build. Financial analysts speculate Universal spent $265 million dollars on The Wizarding World of Harry Potter, with an additional $400 million dollars for the Diagon Alley extension.[46] With such large undertakings and so much money at stake, a theme park will contract many of the physical and creative steps to other firms, each with different specializations: for example, landscape engineering, architectural theming, ride or mechanical engineering, special effects, entertainment production, and costume design and production. The theme park owner or the developer begins with some idea of the general content: rides and attractions based on a movie franchise, or the rights to use characters originally created for other media such as films or comics. The preliminary design begins with a site visit and feasibility study: real estate planning, land and road developers, legal and permit research, repurposing of older assets, and initial budgets. An important outcome of this phase is the overall physical layout of the attraction called a "bubble diagram," and perhaps some early concept art. This art may be drawn by development company illustrators, or by other artists, in order to communicate the major components. These drawings suggest the basic direction well before individual designers are involved in the project.

Each element indicated on the bubble diagram may be, in turn, subcontracted to other design firms, where the creative staff might inherit that preliminary concept art from early meetings or several proposals. The disjointed approach and long lead times create large communication challenges from the very start. Phil Hettema, a renowned theme park designer, described these challenges when speaking to a group of designers at a recent conference. "We can be working on a site three years before they've written the show to go into it" he notes, so the design firm must fill in a lot of information gaps to proceed.[44] The first step is to break the large project into smaller parts to prevent feeling overwhelmed. Such parts might include: the waiting area for the line outside a ride or attraction; an interior waiting area that sets the story using walk-through techniques; an elevator up or down to the start of the ride; the individual segments of the ride; and the off -loading area. Most importantly, each area must contribute something to the overall story.

Every firm employs creative personnel and designers who assemble all the background information to create a "project brief," which provides overarching guidance. After extensive research and preparation, the next step is to hold a brainstorming session called a design "**charrette**" to flesh out the initial general concepts into producible ideas. Each layer of the planning process hones the big plan into distinct areas within the park, the buildings, or the attractions, and then the décor that contributes to the story, called "theming," is considered. It is at this relatively late date that costume designers often join the process. Bonnie Sinclair,[47] a veteran costume designer for themed entertainment, notes that even though they may join the process last, the park characters are often a strong element of any experiential entertainment.

> "People never leave a theme park wanting to be a castle . . . They want to be one of the characters they've just seen."
>
> Bonnie Sinclair[47] from a personal interview

Costume designers are particularly interested in what kind of character will tell each part of the story most effectively: an animatronic character, live performers, pre-filmed video of live action performance, and the ride operators themselves. Every element must enhance the experience, with visitors piecing a story together as they move through the park or attraction. The designers conduct extensive artistic, cultural, and literary research on the given theme, even going so far as to visit far flung locales for inspiration, if possible. Cultural advisers consult with the theme park producer and design firms to prevent accidental offenses to the visitors, or to outline climate concerns in each location.

The costume designer for themed entertainment begins their process in the same way as every costume designer: with their own research, creating mood boards for initial artistic communication, followed by several steps to create the final designs. But costume designers Weller and Sinclair note that they also have to be very proactive when they join the multi-year process already under way. Recognizing that the buildings themselves were designed years before the parade or show to fill it, they need to assess the overall costume protocol, and not just the design. Sinclair once discovered that a building created to store and stage a parade presented severe obstacles. The dressing rooms had been located on the top floor to use space efficiently, but once the performers dressed in their large dragon costumes, they could not fit down the staircase. Furthermore, the fully decorated and assembled floats could not fit through the exterior doors with all the elements in place.

Every themed entertainment costumer must be comfortable with several formats, and be particularly skilled at communication so that they can collaborate with the unusually high number of parties involved in each decision. Themed entertainment costume designers categorize the characters they create in two ways: general characters, and specific branded characters such as Mickey Mouse, Shrek, or Harry Potter, whose appearance must meet strict guidelines. Consequently, many more levels of authority will have approvals over each design, such as company executives, agents and rights holders, and legal consultants. Ideas may be refused or amended for arcane reasons, but the costume designer must acquiesce. Each step adds many considerations and can create time delays when the clock is ticking towards opening day.

Practical Considerations for Costumes

Many characters in themed entertainment are anthropomorphic mixtures of human, fantasy, or animal forms, creating interesting challenges for the costumer and the performer. Designing and building these **character costumes**, sometimes referred to as "walk-arounds," requires special artistry, knowledge of ergonomics, and health and safety considerations. These costumes should meld with human physiognomy, but will disguise—to one extent or another—how a person inhabits the interior. Even well-crafted character costumes can still be incredibly difficult to wear. In spite of hidden eye screens for the performer to see where they are going, visibility is often limited. Fans and cooling vests can be built into large costumes, but the outdoor work in most theme parks still creates a hot, sweaty environment. Performers in hot costumes will enter the park to interact in character for controlled times such as 15 to 30 minutes, and then leave through hidden paths for an extended break. The costumes themselves also endure rugged climate conditions such as sun-fading and rain, as well as special effects, such as bromine used in water shows as a purifier, that will fade materials or render them brittle.

There are a number of hidden functional considerations that must be introduced into character costume design, such as whether a performer must dress or undress without help. The costume must break down in special sections for dressing, maintenance, and storage. Some large character costumes, for example, have removable hoops or padded under structures called "pods" so the storage area can accommodate many duplicates. "When we introduce new characters to the park we have to plan enough room to store *that* many large items," notes Rivera,[42] the Manager of Production-Entertainment Costuming for Universal Studios, Hollywood. Some of the very large character

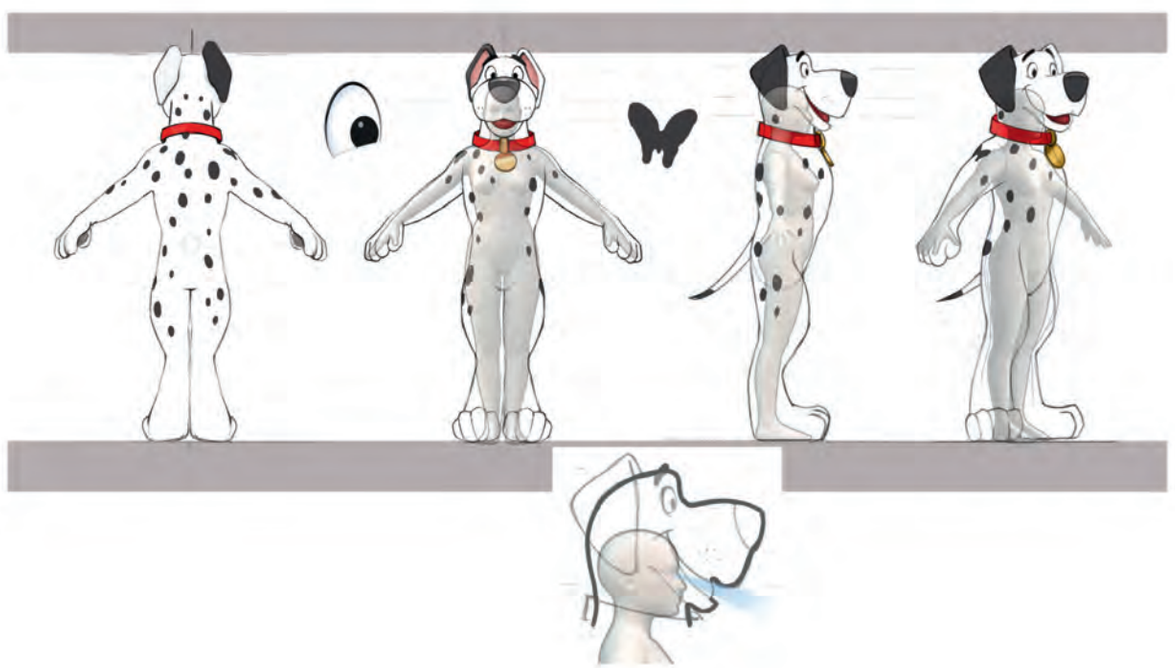

FIGURE 8.31 *Costume design for the costumed character Lucky the Rescue Dog™. This schematic drawing indicates sightline, and size and proportions in relation to the performer. Costume Designer Bonnie Sinclair uses this style of sketch as a blueprint for construction and fit. (Courtesy of the Herschend Family Corporation.)*

costumes she must consider include: Marge Simpson, whose body and hair towers well over 7 feet; the Despicable Me Minions who have short and very wide padded frames; and the staggering Transformers figures such as Optimus Prime, whose costume is over 10 feet tall. Built by Michael Curry Design, the Transformer costume parts are so cleverly assembled it is difficult to determine where the human performer sits inside the complex construction, allowing viewers to believe they are actually seeing a large robot. Performers inside these types of costumes must also meet specific requirements regarding height, weight, shoe size range, and ability to operate the mechanisms.

One important feature of any theme park experience is Operations Costumes: the ensembles designed for employees in the park. Most visitors neglect to give this large part of their experience much thought, but employee appearance must also contribute to the story, work within a specific area or attraction, operate as the public face of the park, and serve as functional clothing. Managing operations costumes requires more than knowing what the costume should look like; the costumer must be familiar with both garment manufacture techniques used in fashion and those used in theatrical costume design. Some examples of these skills include: understanding the role of prototypes; creating garments for affordable mass manufacture; predicting how size range grading may affect the design; negotiating manufacture with specific vendors who may require spec sheets, a prototype, or patterns; surface embellishment such as embroidery or printing and sublimation; and resourcing materials in large quantities. "In order to advance within the field, one needs to sharpen leadership abilities and financial expertise," Weller[45] recommends.

Haunts and Horrors

In 1973 Knott's Berry Farm, a Western-themed amusement park in Southern California, introduced its nighttime alter ego Knott's Scary Farm to produce an annual Halloween Haunt.[48] This seasonal attraction intended to tempt prior guests into repeat visits, and widen the park's appeal to teen and adult audiences. It set a new standard for an otherwise seasonal Halloween industry largely run by low budget independent presenters of

local haunted houses or mazes. The concept was so successful, it spread to other theme parks and attractions, creating a new wave of employment for experiential entertainment creators of every kind.

Theme parks and stand-alone Halloween attractions are now packed with visitors lining up to see favorite attractions or new additions. The parks are subdivided into scare zones or mazes (a portable haunted house style experience), and some

FIGURES 8.32–8.37 *Costume designs for operations wardrobe to be worn by employees within a themed environment. Unrealized project, inspired by costumes for the HBO hit series,* Game of Thrones. *(Costume design by R. Gwyneth Conaway Bennison.)*

feature live shows. By 2014 Knotts Scary Farm produced ten fully themed mazes featuring new content or reworking existing ideas aptly named Voodoo, The Gunslinger's Grave, Black Magic, and Pinocchio Unstrung. Universal Studios began their own Halloween Horror Nights in 1991—a logical extension of their place in film history with monster and horror films such as the classic *Frankenstein*. Their 2014 season featured a maze based on the hit TV show *The Walking Dead*, and the 1981 film *An American Werewolf in London*. Combining puppetry, "scare-actors," and three-dimensional video, it proved to be a crowd pleaser. The Walt Disney Company creates a family friendly Halloween, featuring their classic Haunted Mansion, as well as characters from *Nightmare Before Christmas*. These haunted themed attractions provide a large seasonal opportunity for actors, costumers, makeup artists, and puppeteers. The wardrobe departments begin work for Halloween during the summer, providing about three months to revamp returning attractions and to prepare new ones. The independent haunted attraction business itself expanded in the past 20 years with haunted houses or mazes growing in cities or regions without major theme parks. These haunted venues run the gamut from creating temporary pop-ups in parks and parking lots to sophisticated haunt companies such as Midnight Productions, featuring the 40,000 square foot attraction The 13th Gate, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Experiential entertainment now influences traditional theatrical performances through the innovative and wildly successful efforts of immersive theater company Punchdrunk. The London-based company created *Sleep No More*, a site-specific version of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, first in London, and then in New York. Actors create scenes within the environment, and true to theme park format, the audience moves from space to space. Taking a cue from both themed entertainment and video games, the environment itself holds clues for the audience to examine. Punchdrunk's latest show, *The Drowned Man: A Hollywood Fable*, took place in a building near Paddington Station in London. The company transformed the dreary offices into an eerie Hollywood studio of the 1960s, loosely adapting another classic script for the narrative, Buchner's play *Woyzeck*. Both productions ask the audience to experience only some portions of the story, possibly returning several times to piece together the entire experience.

Starting a career in themed entertainment requires, like any other profession, a network of contacts. Many theme parks will hire entry-level costumers as wardrobe issue and maintenance, checking costumes in and out to the various performers who work in the park. But Rivera[42] stresses: "The chances are small you will be working in the theme park itself. That is not where

Mickey's Ten Commandments

1. Know your audience: Don't bore people, talk down to them, or lose them by assuming that they know what you know.
2. Wear your guest's shoes: Insist that designers, staff, and your board members experience your facility as visitors as often as possible.
3. Organize the flow of people and ideas: Use good storytelling techniques, tell good stories not lectures, lay out your exhibit with a clear logic.
4. Create a weenie: Lead visitors from one area to another by creating visual magnets and giving visitors rewards for making the journey.
5. Communicate with visual literacy: Make good use of all the non-verbal ways of communication—color, shape, form, and texture.
6. Avoid overload: Resist the temptation to tell too much, to have too many objects; don't force people to swallow more than they can digest; try to stimulate and provide guidance to those who want more.
7. Tell one story at a time: If you have a lot of information, divide it into distinct, logical, organized stories; people can absorb and retain information more clearly if the path to the next concept is clear and logical.
8. Avoid contradiction: Clear institutional identity helps give you the competitive edge; the public needs to know who you are and what differentiates you from other institutions they may have seen.
9. For every ounce of treatment, provide a ton of fun: How do you woo people from all other temptations? Give people plenty of opportunity to enjoy themselves by emphasizing ways that let people participate in the experience, and by making your environment rich and appealing to all senses.
10. Keep it up: Never underestimate the importance of cleanliness and routine maintenance; people expect to get a good show every time; people will comment more on broken and dirty stuff.

Martin Sklar, *One Little Spark! Mickey's Ten Commandment and The Road to Imagineering* (White Plains, NY: Disney Publishing, 2015).[49]

most of the items are made anymore." She notes that with a few exceptions, most costumes are created by sub-contractors, specialty shops, or the same made-to-order costume shops used in theatre or film. "That is where the jobs really are," she reveals, because there are not enough craftspeople to work on the huge numbers of shows and characters that a theme park will use. Weller[45] notes "Whether you strive to develop expertise with defined technical skills, or pursue skills for involvement in a broader role, it is an enthusiasm for what you do, a respectable work ethic, and an ability to collaborate well with others that will help make you a valuable contributor wherever your career adventures take you."

Costume design originates as part of a narrative, but in some cases it will take on wider meanings than the story that gave birth to it, and stories that resonate with the wider culture owe some of their appeal to the engaging costume designs. Costume designs may transcend the life of the story, influencing cultural tastes independently of the original story. The designs for the TV and film versions of the *Star Trek* franchise are a strong case of transcendence, influencing how science fiction would look for many other narratives. Other examples include *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Game of Thrones,* each redefining the traditional appearance of stories set during a version of medieval lore.

A COSTUME DESIGNER PREPARES

There is no one single experience the costume designer may expect across the huge spectrum of working in live or recorded performances. The resources each project commands varies widely from a large modern costume shop and a full staff to a small, barely equipped wardrobe room or trailer. The designer may be expected to act as department head as well as creative head, may have to hire their own crew, or may work within a large, corporate infrastructure. One of the most important skills costume designers must hone is the ability to assess and organize each project to work with the available resources and timetable. Working in any capacity with different size projects will give the early-career costume designer the means to compare various methods. It is important to intern with a larger organization to learn the height of current practice, and it is equally important to experience independent projects with the challenge of maintaining an artistic vision with little money or labor. It can be equally challenging to work with larger, complex organizations juggling many shows at once or communicating across the globe.

How the designer begins a project can be just as crucial as the final result, and this is especially important when beginning a working relationship with a new organization. Contact someone who has worked there before to assess the working situation or learn about challenges ahead of time. Create a list of questions for the producer, production manager, and costume shop manager. Never assume any performing organization will do things the way others do; every organization creates—or lacks—systems reflecting their own business practices. Many costume designers have taken jobs only to discover they were expected to do different tasks than they had assumed.

Many costume designers openly acknowledge that they must educate their producers about the complex job of providing performance costumes, particularly if presented with an unreasonably low budget, a short preparation period, or a lack of proper equipment and supplies. Most producers are *not* experts in costume design and preparation, and that is why they hire people who *are* experts. Producers are, however, aware that each project will present unique circumstances, and understanding the art of budgeting will help the designer to propose reasonable alternatives. All costume designers should develop an "inner weasel" that they can use to overcome obstacles. Educating the producer about the specific project also avoids the thing everyone hates the most: surprises. One head of a costume rental house confessed she spends a distressing amount of time on the telephone with producers who are reluctant to pay the final bill. "They did not understand what the *whole* cost of a project would be, so they end up blaming the costume designer," she notices.

"We depend on the designer and costume supervisor to provide realistic numbers," explains Millar,[16] Production Manager of Kaiser Permanente Educational Theater. "The more information we have up front, the better we can plan accordingly. The budget number is usually negotiable in both directions because that number was chosen before we even knew the scope of the design. Of course we expect them to hit our number within reason, but if we know about *all* the variables ahead of time, we can make choices, or maybe find a little bit more money," he advises.

The New Job Checklist is just one tool to remind designers of the entire scope of a project and what kind of questions to ask producers at the very beginning. "If a problem shows up at the 11th hour that will cost a lot of money, chances are it will get cut because there is nothing we can do," Millar explains. Presenting the large view of a project gives a designer credibility in the eyes of the producer and establishes trust. As early-career designers create more shows, they will learn the issues they will face repeatedly and can learn to plan ahead. One whose work calls for complex fabric treatments will develop a different list from a designer who prefers to use vintage garments.

COSTUME DESIGN NEW JOB OVERVIEW/CHECKLIST		
PHASE ONE: Define Scope of the Project with Producer/ Production Manager		
		Define dates carefully—techs, shoot dates, dress rehearsals, previews, open, strike/wrap
		Full schedule for ALL the departments and how this show fits into that large picture
		Negotiate responsibilities from start to strike (see sections below)
		Contact info—Dept Heads, shops, office, etc
		Producer's expectations for show—spectacle, intimate, etc
		Casting dates and contacts for preliminary measurements, use of understudies, swings, doubles, extras
		Actor availability—fitting & rehearsal schedule-—Equity/Non-Equity
		Labor schedule or considerations for crew--union, staff, volunteers, interns
		Budget and reporting method of purchases, petty cash, reimbursement, POs, credit card
		Use of personal vehicle and reimbursement
		Negotiate crew & staffing—team, construction, wigs & makeup, running crew, strike
		Costume facilities and equipment in shops, providing a kit, kit rental
		Expected early publicity or photo calls scheduled, use of renderings in PR, social media protocols
		Open accounts with vendors, existing relationships for goods and services
		Travel and housing, travel to rental or shopping sources
		Type and size of costume stock available, reciprocal usage agreements
		Being paid—contract triggers, invoice submission, union contract, riders, etc
		Hidden costs in costume budget—supplies allocations, dry cleaning, actor contract stipulations?
		Preferred online sharing methods—DropBox, Google Drive, Box, etc
		Required protocols for all purchasing and/or tax-exempt requirements
PHASE TWO: Artistic Planning with Director		
		Script and design approaches
		Special FX with other departments? CG/ animation/ video/ stunts/ camera crews/ duplicates
		Budget priorities, concessions or request more resources
		Determine casting breakdown with roles assigned to each actor, doubling, swings, combined roles
		Finalize costume designs
		Negotiate communication process—fitting photos, others involved in decisions?
PHASE THREE: Logistics Planning with Costume Shop Manager/ Wardrobe Supervisor/ Vendors		
		Review and confirm all items discussed with Producer/Production Manager
		Determine in-shop due dates: rentals, fabrics, likely rush charges, use of upcharges or inhouse materials
		Number of costumes, groups or types, determine likely number of builds
		Determine pre-production labor, running crews, or other labor needs and availability for this show
		Desired period silhouette, type of foundations required, special accessories or modifications for stunts, movement
		Location or onsite services, labor, and supplies—who will work in what locale, what are the necessary jobs?

FIGURE 8.38 *The New Project Checklist helps designers to thoroughly assess the parameters of a new job.*

		Microphone/sound requirements—placement, matching mic pacs, etc
		Movement or fight requirements—chorographer, fight director, padding, stunts, other doubles
		Wig, hair and makeup, collaboration researched & determined
		Final Piece list generated for each actor, who is responsible for show paperwork, etc
PHASE FOUR: Green-light and Strategies		
		Finished design communication available to all parties--color sketches and fabrics, or appropriate visual communication such as character collages, shopping sheets, or technical drawings
		Costume sources identified: built, rented or purchased, vendors identified, costumes ordered or located
		Last minute budget items—rentals, restocking fees, dry cleaning, etc
		Determine made-to-order process and deadlines
		Build list, crafts list finalized
		Final in-shop dates with vendors, fabrics, rentals, purchases, begin fitting date
PHASE FIVE: Made-to-Order Start Dates/ Rehearsal Expectations /Pre-Production or Early Production		
		Table meetings with cutters and vendors to define each item
		Fabric modification methods, materials, labor
		Production meetings
		Expectations for rehearsal costumes, reacting to rehearsal notes
PHASE SIX:Technical or Dress Rehearsals, Shoot Dates, Previews, Opening, Strike Wrap		
		Quick change rehearsal process (live performance) or double performers needed?
		Load in to dressing rooms, locations, crew, calls, equipment
		Providing wardrobe track or running sheets, actor dressing lists, set continuity sheets, etc
		Union considerations, call times, dinner breaks
		Designer responsibilities and notes sessions—who, when, where
		Preview day rehearsal schedule/ shoot days/ wardrobe turn around for costumes
		Maintenance during run or shoot—designers expectations for each character
		Return of unused or cycle out short-term rentals to avoid overcharges
		Photography and documentation of actors in costumes
		Budget wrap and close out purchasing
		Strike process and responsibilities

FIGURE 8.38 *continued.*

Some designers have learned that they can increase their own worth to the producer by supplying needed items themselves; they keep an inventory of vintage items, jewelry, specialty garments and accessories, and even materials and supplies. Taking a cue from working in independent film, some costume designers provide a large "**set kit**" to augment the project even when working in live theater. These extra items serve several purposes: the designer can stretch the budget when using their own items so they may purchase something else; the show will have a more polished or upscale look than the budget might allow; or the designer may augment a lower design fee by renting or selling goods to the show. Some designers will

arrange to keep some items built or purchased for the show in exchange for waiving a labor fee or for the use of their own stock. Costume designers should be aware these practices have positive economic value to an organization, but should be careful to negotiate this arrangement in advance. Designers who do not plan to provide additional services should also make this clear at the outset of any independent project to avoid assumptions by the producer. This conversation is particularly important to determine who is responsible for building costumes or overseeing vendors. Many experienced costume designers keep a very strong eye toward parity in a production team; if the scenic designer or art director is not responsible for extra duties, the costume designer should not automatically assume extra duties as part of the design job.

In the contemporary world, more designers may have to view themselves as small businesses providing creative services, and sometimes actual goods, to their projects. Designers who specialize in many freelance or independent projects may wish to research the requirements for a business license or permit from their local city or franchise tax office. A business license allows a designer to purchase goods at wholesale and resell them to the project. Some designers choose to pass the savings along to the project, again stretching their budget, or they may choose to add a small markup to the purchase price to cover overheads such as book-keeping fees. Non-union designers may find themselves employing assistants or other help without union guidance on the practice and should understand the liability and tax issues. Freelance models of employment are increasing, and the **Freelancers Union** is an excellent place to research these considerations.

Understanding simple business practice is a wise investment of time for any costume designer. As department head for many projects, the designer may oversee a large or complex budget. Small business experience is especially useful for situations where costume designers are expected to pre-purchase fabrics or clothing for later reimbursement. Fronting money without a petty cash allotment is technically loaning money to the producer. It is a very risky proposition and many designers tell horror stories about producers who did not repay on time—or ever. Should this occur, a designer who can prove ownership of the items may have the small consolation of reclaiming and reselling them to recoup some of their loss, or adding them to their own inventory. Invoicing for purchased garments also separates the designer's fee from tangible goods. "Invoice for those goods separately, and indicate we should *not* include it on the 1099 tax document, or you will be taxed accordingly by the government," Millar[16] advises. Any designer who wishes to work as a freelance artist should gain business experience through courses or workshops; there are a number of free options available online.

Learning Costume Resources

Another valuable asset costume designers must develop is excellent resourcing. Before working in any city it is essential to learn the suppliers, or hire an intern or assistant who does. Sometimes the first film experience that theatrical costume people have is joining a film crew in town to shoot for a short time. Locals are often hired to shop and advise on local resources. The ability to move around town quickly using public transportation or driving in an organized manner, no matter where a costume designer or assistant works, is also an essential skill. A current source list and the ability to read maps to override sometimes silly directions provided by a GPS will save the designer untold agony, moving the work along quickly. A strong overview of an area allows the designer to choreograph daily rounds with travel routes and closing times in mind, avoiding time consuming crossing back and forth. Always find reasons to visit new sources as part of doing research for a show. Producers, production managers, and directors need a designer who can operate in a fast paced environment; and they will feel more confident with a job applicant who knows both local and national sourcing.

There are several large listings available to guide costume designers toward industry standard vendors, but a costume designer must always have outside or personal sources beyond these lists. For more information, consult these sources:

- *The Entertainment Sourcebook: An Insider's Guide on Where to Find Everything*
- *Shopping LA: The Insider's Sourcebook for Film & Fashion*
- *Costuming for Film: The Art and The Craft*
- *Hollywood Creative Directory*
- variety411.com/us/new-york (The Production Services Resource for New York)
- variety411.com/us/los-angeles (The Production Services Resource for Los Angeles)
- Manhattan Wardrobe Supply (www.wardrobesupplies.com)
- www.creativehandbook.com
- www.reelcreations.com
- www.shoots.com
- www.showbizjobs.com

Look for the Union Label

Eventually any freelance costume designer will consider joining a union to qualify for more jobs, to be taken seriously in the industry, and to benefit from collective bargaining. Many freelance costume designers have found that to make a living wage in any form of entertainment, they must belong to one or more unions who guarantee minimum earnings, monitor working conditions, gain alerts to employers who have broken prior agreements, and offer benefits. There is a confusing array of unions in entertainment, and both local and national entities have jurisdictions in different states. The ability to put oneself on the work list for day work or other employment opportunities eases those gaps between projects and broadens one's network. Some unions still allow a designer to work in non-union situations.

There are overarching types of unions, although some variations occur by location. In general, unions for costume people are divided into two general categories: Costume Designers & Illustrators, and Costume Makers & Crew. The unions are also further divided by region with national offices and local chapters. The main unions are:

- **Costume Designers Guild (Local 892)**: Film and TV Designers in Los Angeles, Costume Design Assistants, Costume Illustrators, and Commercial Designers. There are four ways to qualify for the union, depending on category. Generally, designers and assistants must have one credit for a commercially released film or TV production, show a portfolio, and produce three letters of recommendation.
- **Motion Picture Costumers Union (Local 705)**: Film and TV Finished Costumes Men's or Women's, Custom-Made Costumes Men's or Women's, Live TV Costumer, Costume House Costumer. With six different categories, qualifying can be confusing, but generally working 30 days in a union costume house is the classic entry point.
- **United Scenic Artists, 829 (USA)**: National Theatrical Designers, plus Film & TV Designers in New York. There are several ways to qualify for the union. A designer or assistant working in a theater with a Collective Bargaining Agreement may apply directly, or show a portfolio, or produce letters of recommendation from members in good standing.
- **Wardrobe Local 764 (IATSE) New York**: Film, TV, and Broadway Theatre Finished Wardrobe, and Custom-Made Costumes for Radio City Music Hall and The Metropolitan Opera workrooms.
- **International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU)**: Film, TV, and Broadway Theatre Custom-Made Costumes.

ADVICE FOR EARLY-CAREER COSTUME DESIGNERS

An important part of preparing for any career is communicating your skills and abilities to those who are hiring. In spite of an ever-expanding array of job boards for design and backstage advertisements, a very large portion of the jobs in show business are never advertised. Each project is unique and it is difficult to maintain quality, as anyone who has ever seen a bad piece of theater, film, or TV can attest. Some projects fail and, unfortunately, in show business the failure is a public one. Theater, film, and TV are also extremely expensive to produce—with so much at stake, teams form on the basis of trust. As this chapter has shown, hiring begins with creators asking themselves and each other who they already know or know something about. New opportunities open up all the time, however, when collaborators or team members are already busy and they recommend someone else. A good recommendation is one of the most prized elements for show business, and very little else matters. It is for this reason that many people will start their careers working for no or low pay in student films or internships: a good recommendation will bring opportunities for years to come. Interspersing these first opportunities with schooling is a smart decision because the aspiring designer can graduate into better entry-level jobs. However, lingering in no or low pay jobs for too long will have a negative effect: establishing your reputation for low level work, and also falsely training producers to believe costume personnel should work for very little money.

Recommendations and Resumes

There are two parts to earning a good recommendation; earning that reference through hard work, and keeping it through consistent, positive interactions in the performance community. Professional behaviors are key, and include such essential rules as never thoughtlessly speaking poorly of a colleague from a past project. Producers and directors expect a productive team, and will balk if they hear about past bad attitudes. This professional world is a small one and almost everyone is just a few degrees of separation from each other.

A good resume addresses both the past and the future: it documents prior work, and holds clues to *how* you might be expected to work in the future. Past jobs tell future employers

NAME, COSTUME DESIGN

WEBSITE, EMAIL, OTHER CONTACT INFORMATION

THEATER

The Power of Light	Star Theater, Off Broadway, NY, 2016 *in process*	Director: Martin Chow
The Codex	Midwest Repertory Theater, 2015	Director: Brandon Jimenez
As You Like It	Shakespeare Center, Memphis, 2013	Director: Mary Saberson
The Kids Show	Maine Summer Theater, 2009	Director: Martin Chow

FILM/TELEVISION/WEB

The Candy Jar	Eat My Hat Productions, see Imdb page, 2014 Short Film, international festival screenings	Director: Mark Supter
Building the Dream	Vertical Line Productions, 2011 PBS Documentary with Historical Re-enactment sequences *Regional Emmy Nomination—Best Documentary*	Director: May Powell
Last Chance	Northstar Entertainment Group, 2010 Netflix Pilot Episode of "Turn of the Screw"	Director: Bill Regal

RELATED POSITIONS & SKILLS

Crafts Head	Midwest Repertory Theater, 2005–10 Millinery, fabric dye & color matching, masks, general crafts
Crafts Artisan	Maine Summer Theater, 1999–2003
Other Skills	Photoshop CS6, Basic editing iDVD, Fluent in Spanish *Please see my website www.AboutMe. com for further examples*

EDUCATIONAL THEATER—UNIVERSITY OF THE MIDWEST 1998–2001

Christmas Carol	Assistant Costume Designer, Jane Jefferson Faculty Designer
Hamlet	Wardrobe Crew Head, Dresser
Oklahoma	Costume Crafts, Dyer

EDUCATION

University of the Midwest, BA	Theater and History (double major) 2001

REFERENCES

Brandon Jimenez, Director boxingday@gmail.com	Mary Jefferson, Artistic Director Jeffersonairplane@gmail.org	Martin Chow, Director eyesonyou@comcast.net

FIGURE 8.39 *Sample resume featuring work divided into media format categories.*

NAME, COSTUME DESIGN
WEBSITE, EMAIL, OTHER CONTACT INFORMATION

COMMERCIALS/MUSIC VIDEOS

Jepson Ravitz Agency

DirecTV/ The Wallenda Story	Director: James Jewell, 2015
Bad Heart Band/ Can't Stop	Director: Pons Soon, 2015
Wonder Pinkett/ One Hit Wonder	Director: Gillian O'Brien, 2014

Star Theater, Off Broadway NY

The Power of Light	Director: Martin Chow, 2016 in process

Midwest Repertory Theater, St Louis

The Codex	Director: Brandon Jimenez, 2010
As You Like It	Director: Mary Jefferson, 2009
The Kids Show	Director: Martin Chow, 2007

OPERA

Summer Opera Theater, Atlanta

Grand Duchess	Asst. Costume Designer, Jun-ha Soon, Director: Adali Rolf, 2014
Carmen, Apprentice Scene	Director: Imelda Juarez, 2013
Rigoletto, Apprentice Scene	Director: Abebi Lorne, 2012

RELATED POSITIONS & SKILLS

First Hand	Shakespeare Center Theater, Atlanta 2005–07 Millinery, fabric dye & color matching, masks, general crafts
Stitcher	Maine Summer Theater, 1999–2003
Other Skills	Photoshop CS6, Basic editing iDVD, Fluent in Spanish *Please see my website www.AboutMe. com for further examples*

EDUCATIONAL THEATER—UNIVERSITY OF THE MIDWEST 1998–2001

Christmas Carol	Assistant Costume Designer, Jane Jefferson Faculty Designer
Hamlet	Wardrobe Crew Head, Dresser

EDUCATION

University of the Midwest, BA	Theater and History (double major) 2001

REFERENCES

Brandon Jimenez, Director boxingday@gmail.com	Mary Jefferson, Artistic Director Jeffersonairplane@gmail.org	Martin Chow, Director eyesonyou@comcast.net

FIGURE 8.40 *Sample resume featuring work divided into performance venue categories.*

about the type of venue or organization with which you have worked before, and therefore they may deduce the level of professionalism they could expect from your work. For instance, if the applicant lists working in regional theater or feature films, it is reasonable to conclude that the applicant understands higher quality expectations; whereas a specialty in experimental or devised theater communicates a willingness to think in new ways or collaborate closely with performers and ensembles. The names of collaborators will also hold clues—high profile directors or actors can denote a certain level of accomplishment or style of working.

Not every designer will use the same style of resume, and some will keep separate resumes featuring different types of work. A designer who also teaches at the university level, for instance, may keep a professional resume for their design work, and a university mandated curriculum vitae form for their teaching accomplishments. The designer who augments their income as a graphic artist may keep two separate resumes with an acknowledgement of the other skillset on each one. The key to arranging any resume, just like any creative endeavor, is to understand the intended audience. Producers and directors want to glean the *type* of creative project on any resume—has this designer worked on a similar type of project before, or do they demonstrate the potential to understand this project?

Conventional wisdom for business resumes does not hold true for the entertainment resume. Business or corporate job seekers list work experience in chronological order, and may include items like goal statements. Potential corporate employers like to see consistency; they may not understand gaps in the record. However, fitful employment is not unusual in entertainment where a large number of people are self-employed or work several jobs at once. In fact, a chronological listing by itself could result in a confused and scattered picture. The designer's resume must be arranged differently—as a record of creative work, not mere employment. An excellent example of this idea is any costume designer's listing on the Internet Movie Database (www.IMDb.com) or Internet Broadway Database (www.IBDB.com). New projects accumulate at the top of the list within designated categories. This arrangement places maximum impact on the job title. Job title categories also work well for the freelancer with multiple skills or jobs, such as a designer who works regularly as an assistant, or a costume shop manager who works as a wardrobe supervisor in film.

Choosing the correct format for the resume is an exercise in efficient communication. What is the best way to reflect an individual designer's work? The designer who crosses media may choose to list projects by the genre or format. This approach emphasizes an understanding of media requirements (See figure 8.39.).

Some designers work repeatedly for a specific set of venues, such as local theaters, regional theaters, or independent producers. In this instance it can be advantageous to craft a resume sorted by venue or company categories with multiple projects listed for each one (See figure 8.40).

It is vital for early-career designers to separate their professional projects from educational projects. Potential employers can and do empathize with the entry-level job applicant; some want to help students to start careers. However, employers must be reassured that the applicant understands the distinctions between school work and professional work; burying an important professional summer job in a long list of school assignments is confusing and may indicate a poor understanding of the professional field. Another essential element of a successful early-career resume is listing work experience using the correct terminology: research the actual job titles accepted in the industry for theater, film or TV, or theme parks. A good internship with a larger organization will also teach the early-career designer proper job titles. The resume should stay reasonably updated, regardless of format: online text, downloadable print copy, or hard paper copy. Day jobs, such as working in a fabric store or doing graphic design work, not only pay the rent but may also add to the designer's accumulated experience. Jobs such as these are best listed in a separate category labeled Related Experience.

Design Portfolios

> **"A website is essential. We don't have time to schedule interviews with every designer just to find out who they are, especially if they are new in the business."**
>
> **Jonathan Banks,[50] Artistic Director of The Mint Theater, New York**

Social media, and photography and art sharing sites are increasingly important to make early connections, but there is *no substitute* for a dedicated archive of your work. Relying on sharing sites may associate your work with pop-up windows featuring styles radically different to your own; not every potential employer can look past this visual confusion.

The major goals of any portfolio are to feature visual examples of work, to supply talking points for conversation during

FIGURE 8.41 *Taking the time to document a body of work with good quality photographs will create an authoritative, interesting portfolio that stands out from others. Reproduction 1907 corset created by MFA student Erin Abbenante at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Corset made with 12" busk and 22 spiral steel bones, metal grommets, coutil, pink and yellow silk, and dyed-to-match elastic garters. (Courtesy of Erin Abbenante.)*

an interview, to supply a resume, and to offer current contact information. There are numerous website template and web-hosting services that appeal to busy designers who do not have time to learn coding or site design. Some sites offer free hosting that may appeal to the early-career designer who is still exploring exact needs and formats, such as www.carbonmade.com, www.weebly.com, and www.wix.com. It is wise to avoid a lot of complex site design elements at first, instead focusing on a straightforward style that features your work and is easy to update frequently.

Fewer designers emphasize a physical "book" of their work, and this practice can be a hallmark of generational views on the subject. Established designers may seldom or never show their portfolio if they consistently find work with the same collaborators or through word-of-mouth. Designers with a large body of work that has not been digitized may see no need to convert a physical book into a new format. However, those entering the job market and competing for jobs are expected to establish and maintain an online presence, and failure to do so may create a suspicion that the designer is out of step with the creative world. The concept of personal branding comes naturally to many early-career designers raised as digital natives, but careful attention must be paid to the quality of that brand.

CONCLUSION

There has never been a wider choice of careers to explore as a costume designer, or more opportunities to apply the same set of skills to different media. Even with such wide choices, every job will draw from the solid foundation of skills described in this book. The beginning costume designer should take a long view of the possibilities, taking as many different jobs as possible to explore what media or process suits their individual skills and temperament. Even day jobs taken to tide a designer through the challenges of starting a career will add value.

The Importance of Varied Experiences

Karen Weller[45] notes what these experiences can teach the young designer:

"Working as a sales clerk can afford you insights to the consuming public; being a labor scheduler can give you insights to managing time and personnel; working in fabric stores can expand ones knowledge of the tools of our trade; experience in costume rental houses can refine knowledge of costume history; working in a theme park wardrobe issue service can build your awareness of garment use lifespans; working on alterations can establish a better understanding of garment fit; experience as a cutter can help you envision the structure of future designs; being a shopper can help build vendor resources; and being a shop manager gains experience in managing budget, time, and personnel. There are many combinations of experiences that can lead you to a multitude of opportunities. My own adventures have taken me from being a volunteer stitcher for a children's show in undergraduate school to designing and developing wardrobe and costume programs for theme parks globally. You may not know exactly where your path will take you, so work to build experiences that will help you be prepared when interesting opportunities do come along."

FIGURE 8.42 *Costume designs for the evolution of Mephistopheles in Gunoud's opera* Faust. *Design by Holly Poe Durbin, as a portfolio project for a contest. Continuing participation in contests or challenges such as those offered by Opera America or DeviantArt, the online art community, give a designer the opportunity to produce new work and sharpen skills beyond those needed for a specific production.*

On a Personal Note

Working in costume design can be an incredibly rich life lived with passion, filled with creative partners, and drenched with compelling purpose. I was reminded of this recently when a director and I held a design meeting in a landmark Los Angeles lunch spot. We chose it partially because the location was half way between us in distance, but also because this restaurant featured huge, old-fashioned wooden tables and benches. We spread our images and books and papers and computers all over this large table. Our meeting lasted a couple of hours, with excited gestures and bouts of inspiration between bites of original French dip sandwiches. Toward the end, a fellow diner approached us. He apologized for interrupting, and said: "I don't know what you do for a living—but I wish my job had *half* that much passion. It was such a pleasure to listen to the two of you."

QUESTIONS

- What are some of the key considerations for finding an entry-level job in costume?
- What are some of the goals of costume design within its storytelling function?
- What types of entertainment fields typically employ costume professionals?
- What are some typical job titles for those who work in the costume industry?
- What are some of the ways in which costume professionals can prepare for a career?

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