

## **Plain and Fancy**

**Originally by Jean Charles Black**

**Updated by Jean Charles Black**

**Jean Charles Black** was born in Edinburgh, Scotland and describes her schooling as a prototype of "The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie". From her teens she nurtured an interest in sewing and clothes and eventually served an apprenticeship at the Gateway Theatre in Edinburgh. From there she taught at the Edinburgh College of Speech and Drama, worked with Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop at the Edinburgh Festival, became Wardrobe Supervisor at the Royal Lyceum Theatre in Edinburgh, and worked a season with the Phoenix Theatre, Leicester. She emigrated to Canada in 1970, taught costume at York University, worked in the CBC costume department executing the designs of Suzanne Mess and Frances Dafoe, was with the Ontario Youth Theatre, and gave a course in costuming for Theatre Ontario. She was especially commissioned to design a breakaway costume for Carol Channing in the show "Lorelei" at the O'Keefe Centre. In 1974 she became Costume Cutter and Supervisor for the Ryerson Theatre Company, and in 1975 she became Resident Costume Cutter and Supervisor for the Actors' Repertory Theatre at the Colonnade where her work was lauded by John Fraser, theatre critic for **The Globe and Mail**, who called her costumes "the best in the city". Since 1976 she has been an Instructor in Patterndrafting and Costume Construction for the Ryerson Theatre School. In 1977 she joined the Stratford Festival Company for the summer as a cutter, executing costumes for "Richard III" and "As You Like It". In 1981 she was appointed to the full time faculty of the Ryerson Theatre School.

Cover Design: Kevin Connolly, Pink Dog Design

## **P L A I N   A N D   F A N C Y**

### **WHERE TO START**

Designing and making costumes for theatrical productions of any kind involves a certain routine order to eliminate errors and for simpler organization of the work. It is a great advantage if the costume designer, set designer or lighting designer are one and the same person, as all three areas will marry with fewer problems.

If there are different designers for each area, try to have thorough discussions about style, period, color and the overall desired effect with all designers and the director, well in advance of the rehearsals. It is essential to have everyone in agreement and to have sufficient lead time to prepare the costumes to the satisfaction of all so there won't be any nasty surprises or panic at the costume parade or first dress rehearsal. Costuming must be given as much thought in the pre-planning of the production as any other production element.

### **WHICH APPROACH**

The first step is to read the script thoroughly and to make notes of all references to costume as they appear in the script. A list should be made of all the characters, in which scenes they appear, and whether or not they change costumes. This will assist in drawing up a costume plot after designs have been submitted. Once this has been done, the first meeting with the designer (or designers) should be arranged in order to establish what approach is to be taken with the production: whether it is an accurate historical reconstruction of the period, a slightly exaggerated historical reconstruction to provide more visual interest, or a fantasy from the designer's imagination.

Style too is important. Are the costumes to be realistic, fantastic, theatrical, natural, new, worn, broken down, textured, plain, fancy, or what? Whichever approach is taken, it must of course have the complete approval of the director and must make the audience fully aware of the period and the style.

At this first meeting, a complete list (costume plot) of each item of clothing from head to toe for each costume change of each character should be compiled and agreed upon by the designer, director and costumier. Make specific notes and decisions, for example, as to whether hats will be needed, what color of socks are worn, what kind of underwear is required, and whether any characters have costume props such as handbags, canes, swords, gloves, spectacles, jewellery, etc. It is much better to think about these items in the beginning rather than to try and come up with the right article at the last dress rehearsal.

### **RESEARCH**

Once the approach has been decided, the costumier should research the chosen period, (historic or modern) in great detail and from all aspects - underwear, outerwear, shoes, accessories, even the furniture and the architecture. These can explain a great deal about the cut and the use of costumes, and will give the costumier greater insight into the lifestyle of that particular era.

Most public libraries have available, or can obtain for you through the Inter-Library System, books on historical costumes, period furniture, architectural styles, or whatever is needed. If your group has its own library, some of these kinds of research volumes may be there already. If not, they should be

considered for addition to your collection. Low price reprints of Sears Roebuck catalogues from various years are available through bookstores and make excellent source material. You may even want to start your own collection of current store catalogues and fashion magazines for accurate future reference to costumes in the 1970s '80s and '90s. The type of fabrics used in any period should also be thoroughly researched in order that they may be matched as closely as possible to modern fabrics with regard to weight and texture.

It is helpful that when the designer submits the designs, they have the fabric samples (swatches) attached, to show clearly what kind of fabric is required. You may find it valuable to start and maintain a collection of fabric swatches (a fabric "dictionary") with notes as to the qualities, suggested uses, and prices of various fabrics.

### **SHALL WE MAKE, RENT, OR BORROW?**

After the designs have been submitted, a decision has to be reached as to what costumes will be made (if any), which are to be bought, which rented, which borrowed and which are to be supplied by the actor.

Obviously, to make all the costumes is not only costly, but time consuming. The costumier must also keep in mind how many people are available to work on the costumes and what their capabilities are. Renting can also be costly, but it is possible sometimes to rent at a lesser cost from other theatres which have done a particular show and have a full set of costumes available. Some extremely specialised costumes (animals, uniforms, formal evening wear etc.) may have to be rented from a commercial costume rental company if there is no time, expertise or budget available to make them, or if a great deal of accuracy is necessary to the production.

Borrowing is obviously the most economical method, but it may be that you are not permitted to make alterations to borrowed costumes which limits the choice.

If there is a stock of costumes belonging to the group, these should always be looked at with a view to finding and altering specific costumes to suit the current production. It may be advantageous in some instances to take an existing costume apart in order to re-use the fabric in a new costume, or to cover an existing costume with new fabric.

In a contemporary play, it may be possible to select each character's costume from the personal wardrobe of an actor playing the role, or from the combined personal wardrobes of the company, and/or production personnel. In this case, the company would undertake to have the garments cleaned at the production's expense at the end of the run. In a professional company, the costumes would have to be rented from the actor.

Modern costumes may also be purchased outright from retail clothing stores (especially at sale time) or from the various secondhand clothing dealers. Usually the decision to make, rent, buy or borrow will depend on the type of production, the style and period, the wishes of the director and designer, the capabilities of the costume crew, and most importantly, the costume budget.

### **COSTUME BIBLE**

All the paperwork for each costume should be organised into a large loose leaf notebook. This becomes the "Costume Bible" or final reference point. It is similar to, and serves the same purpose as the Prompt Book, an accurate, up-to-date copy of all costuming needs.

## BUDGET

As soon as the budget figure for costumes has been decided upon, a ledger sheet should be drawn up with various columns (see example) in order that an accurate record may be kept of just where and how the money is being spent. If this is kept up-to-date, you will be able to see at a glance how much and where the money has been spent, and how much is left, all of which is necessary to make informed decisions on costs to keep your costume budget under control. This is useful too, in determining your costume costs for each show and for the entire season. Materials and supplies bought in bulk at the beginning of the season may then easily be charged back, on a pro rata basis, to each production, according to the amount actually used for each production.

Date	Description	PO PC	Mat.	Supp	Shoes	Wig	Clean	Total Spent	Total Rem.
1.6.93	Budget								\$600
1.6.93	Stitsky's	PO	\$30					\$30	570
3.6.93	T.Eaton	PC			37.50			37.50	532.5
4.6.93	Goodwill	PC		\$15				15.00	517.5
6.6.93	Malabar	PO				\$50		50.00	467.5
9.7.93	Embassy	PO					\$100	100.00	367.5
			\$30	\$15	37.50	\$50	\$100	232.50	367.5

## COSTUME PROGRESS CHART

Another important piece of paperwork at this stage is the costume progress chart. This can be drawn up with the aid of the Costume Plot. It should state very clearly the items of each character's costume, including underwear and all accessories. Alongside this, it should be listed whether the costumes have been bought, borrowed, constructed, fitted etc. This gives a very clear, up-to-date picture of just how the work on costumes is progressing. This helps the Production Manager, (or Producer, Director, Designer) and the costume crew to keep informed as to the progress of the costuming.

Character	Bought	Rented	Const.	1st. Fitt.	Alt.	2nd Fitt.	Trim	Finished
<b>MRS Y.</b>								
Corset	N/A	N/A	_	_	_	_	N/A	_
Chemise	N/A	N/A	_	_	_	_	_	_
Bloomers	N/A	N/A	_	_	_	_	_	_
Tights	_	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	_	N/A	_
Shoes	_	N/A	N/A	_	_	_	N/A	_
Overdress	N/A	N/A	_	_	_	_	_	_
Gloves	_	N/A	N/A	_	_	_	_	_
Cape	N/A	_	N/A	_	_	_	N/A	_
Bonnet	N/A	_	N/A	_	_	_	_	_

## **COSTUME RETURN LIST**

In the case of borrowed or rented costumes, a very detailed list must be drawn up showing the number of pieces, the description of each piece (size, color, condition, etc.) the name, address and telephone number of the source person, the rental cost, and the replacement cost should the piece be lost or damaged.

This list should also indicate any deposits or charges paid and a check-off column with date for return and any special instructions. Signed by both parties, it can serve as an agreement and prevent arguments over responsibilities for cleaning, loss or damage. Borrowed or rented costumes should be labelled for identification as soon as they are obtained, so that you know precisely what has to be returned and where.

## **QUICK CHANGE PLOT**

A quick change means any costume change that is required to be made under one minute. This is normally done in the wings in a quick change booth with the assistance of one or more dressers, and may involve a specially adapted costume.

All quick changes must be plotted well in advance with the director and stage manager, showing how much time is allotted, where the change has to be done, how many dressers are required, what garments must be taken off and by which dresser, and what must be put on and by whom.

This information is most helpful when constructing costumes because, if they have to be removed or put on quickly, it could alter the type of fastenings used. The plot should also state where the actor makes his exit and entrance. This information is useful once dress rehearsals start, since it informs dressers where they should be at any given time during the performance.

## **QUICK CHANGE PLOT**

PRODUCTION \_\_\_\_\_ DESIGNER \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_ SHEET # \_\_\_\_ OF \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Actor</b>	<b>Character</b>	<b>EXITS</b>		<b>CHANGES</b>		<b>Dresser Order</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>ENTERS</b>	
		<b>When</b>	<b>Where</b>	<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>			<b>When</b>	<b>Where</b>

## **MEASUREMENT SHEETS**

The time has now come when measurements of each and every member of the acting company should be taken. It is most important that these be taken accurately as no costume is going to fit if the wrong measurements are used.

The measurements should be recorded on a standard Measurement Sheet and filed for future use, although I recommend that measurements be taken every year since the human body has a habit of altering its shape! Make sure your measurement sheet has the name of the actor and the character, his telephone number and the name of the designer. Be sure to take all the measurements listed on the sheet, specifying whether these are in inches or centimetres. You never know when you will need to know the hat, shoe, collar or glove size or some other measurement, when the actor may not be immediately available.

**M E A S U R E M E N T   S H E E T**

**PRODUCTION** \_\_\_\_\_ **DESIGNER** \_\_\_\_\_  
**ACTOR** \_\_\_\_\_ **CHARACTER** \_\_\_\_\_  
**TELEPHONE** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE** \_\_\_\_\_

1	Height (without shoes)		
2	Neck (taken at base of neck)		
3	Chest/Bust		
4	Under bust		
5	Waist		
6	Upper hip		
7	Lower hip		
8	Across front (approx 3" below throat)		
9	Bust point to bust point		
10	Neck/shoulder to bust point		

11	Neck/shoulder to waist front		
12	Underarm to waist		
13	Nape to waist back		
14	Across back (approx. 5" below nape)		
15	Nape to ground		
16	Waist to knee (taken at side)		

1 7	Waist to ground (taken at side)		
1 8	Length of shoulder		
1 9	Length of outside arm to elbow/to wrist slightly bent		
2 0	Length of inside arm to wrist taken straight		
2 1	Upper arm girth		
2 2	Lower arm girth		
2 3	Wrist girth		
2 4	Waist front to waist back under crotch		
2 5	Inside leg		
2 6	Outside leg (same as waist to ground)		

2 7	Thigh girth		
2 8	Calf girth		
2 9	Ankle Girth		
3 0	Rise		
3 1	Head size		
3 2	Shoe size and fitting		
3 3	Glove size		

## PREPARATION FOR MAKING COSTUMES

### Shopping

You are now ready to shop for fabrics. It is important that the designer goes along for the shopping expedition to decide on fabrics and colors. It is also necessary to take the designs and measurement sheets for reference.

Shopping can be a long, arduous task if you are not fully prepared. Make sure you calculate the yardages required and decide what kind of fastenings and trim are needed for each costume before you start shopping. List all this information on a sheet attached to each design. If you are well organised, this can be a fun trip, and it is possible to get it completed in one day which will save time and energy.

It may be necessary, due to budget restrictions, to economise on one costume in order to spend more on another. This is the designer's decision and you both should be clear on the priorities of each costume.

## **Flat Patterns and Draping**

Patterns will be required for any costume to be made. The drafting of original patterns is a complex and skilled process which cannot be covered in one article and which should only be attempted by trained and experienced dressmakers. However, it is often possible to adapt commercial patterns to your costume needs or to find specific layouts for historical costumes in specialised costuming books. (See bibliography at the end of Part Two). Upon occasion, depending on the style and period of the costume, it can be built directly on a "judy" (a dressmaker's form), or on the actor, by draping. This again is a complicated process and usually requires an experienced costumer.

## **Cutting, constructing and fittings**

Once patterns have been made or adapted, cutting can proceed. If undergarments are being made, these should be handled first, as the fit of the overgarment will be governed accordingly. Actors should be provided with rehearsal costumes (skirts, capes, robes, etc.) which simulate the actual costume as closely as possible.

This not only helps the actor in the portrayal of the character, but it saves leaving the costume element to the last minute which can only cause confusion. It is helpful if a schedule of fittings can be drawn up which should be done in conjunction with rehearsals. No more than three fittings per character should be scheduled; more than this is very time consuming. The designer should always be present at the first fitting to check out the shape and cut, as well as the actor's comfort. The actor should be encouraged to move about in the costume as he would on stage.

Only by doing this can the designer and cutter see how the costume fits. Assign priorities for the making of each costume. It may be necessary to concentrate on one costume initially if it is a particularly difficult one or if there is special business being done with it, since the costume will probably be required early in the rehearsals. This also applies to special costumes needed for pre-production photographs.

## **THE COSTUME PARADE**

The next deadline, other than fitting, is that of the costume parade. This is held about one week before the first dress rehearsal. It is usually held on stage, using, if possible, the sets and lighting which will be in the show.

The purpose of the costume parade is to let the director and designer see the overall picture of the costumes, the sets and the lighting. It is also their last opportunity to make changes or additions to the costumes, and it gives the cutter an idea of how much more work there is to do.

The costume parade should be organised by the stage manager, starting with the actors who open the show, wearing their appropriate costumes. It may be that the director wishes to see them individually or in groups, or in reverse order, and he should always be consulted before making up the schedule. The stage manager should keep the parade flowing smoothly, making sure the next actor (or group) is ready to come on stage when called. Every costume should be seen in order and notes made as to any alterations or changes required. Quick change costumes should be tried out, with the assigned dressers briefed as to how the change is to be done.

While costumes are not required to be completed for a costume parade, they should be in a state where pins are not used except to make alterations called for during the parade. Among some of the things that should be looked for are hem lengths, color co-ordination, trim, accessories, jewellery, etc.

### **COSTUME BREAKDOWN**

After the costume parade has been held and all costumes finished, breakdown should be started. This is a procedure whereby the third dimension which is taken away by distance and lighting, is put back into the costume. It is usually done by the designer.

There are many methods of breakdown, and texturing, using a wide variety of materials, such as paint, latex, jewellery, dirt, etc. It is virtually impossible to describe them all, as it depends on the desired effect, the fabrics being used, the funds available and the expertise of the person doing it.

Costumes can be broken down to look old, worn, tattered, shiny, etc., by treating the greatest stress points of each costume such as cuffs, hems, elbows, shoulder blades, pockets, around openings and the seat of pants. No costume should appear on the stage finally without being broken down in some way.

## **DRESS REHEARSALS AND PERFORMANCE**

By the first dress rehearsal all costumes should be finished except for a few pieces of trim. The cutter should be in attendance at each dress rehearsal to take notes on items that may not be correct, as there are always a few last minute problems to be sorted out.

For the first dress rehearsal, dressers should be organised and know which costume is which and when and by whom they are worn. They should each have a copy of the quick change plot and know for which changes they are responsible and where these changes happen. It is the dresser's responsibility to see that all costumes are set up in the designated area of the dressing rooms before the actors arrive in the theatre. They should be available at all times during the dress rehearsals and performances to assist with dressing, quick changes and to make minor repairs which might occur.

They are also responsible for hanging up the costumes at the end of the performance. If space is limited in the dressing rooms, portable racks can be used with the costumes on hangers. Pieces of bristol board with the name of both the actor and the character on it, can be cut to fit the top rail of the rack separating the costumes of one character from those of another. The costumes can then be removed from and replaced to the rack with the minimum fuss.

At the end of each performance the dressers are responsible for washing all underwear, socks, tights, shirts, etc. used during the production. They should also check each costume and costume piece nightly for repair to split seams, tears, missing buttons, loose hooks and bars, snap fasteners, etc. Dressers should each have a survival kit consisting of needles, threads in the most popular color used in the production, thimble, elastic, snap fasteners, hooks and bars, scissors and of course, a good supply of safety pins in assorted sizes.

The dressers should check each costume to see whether it requires pressing. Each costume should look as good on the final night as it did on the opening night. It is the dresser's job to see that this is the case.

## **P A R T II**

### **THE ORGANIZATION OF COSTUME WARDROBE WORK ROOM**

The ideal situation for the wardrobe workroom is if the company owns or rents its own space permanently. If this is the case then one large room can be set aside as a wardrobe space. Cupboards can be built in a suitable space for storage of fabrics and sewing needles, pins, hooks and bars, snap fasteners, dyes, scissors, etc., etc.

One large cutting table will be required and this should be approximately six feet long by four feet wide. The height depends on the person using it but it can always be raised by inserting blocks of wood under

each leg. No cutting table should be so low that it causes backache for the cutter. Two tables about five feet by three feet can be used as construction tables and should be high enough to enable the seamstresses to sit and work at the table comfortably.

Three portable type domestic machines are the minimum requirement for any wardrobe. The fact that they are portable means they can be moved into the dressing rooms if necessary. A great asset to any wardrobe is a serger which overcasts raw edges and therefore finishes the garment off neatly without unnecessary time being spent. Other necessary items are dress forms (Judies), one male and one female in the most popular sizes for your group. These are costly items as they now have to be imported from the United States, but second hand ones are occasionally available. With judies, a number of fitting jobs can be done without using the actor. A roll of brown paper is essential for patternmaking. A pressure steam iron and table is ideal but a domestic iron will handle most situations.

One full-length mirror is a great help, not only for fittings but also for perspective work. If a screen can be drawn around the mirror area, this makes an ideal fitting room without taking away from the room space, as the curtain can be drawn back after use. Lighting is also very important as long hours are spent in the room and bad lighting can cause eye strain. A soft pink fluorescent light is kindest to the eyes and creates less variance in colors.

There is no need to mention all the stock supplies one needs, as it depends on funds available and of course the needs of each particular show. One very important item, however, is a good pair of cutting scissors which should not, under any circumstances, be used for anything but fabric. These should be sharpened regularly by a reputable sharpener as bad sharpening can harm them.

## **CLEANING AND STORAGE OF COSTUMES**

The costume storage area is just as important as the construction area and again can occupy a fair amount of space.

At the end of the run, all costumes and costume pieces must either be laundered or dry cleaned according to the type of fabric. All borrowed or rented costumes, after cleaning, are returned to their rightful owners, using the return list as a final check for damage, repairs, alterations etc.

The greatest problem shared by both amateurs and professionals, is that of costume storage space. As most community theatres have limited storage space available, the decision has to be made as to which costumes should be kept, and which are to be unpacked and stored as fabric, ready for re-use at a later date, and which are to be thrown out. If the storage space is available, it is necessary to catalogue all costumes, in order to know what is in stock and also available for future productions or rental purposes. Rental of costumes can provide money for future costume budgets and on-going maintenance of existing stock.

Cataloguing and storing can be done in two ways, either as complete shows, or in historical periods. Some form of division should be made between each period or show. This can again be a cardboard disc which is made to fit the hanging rack and labelled clearly. It is most helpful if garments have been labelled to state character, production and theatre company. Space should be found on the label to add Chest/Bust, Waist and Hip size and Height (see example).

**A.B.C. THEATRE COMPANY**

PRODUCTION: \_\_\_\_\_

CHARACTER: _____
ACTOR: _____
Height: _____ Bust: _____
Waist: _____ Hip: _____

This lets you know at a glance whether the costume will fit another actor and what alterations might be possible.

These labels can be ordered from specialist firms or simply made with ribbon or factory cotton and indelible marking ink. Whichever way is chosen, accurate records should be kept, showing colors and sizes of each item.

All garments, of course, should be stored away from sunlight since this can cause color fading, and in a climate controlled area as variances in temperature and humidity will also destroy the fibres. The garments should be covered since even the cleanest storage area has dust which, over a period of time tends to rot the fibres. Dry cleaning companies can be approached, and are often quite willing to supply groups with plastic bags for the purpose of storing costumes. Large garden type garbage bags can also be used for smaller costumes. Large cardboard boxes can be obtained from the supermarket to hold shoes, hats etc., Each box should be labelled clearly and the contents organised by size. Gloves, shoes and stockings should be paired and tied or pinned together. Use smaller boxes for smaller items, such as veils collars, ties etc. Expensive or hard to replace items such as jewellery, combs, collar studs, rings etc., should be kept separately, preferably in a locked box or a cupboard. Really good hats should have their own individual boxes, good shoes their own shoe trees. The storage area should be lockable, with the key retained by the costumier. Strict policy guidelines regarding access to the storage and use of stock costumes should be developed so that the organisation and cataloguing work is kept to a minimum, and the storage area is not ravaged by unauthorised persons looking for Hallowe'en costumes!

### **BUILDING A COSTUME STOCK**

Should your group have no costume stock, it is comparatively simple to start collecting one.

Ads can be placed in the local paper, especially around spring. Many marvellous costume items come from attics when spring cleaning is done. (Some true period pieces have been acquired this way.) Sometimes these pieces are so old they can no longer be worn for fear they will disintegrate, but they can be kept carefully and used as reference pieces. They also make interesting lobby displays for certain productions. Jumble sales, etc., are also great sources for costumes and costume pieces such as hats, scarves, shoes, etc. The Salvation Army, Goodwill Stores and other second hand clothing stores can produce many interesting items for very little cost. It is worth keeping a look out for sales of ex-rental stocks, both costume and formal wear rentals, held occasionally by commercial companies. These may cost a little more money than the sources previously mentioned but can sometimes prove to be very useful.

Last, but not least, you can ask for donations from group members, relatives, and friends. Sometimes the items donated, while unable to be used as costumes, can be taken apart and the fabric used. All of these help save the group some money and also add considerably to the wardrobe stock. Try to persuade your company to set aside a regular budget for costume acquisition and to plan productions which will give your stock a wider range of items.

## **SPECIAL NEEDS**

Some productions will require special items which may not normally be considered costumes, but which may have to be made or found by the costume department if no one else is available to do this.

**N.B.** The line between "costume" and "prop" sometimes is very thin, and arbitrary decisions may have to be made by the designer (or producer) in assigning the responsibility to one department, or the other.

## **JEWELLERY**

Jewellery can add immeasurably to the detail of a particular costume. Careful research on the use of jewellery to denote specific periods of history is important to maintain class distinctions as well as fashion dictates. For modern productions, often the best source is the combined collection of the cast members to find the right combination of items for the best effect. Obviously great care must be taken if using expensive or sentimentally valuable borrowed jewellery. However, it tends to be true, that the more expensive a piece is, the less effective it appears on stage. "Dime store gems", if carefully selected, can appear stunning with the right application -and there is no problem if it is lost or stolen. Period or theatrical jewellery can be manufactured very effectively by using felt shapes, stiffened with "size" (a mixture of white glue and water) and treated with false gems, textured with liquid latex, or hot glue. A glue gun is an electrical heating device which melts solid glue pellets into a stream of hot liquid glue which can be directed like icing from an icing bag onto a cake. No wardrobe should be without one.

Macaroni, painted and threaded on wire, makes incredible Egyptian jewellery. Bubble gum balls in various sizes, painted and drilled with holes, will provide beads, pearls, rosaries, etc., at low cost. Shapes cut from wood or metal and painted can form crosses, pendants and medals. Bases for ear-rings, brooches and rings, etc., false stones and other materials can be purchased at various craft shops and, with imagination and experimentation, can be turned into splendid stage jewellery.

## **MILLINERY**

Special hats and head gear can be fabricated by using pre-formed buckram hat shapes (available with other millinery supplies from Macdonald Faber) and covered with appropriate material, feathers, jewellery, etc. Basic forms can also be made from felt, stretched, steamed (with an electric kettle) and shaped on a wooden hat block and then "sized" with millinery sizing if desired. On occasion, it is possible to alter existing hats by the addition of flowers, feathers, fruit, artificial birds, veiling, ribbons and other trims to approximate historical illustrations. Again, imagination and experimentation will provide interesting results.

## **ARMOUR**

Armour can be rented from the Costume Rental Houses or some theatre companies which happen to have done a production which required it.

Depending on the style and period, good results can be obtained using leather, (or leatherette) and metal studs to make breastplates, greaves, wristbands and some types of helmets. Fibre glass, papier-mache, Celastic and Latex moulded armour can look extremely effective, but these are difficult processes for the non-specialist without proper tools and equipment. "Chain Mail" can be knitted from heavy string, using

very thick wooden needles, in the shape of coats, leggings, boots, then painted and textured. Brass curtain rings, or painted rubber jar rings, sewn to a basic jacket can create an interesting effect. Gold or silver foil can add trim. Metal armour should probably be avoided - even if you can find it - as it is hot, difficult to wear, impedes the actor's movement, and can be very noisy.

## **UNIFORMS**

If accuracy and detail is not an important consideration, modern uniforms can be obtained and embellished to costume police characters or military personnel. It pays to talk nicely to your local police department, military base, cadet force or marching band. Usually you can borrow a basic outfit to which you can add badges, gold braid, epaulettes, belts, medals, gloves, etc., to provide a reasonable silhouette. Army Surplus stores have reasonably priced basic garments which can be adapted. If, however, the script calls for a very precise reference to a particular regiment, or corps, be sure that your research is good and your costume correct in every detail. It always seems in those situations that there is at least one member of the audience who has served in that particular force and who will take great delight in pointing out all the inaccuracies of the costume. Uniforms should take priority as stock items for storage as they also seem to be one of the most difficult items to obtain.

Historical uniforms will probably have to be made from scratch or rented from a commercial costume house.

## **COSTUME PROPS AND ACCESSORIES**

These are items which are used by the actor during the course of the performance but which are also part of the costume and must have a certain appearance, size, color, quality, etc., to match or complement the costumes. Handbags, reticules and muffs can be made simply from matching or contrasting material, or by having existing ones recovered. Inexpensive white cotton gloves can be dyed a variety of shades. Swords, canes, walking sticks can be rented or borrowed with uniforms or bought and adapted. Parasols and other "theatrical" props are available through Theatre Supply houses or the companies which supply wedding accessories. Spectacle frames can sometimes be borrowed or purchased from your local optical dealer, or historical "frames" made from painted or taped wire. Cheap sunglasses can sometimes provide realistic looking modern frames. Joke shops, Magician's Supply Houses, Carnival Suppliers and Promotional Material Dealers all handle articles which might be needed in some production. The Yellow pages of the Telephone Directory can be very useful in tracking down the more unusual costume prop requirements. Again, ingenuity can solve a lot of problems.

In this manual, I have tried to provide a general outline for the steps in costuming and the procedures of the wardrobe department. Of course, each production will be different and will depend on a variety of variable circumstances such as style, period, budget, available manpower, designers' needs and so on. But by applying the principles of pre-planning and organisation to give you the best use of all factors, you should find it easier and more interesting to costume your production more effectively. Don't be afraid to experiment and invent and to use your ingenuity. Above all, have fun!

### **A LIST OF USEFUL ADDRESSES**

These are intended only as a guide and are mainly in the Toronto area.  
Each company should develop its own local list and update it each season.

#### **FABRICS**

**B.B. Bargoons**

#### **COSTUME JEWELLERY, BEADS, ETC.**

**Ontario Specialty Co.**

119 Queen St. E.  
Toronto (416) 368-2648

**Designer's Fabric Outlet**  
1360 Queen St. W.  
Toronto (416) 531-2810

**Fabric Clearance Warehouse**  
760A Supertest Road  
Toronto (905) 665-4647

**MacDonald Faber Ltd.**  
952 Queen St. W.  
Toronto (416) 534-3940

**Textile Bazaar**  
501 Danforth  
Toronto (416) 465-4492

### NOTIONS

**MacDonald Faber Ltd.**  
952 Queen St. W.  
Toronto (416) 534-3941

**Neveren's Tailoring Supplies**  
451 Queen St. W.  
Toronto (416) 368-4136

**Stitsky's**  
754 Bathurst St.  
Toronto (416) 537-2633

### COSTUME RENTAL HOUSES

**Costume House**  
284 King St. W.  
Toronto (416) 977-3113

**Malabar Ltd.**  
14 McCaul St.  
Toronto (416) 598-2581

**Thunder Thighs Costumes Ltd.**  
16 Busy St.  
Toronto (416) 462-062

133 Church St.  
Toronto (416) 366-9327

**Soo Ling Beads**  
1162 Dundas St. W.  
Toronto (416) 588-1994

**The Bead Boutique**  
756 Wilson Avenue  
Toronto (905) 633-8618

### MILLINERY SUPPLIES

**Macdonald Faber Ltd.**  
952 Queen St. W.  
Toronto (416) 534-3940

### FACTORY COTTON

**Gibson Textile Dyers**  
1171 Queen St. W.  
Toronto (416) 533-8565

### FELT

#### **Lewiscraft**

**Stitsky's**  
754 Bathurst St.  
Toronto (416) 537-2633

### TIGHTS & LEOTARDS

**Malabar Dancewear Supplies**  
1234 Yonge St.  
Toronto (416) 925-2801

**Toronto Dancewear Centre**  
530 Wilson Avenue  
Toronto (905) 961-2292

**DON'T FORGET YOUR YELLOW PAGES.**

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Metric Pattern Cutting, Winifred Aldrich, Mills & Boon Limited

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The Art of Cutting Men's Clothes, Norah Waugh, Theatre Arts Books, New York

A Concise History of Costume, James Laver, Thames and Hudson, London

The Evolution of Fashion 1066-1930, Margot Hamilton Hill, Peter Bucknell, Drama Book Specialists, New York

Patterns of Fashion I, II & III, Janet Arnold, Macmillan & Co., London

**\* RECOMMENDED READING.**