

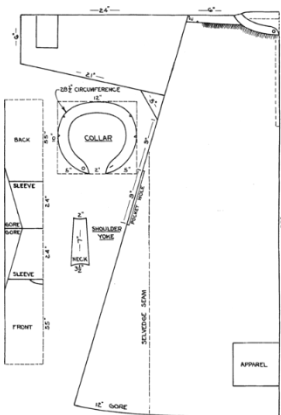
## Theatre People: Cutter (Wardrobe)

The cutter could also be called a patternmaker, costumier, or costume maker. They translate a designer's sketch into a real costume. Think of it as "realizing the designer's vision." The cutter interprets the sketch and imagines how it needs to be constructed. Where are the seams, how much fabric is needed for each part, how will it be finished? They draft patterns – all the pieces that will make up the costume – and cut the fabric using these patterns. The cutter then supervises the sewers as they sew the costume pieces together. Basically, the cutter looks at a two-dimensional sketch of a three-dimensional costume, decide how to divide it up to turn it into two-dimensional pattern pieces, that when sewn together make a three-dimensional costume that an actor can wear!

Once pieces are sewn, the actor tries the costume on in a fitting with the costume designer, the cutter and a stage manager present. The cutter will note any changes needed and adjust the costume accordingly. The cutter is responsible for the costumes being done on time and fulfilling the designer's vision, the actor's needs (comfort and wearability), and the dresser's needs (maintenance and quick-change details). In larger theatres, you may have multiple cutters who are employed for the same theatre all season. In other theatres, the same person might be the head of wardrobe, cutter, and sewer! It all depends on the needs of the company and the production.

### Tasks and activities in a typical day

- Read script and look for information to do with costumes
- Discuss sketches and concept with Designer, Head of Wardrobe and Buyer
- Figure out yardages for fabric and trims needed
- Ask the designer questions about each sketch in order to create a costume. For example, how does the costume need to move? What kind of weight should the fabric have? Does the actor need to get into or out of it quickly?
- Take actor's measurements to use for drafting the patterns
- Draft the pattern pieces to fit the actor's body
- Cut the fabric using the pattern
- Explain the plan for each piece of clothing to the sewers to sew together for a first fitting
- Supervise the construction of the costumes
- Attend fittings with the Designer where the costume is fitted on the Actor
- Attend dress rehearsals to check that everything is working



The cutter determines the 2D shapes that will be sewn together for a 3D costume. Centre: custom pattern pieces are laid out on fabric. Right: sometimes a pattern is purchased, and edited to adjust it to the actor's measurements.

# Theatre People: Cutter (Wardrobe)

## 10 skills that a Cutter uses:

- Communication and collaboration
- Attention to detail
- Time management
- Creative problem solving
- Prioritization and Decision making
- Drafting patterns
- Construction of clothing
- Understanding physics of fabric
- Good “eye” for colour, proportion and line
- Three dimensional ability



In *Shakespeare's Dog*, designed by Brian Perchaluk, the cutter would have had to know the “rules” for making Elizabethan costumes so that they were realistic – but also know which rules to break for the needs of the production! For example, some people played dogs and needed to move in different ways – and have tails added. You can see the details, like Anne's cuffs, translated from sketch to life by the cutter. (Lighting: Scott Henderson)

In *Matilda*, designed by Cory Sincennes, the cutters made plans and supervised construction for pieces built from scratch or bought and adapted. The Wormwood parents' outfits were built. Mrs Wormwoods ballroom dress was bought but her practice skirt overtop was built, and had to be whipped off onstage to reveal the pink dress underneath. Michael's outfit was made of bought pieces that were altered to fit the actor just right. (Lighting: Gerald King, photos: Dylan Hewlett)



## Building Abilities

There are probably lots of things you are already doing, and things you can start to do, that will serve you in a career in wardrobe. Some of these are:

- Watching costumes in movies and theatre – what is worn, and how is it worn?
- Observe the qualities of clothing and how it works – where are the seams? How does that make the fabric drape?
- Notice how fabrics move, feel, look, and sound
- Learn to hand sew, and experiment with other sewing and tailoring techniques
- Notice design trends from today and different periods in history
- Find an organizational system that works for you to track different tasks and projects
- Learn sewing and tailoring terminology and the correct terms for clothing pieces (tailcoat, spencer, cloak...) so you have a common vocabulary with designers and other staff