Classroom VIDEO

Additional Teacher Resource Pack

Treading the Boards series

Cutting It in Costume

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For Teachers

Brief Summary of Programme

Costume forms a crucial part of any stage production. This programme explores the options available to students during the design process. Starting with a history of theatrical costume, the programme goes on to explore the effects which can be created by using different materials, colours and patterns. Finally it discusses the role of the Wardrobe Supervisor, showing how students can make their drama work even more professional and convincing.

DVD Timeline

0.00 – 01.03   Introduction
01.06 – 05.00   A Brief History of Dressing Up
05.06 – 07.39   Character and Costumes
07.44 – 12.30   Raw Materials
12.34 – 17.55   Designing for Production
18.00 – 23.27   Working in Wardrobe
23.30 – 24,00   Conclusion
24.01 – 25.13   Credits

Other Background Information for Teachers

Designing costume can be an elaborate or relatively simple process, depending on the resources available to you and your students. Allowing them to research and create their own costume can be an excellent learning process, even if the focus of your specification is on acting.

Western theatre originates in Ancient Greece when costumes were simple and made use of masks. Throughout Medieval Europe costumes became more elaborate with the travelling performances of the Mystery Plays. During the Restoration, we know that actors provided their own costume, so these tended to be neither elaborate nor historically accurate. When women were allowed onto the stage from 1660, a period we now refer to as the Renaissance, costumes were often gifted to actors and actresses by wealthy benefactors. In modern day theatre we are accustomed to seeing a range of costume, from the spectacular to the minimal.

In schools and colleges, costume provides excellent scope for cross-curricular links between design and drama departments.

Curriculum Links

KS3 / 4 – Art & Design

1.1 Creativity
a. Producing imaginative images, artefacts and other outcomes that are both original and of value.
b. Exploring and experimenting with ideas, materials, tools and techniques.
c. Taking risks and learning from mistakes.

1.2 Competence
a. Investigating, analysing, designing, making, reflecting and evaluating effectively.
b. Making informed choices about media, techniques and processes.

1.3 Cultural understanding
a. Engaging with a range of images and artefacts from different contexts, recognising the varied characteristics of different cultures and using them to inform their creating and making.
b. Understanding the role of the artist, craftsperson and designer in a range of cultures, times and contexts.

1.4 Critical understanding
a. Exploring visual, tactile and other sensory qualities of their own and others' work.
b. Engaging with ideas, images and artefacts, and identifying how values and meanings are conveyed.
c. Developing their own views and expressing reasoned judgements.
d. Analysing and reflecting on work from diverse contexts.

KS4/5 Drama and Theatre Studies

Assessment Objectives:
• Performing and Designing
• Knowledge, Understanding and Evaluation
• Interpreting Plays

Related DVDs available from Classroom Video Ltd.

From the *Treading the Boards* series:
> *Cutting It in Costume*
> *From Page to Stage*

Also available:
> *Creating Physical Theatre*
> *Devising Work*

Please contact customer services on 0117 929 1924
or visit www.ClassroomVideo.co.uk to see our full range of Drama and Theatre Studies titles.

Other Useful Links

http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/38470/costume-and-wigs-design-and-making/costume-and-wigs.html
Costume design and creation from the National Theatre

http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/drama/performing/supportrev2.shtml
Helpful tips from the BBC plus useful costume measurement sheet and interactive dress design tool

http://www.museumofcostume.co.uk/
Lots of images of costumes plus interactive games

Suggested Activities Before Viewing the Programme

1. Look at the outfit you are wearing today. What materials and colours do you have on? What impression might your clothes give to a stranger? Do they reveal anything about your personality? Share your thoughts with your group.

2. Which colours and fabrics would you choose for the following roles in a play?
    a.   An innocent young girl
    b.   An angry old man
    c.   A caring middle-aged father
    d.   A career woman
    e.   A sulky teenager

3. Consider a production you have seen recently (you could refer to a film or television programme). Which costume or outfit stood out for you? What did it tell the audience about that character? Discuss with your group.

4. Select one item of clothing, either from home or from your drama wardrobe. Give this item to a partner, and ask them to use it as the basis for a new character. Each person in the group should now introduce themselves in role, and then explain how their piece of clothing led to the creation of this new character.

5. As a group, look at a short play, or extract from a script, together. If you could assign just one item of costume (eg a hat, a pair of shoes, a bag) to define each character, what would it be and why?

Student Worksheet
While Viewing the Programme

1. When did Western theatre begin?

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2. Who was Dionysus?

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3. During the Middle Ages, what items of costume would be worn to symbolise the devil?

_____

4. What effect did the Puritans have on theatre?

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_____

5. When were women first allowed on stage in England?

_____

_____

6. Name two technical developments in the nineteenth century that had a major impact on the importance of costume.

_____

7. List three items that costume include.

_____

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8. What should a good costume show about a character?

_____

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9. Give an example of how colour can work in costume.

_____

10. List three tips that might help you with your costume design?

_____

_____

11. What effect do coloured gels have on costume?

_____.

12. Name a cheap but useful type of material for costume design.

_____

13. Where can you go to find out about the historical context of your costume?

_____

14. How can you 'break down' a costume?

_____

15. What happens during the technical run?

_____

_____

16. What are the two sections of the wardrobe department in a theatre?

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17. Why is it important for dresser to remain calm?

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_____

18. How are costumes adjusted for quick changes?

_____

Suggested Student Responses

1. When did Western theatre begin?
In Ancient Greece

2. Who was Dionysus?
The God of Wine and Fertility

3. During the Middle Ages, what items of costume would be worn to symbolise the devil?
Black and red material; furred or feathered legs; a grotesque animal mask

4. What effect did the Puritans have on theatre?
They closed them down.

5. When were women first allowed on stage in England?
In 1660 when King Charles II was restored to the throne.

6. Name two technical developments in the nineteenth century that had a major impact on the importance of costume.
Lighting the stage and turning off the lights in the auditorium.

7. List three items that costume includes.
Hairdressing, wigs, accessories like jewellery, handbags, medals, shoes and hats, special makeup, masks.

8. What should a good costume show about a character?
It should show what sort of person they are, the historical period the character lives in and their social status.

9. Give an example of how colour can work in costume.
Younger and older females dressed in lighter and darker shades of the same colour.

10. List three tips that might help you with your costume design.
1) **Limit your range of colours**
2) **Make sure your main characters stand out with the darkest or lightest colours on stage.**
3) **Colours far apart in value work better together eg pale lilac with dark green**
4) **Various shades of one colour usually work well together on stage**

11. What effect do coloured gels have on costume?
They change the look of different colours in costume.

12. Name a cheap but useful type of material for costume design.
Upholstery fabric or unbleached calico.

13. Where can you go to find out about the historical context of your costume?
Internet, art galleries, library, old photos, costume museums

14. How can you 'break down' a costume?
Rub with sandpaper to look worn.
Rub with soap to look greasy.
Paint on blood, vomit and other stains.

15. What happens during the technical run?
Actors wear their costumes on set for the first time and final adjustments to costume are made.

16. What are the two sections of the wardrobe department in a theatre?
Making Wardrobe and Running Wardrobe

17. Why is it important for dresser to remain calm?
Actors are often stressed and over-excited when they are about to perform, or they may need to make a very quick change.

18. How are costumes adjusted for quick changes?
Using Velcro fastenings or elastic.

Suggested Activities for After Viewing the Programme

1. Create a flowchart to show the process of designing a costume for the stage.

2. Choose a character from a script and design a costume for them. Use a scrap book and start by playing with different colours and materials before putting all your ideas together in a final design.

3. Look online for different productions of the same play. If you have access to www.youtube.com you will find lots of versions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Compare the costumes used for one character in three productions. Explain which one you think is most effective and why.

4. Start your own material swatch book, using small squares of material. Make notes about how each material changes under different lights, how easy they are to work with and how much they cost. When you use a particular fabric for a costume, take photographs and add them to your swatch book.

5. Working in pairs, imagine that you are working on a stage version of a book or film that you know well. One of you should take the role of director and the other should take the role of costume designer. Discuss your ideas for costume, taking on board the director's vision as well as your budget.

Wordsearch

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J   D   W   S   D   E   X   E   E   I   Z   D   V   Y   M
B   F   A   B   R   I   C   Z   C   K   R   D   M   E   G
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CHARACTER	COSTUME	DRESS
FABRIC	LIGHTING	MATERIAL
MEASUREMENT	STITCH	SYMBOL
WIG		