8 Costume, Wardrobe, Wigs, Hair and Makeup

1 Key Principles

Sustainable sourcing and making of costumes aims to eliminate the use of unsustainable and inorganic materials. Sustainable practice for wardrobe, wigs, hair and makeup uses products which are sourced sustainably and ethically, and don't damage the environment.

At present, costumes, wigs and care products often rely on materials for which there are no truly sustainable alternatives. Theatre-makers can help lobby suppliers to research better alternatives – and use their networks to share knowledge as they become available.

Sourcing Costumes

Wherever possible, costumes should be reused or recycled. Some will come from store, others – including basics like T-shirts or jeans – should come from second-hand sources. It's equally important to ensure that costumes are returned to storage or the second-hand market after the show, rather than thrown away.

Making Costumes

Making costumes is one of theatre's greatest skills. Sustainable costumes use recycled or sustainable textiles. They're designed to be cared for sustainably and recycled afterwards. Choice of materials for new costumes should include a consideration of durability of fabrics to ensure they will last and be made to ensure they can be refitted for future performers.

Stage blood and other effects often require more harmful cleaning products. Consider options for removal of parts to allow for separate washing.

Note: Costumes for dance and ballet often have special requirements, which are covered in the Dance and Ballet section.

During the Show

Laundry and cleaning of costumes and wigs can have a greater impact on the environment than the costumes themselves. Adopt more sustainable practice by avoiding harmful chemicals wherever possible and consolidating washing and drying loads. *See below and in the Toolkit.*

2 Communications and Planning

All departments / supervisors need to be involved early to make time for sustainable sourcing. Planning early can also reduce last minute ordering, next day delivery and use of fast fashion. Directors can help by identifying early on the costumes or wigs they need for rehearsal.

Designers and costume departments need more time for sourcing, and a flexible approach to choosing from what's available. Producers must make time and budget available.

Producers and theatres also need to provide information on what's available from store, and on local second-hand shops and networks.

3 Reuse and Recycling

Wherever possible, it's important to source reused costumes, rather than making or buying new. Designers and costume departments know many sources.

It's equally important to give clothes a second life through storing, selling or donating after the show. If worn out, they should be disposed of through sustainable recycling operations. Go to the Toolkit for more information on reuse and recycling.

4 Materials

Sustainable Sourcing

If possible, costume departments should use recycled or 'deadstock' fabrics and cottons. Failing that, textiles should be certified organic, contain only organic dyes, be sourced locally if possible, and be machine washable, to avoid chemical or dry cleaning. Scraps should be recycled in textile banks.

For hair and makeup, sustainable, non-toxic products should be used, with clear environmental labelling and disposal instructions. *Go to the Toolkit for more information on Costumes*

Materials to Avoid

Some materials used in costumes, wardrobe, wigs and make-up are particularly damaging. These include glitter, synthetic dyes and products containing parabens and triclosan. For fastenings, use sewing, ties, pins & clips, instead of tapes, pastes & glues.

Cosmetic products should be accredited with an EU Ecolabel, Ecocert, COSMOS or similar, and come in 100% recyclable, compostable or reusable packaging.

5 Caring for Costumes and Wigs

Sustainable care of costumes and wigs means reducing the use of harmful chemicals and energy. Launder textiles below 30°C with products that meet AISE or EU Ecolabel requirements. Tumble drying should be avoided if possible.

6 Deliveries

Last-minute, one-off deliveries can best be avoided by early decision-making, and avoiding last minute changes of mind.

Combined orders from single sources will avoid the need for multiple deliveries, and the planning involved will help reduce reliance on last-minute ordering. Co-ordinating with other productions can reduce deliveries even further.

Deliveries are more sustainable if they're local, and use public transport or bike couriers.

Last Minute Ordering and Fast Fashion

Shows often order at the last minute, using fast fashion retailers and next day delivery. That means a lot of one-off deliveries, and last minute quick alterations which make clothes harder to reuse later. Instead:

- Plan costumes earlier in the production. Ask directors to decide early what they need for rehearsal.
- Design and source flexibly, avoiding over-specific requirements.
- Use local costume suppliers.
- Last minute changes may sometimes be unavoidable – but be sure there's a good reason for them.

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