



UNIT: The ART of Costume Design

OBJECTIVES: In this unit of study, students will

- ID skills used and developed by Costume and Wardrobe personnel (Tech Theatre 1.C; 2.D)
- ID job titles for Costume and Wardrobe personnel in a performing arts organization. (TT 2.C; TT 5.G)
- Define common costume and wardrobe terms (TT 1.A)
- Design a costume for the party scene in the opera *La Traviata* (TT 2.G; 5.C)

LESSON 1 – The Wardrobe Department

OBJ: The student will ID job titles and skills of Costume and Wardrobe personnel for an opera production.

SETTING THE STAGE:

Ask students to list some of the many jobs and skills needed to present an opera. Tell them that today they will be exploring what goes on behind the scenes to costume a cast of performers in an opera.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS:

- View the following INSIDE AUSTIN OPERA videos
Kathy Lang - <http://bit.ly/InsideOperaKathyLang>
Trinka Withers - <http://bit.ly/InsideOperaTrinkaWithers>
Joe Adams - https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=7RYuc8pyK_E&app=desktop
- Turn to your neighbor and share three things you learned about working with costumes in an opera.
- Name at least two specific job titles for personnel that work with costumes in an opera.
- List at least three skills used by personnel on the costume/wardrobe team.
- What skill/s do you currently have that would make you a good addition to the costume/wardrobe team? What skill/s would you need to learn or develop?

EXTENSIONS:

1. Read through the list of personnel for one of the largest opera companies in the world, the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. Which employee titles listed would you identify as personnel that work with costumes?

<https://www.metopera.org/about/who-we-are/administration/>

2. Read through the following job listing for the Head of Wardrobe Department for the Metropolitan Opera. Were there any job responsibilities or qualifications listed that surprised you?

<https://www.metopera.org/About/Jobs/Head-of-Wardrobe/>



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LESSON 2 – Costume Terminology

OBJ: The student will define common costume and wardrobe terms.

MATERIALS:

- **The ART of Costume Design** PowerPoint
- Art supplies

SETTING THE STAGE:

Invite students to describe the clothes that they are wearing. Make a list of the terms they use. Tell students that today we will expand our vocabulary and understanding of clothing terminology.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS:

- View the first section (Slides 1-17) of the PowerPoint titled **The ART of Costume Design**. Ask student to make a list of at least FIVE new clothing terms that were not mentioned in the SETTING THE STAGE activity.
- With a partner and/or as a class, read and answer the questions on Slides 18-24. How did looking at the previous slides of costume terms and pictures guide your descriptions?
- Now go back and describe the clothes you are wearing. Try to include some of the new terms from the presentation.

EXTENSIONS: Use the photo provided here (see next page) or type AUSTIN OPERA PRODUCTIONS in a search engine on the internet to find photos of AUSTIN OPERA productions.

1. Select one of the photos and describe the costumes with a partner.
2. Without looking at the photo, draw/illustrate a picture of a costume as described by a partner. Label any parts of the costume that you can using clothing terminology. Switch roles and do the activity again.



Austin Opera, Aida, 2016

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LESSON 2 – Design a Costume

OBJ: The student will design and present a costume design for a character in an opera using the artistic medium of their choice (sketch, painting, miniature model, etc.).

MATERIALS:

- **The ART of Costume Design** PowerPoint
- Art supplies

SETTING THE STAGE:

Invite a student volunteer to come into the classroom wearing a wacky costume, but act like something the costume isn't. For example, come into class in a very loud, obnoxious outfit and act very timid and shy.

Ask the students what they thought when the volunteer walked into the classroom. Did they notice that their personality and costume didn't quite match? Why was it strange?

Tell them that according to a study done by Janet Elsea, in the first four minutes of meeting a stranger, our understanding of that person is based on three factors: appearance, 55%; tone of voice, 38%; what the person is saying, 7%. The way people look affects the way people act and the way others perceive them.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS:

- Read the synopsis for the opera *La traviata*. Focus on the first party scene, describing what kinds of activities occur at a party.
- View the final section of the Power Point titled **The ART of Costume**. (Slides 25-45). Make note of the different inspirations that directors and costume designers can take in creating a production of an opera – traditional setting, time period setting, genre influences, etc.
- Select a setting for your version of Violetta's party. Name the character that you will be designing a costume for (Violetta, Alfredo, Flora, chorus member, etc.)
- Describe your inspiration for the vision you chose.
- Using an art medium of your choice, create a costume for one of the characters to wear at the party. Some possibilities - sketch, painting, small model, full size costume, etc.

EXTENSION:

1. Take a photo of your costume design and share with Austin Opera:
INSTAGRAM – austinopera
TWITTER – @AustinOperaEd and @AustinOpera
FACEBOOK – austinopera
EMAIL – derck@austinopera.org
#AccessOpera #AustinOperaEDU #AustinOpera