

Role(s)

The Wardrobe Department in a theatre or on a show can vary in size depending on the size and scale of the production. However it generally consists of a *Head of Wardrobe* who supervises a team of *Wardrobe Assistants* and *Dressers* to ensure that the costumes for a production are well looked after, maintained and fitted well to the performer.

Depending on your level of experience a position in wardrobe is likely to pay in the region of £18K for a novice to £35K for a Head of Wardrobe.

Responsibilities include

Working with Stage Management to prepare dressing rooms and pre-set costumes

Liaising with the Costume Designer and Supervisor regarding changes or alterations to costumes

Assisting actors' change of costumes, supervising quick changes where necessary

Maintaining costumes, including laundry and ironing

Altering or mending costumes

Storing costumes and returning hired items (known as 'breaking down' costumes)

Key Skills

These are the desirable skills to have to be the right candidate for a wardrobe role:

Excellent organisational skills

An eye for detail

Ability to work in a fast-paced environment

Competent in sewing

Good communicator

Training

Vocational training in Costume is on offer at many drama schools and some traineeships are available with larger theatre companies. However, many people working in Wardrobe Departments begin by working voluntarily in local theatres, progressing from Dresser to Wardrobe Assistant.

Skills are developed on-the-job while gaining useful industry contacts – Designers, Costume Supervisors, Production Managers – which are vital for securing future work. Some people seek additional specialist training, for example in tailoring and millinery, to increase their skills-base and employability.

A degree is not necessary for this role but useful subjects to study include:

Costume design

Fashion

Dressmaking

Textiles

Courses include but are not limited to the following

BA (Hons) Theatre Practice (Costume Construction) – Central School of Speech and Drama

Theatre Costume – Royal Academy of Dramatic Art

BA (Hons) Costume Production – Rose Bruford College

BA (Hons) Costume for Performance (London College of Fashion)

BA (Hons) Theatre and Screen (Costume Interpretation) – Wimbledon College of Art

BA (Hons) Costumer with Performance Design – Arts University Bournemouth

Useful Information

Stage Costume – Step-by-Step by Mary T Kidd, 2002

Costume and Make-Up by Michael Holt, 1988