



Bartholomew Players

November 2022 Newsletter



Notices

Front of house help.

Showtime is Wed 30th Nov – Sat 3rd Dec. We hope members not in the cast or crew will either offer to help with front of house duties or pay to come & see the play!

Spring 2023 production

We are delighted to report that we have secured the performing rights for A Bunch Of Amateurs by Ian Hislop & Nick Newman, so will be performing this very funny play, directed by Joe O'Connor and Pip Burns from 17th-20th May. There is a cast of 3 men & 4 women. Readings, workshops & auditions are scheduled for January.

Whats' on

Rehearsals - Every Mon & Wed

Eynsham Village Hall every Monday and Wednesday. Come down and see the progress.

November

19th from 9am-6pm - Set build

Any members that have availability, please come down to the hall to help with the set build

28th at 7.30pm - Dress rehearsal

All members welcome, please come along.

30th to 3rd Dec - Performance nights

December

4th Dec 9.30am-12.00pm - Set strike

Many hands make light work, please come down and help.

14th Dec from 7.00pm - Christmas party

For those of you attending, please could you email your menu choices and dietary requirements by 7th December to liberty.foreman@gmail.com

How-to series on BP

As part of a new series of 'How-to' articles that will be released in each BP newsletter, this month we have interviewed Sally about wardrobe.

Sally joined BP in 2016 initially just to help out with wardrobe as the previous lady had moved on. Having been hooked by BP, she stayed and dabbled in almost all of the backstage roles, but wardrobe remained her favourite. As to why Sally enjoys backstage work so much, well it's because it has all the creativity and social reward without the pressure of line learning.

Sally asked me if I remembered what it was like dressing up for Halloween as a child, or picking out a performance costume for ballet or gymnastics? As soon as she asked me I realised what it must feel like to see all the costumes, hair and make-up, lighting, sound, set-design, props all come together for performance night; that child-like excitement, satisfaction and pride when seeing everything come together.

So what does it take to get wardrobe ready for a BP performance? Here is Sally's step-by-step How-to guide to Wardrobe. If you would like to be involved in wardrobe for the next play, please reach out to Sally at sally.firth@outlook.co.uk, she is currently seeking someone to join her on wardrobe for the next play.



How-to: Wardrobe



by
Sally Firth

1. Preparation

Like hair, make-up and props, developing wardrobe for any play is a dynamic process. It is important to bear in mind that initial visualisation may not necessarily be the end result. By this I mean, for a variety of reasons, costumes and props often need a re-think during the course of rehearsal. For example, a costume may not behave quite the way you intended, resulting in a new approach. It is necessary, therefore, to keep an open mind. Costumes can evolve! Hence the importance of staying organised and keeping notes of inspirations and ideas as the play develops through rehearsals.

Inspiration will come from all sorts of places, so starting a folder with the following placeholders will help keep these thoughts organised:

a) Key dates

The first thing is to list down the key dates associated with the production: rehearsal schedule, photo shoot, technical rehearsal, dress rehearsals and performance nights.

b) Era

Rutherford and Son is set in the 1900's. Every era will have its own style. Having an understanding of the general styles available in that time of that time period helps with inspiration. Printing out a few different styles will help develop inspiration/ideas as rehearsals progress.

c) Location/social status

Our current production is set in the North of England. Even within England, different locations will be associated with different dress codes.

d) Set

Where does the majority of the play take place? Indoors/outdoors or formal/informal: this will have a big effect on wardrobe.

e) Characters

Get a notebook and create a blank page for each of the characters (and the actor playing them!). Ensure you have all their measurements and shoe sizes.

As a starter, I normally start by flicking through the script and writing down obvious wardrobe hints for each character. I will continue to develop this throughout rehearsals.

f) Order of costume changes

This is where you will keep track of which costume changes will be required and when.

g) Sources

This is where you will keep track of costumes used, and from where they have been sourced.

2. Rummage through the green room

Once you are prepared, it's a good idea to start rummaging through the Green Room and find (and make a note of various) RELEVANT pieces (e.g. shoes, coats) that might be of use. I usually start doing this during the first few rehearsals as the actors develop their characters.

BP is extremely lucky to have a huge Green Room filled with all sorts of wonderful costumes and props so when you find something that might be fitting for a character note it down on their character page.

I also use these first couple of sessions to sort through any of the donations we might have had, and take the opportunity to have a bit of a tidy up!

3. Watch the characters developing

It is truly amazing to see how each actor develops their character. I take a note of the following over the weeks leading up to the photoshoot:

a) Back story

After a few weeks of rehearsals the actor/director will have a back-story for their character. The character idiosyncrasies usually provide costume ideas!

b) Movement

How a character moves will help me think about suitable costumes. If the character is sullen and looking down a lot, a hat with a large peak will hide the face. If the character kneels, the shoes will have to be comfortable. If the character moves their arms a lot, the jacket will have to take this into consideration. It is important that the actors are comfortable with wardrobe; the right wardrobe really enhances their performance.

c) Set

As the play moves through to the later stages I take a keen interest in how the set is developing, I like to ensure there will be no clashing colours and certainly no shiny fabrics that will pick up the stage lighting or anything too dark. The characters need to stand out or blend in as appropriate.

4. Wardrobe hire

It's unlikely that our Green Room will have absolutely everything we need, so I go through the following steps, in this order if the green room can't deliver:

a) Ask the cast and crew

Often we will find that the cast and crew, or even their friends and family, might have either shoes or a relevant costume that we can use. Just make sure they know it will be used constantly and might get worn and a bit dirty!

b) Wacky Wardrobe

We have developed a stellar relationship with Jeanette Gee from Wacky Wardrobe. Jeanette provides a lot of flexibility. It is usually £15-20 per item and we can keep the items for ALL rehearsals and production run. Sometimes, if we are really nice and lucky, they will alter a costume for no extra cost!



c) Oxfordshire Drama Wardrobe

ODW has an amazing selection of extremely high quality costumes. Although, they are less flexible on timelines and are more expensive.

d) Charity shops

We have developed great relationships with the local charity shops in Eynsham. I always ensure I keep them posted of our productions and ask them to keep an eye out for key pieces.

Over the course of the production we might end up using costumes from lots of different sources. To make sure I do not lose track of where things are from I do the following:

- Develop a set of initials for where things have come from, and keep it in the “sources” section of the preparation folder. For example I use: “W” for Wacky Wardrobes; “ODW” for Oxfordshire Drama Wardrobe; “BP” if it's from the greenroom; initials of person lending.
- Attach a small piece of paper with the initial to the garment. Note, at some point these always go missing. So do not rely on this!
- Make a note in the folder, or keep a spreadsheet of all the items and the associated initials.
- I also take a photo with my phone, hit edit and annotate each image with the initials. Sometimes it's easier to have a visual record.

My motto within Wardrobe in amateur dramatics is “If you don't ask, you don't get!”. So don't be afraid to push for that little bit more when sourcing costumes!

5. Costume changes

It may not always be the case but if there are any costume changes make sure that you keep a note, in order of act and scene, which costume changes are needed and when. You will get a feel for how to document exactly what needs changing as the play develops; every play is different. The actors will do most of the work for you, but you just need to make sure that things are easy for them to find, especially if there are fast changes. If there are a lot of changes I usually organise the rail in order of scenes or acts.

6. Photo shoot

Approximately 6 weeks before the performance BP organises a photo shoot for marketing purposes. Whilst there is some forgiveness, you need to be prepared to costume each actor in as much detail as possible.



7. Alterations and back-stage team work

The photo shoot is almost a dress rehearsal for the wardrobe so take advantage of this opportunity and start the fine tuning and alterations.

For example, when watching a character move, you may realise that they are having to lift a skirt too often, or their sleeves are restricting them, or their hat is too big. Being able to notice these things and then fix them for the next time the scene is run will massively improve the actor's performance.

Remember : you do not need to know how to sew to be part of wardrobe!! BP is full of amazingly talented people. Our hair and make-up lady, Sue, together with Judith are amazing at sewing, and incredibly creative so if you notice something isn't right, one of the back stage members will help you.

I often think this team work is the most satisfying part of any production; seeing how tiny costume alternations can make a huge difference to a production and then, how this small contribution adds to the backstage camaraderie and appreciation from the cast.

The cast will often be really grateful when wardrobe notices something that makes it easier for them to do their part too!

8. Credits in the programme

About 4-6 weeks before the performance BP will compile the production programme. Any hired wardrobe items will be listed in the credits so make sure you pass this on to the producer.

8. Revel in the performance

Remember, most of the work in garnering and costume is completed in the early stages of production so when you see it all come to fruition on a first night it really is most rewarding. It is only on the last night that you'll want to do it again!