



## Utah Symphony | Utah Opera Costume Department: Fact Sheet

The USUO Costume Department was established in 1978 by Susan Allred, the lead designer for more than 30 years. Utah Opera founder Glade Peterson understood the importance and significance of costumes in the opera, and he made sure that the Utah Opera was able to own and create their costumes from the very beginning.

- Because Utah Opera holds performances year-round, the Costume Department is busy year-round creating costumes.
- Costumes for a single production take 6 months to 1 year to create, depending on the amount of costumes needed and how elaborate and detailed the costumes are.
- Sophisticated lighting over machines and cutting table prevents shadows on the fabrics.
- The specialized floor, also found in operating rooms, provides comfort for standing for long periods of time.
- The “wall of fabric” is an efficient way to store swatches as well as an interesting décor element for this space.
- There are two terms to describe costumes for each production
  - *New Build* – costumes are created from scratch.
  - *Re-Mount* – costumes are created from a foundation from a previous costume.
- There are 7 main steps in building costumes from scratch
  - *Designer* – A costume designer is hired to design the costumes.
  - *Renderings* – The designer creates renderings (artistic drawings of the costumes).
  - *Line Drawings/Technical Drawings* – Once renderings are approved, the designer creates drawings of each piece of specific measurements and shaping details.
  - *Fabric* – Fabric types and styles are decided on and ordered.
  - *Mock ups* – Costumes are created in low-quality fabric to check the line drawings, adjustments are made, and these become the patterns made by cutter/drapers.
  - *Final Cuts* – The patterns are used to cut the fabric that will be made into costumes.
  - *Creation* – The Costume Department stitchers create and finish the costumes.
- For the fall 2014 production of *Madame Butterfly*, the Costume Department created 18 hand painted and dyed kimonos, which took more than 40 hours of construction time each.
- For the 2014 production of *La Traviata*, the Costume Department created 19 new gowns from scratch.
- Before the completion of the Utah Production Studios offices, the Costume Department stored some of their costumes in unheated rooms, beneath stages, and in the rafters of old buildings.
- There are more than 150,000 individual pieces of inventory in the Costume Department, including small pieces like cravats, belts, hats, shoes and ties.
- The Costume Department storage room is so large that the employees use maps to find costumes they need. The inventory is organized in 11 rows of racks with 2 or three layers of clothes per row. There are separate rooms for smaller items like shoes, ties and jewelry.
- The Costume Department organizes rentals for at least 18-20 full productions each year and rents out individual pieces or partial shows all year long.
- The Costume Department has costumes for 45 full productions in its inventory which it rents out to other opera companies, averaging \$260,000 in rental revenues annually. The most popular are *La Bohème*, *Madame Butterfly*, and *The Barber of Seville*.
- The Costume Department was commissioned to produce 200+ costumes for the TV Pilot of “Galyntine” in 2014.