

PARADE OF UTAH OPERA COSTUMES

Utah Opera's Costume Shop works with Stage Directors and Costume Designers to create costumes that help communicate the traits of the characters portrayed by the singers in an opera performance.

Enjoy these samples from Utah Opera's Costume collection, with descriptions by our Costume Shop Director, Verona Green.



Meet **Amneris**, Princess of Egypt, from the opera *Aïda*, by Giuseppe Verdi

Amneris' wealth is shown through the "lapid" down the front of her gown, hanging from her waist. The multi-stone collar and the peacock many-feathered gold and beaded headpiece also communicate her wealth and high social standing.

Her gold wrist bands and large stone rings show power.

She has a gold-pleated overdress with golden beaded trim; our Costume Shop clearly spent many hours to make Amneris' beautiful, intricate clothing.

The designer used rich colors to make sure that Amneris stands out from the rest of the people on stage as she places herself next to her father the King.

Meet the King of Egypt, from the opera *Aida*, by Giuseppe Verdi



The Designer for Utah Opera's production of *Aida* wanted to do everything she could to make you think of wealth and power when you look at the King on stage.

His crown is the royal blue of Egypt with a gold band and a large cobra. This was designed to look like the crowns worn by the Pharaohs of old to remind their subjects who was in charge.

The pleated skirt and shoulder wrap were made from shiny gold sheer fabric so that they glisten every time the King moves even a little bit on stage.

The King's beaded gold and stone collar is larger, and has more stones and more bright tiny beads in it, than any other character's clothing.

His underdress is very white, unlike anyone else on stage, because only people in power could keep their clothing that clean.

His apron is made from bright blue and many colors to draw more attention to him.

He is holding the crook and the flail to symbolize the Pharaoh's stewardship over the people of Egypt; these are artistic versions based on the original Egyptian clothing.

Meet Two Flirty Young Women from the chorus of the opera
La bohème, by Giacomo Puccini



The director and designer for Utah Opera's *La bohème* wanted to have several young women flirting in the crowd scene.

To communicate their characters, the designer picked costumes with tightly fitted waists and bodices. The skirts are full with texture to draw your eye to them (and of course the director picked women who could act the parts).

The designer drew the audience's eyes to the faces of the women by adding brightly colored and design-filled short capes and stylish hats on their heads.

Contrasting gloves put the finishing touch on these costumes.

Meet Leporello, from the opera *Don Giovanni*,
by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Leporello is Don Giovanni's servant. He helps Don Giovanni find new women to meet. Our production was designed to update the opera story to the 1950s.

Leporello's master, Don Giovanni, wears a black tuxedo the entire time, so the designer wanted the servant, Leporello, to look good enough to be with him but not look as good and certainly not better than his boss. So the designer dressed him in very nice trousers, vest, coat, gray shirt and black tie.

She topped it off with a small fedora hat that the actor could use to help define his character. The man who sang the role of Leporello did a lot of tricks with the hat, including rolling it down his arm, flipping it into the air, and tipping it on and off his head.



Meet Don José and Carmen from the opera *Carmen*,
by Georges Bizet



In this scene from *Carmen*, Don José and Carmen have gone to the mountains with the gypsies.

Don José is dressed in a coat that is a little too large for him; it contrasts with the yellow uniform he wore in the previous scene that fit him perfectly. The designer wanted you to see that after he runs away from the military to be with Carmen (after he releases her from being a prisoner), his life begins to spiral out of control, which is evident in how his clothes fit. If you could see his pants closely, you would see that they have some dirt along the bottom as evidence that he has been marching through the mountains.

Carmen is dressed in dark colors to suggest how the gypsies have been able to hide from the soldiers who are searching for them.

Carmen's striped skirt, though, draws attention to her. She thinks she is the most important person in the camp, and her costume helps us think that too. Her shawl has really long fringe so that whenever she moves on stage, you notice her more than anyone else. She also flips the shawl in anger and wrings it in fear, using it like a prop to communicate her emotions in the scene.

Meet chorus men and the character Happy from the opera *The Girl of the Golden West*, by Giacomo Puccini

The designer wanted these men to look like they had been living up in the tops of the mountains for months at a time. Each person on stage was designed individually so the audience would think that they were looking at a camp of miners who had come from all over the world.



The designer started by deciding if the character were a dressier-looking guy or just a muddy-looking guy.

Next she picked sets of colors for the more “distressed” (our word for muddied) looking guys and colors for the more dressy guys.

Then the designer designed the vests, shirts, coats, and pants that each would wear.

After the costumes were all built, the designer decided how much “mud” (paint) to put on pant hems, coat hems and sleeve hems, shirts, neckerchiefs, and then how much to put on their hats so it looked like they had been sweating in them for days and days.



Meet the prisoner Florestan, from the opera *Fidelio*, by Ludwig van Beethoven



Florestan has been unjustly imprisoned in the worst part of a prison for a very long time. The designer wanted to show that he has worn his own clothing since his arrest, and his clothes have not been washed or taken care of at all. You can see by his clothing how awful his life had been.

How do you make such a filthy-looking costume? First, the designer had the costume made to fit the actor perfectly. Then, the costume was “distressed” to show how much filth he had been through and that it had actually worn away the fabric of his clothing. Don’t worry - the costume just *looks* dirty (the singer did not wear a costume that was actually dirty).

The designer had a long greasy-looking wig put on Florestan so that you would know that he had not had his hair cut for a very long time. Make-up that looks like mud was applied to his face, chest, hands and arms, and feet and legs to make him look really sad and filthy.

Meet two forest-dwelling animals from the opera
Hansel and Gretel, by Engelbert Humperdinck



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These are animals from the opera *Hansel and Gretel* that are in the forest overnight. Child dancers played these roles in our production.

The director and the designer wanted to have more than angels watching over Hansel and Gretel as they slept in the forest, so they decided that life-size animals would be really fun and interesting.

This is one time that the character was so completely designed from the outside in that you never see the people portraying the character.

Each animal was designed with a certain personality: Donkey on the left is a little shy, and Wolf on the right is the opposite - very wolfie.

These costumes were worn by dancers who were choreographed with certain movements. Each dancer said that as soon as they put the entire costume on, it suddenly became easier to know how to make the animal come to life.