

Wardrobe Tips and Tricks by **Wardrobe Manager Julie Smith**

**Thank you for the opportunity of working with your amazing garments.
Below are a few tips and some knowledge to help get your garments
from pre-selection to showcase.**

Behind the scenes – This year’s showcase featured 40 fantastic garments, worn by 25 talented and gorgeous performers. Most of them wore more than one garment, and including the dance costumes, some had up to 5 changes. My team – Jo, Jodie, Anne-Marie and Emma managed this backstage chaos so perfectly, there was hardly any chaos at all! Some garments were made so the models could dress themselves, and some took the whole team – this was quite a feat given that we could have up to 7 or 8 performers changing garments in a 3 minute timeframe.

There are a few things to keep in mind when constructing your garment so they remain in the best condition possible!

Longevity - consider how many times the garments may be worn - photography, judging day, model fittings (up to 4 times), rehearsals, shows, exhibitions, promotions - this year also Art Ball, Perth Fashion Festival and APEX. Appropriate construction methods are essential to prevent 'shedding' and breakage. Consider how the garment will hold up, will glue melt, seams split, scratch, drag, catch etc. Avoid everything you can that will break or catch and consider doorways, steps, heels, stages etc.

Ensure fastening mechanisms are strong - use sew on Velcro, not sticky Velcro, strong zips, reinforce grommets and ties. We had to repair and replace a number of these items. Your garment will be performed in – will your stitching, gluing, soldering etc hold? If using Velcro make sure there are alternate fastenings such as hooks and eyes, ribbons and laces etc. If garment and material is fluffy or woolly then Velcro will get fluffed and not stick as well after a few wears.

Wearability - our garments are worn by volunteers who work incredibly hard to show them off to the public. They do not just wear them in a sedate fashion parade, but in a show full of dancing and dynamic performance. Please consider their comfort. It was necessary for us to pad shoulder straps, remove, cover and pad wires that would stick out and scratch the models, cover chicken wire and hessian, pad uncomfortable headpieces, trim and cover cable tie ends ***use nail clippers to make a rounded end on cable ties***. Some performers were in these garments for a considerable time, so we need to make sure all the weight is not carried in one place and that they are relatively comfortable.

Some suggestions - if using shoulder straps, make them wide and padded and perhaps add a waist strap or support a heavy skirt with shoulder straps and have a separate bodice - this may also contribute to the garment lasting longer as the weight is not pulling on just one place. Look for lighter-weight alternative materials, and try your garments on yourself if possible - especially headpieces. Check armholes, neckline and hems for scratchy parts.

Consider lining hard, sculptural-like pieces in fleece or felt. Use latex to harden fabric: it is much more flexible, lightweight, and durable and won't scratch skin, plus it can be painted.

Adjustability - We don't always know who will wear the garments on judging day and in the showcase. Our performers ranged in age from 10 - 70. Shoe size average was a 7-8, bust size was A - DD. So making your garment adjustable is a huge help to us behind the scenes, and again, will reduce wear and tear. One of the best ideas I've seen this year was a side zip for quick dressing and corset lacing for adjustment. Velcro is also brilliant, just make sure it is sewn on firmly. Wide elastic waistbands work well.

Movability - if your garment can only be shuffled around the stage, that's all that will get shown - think about arm and leg movement, whether it will fall apart or come undone, or restrict the performer's ability to walk.

Headpieces need to be stable, light and comfortable. Bend any wires away from the head, and pad them. Add more than one anchoring point, chin strap, hair comb, loops for bobby pins etc. Think about hairstyles than can help support the headpiece.

Shoes - need to be stable, easily moved in (not all garments will allow the wearer to see their feet) and possibly worn in the dark backstage. Make sure attachments are firmly secured - I use a specific shoe glue for mine, but you basically need something that dries clear and is flexible.

Props and accessories - basically, the same as for shoes. Comfortable, light and easy to hold/support. No sharp, spiky bits, use quality construction materials, and use quick fastening/dressing techniques.

Dressing Instructions & Speed – detailed, **large print**, instructions are invaluable. Clear photos/diagrams are very helpful. Colour coding or marking attachment points on garments is also very useful. Even if you're dressing your model on judging day, please bring your instructions to leave with the garment so that we don't need to ask you to come in for a dressing lesson!

A suggestion: What makes perfect sense to the artist might not be clear to a wardrobe person seeing the garment for the first time. Ask someone else to read your dressing instructions and see if they can understand them before submitting your entry

Corset Lacing - please, please use large grommets, reinforce the fabric and have an easily threaded end (I had to use glue to make aglets on ribbon). Lacing the back of a garment takes time and fewer, large grommets make it just a bit quicker. In the show we have very limited time to get the performers out of one garment and into the next. Also try to use sturdy ribbons, laces etc that are long enough to tie easily into bows and that will not fray or slip undone.

Makeup - models wear lots of makeup and this can get onto garments, especially around the face. If you have a white garment consider providing a simple makeup shield that can be used during quick changes and give instructions. Perhaps avoid white fabric near the face if at all possible.

Labelling - please label every part of your garment, **especially underwear/undergarments**. There were a number of bodysuits, leggings etc with no labels, and after the show it's impossible to put them back with their correct garments. The performers may keep one set on if it suits both garments, so you can imagine the confusion afterwards. (If you are missing something from the 2017 show please let us know).

Size - we had a number of 'dress on side of stage' garments this year. Please consider the size of your garment- we don't want to damage garments while transferring them back and forth, getting them into cars or through doorways. Also if your garment can't fit through an average doorway it may limit the places we can exhibit it.

Storage- How will it store? Will it sag or stretch and how can you prevent this? How can it be transported, how much room will it take up? Can it be maneuvered by wardrobe?

A Tip- Mannequins can be really small. If you cover them with wadding and then clear tape or masking tape over the top you can make them much more 'life size', and can also draw on them and pin into them.