

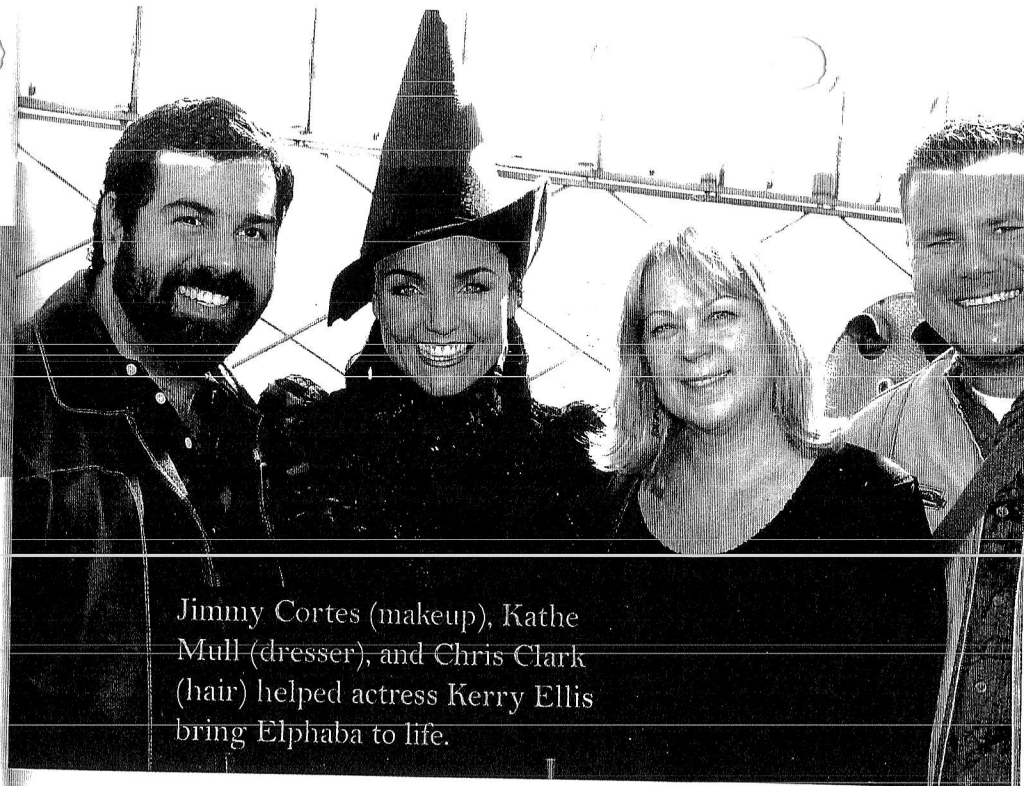
CHAPTER TWO

Playing Your Role

Teamwork is possibly the most important aspect of staging a theater production. Everyone onstage and behind the scenes plays an important role. To keep the performance running smoothly, everyone must do his or her part, both individually and as part of the team. For this to work, you will want to not only know how to do your job well, but the jobs of everyone around you. If you're in charge of Elphaba's makeup in *Wicked*, who in lighting is in charge of making sure that makeup really "pops" onstage? Who can you talk to about an important costume change and how it will affect how you style a character's wig for the second act? Teamwork brings all of these elements together and helps your vision come to life.

Team Goals

As a stage production begins to take shape, you'll find yourself working alongside people who will be a big part of your life for the next several weeks or months. This is your team, and it is helpful to start thinking



Jimmy Cortes (makeup), Kathe Mull (dresser), and Chris Clark (hair) helped actress Kerry Ellis bring Elphaba to life.

of them that way. You will have to learn to rely on each other to get stuff done and solve problems, both large and small. If the production is a large one, hair and makeup might be handled by separate teams. If the production is small, hair and makeup might be one group, which may even be part of the costume department.

The first thing a team must figure out is who is in charge. Is it an older student, parent volunteer, or member of your school's faculty? This is an important person to know. A good leader will keep things running smoothly and delegate tasks to everyone within your team.

If you're the one in charge, make sure you get to know everyone on your team. Introduce yourself to anyone you don't already know, and remember

that if everyone on your team is happy, they will do a better job. Make sure that everyone feels valued and appreciated, and you'll be off to a great start. One of the first things you might want to do is talk to the individual members of your team about their particular interests or talents. A longtime cosplayer who has dabbled in special effects makeup might be well suited for a complicated makeup design that requires more skill. An amateur hair stylist who can work quickly and efficiently and seems to handle stress well may be your go-to stylist for a fast hairstyle change. Team members who are less sure of their skills and need a little more guidance can be delegated to roles that will allow them to shadow a more experienced member of the team.

Costumes, Hair, and Makeup

Costumes, hair, and makeup go together like peanut butter, jelly, and bread. These three groups (or departments, in the case of a larger or professional production) work together to help create a specific "look" for each character in a production. Early in the process, team leaders will sit down to discuss their vision for the production. This vision will need to coincide with the director's vision. Meetings are a big part of teamwork early in a theater production, so no matter your role in the production, be ready to be on time, and write your ideas out in advance so you don't forget anything.

The head of a costume department is usually referred to as the costume designer or head of wardrobe. This individual will design a look for each



of the main characters in the show after discussing the overall look of the production with the director and set designer. Then the costume designer will meet with the hair and makeup departments to go over the designs and find ways to enhance the look with hair and makeup. If you are working on hair and makeup for a theater production, your work will be closely linked to the costume department from the show's inception to its close. While the costume department is hard at work finding just the right hat for Dolly Levi—the title character of the musical *Hello, Dolly!*—you can be sure that they're being mindful of the wig or hairstyle Dolly will be wearing under that hat. Communication between departments is key. Let's take a look at everyone else you might encounter as part of the hair and makeup team for a theater production.

Hair and Makeup Designer

In a college-level or professional production, the theater may employ a hair and makeup designer. It is that person's job to work with the costume department to design a look for all of the lead actors and key members of the **chorus** (or background players). This individual will study the script carefully and commit some hairstyle and makeup designs to paper (or computer), being mindful of the play's time period and the vision of the director. The designer's vision needs to be both creative and practical, as a look must be functional. As tempting as it might be to use extra-gruesome **prostheses** to make the

Phantom of the Opera as hideous as possible under his mask, the actor has to be able to sing for the length of the performance with that makeup. A hair and makeup designer must take every possibility into consideration and plan accordingly.

Makeup Artist

Once a makeup design is approved, it is the job of a theatrical makeup artist to bring the look to life—and to do so for every performance. Large, well-funded theaters will hire professional makeup artists—either full-time or on a freelance basis—while smaller or community-run theaters might rely on volunteer makeup artists. Volunteers might work for free in order to build a professional makeup **portfolio**. (It is important to note that, in many states, you must be a licensed cosmetologist to apply makeup professionally, but many makeup artists are self-taught.) Makeup artists often gain experience by practicing on friends or relatives or doing makeup for weddings or other special occasions. In addition to applying makeup before every performance, a makeup artist must be knowledgeable about skin care in order to prevent reactions to certain chemicals in makeup. Makeup artists usually bring their own **makeup kit**, which is a large investment that can be added to over time.

Professional makeup artists must keep brushes clean and replace expired makeup in their kits in order to keep actors safe from infection. Not only does the makeup artist have to be mindful of finding the right shade of foundation for an actor's skin or a good eye

pencil for just the right cat's eye, he or she must plan the application of the makeup. Does the makeup need to last for the entire performance, or will it need to be removed within an hour? Which products will best accommodate a fast makeup change or stay on for all three hours of the performance? These are things a makeup artist must consider. After a performance has ended, it is also often the job of a makeup artist to remove the makeup or instruct an actor on removing makeup in a way that doesn't lead to a skin breakout or inflammation in the future.

Hair and/or Wig Stylist

A production that requires the use of several wigs will often employ wig stylists whose job is to maintain and style the wigs, and help with wig changes during a performance. Wig stylists show up several hours before a performance and begin to prepare the wigs for the show, adding fresh curls, pinning a lock of hair so that it stays out of an actor's face, and checking the wig for any damage. (Luckily for the actors, wigs can be styled on wig stands, which are made to hold a wig upright when it is not being worn.) When it's time for an actor to put on a wig, a hair or wig stylist will help secure a **wig cap** to the actor's head. A wig cap is made from nylon (often old nylon hose), which helps protect both the natural hair underneath and the wig itself, as well as the actor's scalp. (Wigs can be itchy!) It also helps to keep a wig on the head once it's pinned in place. In some musicals, wigs must also accommodate carefully hidden microphones and



THE FUNCTION OF A COSTUME DESIGN

To the untrained eye, a character's costume might just seem like an appropriate choice of outfit. But a costume does a lot more than simply give an actor something to wear. A costume also helps to:

- Convey the mood of a production. A dark, somber costume in a play by Henrik Ibsen will give people in the audience the sense that the play will be dark and somber, even if they are not familiar with the themes of Ibsen's work.
- Help a character stand out among the others. If there are five actors onstage, and four of them are wearing dark colors and one is wearing red, the one wearing red will seem the most significant, as in a production of *Annie*.
- Change an actor's appearance. In a production of *The Magic Flute*, an opera composed by Mozart, costume designers often want the

Queen of the Night character to transcend humanness so that her every appearance onstage is intense, memorable, and dramatic.

- Indicate character development and the passage of time. In 2013, as the TV show *Breaking Bad* drew to the end of its final season, the website TDYLF shared an infographic it had made, revealing how the show's producers had used the color of the characters' costumes to reflect how each of them had changed throughout the show's progression. A character who had become more evil lost his color, moving slowly to a more neutral color scheme, while a character who had become stronger and more independent over the seasons is dressed more colorfully in each episode. The changes were so subtle viewers would not notice a difference right away.

wires. As an actor finishes with a wig, it's the job of the stylist to clean and prepare the wig for the next performance. Some wigs, particularly ones made out of real human hair, can cost thousands of dollars, so keeping them clean and undamaged is important.

A hair stylist's job often includes styling wigs and/or an actor's actual hair before a performance.

Hair stylists often practice a particular hairstyle on an actor in advance so that the styling process can be streamlined for speed and efficiency. In a large professional performance, an actor might have a hair stylist whose job is to style only him or her. In a small theater, one person may style everyone or teach actors how to recreate a look on their own.



Students must balance homework with rehearsals and other activities.

juggle schoolwork, family obligations, and your job with rehearsals or planning meetings. So sit down and plan out a strategy for handling the workload. One Friday night, you might have to meet with the costume designer when your mind is on that big English paper that's due Monday, so sometimes you can start to feel overwhelmed. Don't waste any spare time. You might be able to do homework during rehearsal downtime or take some time during homeroom to draw up some makeup designs. If you're determined to make it as a theatrical makeup artist, makeup designer, hair stylist, or whatever your theater dream might be, you'll find opportunities to take care of your responsibilities so you can showcase your talents in the theater.

Being a Good Team Member

Before you've joined the hair and makeup team for a theater production, you must ensure you can be a good, responsible member of the team. As a high school student, you'll often find you will have to