

Melbourne Theatre Company Education Program

BACKGROUND FILE MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY

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CONTEXT

Melbourne Theatre Company is the oldest professional theatre company in Australia and a semi-autonomous department of the University of Melbourne.

Within the theatre industry it is classified as a large, government-subsidised, mainstream state theatre company. This is in contrast to theatre companies that may be classified as fringe, co-operative or commercial theatre. Commercial theatre relies solely on box office sales and investment from the private sector.

MTC is one of the largest theatre companies in the English speaking world. It is the largest theatre company in Victoria and one of the major performing arts companies in Australia. It is the major provider of text theatre in Melbourne.

Each year MTC produces approximately 12 plays as part of its subscription season. Generally, five productions are presented in the Playhouse and five in the George Fairfax Studio at the Arts Centre Melbourne, and two at other theatre venues. This represents approximately 550 performances each year.

In addition to this MTC's Education Program usually presents three productions each year, plus a range of short courses and workshops. MTC also tours to regional Victoria and interstate.

MISSION STATEMENT

To produce classic and contemporary Australian and international theatre with style, passion and world class artistic excellence in order to entertain, challenge and enrich audiences in Melbourne, Victoria and Australia.

OBJECTIVES

- 1. Provide world class theatre for Melbourne residents and visitors, by:**
 - 1.1 Presenting a subscription season of plays in Melbourne.
 - 1.2 Choosing plays from the world repertoire using the joint criteria of artistic quality and likely financial success.
 - 1.3 Supporting the University of Melbourne in contributing to and expanding the cultural life of Melbourne.

- 2. Contribute to the development of Australian theatre, by:**
 - 2.1 Commissioning, workshopping and presenting new Australian writing.
 - 2.2 Providing employment and development opportunities for Australian and particularly Melbourne actors, directors, designers, theatre technicians, craftspeople and administrators.
 - 2.3 Support the theatre industry through help for smaller theatre companies and through participation in industry forums.

- 3. Build an audience for live theatre in Australia, by:**
 - 3.1 Providing an entertaining educational program for Victorian students with the majority of costs recovered from fees and box office.
 - 3.2 Offering touring productions at affordable prices for venues throughout Australia.
 - 3.3 Offering a range of generally affordable prices including discount prices for low income earners.
 - 3.4 Using innovative and appropriate marketing techniques to build subscriber and single ticket sales in Melbourne.

- 4. Operate a cost-effective and creative theatre Company, by:**
 - 4.1 Meet 2006 operating breakeven budget.
 - 4.2 Selecting repertoire to minimise box office risk while meeting artistic mission.
 - 4.3 Operating a Company in which continuous improvement occurs in both the working environment and work practices.
 - 4.4 Within the financial limitations of the Company, creating an employment environment in which people are rewarded for hard work, initiative, creativity and commitment.
 - 4.5 Within the financial limitations of the Company, improve the working conditions, Environmental Health and Safety standards and presentation of Ferrars St headquarters.

- 5. Build a working capital base to ensure the long-term survival of the Company, by:**
 - 5.1 Obtaining a 500 seat theatre with either no or low annual rental charges.
 - 5.2 Negotiating debt reduction to zero with University of Melbourne.
 - 5.3 Building a working capital fund at the recommended Australia Council level of 15-20% of turnover.

HISTORY

Melbourne Theatre Company was established in 1953 when it was first known as the Union Theatre Repertory Company (UTRC). It was originally administered and directed by John Sumner, an English theatre professional who answered an advertisement from the University of Melbourne for the Manager of their Union Theatre. At the time there was no professional theatre company in Australia; the theatre world was either amateur or imported.

Some of the notable early members of the Company included Zoë Caldwell, Patricia Conolly, Noel Ferrier, Frank Gatliff, Barry Humphries, Reg Livermore, Monica Maughan, Frederick Parslow, Alex Scott and Frank Thring (Parsons 1999: 358).

John Sumner was the driving force for MTC for thirty-four years turning the Union Theatre into the nation's largest theatre company. In 1955 he directed the Company's first Australian play *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* by Ray Lawler. He not only directed plays but was also responsible for developing the model on which most state theatre companies in Australia are now based.

John Sumner took a position with the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust in the mid-1950s and during that time Ray Lawler and then Wal Cherry were the Artistic Directors of the Company. John Sumner returned in 1959 and continued directing with MTC until 1987. Roger Hodgman took the reins from Sumner, working with the Company from 1984 until 1999 when the incumbent Simon Phillips became Artistic Director.

MTC has gone through many changes since its inception, but one constant is its relationship with the University of Melbourne. MTC is a department of the University, and although it functions autonomously, the relationship between the institutions is cordial and sympathetic. For example, the University is represented on the Board of Management. The University continues to support MTC as it sees the Company as a vital contributor to the cultural life of Melbourne.

The Company has also moved several times during its history. It started out at the Union Theatre, filling the periods when the theatre was not being used by students of the University of Melbourne. In 1960 the Company moved to the Russell Street Theatre, changing its name to Melbourne Theatre Company in 1968. In 1971 production headquarters were established at large premises at Normanby Road, South Melbourne.

In order to expand its audience MTC went to St Martin's Theatre in South Yarra in 1973, continuing to play at Russell Street. The next major change was in 1977, when the Company moved to the Athenaeum Theatre in Collins Street, a larger space again, and St. Martin's was relinquished. At the same time, production headquarters moved to Ferrars Street, South Melbourne. Two years later, Athenaeum II was opened, a small space upstairs in the Athenaeum Theatre, which was used for more experimental work.

In 1984 MTC left the Athenaeum for the Playhouse at the Victorian Arts Centre. In 1994, after twenty-eight years of MTC tenancy, Russell Street Theatre closed its doors. In its place the Company began using the refurbished Fairfax Theatre, also at the Arts Centre, as its second performance space.

The last major review of the Company's operations was in 1994 when the University of Melbourne commissioned a management consultant to review the Company's operations and report on its long-term viability. This was a result of the Company starting to generate large annual deficits due to the economic recession of the early 1990s. During this period ticket sales slumped although operating costs remained at the same level. The consultant's report recommended that a number of major changes take place rather than close the Company or let it continue to generate large deficits.

One of the major changes was to reduce the number of plays the Company produced for its subscription seasons from 16 to 11 per year. This began in 1996, and prior to this the Company presented two seasons each year of around eight plays. This was originally based on the availability of the Union Theatre. The reduction in the number of productions has resulted in reduced production costs, more efficient workflow and the potential of running longer seasons to increase box office income and recover production costs.

The second major recommendation was that the Company initiate the building of its own theatre. In 2006 work eventually started on the construction of this 500-seat theatre at Southbank. This seating capacity is considered to be ideal for the presentation of drama. The Company will continue to hire the Playhouse and the Fairfax at the Arts Centre, although on a less frequent basis. This will result in financial savings through reduced theatre hire costs, increased revenue through restaurant and bar sales, and increased opportunities for sponsorship. It will assist in creating a capital fund to provide a stable financial base for the Company's future operations.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

MTC is a semi-autonomous department of the University of Melbourne. It is managed by a Board responsible to the University. The Artistic Director is head of the Company who works closely with the General Manager. The next level of management includes the Finance Director, Marketing and Development Director and the Production Manager. Each part of the Company falls within the responsibility of one of these management areas.

Each year the Company employs approximately 50 staff on an ongoing full-time basis in specialist administration, marketing and production areas, and a further 200 staff on short-term contracts including actors, art finishers, choreographers, composers, designers, fight consultants, musicians, stage managers, voice consultants, wig makers and other specialised personnel. These are theatre workers who work on a freelance basis.

It is common for the Company to employ additional workers depending on the needs of a particular production. A large costume show might, for example, require additional costume, hat and wig makers, and a play with many changes of scenery might need extra carpenters, scenic artists or properties makers.

As MTC is a relatively large company it is highly departmentalised with specialist staff working in clearly defined departments. Most positions within the Company require specialist training and experience. MTC is also able to offer additional services to the theatre industry, training institutions and the general public. These include costume hire, rehearsal room hire, consultancy advice and training.

COMPANY STRUCTURE

Board of Management

Artistic Direction

Artistic Director
Associate Director
Casting Director
Casting Co-ordinator
Artistic Administrator

Management

General Manager
Theatre Development Manager
Administrative Assistant

Finance and Administration

Finance Director
Systems Administrator (Information Technology)
Finance Officer – accounts payable
Finance Office – accounts receivable
Salaries and Payroll
Senior Accountant
Ticketing Officers (2)

Education

Education Manager
Education Ticketing Officer
Project Directors (2)

Marketing and Development

Marketing and Development Director
Advertising and Promotions Manager
Media and Public Relations Manager
Media and Public Relations Co-ordinator
Graphic Designer
Marketing & Development Co-ordinator
Publications Co-ordinator
Receptionist

Philanthropy

Philanthropy Manager
Philanthropy Co-ordinator

Business Development

Business Development Manager
Business Development Co-ordinator

Production

Production Manager
Deputy Production Manager
Technical Manager
Technical Co-ordinator
Head Mechanist
Electrics (2)
Production Administrators (2)
CAD Drafting
Stage Managers (8)

Workshop

Carpentry Workshop Supervisor
Deputy Workshop Supervisor
Carpenters (2)
Welder (1)

Properties

Properties Supervisor
Properties Assistant

Scenic Art

Scenic Art Supervisor
Scenic Artists (2)

Wardrobe

Wardrobe Supervisor
Deputy Wardrobe Supervisor
Costume Cutter and Makers (2)
Buyer
Costume Maintenance

Millinery

Milliner

Costume Hire

Costume Hire Co-ordinator

Catering

Catering Manager
Catering Assistant

ARTISTIC PROGRAM

MTC uses a range of criteria to select the plays it presents as part of its annual subscription season. Approximately 11 or 12 plays are chosen each year and they usually come from four different categories: new Australian plays, new plays from overseas, classics such as those written by Shakespeare, and revivals of Australian plays. This helps to provide variety and balance to what is quite a large season. The number of plays from each category may change from year to year and not all categories are necessarily represented in every season.

The idea of this developed from MTC's first Artistic Director, John Sumner, where the programming was based on the following: one third classical writing, loosely referred to as works written prior to the twentieth century, and revivals of twentieth century works; one third Australian new writing; one third new writing from overseas.

The original objectives of the Company when it was first set up were to:

- provide for the production, representation and performance of theatrical entertainments which are not generally offered to the public by commercial managements,
- educate theatre-goers to a finer appreciation of the theatre by first-class presentations,
- present theatrical entertainments which seek both to educate and entertain,
- give young artists interested in the work of theatre a chance to become educated in that work by first-hand experience,
- encourage playwrights and give them the opportunity to become educated in the work of theatre and to present their work whenever practicable,
- encourage talent and skills necessary or ancillary to the development and maintenance of first-class theatrical entertainments.

Performance Styles

The categories listed above point to the types of different performance styles the Company presents. Style is a concept relating to plays that emerge from a particular period, country, intellectual movement or playwright (Brockett 1974: 57). Over the course of any one season MTC presents work of different but predominately Western styles. This is different from some other theatre companies that may present productions representing a narrower range of particular styles.

Sometimes performance styles are combined within a single production. This happens if a director decides to alter the original time and place of a play, or interprets it in a way that is different from what the playwright originally intended. This is sometimes referred to as changing the "world" or "environment" of the play. This happens, for example, if the setting of a Shakespearean play is changed to a more recent time, or a particular performance style is applied that is different from what we would normally expect.

Some of the performance styles MTC presents include:

- Elizabethan and Shakespearean
- Jacobean
- Romanticism
- Realism
- Epic Theatre
- Absurdism
- Contemporary styles

Selecting a Main Stage Subscription Season

The Artistic Director of the Company is ultimately responsible for the final decision on the plays selected. The person in this position receives advice from key personnel within the Company including the Associate Director, General Manager, Finance Director, Marketing & Development Director, Production Manager, Education Manager, Media and Public Relations Manager and Publications Co-ordinator. Each of these gives advice based on their personal taste and particular area of expertise within the Company.

This selection process begins up to 12 months prior to the beginning of a new season. The aim is to create a season that the Company finds artistically satisfying and one that audiences will find exciting to attend. It also needs to find a balance between different forms such as comedy and more serious plays. Not only does MTC consider plays already written but also commissions Australian playwrights to write new work for consideration.

Apart from the category of plays there are other important criteria that are taken into account, such as the theatres MTC presents its productions in. For the Mainstage subscription season approximately five productions are presented in the Playhouse and four in the George Fairfax Studio at the Arts Centre Melbourne, and two additional theatres, all of which MTC hires.

The Playhouse is a large, proscenium arch theatre that seats 884 people. The George Fairfax Studio is a smaller theatre that seats 376 people. Rather than having a proscenium arch the Fairfax Studio stage is designed with a round thrust into the auditorium with a steep rake for audience seating. It is similar to the design of an amphitheatre, although the Fairfax is inside and has a deeper stage to accommodate sets and performance action. From an artistic viewpoint the design of these two theatres influences the plays MTC presents in them. The relationship between the actors and the audience are quite different in the Playhouse compared to the Fairfax Studio.

Generally larger productions such as Shakespearean plays are presented in the Playhouse. More contemporary work that requires greater intimacy is usually selected for the Fairfax Studio. If smaller, more contemporary plays are presented in the Playhouse the designer has to try and scale down the size of the stage and move the action closer to the audience, sometimes breaking through the proscenium arch.

Other artistic criteria that is often considered relates to the following areas:

- The level to which this work will attract new audience groups from the community, even if the subject matter is of limited appeal.
- The level to which it may appeal to Company subscribers.
- If the play is likely to be produced by a commercial management rather than a subsidised company like MTC.
- Opportunities for innovative artistic interpretations of existing texts.
- Plays that showcase particular actors, designers and directors.
- The desire to include musical theatre in a season.
- Plays that include high standards of playwriting from Australia and elsewhere.
- Plays that reflect interesting or significant trends overseas.

Touring Productions

In addition to the main subscription season MTC often tours productions to regional Victoria and interstate. Quite often these are productions that MTC has presented as part of its main season and then due to their popularity have been selected by theatre venues to enable a tour to take place with the assistance of government funding.

Sometimes plays are selected with touring in mind, although a designer would ideally need to know this in order to design a set that is easily transportable and will work well in a variety of theatre venues. Touring productions enable the Company to present its work beyond Melbourne.

The Education Program

Each year the Company presents approximately three productions specifically for school or youth audiences. These are either full productions or special *Explorations* presentations that include the performance of key scenes from specific plays and a commentary. Many of these are selected from senior secondary school text lists.

The Company also presents new work not necessarily based on text lists and is working towards presenting more plays that have a broader appeal across the education community as well as to the general public. Occasionally, plays from school text lists appear as part of the Mainstage season.

POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

Following on is a detailed description of the positions that make up the Artistic Direction Department at MTC, and the type of training and experience required for each one.

Artistic Director

At the head of the Company is the Artistic Director who establishes the artistic policy of the Company and usually directs a significant number of plays during a season of productions. The Artistic Director works closely with the General Manager and Finance Director in budgeting and planning, trying to make the most of the Company's limited resources. Although ideas and suggestions from all Company members are welcomed, the ultimate decision regarding all matters – artistic, administrative or personnel – rests with the Artistic Director.

The Artistic Director reports to and negotiates with the board of management and high profile members of the community in promoting and seeking support for the Company. Awareness of trends in a wide spectrum of theatre arts across Australia is necessary in a position at this level, as well as keeping in touch with similar activities internationally. Interstate travel is a common event and international travel is also undertaken.

This is an extremely responsible position and very rarely would an Artistic Director be appointed without having considerable experience as a creative theatre professional as well as proven ability in the running of some form of performing group or theatre company.

Associate Director

The Associate Director assists the Artistic Director in decision-making and planning and shares some of the responsibility for directing plays or acting in productions, depending on the individual's area of expertise. The Associate Director's function is extremely important in the selection and development of the Company's repertoire of plays, particularly if the Company's policy includes the production of new plays by local authors. The Artistic Associate provides encouragement to new and experienced local writers and assists in the workshop process of newly written plays, which are rarely given the time they need to be developed due to limited resources. The advice of an objective observer who is familiar with many different forms of dramatic literature can be invaluable in helping to cut and shape the script for the demands of the theatre.

Therefore, the Associate Director takes on the role of a dramaturg, and spends a great deal of time reading plays and writing play reports commenting on their writing style, structure, character development, and theatrical potential. Not all dramatic material is suitable for the

stage, whose requirements for dramatic action and visual expression are very different, for example, from radio, television or film.

The kinds of work the Associate Director reads will range from manuscripts by new authors to recently produced plays from Britain, Europe or North America. The person in this position is consulted about the quality and suitability of a variety of dramatic works or works from other media, for example novels and short stories, which may be suitable for development into theatre pieces. The Associate Director is also always on the look out for “forgotten” plays by Australian authors of the past, which may be suitable for new productions. The Associate Director liaises with other companies in the development of new writers and the exchange of scripts, attends playwrighting conferences and organises rehearsed readings of authors’ works.

MTC has an archive that collects materials related to the Company’s history and a small reference library. The Associate Director co-ordinates these resources, which includes a collection of play scripts, programmes, books, journals, memorabilia and related visual material. Detailed historical records are kept regarding every production the Company has produced and the personnel who have worked on each one. The Associate Director keeps these records up to date and makes this information available for Company reference as well as for requests that come from the general community.

This position is invaluable in training an Artistic Director of the future, as it is rare that freelance artists are given the chance to assist in the running of a theatre company, acquiring experience in management and administrative skills as well as exercising their creative talents. Many actors move into direction while continuing to perform, and an Associate Director has usually had experience in one of the other, if not both. Candidates who would be considered for such a position would be skilled, mature theatre professionals whose experience has been varied and of a high level. Clear thinking, writing and speaking are required for this position, as well as directness and tact in dealing with playwrights and directors. A tertiary qualification in literature, with an emphasis on drama, would be a valuable qualification for this position, and some playwrighting experience would also be an advantage. A thorough understanding on the theatre and the process of producing a play is essential.

The Director

The actor does not create a character within the play alone. They are guided by a director who is responsible for presenting the play as a whole. The director’s function is primarily interpretative, translating the written work of the play’s text into the living images we see as the performance on stage. The director’s work commences well before rehearsal begins, reading and interpreting the play, conducting research, selecting the cast and consulting with the designer about the scenery and costumes required to create the physical environment in which the play will be performed.

In the rehearsal room the director is responsible for guiding the actors in their particular roles. They determine where the actors move on stage, a process called blocking, and assists them with character motivation and interaction, providing encouragement when needed and discipline when required. The director constantly observes the performance in rehearsal, taking notes and helping refine performances to a level that is consistent with his or her conception of the play and how it should be communicated to an audience.

Another aspect of the director's role is to provide technical information to the production staff, before and during the rehearsal period, but most particularly during production week when all the technical aspects come together with the actors in performance for the first time on stage. The director determines where and how lighting levels and changes will occur within the play, where sound effects or music will be utilized and pitched and how scenery will move within the action of the play. These may alter once the show moves into the theatre, and it is the director's job to adjust, add or delete as may be necessary.

Final decisions are usually made in collaboration with the expert in the particular field – the designer, the lighting designer, the sound technician or composer. Once the technical problems have been sorted out the director devotes more attention to the performers, and after each run in the theatre notes are given either individually or generally on aspects that warrant improvement, alteration, or praise.

The job is very comprehensive, requiring many skills. Most directors have had previous experience in either acting or stage management, occasionally in design, as the job demands a complete understanding of all artistic theatre processes. Also helpful is a literary background, highly developed people skills, patience, financial wizardry and a sense of humour.

Casting Director

This is a full-time position within MTC and this person, in consultation with the director, suggests suitable performers for a role in a play and approaches them either directly or through their agent about availability, scheduling and payment. In most cases actors are required to audition if they have not previously worked for the Company or their work is not known.

The Casting Director is also responsible for organising any open auditions that the Company might hold, and MTC holds around two of these each year depending on work-load. The Casting Director recommends, organises or auditions the talents of various types of other theatre professionals such as voice or accent coaches, fight consultants, movement co-ordinators, musicians and composers who may be required to contribute to a particular production.

A broad knowledge of the Australian theatre scene is required for this type of job, especially familiarity with the performance styles of a wide range of actors. Experience, either as a theatrical agent, director or performer is useful, and highly developed communication skills, tact and discretion are essential.

Composer

The Company usually employs a composer on a show by show basis. Guest directors are consulted about the employment of artistic personnel such as composers, designers and lighting designers who will help to facilitate their vision of the play, and wherever possible their preferences will be given due consideration.

Once chosen, the composer may be required to provide conventionally scored music for instruments, electronically produced music, pure sound or sound effects, or assist in the selection of pre-existing music that may be adapted to the play's needs. The composer works closely with the director to evoke mood and atmosphere, attending rehearsals to keep in touch

with how the performances are developing or sharing the rhythms of the play. The composer will also work closely with the sound technician if new sounds or music are being created.

During production week the composer will collaborate with the director, stage managers and technical crew in establishing sound levels and timing, which may need to be extended or reduced, depending on other technical considerations like scene changes or the play's running time.

Many Australian tertiary institutions offer degree and postgraduate courses in music and composition, and technical courses in sound recording would also be useful for this position.

Education Manager

Most large theatres have an Education Program. MTC favours a broad program that includes full-scale productions and presentations such as *Explorations* where key scenes from a selected play are performed with a detailed commentary. These presentations explore the major themes of the play, information about the playwright and details about the setting of the work.

Workshops to assist senior secondary students studying Drama and Theatre Studies are offered, as well as short courses for the general public. Curriculum materials based on MTC productions are prepared for teacher reference and student study. Students and young people are also encouraged to attend the Company's main stage productions through special ticket prices and promotions. Students are able to study the workings of MTC at first hand by participating in tours of the Company, with some having the opportunity for a work experience placement.

The Education Manager is responsible for devising, implementing and evaluating the Company's Education Program. This involves formulating policy, writing the program, scheduling and budgeting. Key personnel are identified and contracted including directors, actors, designers and technicians. Performance venues need to be booked and the program marketed to the education community and the general public. Liaison takes place with the Education Department and key members of the Company for assistance in planning and development.

A variety of skills are necessary for this position, which is extremely demanding. Knowledge of current philosophies of education and the education system is essential, as is a thorough understanding of the theatrical process. Although the Education Manager may not direct plays, there is responsibility for the employment of personnel who will shape and guide productions, workshops and short courses. Good administrative skills are also essential.

There is no specific training for such a position, but many directors of educational programs are qualified teachers. Just as many come to the position from within the theatre industry, with performance or directorial skills. Many have a combination of both.

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Financial and business decision-making is a crucial part of the way MTC operates. It is a major factor taken into account when decisions are made about the annual subscription season, touring productions and the Education Program

Once the artistic program has been selected it is then checked to see if it is possible to proceed with this given the financial situation of the Company. The Finance Director in consultation with the General Manager undertakes most of this work.

The General Manager is an important administrative link between the artistic, production and financial decision-making. Once discussions have begun regarding the selection of plays for the season, the General Manager will begin checking to see if the performing rights are available to do each play that is under copyright and not in the public domain. This is done through liaising with the playwright's agent. Requests are also made to the Arts Centre (Melbourne) for the preferred dates the Company wishes to use the Playhouse and Fairfax theatres it hires there. Negotiations then take place as the Arts Centre also hires its theatres to other companies for preferred dates.

Expenditure

The next stage is to work out what the proposed season will cost. A computer software program called Play Model assists with calculating the expenditure on each proposed production. All production costs, such as actors' salaries, are fed into this so that the total expenditure on each production can be derived. The overall cost for the season is not allowed to exceed what the Company decides it can afford to spend.

If the expenditure is too large for the 11 plays in the Mainstage season, then the artistic decisions will need to be revisited and different plays chosen. A common example would be to look at replacing a play with one that has fewer actors as salaries are a major source of expenditure. Another one might be to select a play that is in the public domain where royalties do not have to be paid to a playwright, which is usually around 10% of ticket sales.

Some productions, especially those in the Playhouse, will be more expensive but may also have the potential to attract greater ticket sales. These productions will need to help cover the cost of smaller productions in the Fairfax, which may have less opportunity to generate a surplus, or larger productions in the Playhouse, which may not generate as much income.

As much variable expenditure as possible is allocated to the production that has generated these costs. The overall cost of a production in the Playhouse can range between \$300,000 to \$1,000,000, and in the Fairfax from around \$250,000 to \$450,000.

The other major source of expenditure is overheads. This includes items such as salaries for administration and marketing staff, maintenance and running of MTC Headquarters and equipment purchases. Each production is required to make some contribution to this overhead cost which is approximately 35% of expenditure each year. This also depends on the level of touring the Company undertakes each year. Funds are also allocated for the commissioning of new plays by Australian playwrights or for special projects.

Income

MTC needs to have an accurate picture of its projected income. Based on past experience the Company predicts what the income from ticket sales is likely to be. Approximately 70% of the Company's income needs to come from ticket sales and touring revenue.

The large group of subscribers, around 19,000 of them, will be the most significant factor in box office revenue, followed by an estimation of single ticket sales and education group bookings.

The Company knows it receives around 11% of its overall income from the Federal and State Governments. The Federal funding body is the Australia Council for the Arts, and the State Government funding body is Arts Victoria. MTC raises 9% of its income through sponsorship and fundraising, and the rest from interest earned and the provision of other services.

This tight financial scenario places MTC in the position where it cannot afford to make many errors in selecting plays. It is particularly important that the right plays are chosen for the Playhouse as it is more expensive to hire, and the productions presented in this theatre generally have higher costs. This is where the Company is most exposed financially, and it is possible to lose \$250,000 on a Playhouse production that does not attract good single ticket sales.

MTC is in a situation where it needs to minimise risk and increase expenditure in order to continue to operate in a difficult economic environment. It has to compete with other forms of entertainment, work with decreasing government funding, deal with increased costs, and avoid increasing the accumulated debt incurred during the early 1990s. This impacts on artistic programming in a number of ways.

Some of the things the Company might do to increase its box office revenue may include:

- Programming plays or musicals that have more commercial potential.
- Contracting well-known actors to attract greater single ticket buyers and to boost subscriptions.
- Including plays that are by popular playwrights.
- including plays that have proven box office track records elsewhere.

It is useful that these strategies also help to ensure that a high standard of work is presented as part of the season. Apart from this the Company continues its commitment to include work that is artistically significant even though it may have less popular appeal. If it had more income at its disposal it would present a higher percentage of artistically challenging work, which may not necessarily attract high box office earnings.

Another way of increasing revenue and maximising valuable resources is to produce plays that have the potential to tour or that can be sold to interstate theatre companies. MTC helps to balance this out through “buying in” productions from other companies. This happens when two state theatre companies are interested in producing the same play and it is more efficient if one company produces the play and then transfers it to the other company.

Other types of arrangements can be negotiated such as co-productions, where two companies share the costs and income. Longer tours are organised when a group of “presenters”, or theatre venue operators, apply for government grants to cover the touring costs of productions to their theatre.

Play Model

This computer software program not only works out the itemised projected expenditure, but also the projected income for each production with a variety of ticket prices. After each production closes the real income and expenditure are added into the system and it then calculates what the difference is between this and the original budget projection. This is called the variance, and productions either meet budget, generate a surplus or a deficit. This

is very useful to know for future budget planning. Combined with daily box office sales reports this enables the Company to monitor how the season is progressing financially.

Production Costs

The specific types of expenditure on productions usually include the following, and specialist staff within the Company are consulted to help produce accurate costs.

- Director's fee
- Designer's fee
- Lighting Designer's fee
- Composer's fee & music royalties
- Stage Manager's salary
- Assistant Stage Managers' salaries
- Actors' salaries
- Salary on-costs (superannuation, leave loading, insurance)
- Consultancy fees (voice, fight choreography, accent coach)
- Sets and Properties materials
- Sets and Properties labour
- Wardrobe/millinery/wigs materials
- Wardrobe/millinery/wigs labour
- Theatre Hire
- Marketing
- Front of House labour
- Bump-in & out costs
- Back of House (Technical) labour
- Hire of equipment & projection
- Freight
- Contingency

Notes on production costs

Fees for directors, designers and composers vary according to their experience and the scale of the performance.

Salaries, overtime and allowances for actors are covered by rates that are negotiated between the actors' union (Media Entertainment & Arts Alliance) and MTC. MTC usually pays salaries above award rates with rates paid according to the experience and profile of actors.

Royalties for the play are usually around 10% of gross box office receipts (ticket sales less booking fees). Depending on the production royalties may also be paid to a translator or a composer. These rates vary according to the work used, and MTC needs to check the availability of rights before it can proceed with using any copyright material within the season.

The cost of materials for a set can range from around \$10,000 to \$30,000. The cost of labour to build sets is in addition to this.

The wardrobe, millinery and wigs cost will depend on the number of roles in each production and the period. Productions that require elaborate period costumes, hats and wigs that have to be made will cost more than contemporary plays where these items may already be in

stock or easily sourced. The wardrobe materials budget can range from around \$1,500 to \$20,000.

Theatre hire costs the Company around \$1.5 million per year.

A contingency of 10% of total expenditure is sometimes included to allow for unexpected expenditure.

Additional Services

In addition to preparing budgets, the Finance Department is also responsible for handling the day to day financial accounts of the Company. Other responsibilities include payroll, managing the Costume Hire Service, Catering Services, Education Ticketing Service and reception staff.

MARKETING AND DEVELOPMENT

Once the subscription season has been chosen, the Marketing and Development Department has the responsibility of developing a plan to sell the season to subscribers and the general public. The major element of this is to follow through the production of the new season brochure in consultation with the Artistic Director and the Graphic Designer.

This important publication needs to reflect the Company's image as well as excite potential audiences. A launch date is set when the season will be announced to the press, subscribers and the public. This is approximately three months before the first play of the season opens.

In particular, the Marketing and Development Department will be involved with the following in relation to each season brochure, through consultation with relevant departments.

- Plan a diary of dates and times for each performance for each production.
- Decide on ticket prices to attract subscribers and youth audiences.
- Seek out sponsors for each production and advertising within the brochure.
- Follow through the design concept for the brochure including any photo shooting sessions on location.
- Include the photos and details of any known directors, designers and actors.
- Arrange written copy to describe each play, a synopsis for each one, booking information, and specific Company promotion.
- Write and distribute press releases and generate media interest in the new season and launch.
- Create a launch that is an exciting arts event reflecting the Company's standing in the arts industry.
- Liaise with the printer to ensure a high quality publication is produced.

Great accuracy is required in the production of the brochure as it is the document everyone will refer to before the new season begins and once it is underway. It also becomes the basis for what appears on the MTC web site at www.mtc.com.au.

Further follow up is made to ensure those who have attended previous MTC productions are made aware of the new season and encouraged to subscribe.

The Marketing and Development Department undertakes a similar process for other major projects such as the Education Program, touring productions, special events and promotions. These activities reflect the overall role the Marketing and Development Department has within the Company with its responsibilities for marketing, publicity, advertising, sponsorship and fundraising.

Once the season brochure is launched, the Marketing and Development Department begins to work on each production by devising individual marketing campaigns. This involves specific paid advertising, publicity such as posters, handbills and special promotions. Newspaper advertisements will appear approximately two weeks prior to a new production opening. The Media and Public Relations Manager co-ordinates radio, press and TV interviews for the director and actors, and writes media releases for distribution. The aim is to maximize ticket sales, particularly to new audiences, and maintain the interest of current supporters. New technology is utilized wherever possible to effectively communicate the Company's message to its potential audience.

A printed programme is produced for each production and this requires the co-ordination of its various elements including biographies and photographs of the director, designer and actors, list of production personnel, acknowledgements, articles and other information relevant to the play, visual material and advertising. Much of this information is very detailed and requires great accuracy as it is a permanent record of the production. This material is researched, edited and prepared by the Publications Co-ordinator.

Planning takes place for each opening night performance where the work of the Company is showcased. Theatre critics, supporters of the Company, friends and family of the cast and staff comprise much of the audience on these occasions.

The Marketing and Development Department is involved in providing additional benefits to MTC supporters through the CentreStage support group and *Scenes* magazine for subscribers, which is edited by the Publications Co-ordinator. This publication contains news about the Company and special offers to participate in other arts related activities and special events. Educational activities including briefings and forums on each production are held.

Benefits for corporate sponsors are also arranged, as the support received by these organisations is essential for the Company's survival. The provision of customer service, the analysis of audience feedback, and audience research form other important operations of this department.

PLAY PRODUCTION

Once the season has been chosen each play then takes on a life of its own as it follows the production process. The first stage of this is to decide on the director and the designer for the set and costumes for each production. These decisions have usually been made by the time the season brochure is finalized. The director is responsible for the overall artistic decision-making on the project, and works closely with the designer who establishes the "world" or "environment" of the play. This includes the decision of where to set the play and at what time.

Direction

The Company's Artistic Director and Associate Director will direct most of the productions. As they will not have the time to direct all of the productions in the season, freelance directors are then considered. Selection of these directors is based on a director's previous experience and expertise within a particular field of directing.

Dramaturgy

If the play has been commissioned, the director and Associate Director may develop the original script with the playwright before rehearsals begin. This process may continue with the actors in rehearsal. The play may go through several drafts before the performance script is established. As with existing plays many weeks of thought, research, planning and preparation takes place well before the rehearsal period begins. The director needs to have a clear idea of how the play will be interpreted and to ensure that the meaning of the play in performance is made clear.

Casting

The Director will have held discussions with the Casting Director who assists the director to cast each production. Some preliminary work may have been done on this so that the names of actors can be included in the season brochure. Each production is cast separately.

Sound designing

Discussions will have taken place with the composer of the music to help establish how this will be used to enhance the production. If a composer is not being used then the use of any pre-existing recorded music will need to be decided upon and an application made for the rights to use this music.

Designing

MTC does not have a Design Department so all productions are designed by freelance designers. Designers are also selected on their previous experience and area of specialization. It is important that directors and designers have a good working relationship, and they may have previously worked together on productions. If it is a new working relationship it is imperative that they both have a shared view on how the play will be interpreted.

Further discussions take place with the designer, who provides visual images in the form of sketches or rough models, of how the set and costumes might look. Most designers on MTC productions will design both set and costumes, although occasionally a different designer will do costumes only.

Once the final designs have been agreed to, the Production Manager organises a design presentation. At this the designer presents the final drawings and model to the heads of each production department, including Carpentry, Properties, Scenic Art, Wardrobe, Millinery, Lighting, Sound and Stage Management. The overall concept and interpretation of the play can then be communicated by the director and designer directly to the production staff, and any unusual requirements or problems in making, costing and scheduling may be discussed.

Budgeting

An overall budget, divided into sets, props and costumes is prepared by members of the Production Department in conjunction with the Artistic Director. The amount allocated to

each area will vary from show to show with some gaining a larger costume component. The amount allocated to set and costumes is recorded in the designer's contract.

For costumes, the Wardrobe Department presents a costing based on estimates made on the content, quality and amount of costume designs, which goes into the budget. A meeting then takes place with the designer, Wardrobe and Millinery to refine the estimates. This final estimation is presented to the Production Department. If the amount is more than the original budget the designs may have to be modified and the Artistic Director is informed, especially if major changes are envisaged. Expenditure is monitored by the Production Department during the making process, as unforeseen changes and additions can occur during rehearsals, which add expense and workload.

Budgetary restrictions may mean that certain aspects of the set design may also be modified, or alternative solutions found in the making process. Once approved, the designs and working drawings will then be consigned to individual departments so the making can begin. This usually happens well before the rehearsals start, and regular production meetings will be held during the period of production to make sure that the realisation of the designs are progressing satisfactorily.

Rehearsing

Immediately before rehearsals begin members of the stage management team draw up the plan of the set in the rehearsal room with coloured tape, marking in the boundaries of the acting area, indicating where entrances such as doors and windows will be, or where any important built pieces of the set will be placed. These can also be approximated with makeshift doorframes and substitute rostra, which will serve to familiarise the performers with the limitations of the performance space. Stage Management also organise rehearsal furniture and props and set them up according to the positions indicated on the floor plan or by the director as events develop in rehearsal.

On the first day of the four-week rehearsal period the director, designer, cast and stage managers are welcomed into the Company at a morning tea. Many of actors and creative personnel working on the production may not have worked with the Company before. This type of informal event provides an opportunity for a department such as Marketing and Development to make personal contact with performers whose services they may wish to use for publicity purposes.

The cast, creative team and interested Company staff then assemble in the rehearsal room where the costume designs and set model are displayed. The director, perhaps in conjunction with the designer, will explain his or her approach to the play, and how the set and costumes will function. It may be the first time the designer has met cast members, and the design may need to be modified depending on the height, breadth, colouring and proportions of the individual. The play will be read through from beginning to end with appropriate breaks for coffee. The reading is useful for breaking the ice, and allowing performers to meet with whom they may be dealing with during rehearsals.

In the first week of rehearsal the director and actors may explore the text more closely through text analysis and breaking the play up into clearly defined units. The aim of this is to identify what is happening in the scene, what is motivating each character, and what their objectives are as they interact with each other. Actors need to know this in order to play the scene. The work then transfers to the "floor" where the scenes are rehearsed and "blocked".

This is the process of working out the moves the actors will make, as well as when and where they should enter and exit.

Once moves are established, which can change during the course of rehearsal, the play is rehearsed in sections, usually scene by scene. The actors will also be applying their acting skills to create a physical character through movement and voice. The rehearsal period allows them to experiment with this and to fine-tune their characters ready for stage performance.

Depending on their roles, actors may not be called every day to rehearse. Further work takes place outside the rehearsal studio including learning lines, practicing accents and undertaking further research on their character. The director guides the actors in finding their roles, and is responsible for interpreting the written text of the play into what will ultimately be seen on stage. During rehearsals the director provides feedback to the actors and assists them to refine their performances, and ensuring that the meaning of the play in performance is clear.

Stage Managing

The stage manager is responsible for recording any moves or stage directions that are decided upon in rehearsal, as well as making sure that any technical requirements that may result from rehearsal will also be passed on to the Production Department. This enables any alterations or additions to props, costumes, scenery, sound or lighting to proceed as smoothly as possible.

Towards the end of the rehearsal period, the play is rehearsed in larger sections with the final days often being devoted to “runs” of the play, which are complete run throughs from beginning to end. Such runs are helpful in timing the performance – if the running time is felt to be too long, the director may cut lines or even whole scenes, pace the scenes differently, reduce the number of intervals or the times of scene changes.

Set and costume making

While the actors rehearse, the designer, Production Manager and production staff continue the making process. Throughout the rehearsal period actors will be called several times by the relevant departments to have fittings for costumes and millinery, or special props that might need personal fitting, such as masks, harnesses or padding. These fittings are arranged through the stage manager, who is also responsible for scheduling rehearsals so that time is allowed for these and any other tasks the actor might be required to perform outside the rehearsal room. These may include recording music, songs or voices that will be part of the stage effects.

Technical rehearsing

Once the scenery, costumes, props and performers have moved into the theatre the following days will be devoted to technical and dress rehearsals. This is referred to as production week or “tech” week. The process of transferring from production workshop to theatre is known as the “bump-in” or the “get-in”.

The set will be transported in pieces from the production workshop and set up in the theatre according to the floor plan provided by the designer. At the same time the lights are rigged, that is, set up in the grid above the stage and in position overhanging the auditorium, according to a lighting plan worked out by the lighting designer. Once the lights are rigged they are then focused to ensure their effective use.

Before moving into the theatre the lighting designer plots the lights to illuminate important performing areas or to create special lighting effects. As well as being familiar with the set model and technical drawings, the lighting designer has attended several runs of the play to find out where and when the actors will move around the stage, so that lights can be placed to the best dramatic effect. Finished scenery, costumes and props will also have been available to the lighting designer, who can check on surfaces and colours that may create problems.

The director has a desk set up in the centre of the auditorium, with room for the designer and the lighting designer. Intensive collaboration between these three will be required over the next few days to iron out problems and discuss ways of improving on any ideas that may not have been fully developed at the planning stage.

A costume parade is an important part of these technical rehearsals. The actors are dressed for the first time in their complete costume – wigs, hats, shoes, or any other important accessories. It will be the first time the designer and director will have seen the cast completely dressed and all together, under stage lighting. The dress parade is important in sorting out any initial aesthetic or practical problems, such as bright colours which may need to be “dyed down”, inconsistent skirt lengths, tight wigs or unstable hats which will be noted by the relevant head of department and attended to before the dress rehearsal. All changes of scenery, lighting changes, quick changes and sound cues are recorded in the stage manager’s script of the play, the prompt copy, and the first run on stage is often a purely technical rehearsal so that any difficulties can be ironed out.

The stage manager “calls” the show, which means that they are responsible for issuing instructions or cues from the prompt corner of the stage, which is at the right hand side of the stage viewed from the audience. These cues are given to the various technicians, actors waiting in their dressing rooms, and the front-of-house staff in the foyer of the theatre. These calls are made through a microphone and speaker headset or “cans” worn by the stage manager. This relays information through headsets to mechanists who move scenery, follow-spot operators, and lighting and sound technicians who are often situated in a control room behind the auditorium, and would otherwise only have visual contact with the stage. The stage manager also issues instructions verbally backstage to the assistant stage manager, who is required to be on hand to help with any technical business or emergency.

An initial rehearsal, without actors, can be undertaken simply to rehearse scene and lighting changes for the backstage staff. A further technical rehearsal will be conducted with the actors, who may need to rehearse quick costume changes, test make-up or deal with technical aspects of props and scenery, although this rehearsal is otherwise not a dress rehearsal. Sections of the script may be left out altogether if no changes are plotted or technical difficulties anticipated, and this is called “topping and tailing”. There may be at least two technical rehearsals, and depending on the technical complexities of the show, even more may be required if time permits. There is a great deal of stopping and starting in technical runs so that any problems are properly addressed before continuing with the run.

Dress Rehearsing

The dress rehearsal is the first, and sometimes final, opportunity for the actors, designer, director and production staff to attend to any problems that may arise from the first run in full costume. This may include aspects such as make-up, voice levels, sound levels and sight lines – whether, that is, the audience has an unobstructed view of the actors from all seats in the auditorium. Adjustments to the blocking are required if actors are “masked” from view.

Unless something goes terribly wrong no stops will be made, as real performance conditions apply to the dress rehearsal – both actors and backstage staff are expected to deal with disasters just as if a paying audience were present in the auditorium.

The night after the dress rehearsal a paying, preview audience may be the first to view the play. At MTC generally four previews precede the opening night, allowing finishing touches to be made to costumes, direction and performances.

Opening the production

If everything proceeds as planned, no rehearsal will be called during the day of the official opening and the director and actors are free to relax, sleep, prepare themselves or simply get nervous. If the director is the Artistic Director of the Company, he is probably already beginning to think about the next project, as is the Production Department. They'll certainly be taking things easier than normal, especially if there is no last minute work to be completed on the play. They may be planning their outfits, writing well-wishing cards to cast and colleagues, and hoping to get home in plenty of time to have a meal and return to the theatre for opening night. Their job is over, but for cast, backstage and front of house staff, the real work is beginning.

PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT

The Production Department provides the making and staging resources necessary to present the plays programmed by the Company. It also co-ordinates the freelance creative staff contracted for each production, including the set and costume designer and lighting designer, and any additional casual staff contracted to assist in specific production areas.

This department comprises Stage Management, Carpentry Workshop, Scenic Art, Wardrobe, Millinery, Lighting and Sound. The activities of these departments need to be co-ordinated so that the various components that make up the technical aspects of a play all arrive in the theatre at the same time, and of a standard acceptable to the director and designer. This is the job of the Production Manager and Deputy Production Manager who are responsible for budgeting, planning, hiring additional personnel and generally facilitating and co-ordinating the making processes of the various production departments. They also liaise with the director, designer and other theatre companies or arts organisations.

Production management, when required, also plans tours of plays, which involves the booking of country, interstate or overseas venues as well as scheduling, arranging accommodation and managing finances.

POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

Following on is a detailed description of the positions that make up the Production Department at MTC. This includes the responsibilities of each position, and the type of training and experiences required for each one.

Designer

Each play requires a physical environment in which to perform the action, an environment that can be literal and naturalistic or abstracted and expressive, or anywhere in-between. The actors also require costumes that will assist them in creating character. It is the designer's responsibility to create this environment and these costumes, usually in collaboration with the

director. It is useful for a designer to be proficient in both costume and scenery design, but often the two areas are separated, and it is possible to specialise in one or the other.

At MTC a different designer is appointed for each production rather than having a design department on site. After becoming very familiar with the play preliminary discussions take place with the director. It is essential that the designer and director have a shared vision of how the play is to be interpreted and what the “world” or environment of the play will be.

At MTC the designer and director may have worked together before and will be familiar with each other’s work. If it is a new working relationship then this will have to be established. Some directors are more prescriptive in what they want to see on stage whereas others allow the creativity of the designer freer reign.

The designer then presents initial visual images, usually in the form of sketches or possibly a rough model for the set. The designer may be inspired in many ways to produce a particular image and each designer works in a unique way, perhaps consulting images from the history of art or contemporary art and design, including computer graphics and film imagery. A historical play may seem to present clearly defined boundaries of period style and naturalism by having a much more abstract or simplified look, drawing more attention to the spoken words and their contemporary relevance.

The designer will also be looking for themes within the play to draw upon. This may include physical ones such as water or a requirement for different stage levels, as well as intellectual ideas or psychological states that may be evident in the text. Distractingly decorated sets or costumes that are awkward for the actor to perform in and negotiate may only distract from the meaning of the play. On the other hand, a sumptuous costume piece may be exactly what is required. Yet the designer is still free to reject a faithful reconstruction of the period to create an imaginative fantasy, perhaps using the period style as a starting point. Once a “look” has been established, coloured costume designs will be presented to the Wardrobe Department and a finished, painted scale model of the set will be shown to the Workshop and scenic artists.

Accurate measurements for the construction of the set are taken from a series of technical drawings based on the set model. The scale of the set model and technical drawings is 1:25, i.e., one metre is the equivalent of four centimetres, or one twenty-fifth. Working drawings can also be made from the finished costume designs and distributed to the makers of the separate departments that create the individual elements of the costume, such as hats and jewellery to Millinery.

The designer’s work commences prior to rehearsals and continues until the play has opened; it does not end with the presentation of the finished designs. Supervision of the making process is very important to ensure that the finished product resembles the designer’s original vision. The designer is constantly needed to give advice and approval for fabric selection for costumes, set-building materials, construction methods for scenery, props making and buying, and solving problems that might arise in rehearsal about the use of these elements.

Depending on the scale of the production, a designer may be engaged on one project from five weeks to six months. At MTC the usual time frame would be about three months from initial sketches to opening night. For this reason freelance work as a designer is rarely highly

profitable, as commitment to one project means that it is difficult to accept other work, especially if the work is offered in another state, which is often the case in Australia.

There are tertiary institutions in most Australian states that offer training in costume and scenery design, and most young designers in Australia today graduate from such institutions. However, transition to theatre design can occasionally be made from a background in architecture, fine arts, interior design or fashion. A wide range of practical skills is useful, as well as an understanding of literature and a knowledge of the history of art and architecture.

The Production Manager

The Production Manager is involved with the Artistic Director in the forward planning of the Company's season of plays. The Production Manager is especially concerned with those aspects that will increase the workload of the production departments, incurring undue expenditure for wages or materials. An entire season will be planned well in advance in consultation with MTC senior management, from six months to a year ahead.

The Production Manager is responsible for scheduling times for the presentation of set and costume designs from the designer, and for organising and attending production meetings where the designs can be discussed by heads of each MTC production area with the designer. This happens well in advance of the rehearsal period so that designs may be adjusted if budgetary problems arise. The costumes, sets and props need to be in a satisfactorily advanced state to ensure the rehearsal period can proceed with the fewest demands on the director's and actors' time for decision-making or fittings.

The Production Manager monitors the acquiring of materials or making of props, sets and costumes, keeping track of financial outlays and dealing with any conflicts that may arise between staff members, both on a show by show or a continuing basis. Evaluation of staff performance and the identification and assessment of staff needs are also dealt with in this position.

Maintenance of the Company's building, property and security is another important aspect of the Production Manager's role. The Production Manager is also responsible for the implementation of Environmental Health and Safety procedures, including those relating to the Company's premises and pertaining to the sets built for each production.

One of the most important jobs is the co-ordination of the bump-in, when the play moves into the theatre for production week. The Production Manager ensures that the contributions from each department are in a suitable state for transporting, organises transport, packing and personnel, and liaises with theatre management or production staff to facilitate unpacking at the other end.

The **Technical Manager** and **Head Mechanist** are responsible for working with the technical staff at the hired theatre to ensure that all technical requirements are met and to supervise and assist with the set up of the production on stage.

Deputy Production Manager (DPM)

Because the Production Manager's position is fundamentally managerial the Deputy Production Manager is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the Production Department, co-ordinating tasks in consultation with the Production Manager. Specific tasks may include the issue of purchase orders, petty cash, arranging local, intrastate and interstate

freight, maintenance of the building and equipment, Environmental Health and Safety compliance, travel and accommodation for production personnel, ground travel for tours and the checking and distribution of production information.

Once the play is in performance, the DPM oversees maintenance of the show. The DPM convenes and facilitates meetings, makes purchases for productions and staff amenities, negotiates and contracts external contractors.

Appropriate skills and attributes for production management include word processing, database and spreadsheet literacy, listening and questioning abilities, problem solving, conflict resolution, team building, stress management and self-awareness, and organisational skills at the highest level. Most theatre courses will include training in production management but staff often come through stage management.

Tour Co-ordinator

MTC employs tours co-ordinators, but only when it has large productions touring away from the Company's Melbourne home base. Otherwise, regular full-time production staff arrange transfers to other theatres. The Tour Co-ordinator organises all production and technical aspects of touring a play that has been part of the Company's season. This does not always mean taking the show straight onto the tour circuit, but packing it up and making sure that each of its component parts including sets, costumes and properties are all accounted for and ready to be freighted at a scheduled time.

This may be several months after the show finishes its city season. Important aspects of this position are organising intrastate and interstate transport for production material and equipment, as well as organising accommodation and travel arrangements for cast and production crew. Contracts are also arranged by the Tour Co-ordinator, as are the budgets for the tour that are drawn up in conjunction with the Production Manager.

One of the most crucial aspects of this job is the ability to prepare and negotiate schedules for the bump-in of the play in the various venues, which have been booked well in advance. The Tour Co-ordinator is an important liaison between venues and the Company's Production Department. All hiring agreements are double-checked, plans of all venues are obtained and the production set design must be checked in relation to touring venues to ensure its viability.

The Tour Co-ordinator also arranges any equipment hire, monitors the production on tour on a day-to-day basis, and liaises with the Electrics Department regarding touring. Touring kits are also prepared and distributed to venues. The Tour Co-ordinator is responsible for recording all information relating to the tour.

Computer skills are essential in this position, as are organisational skills, which will most probably have been gained through a production job like stage management.

Lighting Designer

MTC does not have a resident lighting designer and so one is contracted for each production. The lighting designer works closely with the director and the designer, discussing ways in which the set and costumes will be lit to provide mood and atmosphere, and reveal or conceal the performers. A set design may rely almost completely on lighting if the set pieces are reduced to a minimum. In such a case the involvement of the lighting designer in the

rehearsal process is crucial, as they need to be aware of the actors' groupings and movements in a space where areas will be defined by light only.

Once the play has been read and the interpretation discussed with the director and designer, the lighting designer will draw up a lighting plot, using the ground plans of the set design, on which set pieces, furniture and masking will be indicated. Lights can be hung from grids and bars above the playing area or in the auditorium, on stands in the wings, placed at floor level anywhere on stage or on the forestage as footlights.

The plan the lighting designer draws up will indicate the required positions and the types of lamps to be used, of which there are many different kinds, as well as their number and colours. Colour is projected with "gels" (coloured filters) inserted into the front of a lamp, which can be easily changed manually or by an in-built mechanism if a different effect is required. During the rehearsal period the lighting designer will consult regularly with the director as the play develops, scene by scene. A lighting synopsis may also be worked out with the stage manager.

Once the play has moved into the theatre a great deal must happen in a short space of time. Lights must be rigged and angled according to the plan. Several technical rehearsals are devoted to getting the lighting right. This includes adjustments to the original rig, angling and focusing the lamps so that acting areas are precisely lit, illuminating the faces of the actors without creating any troublesome shadows, rehearsing the timing of lighting effects such as slow fades from day to night, special effects such as back projection, and plotting the lighting cues with the stage manager and the lighting technician.

The colours and surfaces of the costumes may also affect the intensity and hues used by the lighting designer. Once established, the cues are written into the stage manager's prompt copy. By the final rehearsal, most problems should have been solved, but adjustments may be necessary right up until the opening night.

Lighting designers mostly begin their careers as lighting technicians. Although some tertiary institutions offer lighting as part of a production course, it is necessary to be a competent electrician and to have a good understanding of colour theory and the capabilities of lighting equipment.

Lighting Technician

The lighting technician operates the equipment that controls lighting and visual effects, so their work is mostly done at night once the play has opened. Lighting technicians ("board operators") who work on MTC productions are mainly employed by the theatre venue the Company hires.

The lighting control system is installed in a small room called a control room or bio-box, generally incorporated into the rear of the auditorium. It has a window that allows the lighting technician an uninterrupted view of the stage. The stage manager is responsible for relaying lighting cues through headset connections, but some cues may be visual taken from activities on stage. The lighting technician operates the "board" which is a control panel that sets lighting levels, dims or brightens, and records lighting states in varying combinations.

The lighting technician is also involved with organising special equipment and assisting in the bump-in, positioning lights, angling, focusing and changing colour filters. Lighting

technicians may also be called upon to operate follow spots and maintain equipment during the run of the show.

Sound Technician

The sound technician is responsible for recording naturalistic sound effects, like cars braking, horns honking, cows mooing or babies crying. MTC has built up a library of such sounds recorded electronically. The sound technician is also responsible for providing recordings of music, sound effects and voices for rehearsal purposes. This often involves the editing of sound using computer equipment. More complicated recording may be required, such as original musical compositions or special soundscapes, which have been created by the composer.

The sound technician will be responsible for setting up recording sessions, setting levels and collaborating with the composer and director in achieving the desired effects. Sound effects will be noted in the stage manager's prompt copy, and during production week the sound technician will be required to assist in the final plotting of sound effects and establishing the correct levels.

Sound is usually operated by the stage manager from the prompt corner. If microphones are to be used for music, voices or other sounds the sound technician will be responsible for the setting up and operation of this equipment. Equipment for producing recorded sound varies with computer mini-discs most commonly used by MTC. These have replaced the use of reel-to-reel tape, audio cassette tape and most live sound effects. The sound technician is responsible for buying and maintaining this type of equipment.

Technical Co-ordinator

The Technical Co-ordinator supports the work of freelance composers and lighting designers. This is primarily through realizing their creative ideas on a practical level. It involves specialised work such as the building and placement of practical lights and electrical sound props used on stage. It also means the supply of recorded mini-discs that are operated by the stage manager during rehearsals and the production run.

The Technical Co-ordinator supervises additional personnel employed in the **Electrics Department**, and liaises with the lighting and sound technicians at the theatre venues. This provides an important link between what the creative personnel on the production wish to accomplish and how this is implemented in the theatre.

Stage Manager

MTC employs stage managers on a contract basis for each production. Even though stage managers work on a freelance basis MTC often employs the same stage manager on a number of productions throughout the season. The stage manager performs a key role in the rehearsal period, production week, and the run of a production, and is responsible for co-ordinating the technical aspects of the production in consultation with the director. The stage manager strives to ensure that all operations on and off stage operate efficiently.

Before rehearsals begin the stage management team comprising the stage manager and the assistant stage manager(s), read the play and make a list of properties and furniture that will be required. They go about collecting either the real thing or substitutes that can be used in rehearsal until the finished pieces are available. Stage managers can be involved in the planning and organising of special equipment such as harnesses and masks that will affect the

movements of the actor, who will need to become familiar with them before the production moves into the theatre.

Stage management will familiarise themselves with the set design and technical drawings so that they are aware of the mechanics of scene changes or special effects. They may make photocopies of the costume designs and put them up in the rehearsal room. This makes the room more attractive and at the same time clearly shows the performers any changes of costume or quick changes that might be necessary. They will also show accessories such as sticks, hats, gloves, bags and the like, which can assist in creating character or may be awkward to manoeuvre in some way.

Before rehearsals begin the stage management crew use adhesive tape to mark up the ground plan of the set on the rehearsal room floor. Several different colours may be required if there are changes of scenery to clearly designate each act or scene. Rehearsal properties and furniture are set up, research material provided for the cast and the room generally prepared for rehearsals.

Once rehearsals begin the stage manager is required to record any important plotting that must be remembered such as the actors' moves or where props are set on or offstage, to be collected before making an entrance. These, and any technical effects that are established during rehearsal, such as music for scene changes, sound, lighting or scenery changes, are recorded in the stage manager's script (prompt copy).

The stage manager is responsible for recording any changes in the script such as the cutting, adding or alteration of lines that may be made during rehearsal. This is often the case with a newly written or specially commissioned play. Stage managers facilitate actors' requests for additional research material, perhaps accessories including hats, cloaks, walking sticks, handbags, luggage or anything that they may need practice in use. Similarly, rehearsal skirts or corsets may be required by female members of the company if a period play is being presented. The stage manager will organise these and ensure their safe return to the Wardrobe Department.

During rehearsals stage management provides important links between the rehearsal room and the Production Department, advising of any changes or additions that may affect the making of scenery, costumes or properties, or add alarmingly to the budget. They also draw up rehearsal schedules that will incorporate not only times for actors to attend rehearsals, but fittings for costumes, wigs and millinery or anything else the actor may be called upon to do, such as recording voices for sound effects. The stage manager is available to prompt actors if they forget or miss lines in rehearsal.

Once the set, props and costumes have been bumped into the theatre a week of stress begins for the stage managers, as it is they who are the director's lifeline to all that happens backstage. A headset links the director's temporary desk, which is set up in the auditorium, to the stage manager who orchestrates events backstage and relays important information to the director out front.

Once the production has opened the stage manager is responsible for calling all technical cues, ensuring actors are on stage when required, and writing nightly show reports after each performance. These are used to record any unusual circumstances such as lateness, illness, accidents, damage to props or costumes, audience reaction or technical hitches. Actors'

performances may also be commented upon, as the director will not normally see the play every night during the run of the play. The stage manager's report enables the director to assess whether unusual or direct actions need be taken other than the occasional encouraging visit backstage.

Assistant Stage Manager (ASM)

The assistant stage manager's job is that of "runner" – it is one of the least glamorous jobs in the theatre, but is often crucial to the success of both rehearsal period and the performance run of the play. During the rehearsal period, the stage manager is obliged to be in rehearsal almost constantly, to record the daily changes and requirements of the play as it develops. So the assistant stage manager is responsible for executing day-to-day tasks and any requests that arise from the rehearsal room. This includes new props, additional research, costume alterations and additions, sound and lighting demands or unexpected problems in any of these areas.

The ASM must also shop for simple props and make telephone calls to prospective sponsors willing to lend or donate props, especially "running" props. These are items like bottles of champagne, which must be opened each night, or articles that are destroyed on stage nightly and must be replaced daily, often adding considerably to the running costs of the show. The AMS is, therefore, a vital link between the cloistered atmosphere of the rehearsal room and the world outside as information not communicated to production staff may have serious consequences.

Once the play is in the theatre the ASM is responsible for the care of props and the smooth running of technical aspects of the play. It is their job to set props or costumes backstage so that actors, often in dim and difficult conditions, may find them easily. They perform emergency repairs to props, scenery or costumes, and generally perform any task required by the stage manager, performers or technical crew. The ASM is the first person in before the show every night, clearing the set from the night before and setting up the stage ready for the performance.

Efficiency, organisation and reliability are essential qualities for a good stage manager. The ability to deal with many different personality types is also important, as well as being able to take instructions and delegate them. Most theatre courses in Australia offer training in production, which includes stage management, but stage managers can also be trained within the industry starting as assistants and gradually achieving promotion.

Workshop Supervisor

The Workshop Supervisor liaises with the designer and Production Manager to construct and co-ordinate all aspects that go into creating the setting for a play. This may take many different forms, from "soft" scenery like backcloths, "legs" and borders, (which mask the wings and lighting bars in the grid), to detailed, complicated "box" sets that are solidly constructed and aim to represent reality.

The Workshop Supervisor will have a good idea of how to "fake" because of the need to reduce costs, weight and person power. Estimations of set costs are an important part of the supervisor's job, and costs will alter from show to show depending on the design concept chosen. After viewing the set model and working drawings the Workshop Supervisor consults with the designer, who will have his or her own ideas about what the set should be made from. The Workshop Supervisor estimates the materials cost, perhaps making

suggestions of alternative materials that will be as visually effective or structurally secure but more economical, and therefore cost effective. It is essential, however, that the safety of any set pieces used is not compromised in the building process.

It is the Workshop Supervisor's responsibility to locate, order and purchase these materials once quantities have been established. The Supervisor delegates various parts of the set to the set makers for construction. The scenic artists are reliant on the set pieces being built before they can start painting, so the Workshop Supervisor liaises closely with them to ensure their time is efficiently used and that the set is both built and painted before it bumps into the theatre.

During the making period the Workshop Supervisor keeps a close check on building progress and the costs involved, working closely with the Production Manager and the stage manager to keep track of any changes or difficulties that may arise in rehearsal. When the set is bumped into the theatre the Workshop Supervisor is responsible for co-ordinating the various elements that might make up the entire stage picture. This includes backcloths, frontcloths, built pieces, revolves, masking flats, false prosceniums, legs and borders, ground rows and any other piece of stage machinery that has been built to the original design.

There is no official training for this position, although theatre production courses offered at various tertiary institutions will incorporate some aspects of workshop practice. Most Supervisors will have had considerable experience in the industry, and are usually promoted to this position from a workshop position, such as a set maker. They may also have gained experience through building industry trades.

Set Makers

Qualified carpenters are most often employed as scenery makers but may have other skills, for example welding or cabinetmaking. Conventional carpentry skills are essential, but the good set maker should be able to adapt traditional making techniques to the unconventional materials used in making sets.

A variety of tools and materials can be used for set construction including plywood, canvas, corrugated cardboard, plastics, perspex, polystyrene, plaster, chipboard, and furnishing fabrics. These may be either used on their own or combined to create the desired effect. The set maker works as a part of a team, so an ability to work in harmony with others is essential, and they should be able to accept instruction or use initiative as required.

Properties Supervisor

It is the Props Supervisor's job to fake, beg, buy or borrow almost any object that is held by an actor or used to "dress" the set, from fake food to antique furniture. Great detail would not be required on fake money, for example, as it would rarely be seen up close by an audience, but the size, colour and texture would be important to make it look convincing from a distance. Furniture tends to be built and upholstered for its outward appearance, rather than for comfort or long life, but is made as strong and as light as possible to facilitate scene or act changes.

Cheap materials can be made to look expensive with paint, glazes and other surface treatments or with braids, jewels and other decorative techniques. Different kinds of props can be newly made, then "broken down" and aged with distressing and painting techniques.

Depending on the scale of the prop, tasks can be executed in conjunction with the Workshop, Scenic Art or art finishing. The ability to sculpt is a valuable asset in props making, as many sets may require, for example, architecture with sculptural decoration or statues. These may be made to look like stone, but will probably be made from polystyrene or some other material that is light, easily carved and painted. For greater stability and durability, sculptured objects can be cast in fibreglass or plaster. A great variety of materials are used in props making including latex, plastics, fibreglass, wood, plaster, and timber - in fact almost anything.

Props can be practical or not, depending on what is required by the play. Practical props, like guns, need special care and security both on and off stage, and all weapons must be kept locked when not in use. The Property Supervisor can be called on to construct or acquire shields, helmets or any kind of armour and weapons, animated animals, crockery, glassware, furniture, clocks, pictures, mirrors, candlesticks, televisions, coffins, boxes of all sizes and functions, or any object at all from Ancient Egypt to contemporary Australia.

The Props Supervisor or Props Assistant is also responsible for maintaining and storing props, which can be used for rehearsal purposes, or re-used in future productions, which may be modified or re-decorated in order to save money. MTC has a large props stock comprising larger pieces such as furniture, and many smaller props including common household items of various styles and periods.

Assistant Props Maker

The Props Supervisor may need assistance in assembling all of the props required for a production, especially if a period play is being presented and more making than buying is required. While the Props Supervisor plans, prepares or finishes, the Assistant may spend more time locating and ordering raw materials or hunting down specific items that can be bought, hired or borrowed. The Assistant will also be of great help in the making process, helping in the preparing of items and, depending on expertise, playing an active role in planning and finishing. MTC has a full-time Assistant Props Maker on staff to assist the Properties Supervisor.

Some tertiary courses may include aspects of props making but the skills are usually developed on the job, and it is not uncommon for a set builder with additional skills to move into the props making area. Abilities or training in carpentry, fine arts (sculpture and painting), upholstery, machining or metalwork are all useful.

Scenic Art Supervisor

The Scenic Artist is employed to paint sets, which may include large backdrops made of canvas, solid built sets, or props and furniture. This can involve painting on wood, metal, cardboard, canvas, gauze, perspex, polystyrene, or any number of surfaces and materials. The Scenic Artist must also be able to add texture, bringing depth to flat surfaces and materials, and produce effects resembling natural and manufactured objects including the sky, stone, wood, metal and foliage.

The Scenic Artist needs to be able to approximate painting styles that cover the entire history of art. This may include figure painting in the style of Raphael or Michelangelo or reproducing the Surrealist fantasies of Salvador Dali, and anything before, in between or after these art movements. A wide knowledge of paints, glazes and stains is necessary, as is the

ability to scale up images from the set model if backcloths or other soft scenic effects are part of the design.

Reading the play is necessary so a complete understanding is reached on the needs of the production and the design concept. At the start of a production period the Scenic Artist discusses the set model with the designer, including materials, colour, texture, feel, style, period and the painting approach to these elements. This is whether something should look natural, as on stage things often need to be exaggerated to appear natural, especially in a large auditorium, and because lighting effects may bleach out detail and flatten objects. Objects may also need to look refined or coarse, new or old.

When objects need to look old or well used, a technique known as “breaking down” or “distressing” is used. Through choice of colour, highlighting, brushwork and even physical wearing down of the object with, for example, sand paper or solvent, the painter makes a newly constructed object appear to be the required surface. This can include rusted iron, weathered boards, old polished metal or a myriad of other surfaces, which are more often than not constructed from materials that bear little resemblance to the intended object. The discussion with the designer can also include the sources, inspiration and approach the designer has made giving the Scenic Artist insight and understanding of the design concept.

Designers seek inspiration from the entire spectrum of art and design history or contemporary trends, in both Eastern and Western styles, so the Scenic Artist should have a broad knowledge of these movements and styles. The Scenic Artist also works closely with the Workshop, props makers and production management.

Assistant Scenic Artist

The Scenic Artist often requires assistance in the preparation of anything that needs to be painted or treated in some way by the paint workshop. Most surfaces require priming with a base coat of paint, and it is usually the Assistant who performs this tedious but necessary job. Other types of preparation may include mixing colours, texturing surfaces, drawing up grids on backcloths or floor surfaces so they can be correctly scaled up from the set model. However, most Assistants will be included in the more challenging areas of the artistic process, learning a wide range of effects from an experienced scenic artist.

Training in theatrical scene painting is offered as part of courses in theatre production at established institutions, but training in fine arts is also valuable. Scenic Artists are often trained within the industry, being taken on by a professional scenery painting studio, or moving sideways within a theatre company, for example, from an area like Workshop, Properties or Design.

Wardrobe Supervisor

The Wardrobe Supervisor is responsible for making sure that all aspects of a costume are realised and co-ordinated so as to appear exactly like the original costume design. Supervisors often have specialised skills, such as cutting or tailoring, although this is not always the case. It is unusual, however, to have achieved this position without rising through the ranks of a theatre wardrobe in some capacity.

The ability to understand how a costume is constructed is essential, as accurate amounts of fabric and trimmings must be estimated for both budgeting and making. On receipt of the designs the Supervisor must provide a budget for materials and accessories and must estimate

how much time it will take to make each costume, as extra staff may have to be employed if a show is beyond the normal making capacity of the wardrobe.

Reading the play well before the production period begins is essential to understanding the demands and problems it may present. Dealing with designers is an important part of the Wardrobe Supervisor's position. Each designer is different and has different expectations. Some designers provide clear, detailed and descriptive designs with accurate colours and textures represented. They may also provide working drawings with suggestions pencilled in to assist the wardrobe staff with details. Other designers prefer to put down impressions, rather than hard and fast images, and the Wardrobe Supervisor will be called on to assist in interpreting these designs for the other wardrobe staff, who may also be required to make suggestions and call on their imaginations to assist in realising the design.

The chief skill of the Wardrobe Supervisor lies in organisation and co-ordination. When the designer gives the costume designs to the Wardrobe Department the Supervisor divides each character's costumes into its component parts, and every single item is listed in a book called the "bible". This book provides a complete reference for everything that needs to be made, bought, begged or borrowed for a particular production, and is available to every member of the wardrobe staff to refer to. Items are marked off as they are completed. The Wardrobe Department needs to know which actors have been cast in the production so that they can gain their measurements and this information is also included.

Apart from millinery and wigs, a typical costume for a male actor in a period play could incorporate shirts (day or evening), detachable collars (day or evening), studs to attach to collars, cuff links, jackets, waistcoats, trousers (day or evening), braces or suspenders to support trousers or socks, socks, shoes, gloves, handkerchiefs, scarves and overcoats. A typical lady's costume might include bodices (day or evening), blouses, skirts, jackets (day or evening), petticoats, stockings, shoes, corsets, camisoles, gloves, purses (day or evening), handkerchiefs, scarves, muffs, cloaks or a wrap of some kind. Depending on the play, a character may have several changes during the evening, which involves a repetition of many of the aforementioned articles of clothing. It is the Supervisor's job to see that all these are assembled and ready when the actors move into the theatre for production week.

Additional problems always occur once the actors are wearing their costumes on a regular basis, moving about and performing tasks that have previously been performed unrestricted by the costume. The Wardrobe Supervisor will, therefore, be present at the dress parade, technical rehearsals and dress rehearsal to record notes about any alterations or additions that need to be made so that these are executed before opening night.

Not all costumes are newly made. The Supervisor can also call on stock items and suggest them to the designer to save money and making time. In a large, well-established company like MTC a certain amount of repetition, especially with period plays, may be involved, so a large range of basic items are available for re-use.

Costumes for minor characters, such as maids and other types of servants, can often be re-used, perhaps with some refurbishment, without compromising the designer's visual concept. Even major characters may be suitably outfitted with some new co-ordinating of accessories and trimmings, especially if the same designer is involved in the new production. Basic stock items would include, for example, men's shirts (contemporary and period), socks, stockings, shoes, handbags, petticoats and men's evening wear. Period underwear such as corsets are

often stock items too, but these are usually made to measure, as a comfortable fit can only be assured by following the performer's proportions exactly.

Once any stock items have been established and accounted for, the Wardrobe Supervisor will discuss with the designer those costumes that need to be made from scratch, accepting and making suggestions about the types of fabrics required to make the costume look authentic. The Wardrobe Cutter will also be consulted about this. Different historical periods require different fabrics. For example, a 1930s evening dress will require silky fabrics that fall softly and cling to the body, while an Elizabethan gown will need fabrics with a great deal more body and texture. The Buyer will then go out shopping at fabric retailers and wholesalers, pricing fabrics and bringing back samples for the designer to consider.

Once the fabrics have been brought they are labelled according to character and costume and hung on racks. They will then be cut out by the Wardrobe Cutter and tacked together, preparatory to a first fitting with the performer. There are usually two fittings throughout the rehearsal period. The first fitting is needed to adjust the shape of the costume to the actor, so the costume itself is in a raw state to allow seams to be taken in or let out, and sleeve or hem lengths established. At the second fitting the costume will be more finished, hemmed, lined and fastened, and trimmings will also have been added. The Wardrobe Supervisor conducts the fittings with the designer present. The Wardrobe Cutter and Maker may be called in as required.

Costume Cutter

A Ladies' or Gentleman's Cutter may be responsible for cutting all the women's or all the men's costumes. Depending of the size of a wardrobe department, cutting and making can be shared or divided, although it would be unusual for a Cutter not to have some hand in the making as well. Cutting involves far more than simply cutting around the edge of a pattern with a pair of scissors. The Wardrobe Cutter is like an engineer, who finds out what is required in the way of shape and function, then breaks down the overall outline into smaller shapes, which will provide the silhouette required by the particular period style.

The Wardrobe Cutter can contribute to initial talks with the Wardrobe Supervisor and Designer, giving advice on the construction of a garment and making suggestions about fabric that will behave in an appropriate manner for the cut required. A crisp fabric like cotton will not, for example, adapt to a particular cut in the same way as silk. A paper pattern is drafted in pieces that will be joined to make up the overall shape, and to suit the measurements of the individual actor.

The Cutter will often make up a trial costume, which is called a *toille*. This is made in cheap fabric, such as calico or canvas, to establish the correct line and sort out any problems before cutting into the expensive fabric that has been selected. Once the shape has been approved the Cutter will cut out the costume from the adjusted paper pattern, and the pieces will then be passed on to the Costume Maker to be seen together for the first fitting.

Costume Maker

The maker of a costume may not necessarily be a Pattern Maker and Cutter, although these aspects will probably be familiar to them if they have undergone formal training. Such skills will certainly be demanded of them in a busy theatre wardrobe restricted by budgetary constraints. The Costume Maker must, however, be a capable machinist and hand-sewer. The Maker is responsible for various aspects of putting together a costume, from mundane

tasks like tacking seams for the first fitting to the application of trimmings on the finished product.

The Costume Maker should be skilled in handling and sewing fabrics of all types, from sturdy materials like those used in men's tailoring to delicate and difficult to control materials like silk chiffon. The Costume Maker may also be asked to perform highly skilled and delicate tasks like appliqué and embroidery or construct "prop" type costumes, such as padding to create false paunches, bosoms or pregnancies.

Other tasks that the theatrical Costume Maker, rather than the dressmaker, will be required to assist in making are costumes specially constructed for quick changes. These may be whole outfits that look convincing from the front but might be sewn as one piece with a single opening that will rip open in a flash, revealing another costume underneath or allowing the performer to change into something else in a hurry.

Buyer

The most important function of the Buyer is to collect samples of fabrics or to price retail items that may go together to make up a complete costume. The Buyer works closely with the designer once the costumes are approved, discussing what types of fabrics will be required, their colour, texture and weight, as well as trimmings, such as braids, laces and ribbons, which will decorate them. The Buyer will then shop at a range of fabric outlets – retail and wholesale – to try and match the designer's demands to an existing fabric or trim, bringing back small samples of possible materials, each clearly labelled with place of purchase, width of fabric and price per metre.

Budgetary restrictions mean that some compromises may be necessary to achieve the desired result. A very expensive fabric that is perfect for the costume of a major character may nevertheless have to be reflected in favour of something less "right" but not so costly. On the other hand, the designer may decide to go for the expensive fabric and compromise on another costume. For example, the costume for a less important character might be gained by choosing something from stock that may need no money spent on it or can be refurbished at a small cost.

If a play is contemporary or set in the recent past the Buyer may be on the lookout for brand new items, both clothes and accessories, which can be bought, hired or borrowed. Borrowed items are covered by insurance and the lending company will often receive some form of publicity in exchange. The Buyer may also be required to scour opportunity shops or sellers of second-hand clothing.

The Buyer is also responsible for providing sundry items without which no wardrobe can function. This includes laundry stock, lining materials and haberdashery items such as cotton thread, zippers, buttons, elastic, tape, hooks and eyes. Once the designer has made a choice of fabric, the Buyer is responsible for ordering and collecting the fabric in the amounts estimated by the Costume Cutter or Supervisor.

The Buyer needs to have an excellent knowledge of the properties of fabric – how it will fall, move, respond to lengthy wear and cleaning. Some fabrics will not stand up to the constant wear and tear a play demands, especially if a tour is planned. Knowledge about dyes is important, as the fabric may have to be dyed if the right coloured fabric cannot be found. In this case natural fibres are preferable to synthetic materials.

The Buyer will ideally have the skills of a Costume Maker as well as an extra pair of hands is always useful, and the demands on the Buyer are fewer once the fabrics or costume items have been purchased. However, new requests that issue from the rehearsal room during the production period mean that the Buyer is kept busy throughout the production period, and the search for the perfect costume item or trim can continue well into the production period.

Wardrobe Maintenance Person

The Wardrobe Maintenance Person's work involves the cleaning and repair of costumes that are being worn in a current production. The position involves hand and machine sewing, hand washing, machine washing, spot cleaning, drying, or delivery and collection of costume items to a quick service dry-cleaner. This person is also responsible for helping to pack up the costumes after the run of the show, as well as making sure that they are cleaned before being relegated to stock by the Wardrobe Assistants. They may also be called on to give assistance to Wardrobe staff on the play in production.

All wardrobe staff need to be highly flexible as very different demands will be placed on them according to the requirements of the play. A wide range of skills in the construction and finishing of garments is essential. There are courses available that provide specific training in costume making for theatre. Courses in fashion design, dressmaking and machining are also useful in providing basic skills.

Wigs, Make-up and Hairdressing

The wigmaker has invariably trained as a hairdresser, which will take three years. Experience in wig making, make-up and hairdressing will most often come from working within the industry. Special make-up effects, which include latex and prosthetics, must also be studied, either through special courses or from training with an established expert in the field. MTC employs such personnel on a freelance basis rather than having its own department.

Characters who require special make-up or hairstyles will be discussed in detail with the designer once the designs have been approved. The actor will then have a first measurement and fitting. This enables the wig maker to assess the individual characteristics of the performer, and perhaps suggest adjustments to the original design, which may not be ideally suited to the performer's colourings or physical proportions. Then the real work begins with the making of the wigs and special effects. Each actor will have several fittings as part of this process.

Each wig is made of approximately 250g of real human hair and will take about 45 hours to make. Some of the very long and difficult wigs can take up to 60 hours to make. Single strands of hair are knotted onto special gauze in a technique similar to rug making. This is what makes the process so time consuming. Real hair is the preferred material as it can be treated and coloured more effectively than synthetic hair, although synthetic materials and others such as horsehair are sometimes used for specialised headdresses. Wigs often need to be made, as ready-made ones may not satisfy the requirements for a particular look, such as one for an ageing character rather than a glamorous one. Wigs are often re-used for other productions and remodeled for different actors and characters.

Each wig is very expensive. The average can cost around \$3,000.00, but the more expensive ones can cost much more. Wig making is the most time consuming job of the theatrical make-up artist, which often needs to be completed before the play leaves the rehearsal room.

This is so the actor can become accustomed to wearing a wig, beard, or special make-up, which can affect both movement and speech, as well as character development.

The actors will be shown by the make-up artist how to apply their own make-up for the production, as they will be doing it themselves once the play is up and running. Where more difficult make-up artistry is involved, or regular maintenance is required on the wigs, daily attention on the part of the wig maker/make-up artist may be required right throughout the performance period.

Milliner

The theatre milliner is required to make any kind of head covering, from a simple head scarf, to carefully shaped period bonnets, to delicate jewelled evening headdresses, to fantastical creations for which no model exists but the designer's imagination. All of these, nevertheless, require sewing and construction skills. Like the wardrobe cutter, the milliner must mould the material of the head covering not only for the performer's head, but in a variety of shapes, angles and directions that must assume proportion that harmonise with the rest of the costume. This means keeping in mind the entire costume of the character once the designs are presented, although the milliner will most likely work from detailed working drawings of the hats alone that have been prepared by the designer.

Millinery requires great skill and a great love for hand sewing, as well as patience and a keen eye for detail. An intimate knowledge of the capabilities of those materials that make up conventional millinery – felt and straw – are essential, although many shapes can now be purchased commercially and adapted. A broad knowledge of fabrics and trimmings is just as important, and creative skill is required in combining these to the best effect.

In consultation with the designer the milliner establishes the correct shape and proportions of a hat. A fitting is then called for the performer so that size, comfort and proportions will be adapted to the individual. The hat will then be finished - lined, trimmed, fastenings such as chin ribbons or elastic attached, and labelled with the actor and character's name. There are several ways of achieving the desired look. Fabric hats are made on a base of coarse straw-like fabric called sparterie, buckram or Paris net. These are damped or steamed so they can be moulded to the appropriate shape. This can be done on a wire shape or wooden hat block, where the shape is left to dry. When dry they are wired, stiffened and covered in the fabric desired.

More adventurous shapes may require a wire-shape to be constructed. This is a laborious and intricate form of millinery and dates back several centuries. A head measurement is taken and the brim circumference worked out, then struts are added, much like the spokes on a bicycle wheel. This is then bound with ribbon, which provides a sewing base, and covered in a lightweight, usually transparent fabric. The advantage of hats constructed like this is that they are light, but extremely durable and strong. They take a week or more to make. Cloth caps are made to patterns and only require fitting and lining.

MTC has a milliner who works on a permanent part-time basis. The milliner is also asked to take responsibility for supplying accessories as well as hats. This can include fans, parasols, spectacles, jewellery, rosary beads, masks, and watches.

Some institutions offer theatrical millinery as part of their production or design courses. The alternative is to undertake a fashion course that will incorporate fashion millinery and hope to be taken on in a theatre millinery department and trained in the idiosyncrasies of the position.

Art Finishing

The art finisher's job overlaps many areas such as Wardrobe, Props and Scenic Art. The title is quite accurate, as this person usually ends up "finishing" an item someone else has begun. For example, a costume that has been made in Wardrobe will be passed on to the art finisher to be "distressed" or "broken down" if ageing is required. This can be achieved in many ways. The costume may simply be dyed in a weak solution of an appropriate colour to take the edge off the fresh appearance of a new fabric.

If further ageing is required the garment can be painted in selected areas to increase the impression of wear, or make it appear dirty without the process having to be repeated each day of the production. Sandpaper can also be used to break down the surface of fabrics, and different kinds of diluted solvents can be used to dye or alter commercially used colours. Dyeing fabrics, whether for costumes, props or scenery is an important part of the art finisher's job, as colour plays a significant role in the designer's concept and may be unique, not easily matched with commercially produced materials.

Fabric painting plays a large part in the art finisher's job. Specific design concepts may incorporate patterns or textures not found commercially. The art finisher must follow the original design exactly by dyeing the fabric, painting the pattern freehand, (or by making templates or block prints), or building up the texture with paint, dye, braid, string, glue, glitter, or any other unlikely medium that happens to be appropriate. Other kinds of jobs that the art finisher can be called on to perform are upholstery, soft furnishings, the making, painting or decorating of a variety of accessories like masks, jewellery, shoes, handbags, fans, umbrellas, and specialty props, for example covering the articulated wings of angels.

Where no art finisher is on staff or available, individual finishing work, such as jewellery, dyeing and decorating may be taken on by multi-skilled workers in departments like Millinery, Wardrobe and Props. MTC does not have a permanent art finisher on staff so it needs to employ one on a casual basis and have some work completed in-house.

Considerable artistic talent is required in this position. There is no special training for this kind of work but skills in making, painting and creative fakery can be learnt through theatre design and fine arts courses. Sewing, cutting and machining skills acquired in fashion and dressmaking are also useful.

MTC's AUDIENCE

In 1998 and 2002 audience research was undertaken to analyse MTC ticket buyers.

They found that:

- 60% are female
- 53% of subscribers are over 45 years of age
- 40% of single ticket buyers are over 45 years of age
- 30-35% have postgraduate qualifications
- 40-50% are in full-time work, of which half are professionals and 20% are managers

- 29% earn more than \$60,000 per year
- 8-9% have more than \$100,000 per annum household income.

First time single ticket buyers:

- Have a younger age profile than subscribers
- 56% of first time single ticket buyers are aged between 45 and 65
- 5% are over the age of 65
- 40% are under the age of 45 (compared with 24% of subscribers).

Occasional and regular single ticket buyers are younger than subscribers, but older than first time ticket buyers.

The average audience member is female, a professional with university qualifications who lives in the eastern or southern suburbs. There is a 50% chance that she will be a subscriber. If she is a subscriber she is older than the single ticket buyer. The media habits of the audience are orientated towards *The Age* and the ABC.

The top four reasons for subscribing were:

- It encourages me to go to the theatre
- It encourages me to see plays I wouldn't normally see
- It is cheaper
- I will be guaranteed good seats,
- I won't miss out on a seat if the show sells out.

STATISTICS

Since its beginnings in 1953, MTC has produced over 700 plays. Over 200 of these are plays have been written by Australian playwrights.

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Total Melbourne Productions	11	12	12	12	11	11	12	12
Total Melbourne Performances	455	499	460	488	499	550	538	555
Total Melbourne Attendance	187,833	191,932	181,332	195,383	244,462	256,430	226,712	240,797
Total Touring Attendance	73,810	28,169	35,376	35,000	41,701	88,216	82,669	26,963
Total Education Attendance	27,200	14,605	10,364	13,032	19,076	13,525	12,501	8,681

Melbourne Theatre Company Productions and Attendance, 1998 – 2005.

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