

NEURODIVERGENCE AND THEATRICAL COSTUMING:
THE SENSORY EXPERIENCE

by
Annie Vaughan

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NEURODIVERGENCE AND THEATRICAL COSTUMING:
THE SENSORY EXPERIENCE

Project Approved:

Supervising Professor: Murell Horton, M.F.A.

Department of Theatre

Lydia Mackay, M.F.A.

Department of Theatre

Joe LeConte, LPC Associate, LCDC

Counseling & Mental Health Center

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to provide insight on the sensory experiences of neurodivergent actors in relation to theatrical costuming. I created a survey to get input from neurodiverse actors and used the responses to create a sample costume that demonstrated sensory-friendly techniques. The results showed that the vast majority of respondents experience sensory processing differences which affect the way they navigate the world. Most also felt that the comfort of their costume affected their ability to perform well and maintain their mental and physical health during performance. I described my research, design, and construction process and provided examples of my own experiences as a neurodivergent actor and costumer with sensory differences. Ultimately, I sought to bridge the gap of understanding between neurotypical and neurodivergent individuals in theatre on the sensory experiences of theatrical costuming and determine how we, as designers and costumers, can better understand and accommodate the sensory needs of neurodivergent performers.

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INTRODUCTION

Personal Impetus

Though my understanding of neurodivergence developed relatively recently, my experience with neurodivergence has been lifelong. As a child, I was often referred to as “picky” or “sensitive” for the way in which I experienced the world. I always felt like my environment was noisier, brighter, more distracting, and more overwhelming to me than it was to others. I felt this distinctly when it came to clothing. There were many fabrics that made my skin crawl. Tags in my clothing would bother me all day and even irritate my skin. Certain sleeve shapes or seam finishes were agonizing. Even worse, the sensory experiences that bothered me changed from day to day. A cute form-fitting top could be fine one day and unbearable the next. I hated shopping, hated clothes – everything was uncomfortable, and I couldn’t understand why beauty had to be painful. I noticed that it didn’t seem like this experience was universal.

That feeling of difference found its answer with my ADHD diagnosis in the fall of my senior year of college. It contextualized my struggles with executive function and sensory stimuli. I realized how much energy I exerted trying to overcompensate for the way in which my brain worked differently. Post-diagnosis, instead of trying the same strategies over and over and trying to change myself to get results, I decided to simply accept where I was at and accommodate my needs without judgment. This mindset shift was utterly life changing. It took so much less energy, and it was so much more effective! Interestingly, though I’d never thought to apply accommodations to other areas of my life, I had been using that approach for my clothing forever. I’d learned how to remove tags, shopped carefully and in-person so I could feel the fabrics and try the clothes on, and bought multiples of items that fit my needs best. However, it was not quite enough. I struggled to find clothing that fit both my body and my aesthetic.

My desire to meet my unique sensory needs was a large part of what drew me to sewing. If I knew how to make things myself, I could accommodate my needs *and* dress in a way that made me feel beautiful. During my sophomore year of college, I started working in the TCU Costume Studio. There, I developed the skills I needed to create and alter my own clothing and began to use them outside of the studio.

Sewing my own clothing gave me total control over my sensory experience. I could choose fabrics that I had touched beforehand, pick patterns and seam finishes that felt good and suited my aesthetic, add linings and pockets, and make any item fit well. By accommodating my sensory needs, I freed up a lot of the energy that I was expending trying to distract myself from bodily discomfort. That energy could now go towards the tasks at hand, whether it was interacting with others, doing work, or resting. I am unable to change the way I process the world, but by reducing the sensory load on my body, I can set myself up for a better chance at success.

As I began to rethink the way I treated and thought about myself post-diagnosis, I wondered how the neurodivergent sensory experience might interact with theatrical costuming. Having worked in a collegiate costume studio, worn costumes as an actor, and worked as a dresser in the DFW area for national tours and other professional performances, I saw a need for better understanding of the neurodivergent sensory experience. I have been lucky thus far in my ability to communicate with my costumers about my needs and have them be receptive, but I saw that this was not a universal experience. Though never with cruel intent, I heard actors who brought up sensory complaints regarding their costumes be dismissed as ‘divas,’ or told they needed to ‘suck it up.’ I do not know whether those individuals were neurodivergent, but I do know that it is difficult to put yourself in someone else’s shoes when their experiences are so

different from your own, and that misunderstandings can lead to harm where none was intended. However, one of the things I love most about theatre is its ability to draw an audience into a story and offer new ways to think about, understand, and interact with the world around us. I sought to create my own story that would provoke thought about the unique experiences of the people around us.

Defining Terms

The term “neurodiversity” was originated in 1997 by Judy Singer, an autistic sociologist, and has now come into popular use. Singer sought to create a word that celebrated the structural brain differences that made these individuals unique, rather than othering them or dismissing them as not normal and therefore not right. The terms “neurodivergent,” “neurodivergence,” and “neurodiverse” are also used now, relatively interchangeably.

The conditions most widely understood to fit under the umbrella term "neurodivergence" are Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD, Autism) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Technically, the term applies to all neurodevelopmental disorders, which includes conditions like dyslexia, Tourette’s syndrome, and cerebral palsy, but primarily refers to the shared experiences and traits of those with ASD and ADHD. For the purposes of my research, I chose to include Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) as well, which is a more recently classified neurodevelopmental diagnosis that would produce similar sensory experiences to those associated with autism or ADHD. It is not currently included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), the primary book used for diagnosing and treating mental disorders in the U.S. but has gained enough name recognition on social media and in neurodivergent circles to merit inclusion.

Throughout this paper, I use the term “sensory experience” to describe the way in which a person processes the input they receive through their body’s senses. This includes sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing, as well as the vestibular and proprioceptive senses. Neurodivergent individuals commonly experience sensory differences, where their brains process and filter sensory inputs differently. While this phenomenon can be termed an ‘issue’ or ‘dysfunction,’ I chose to use the term ‘differences’ to suggest that while this way of experiencing the world can be detrimental, it can have benefits as well. Currently, there are two main terms used to describe the way the neurodivergent brain may respond to stimuli: sensory-seeking and sensory-avoiding. With sensory-seeking, the individual needs more input from their environment to know what they are feeling, and to function. Without that input, it may be more challenging for them to know where their body is in space, or how hot or cold the object is that they are interacting with. They may seek out more stimulating experiences such as making a lot of noise, running around, or engaging in more intense activities and sensations. Sensory-avoiding behaviors stem from the opposite: where a person’s senses are overstimulated, and they need less input from their surroundings to function well.

Neurodivergence encompasses a spectrum of sensory responses, and a single person can experience both under- and over-stimulation. Regarding clothing, sensory avoidance is the primary issue that must be addressed. According to my research and personal experience, sensory-seeking behaviors typically have minimal crossover with clothing needs. I focused primarily on the challenges neurodivergent people face with heightened sensitivity to touch and pressure when it comes to clothing as those are the main senses involved, but also briefly covered issues related to hearing and vision.

Gaps in Research

Research on these conditions has only begun in the last century. The identification of diagnoses that fit under the neurodivergent label are still very new, and thus under-researched, especially when it comes to minority populations. Much of the existing research on neurodivergent conditions is focused on children – even less can be found about adult populations. A standard Google search on these conditions primarily leads to sites designed to advise parents on how to manage their child’s condition, rather than information meant for the affected individuals themselves. The research follows suit.

Theatre-focused research concerning autism generally focuses on therapeutic approaches to developing interpersonal skills in children or autistic adults with higher support needs. However, there is a growing community of neurodiverse adults who participate in theatre on a regional and professional level rather than solely a therapeutic or educational one. All three conditions I chose to focus on demonstrate sensory processing differences as notable features that directly impact the experiences and day-to-day life of neurodiverse individuals.

During my initial research stage, I read a book titled “Women and Girls with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Understanding Life Experiences from Early Childhood to Old Age” by Sarah Hendrickx to get a better sense of the aspects of neurodivergence with which I was less acquainted. The book gave meaningful qualitative insights on the lives of women and girls who had been diagnosed with autism, and their shared experiences. There were a few passages that discussed their sensory experiences, which was what drew me to the book in the first place, but what I loved most was reading direct quotes from the women included in the author’s research. Their first-hand accounts were powerful to read and helped me to better understand the experiences to which I could not personally relate. As a theatre person, I believe that storytelling

is a massively important part of the way we share information with each other and develop our sense of empathy. Hendrickx' method of storytelling inspired me to gather and incorporate real-life stories from the neurodivergent actors I was ultimately trying to benefit.

OVERVIEW

Thesis

Many of the fantastic and elaborate costumes we see on the stage and screen aren't the most comfortable. However, if you experience sensory stimuli more intensely, as many neurodivergent people do, that discomfort can grow into something worse. My experiences as an actor and a costumer drew me to this topic –

How can we, as designers and costumers, better accommodate the sensory needs of neurodivergent performers?

I wanted my project to help bridge the gap of understanding between neurotypical and neurodivergent individuals in theatre on the sensory experiences of theatrical costuming.

To answer my question, I decided to create a survey to get input from neurodivergent actors and use the responses to create a sample costume constructed using sensory-friendly techniques, alongside a tactile guidebook describing common sensory triggers and ways to accommodate them. A topic this tactile demanded a visualization that could be touched.

Study Design

I considered several options for conducting meaningful research on my topic before deciding upon a qualitative survey. At one point I entertained the idea of conducting a research study involving a group of neurotypical actors and another group of neurodivergent actors, in which each group would put on costume pieces with varying levels of associated discomfort and perform a provided monologue. Participants would then rate their levels of focus and comfort,

and the groups' responses would be compared. Ultimately, I decided there were too many variables involved that I would be unable to adequately control, and I did not want to make participants provide medical information like diagnoses that would necessarily be directly associated with them due to the requirements of an in-person study. Additionally, it was difficult to identify and provide costume pieces that would produce a comparable sensory experience for each individual across a variety of sizes. I decided to scrap that idea and instead focus on what I was trying to learn from the study and pick a research method from there.

Based off my initial research, the DSM diagnostic criteria for each condition, and my own experiences and connections, I felt confident that the majority of neurodivergent performers experienced some form of sensory differences. I wanted to ascertain three main things from my research:

1. What, if any, sensory differences did they identify with?
2. How might those differences affect them when it comes to costuming?
3. What accommodations have they had before or would like to see going forward?

With these goals in mind, I designed an anonymous qualitative survey for neurodivergent actors that would give insight on how their neurodivergence may impact the way they experience clothing, both inside and outside of theatre. My hypothesis was that neurodivergent actors would describe varying levels of distress from costume-related sensory experiences, but that most would indicate at least a low level of discomfort, enough to affect their performance. I wanted to get a variety of perspectives, as I understand my sensory needs are far from defining the experiences of neurodivergent individuals as a whole. While not every potential issue and accommodation would be able to be included in the project, I wanted to ensure I was addressing the most pressing and common experiences.

SURVEY

Creating the Survey

I began learning how to use Qualtrics, the platform through which I designed and distributed the survey. I also went through the IRB process to ensure that the research I conducted would be ethical and sound. The most challenging part of the process was creating the survey questions. I reworked the format and phrasing of my questions several times to ask neutral questions that would be easy to read and answer. I also took great care to make sure that the questions would accommodate a variety of perspectives and experiences. This was most apparent when it came to cultivating a list of potential sensory triggers. The list needed to be comprehensive, but structured in a manner that was easy to follow and not visually overstimulating.

The survey consisted of:

- 5 questions on eligibility + demographics
- 4 questions identifying level of sensory processing differences and how much it interferes with their daily life
- 4 questions identifying specifics of sensory triggers
- 2 questions on previous experiences with bringing complaints to costumers
- 1 question allowing free response on potential costuming accommodations
- 1 question allowing free response on anything else they'd like to mention

All questions past the initial eligibility questions were fully optional. I did this to get the best chance of having as many responses as possible. I also wanted to give participants the option to skip anything they weren't comfortable answering or did not know while still being able to complete the survey.

The survey began with a series of questions designed to confirm the respondent's eligibility. Eligible participants needed to self-identify as neurodivergent, have some experience as a costumed stage actor, and be eighteen years or older. If they did not meet one of the criteria, they were forwarded to the end of the survey and made aware of their ineligibility. I did not require a formal diagnosis of ASD, ADHD, or SPD from participants due to the difficulty of obtaining a formal diagnosis, especially for female-identifying individuals (Hendrickx). The age restriction was put in place because adults are more likely to have further experience with costumes than minors, and adults can give consent. They may also be more aware of and better able to describe their sensory experiences. In stage performance, actors almost always wear costumes that are provided at least in part by the producing company or affiliated costume studio, so I was confident that respondents with even minimal acting experience would have encountered a variety of costumes.

Beyond the eligibility questions, I asked participants to answer a multi-select question where they chose diagnoses with which they self-identify or have been formally diagnosed. The options were:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD)
- Unsure
- No formal diagnosis
- Other

When developing the list of potential sensory triggers, I consulted my advisor Joe LeConte, a small group of neurodivergent friends, internet message boards and websites, and my

own experiences as a neurodivergent person and costumer. The full list can be found in Appendix A. I struggled to present this list of potential sensory triggers in a way that was simple and made sense. I tried several different question types and visual styles before deciding upon a matrix table question that used a Likert scale ranging from extremely uncomfortable to extremely comfortable. I then grouped the triggers into six categories: sight, sound, texture, touch, pressure, and miscellaneous. I also gave each group header text a unique font color to further separate the categories visually.

At its completion, the survey included 17 questions and could be completed in 10 minutes or less, depending on the amount of detail the respondent chose to give.

A full print-out of the survey can be found in Appendix A.

Distribution

I primarily recruited participants through social media. The survey link went out to TCU theatre majors and faculty/staff via email and D2L, but I also posted the link and informational flyer on my personal socials. The information was then forwarded or shared with other theatre artists and groups.

I was concerned I might not receive enough responses due to the specificity of the eligibility criteria, but within a short period of time, I had 38 respondents between the ages of 18 and 39. The responses generally confirmed what I've personally experienced and witnessed in my work as both an actor and costumer, and provided valuable insight for the creation of my educational materials.

Results & Analysis

My major takeaway from the results was that the vast majority of neurodivergent actors surveyed experienced sensory processing differences which affected the way they navigate the world.

35 out of 38, or 92.11% respondents answered that they experienced sensory processing differences according to the following provided definition – “an over- or under-reactivity to sensory stimuli like lights, sights, sounds, textures, movement, etc. Certain stimuli can provoke a strong reaction in an individual. Common triggers might include bright lights, noisy environments, or certain textures like scratchy fabrics, but can vary widely from person to person.”

27 respondents identified as female, 4 identified as male, 6 identified as non-binary, and 1 chose not to specify.

Many participants selected more than one condition when asked to self-identify. This was to be expected, as it is not unusual for neurodivergent diagnoses to be co-morbid. The condition most represented was ADHD, with 29 individuals. 19 people selected ASD, 8 selected SPD, and 5 selected Other. 5 people also selected no formal diagnosis, suggesting that the majority of respondents were formally diagnosed with a neurodevelopmental condition.

When asked to describe what they felt when they encountered a sensory trigger, responses mentioned dissociation, panic attacks, nausea, fatigue, anxiety, an inability to focus on anything else, and a variety of other reactions (Appendix B). I have included two notable descriptions below.

“It depends on the stimulation. For me, related to fabrics and costumes, if it is scratchy or

rough I can feel uncomfortable/distracted by that sensation for as long as I am wearing it. Basically, a certain portion of my mental energy is continually going to regulating my discomfort from that sensation while I'm also trying to focus on blocking, emoting, etc.”

“It's a bit like a million angry bees inside my skin. Nerve pain, emotional distress, and brain fog take over when I'm overstimulated in any way. Though, sometimes I get emotional and feel mood swings during times of overstimulation.”

Though the effect produced when each individual encountered a sensory trigger could be very different, what they all had in common was a deeply unpleasant experience that could disrupt focus and ability to perform well.

About half of the respondents said they experienced discomfort with everyday clothes rarely or never, while the other half noted discomfort sometimes or always. Regarding theatrical costumes, however, 68% of respondents experienced discomfort sometimes or always. The discrepancy between everyday clothes and costumes could be attributed to the ability to accommodate one's own sensory needs in choosing everyday clothes which cannot always be done for costumes, as well as the more unique silhouettes, materials, and demands that costumes can impose.

Out of the categories of material, fit, seams, tags, and restricted movement, all except seams were identified by more than half of respondents as something that has caused them sensory discomfort in a costume. Respondents also wrote in sources of discomfort such as heavy fabric that could get caught on nails, dusty clothing, boning without an underlayer, and thick fabric that lacked in breathability. Materials and restricted movement were most commonly

ranked as the biggest source of discomfort, with the rest of the categories decently close behind. I gathered that though those two were the most egregious, the experiences described in all six categories caused sensory discomfort in the majority of respondents.

Out of the list of 20 sensory experiences, the most uncomfortable when averaged on a 5-point scale were multiple layers, itchy fabric, rough fabric, restricted motion, and tight clothing. The most comfortable experiences, on the other hand, were smooth fabric, loose clothing, bright colors, and high-contrast patterns.

89% of all respondents felt that an uncomfortable costume would negatively affect their performance in some way, and 65% of that group described the negative effect as moderate or higher. This is a big part of why accommodating those with sensory differences matters – the effect of an uncomfortable costume upon the actor's ability to perform well and maintain their mental and physical health can be quite significant.

63% had communicated concerns to a costumer or costume shop before. Those who had, received varied responses – some were met with kindness and understanding while others struggled to be listened to or had their issue deemed insignificant. Others still were unable to have their needs met due to budget and time constraints. One actor noted that while in high school theatre, they were not accommodated; however, they were able to access what they needed at the professional level.

The most requested accommodation was an option to indicate sensory needs on the initial measurement form that an actor fills out when first visiting the costume shop. They also noted that a general education and awareness on neurodivergence would be helpful in making the overall experience better. Other suggestions included additional or earlier fittings so that the actor could adjust, and the costumer could make adjustments before it was too late, the ability to

wear one's own undergarments beneath the costume, being asked before they are touched during fittings, unscented laundry products, linings, accessible closures, and more open communication with the costumer. Several people also wrote that they enjoyed wearing corsets as an undergarment since the pressure provided comfort and support and had requested them before as part of their costume.

VISUALIZATION

Introduction

Since the end goal was to encourage understanding between neurotypical and neurodivergent people, I felt it was crucial to turn the results of my study into something that was both visual and tactile. I debated between a variety of visualizations, like having two costumes where one was not sensory friendly while the other was, or one costume that demonstrated different sensory accommodations. I even toyed with creating an abstract costume that simply served as a visual, exaggerated representation of the discomfort of sensory triggers. I wanted whatever I came up with to be a tangible sensory experience that could help people understand what it was like for people like me. With the data I gathered from the survey and my own experiences, I began working on the visual representation.

Historical Inspiration

Once I settled upon creating a single costume, I considered the source of inspiration and style. Ever since I started working at the TCU Costume Studio, I wanted to work on a period costume from the early 1900s or before. The dramatic silhouettes, intricate hand-sewing techniques, and multitude of layers fascinated me. Historical costuming would also offer the most challenge in accommodating sensory needs for demonstration purposes, and shows set in the 18th or 19th century are still commonly produced today. I found myself drawn to the late

1880s and early 1890s, specifically because of an elaborate gown I had seen in the costume studio when I first started working there. The gown was created for a production of *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde and was worn by the character Lady Bracknell. Designed by Murell Horton, it was appropriate for the play's setting in 1895. The dress that I subsequently created was designed to live in that world without being attached to a specific character. I chose a feminine costume because the majority of my survey group identified as female, and because historically, women's clothes have been noted for being particularly uncomfortable compared to masculine styles and employ a more varied range of silhouettes due to the use of supportive undergarments.

When doing my research, the dresses pictured in Appendix C (Figs. 1-6) caught my eye. I used them as general inspiration, and as a way to focus my design within a specific time period using historical examples.

Design

Women's clothing in the late 1880's and early 90's could consist of as many as 10+ layers, including:

- Chemise
- Drawers
- Bustle cage or pad
- Petticoat, sometimes more than one
- Corset
- Corset cover
- Stockings, sometimes with garters
- Blouse

- Jacket
- Overskirt

These layers would be worn with shoes and hats as well. While the quantity of pieces makes historical sense, it is highly unlikely that a modern reproduction of these styles designed for stage performance would include every layer. For my purposes, I chose to simplify the layers to only what is necessary for comfort and shape. Therefore, there would be no drawers, corset cover, or stockings (at least not with garters), and only a single overskirt. Since several survey respondents mentioned that they struggled with overheating and excess layers, removing a few helps keep the costume lighter and with less attachment points on the body, while also reducing expense.

I aimed for historical inspiration as opposed to strict historical accuracy – many of the materials and techniques used in the 1890s are either difficult to find, too expensive, or too time-consuming for one to expect the average modern costumer to use. The external look of the costume is ultimately the most important. Audiences won't be able to tell if the corset uses steel boning or zip ties for structure, but the actor will feel the difference...and so will the budget.

I sketched a few versions of the dress where it was split down the middle, with different sections being capable of folding out of the way to reveal inner layers and hidden details. While this would make the costume unwearable, it would make it more effective as an educational prop, which served my goal better than wearability would. The design sketches in Appendix C depict a few variations of a concept where the left side exhibits the exterior look of the costume with traditional undergarments, while the right side reveals interior layers and a selection of accommodations in both the costume design and the execution, akin to a dissection.

I looked through the TCU Costume Studio stock for historical patterns I could use for inspiration and construction. I selected the six seen in Appendix C Fig. 10 and drew a revised sketch (Fig. 8). The left side of the gown from the observer's perspective now demonstrated typical practice and techniques, while the right side represented potential accommodations. I largely excluded material and tag accommodations from the design, intending to include those in the accompanying guidebook. I left seams, fit, restricted movement, and miscellaneous accommodations like corset boning for representation in the dress.

Construction

Now that I knew what I was trying to accomplish, I realized I would need funding to get the fabric, patterns, and notions that would help me best fulfill my vision. I was granted some research funding by the Honors College, which allowed me to buy reproductions of the historical undergarments commonly used in the 1880's and 90's – the 'lobster tail' bustle and the bustle pad or bum roll, along with the ruffled petticoat which typically went over either structural piece to smooth out the skirts. The TCU Costume Studio lent me a dress form. I also purchased a historical chemise and corset pattern and two styles of skirt patterns from Black Snail Patterns on Etsy meant to accommodate different styles of undergarments. I used patterns from studio stock for the sleeves and bodices. The construction of all but the purple accent pieces were done out of muslin cotton, an inexpensive and tightly woven fabric that can be purchased in large quantities and is commonly used for creating mock-ups. Cotton is a natural and breathable fiber, making it an excellent choice for the undergarments. The left side skirt and collar accent were constructed from purple taffeta. The taffeta offered a glimpse of the structure and style of the more expensive fabrics that were used in historical clothing of this era – it is crisper and shinier than the cotton muslin, but similarly lightweight. I sewed the right side of the costume in shades of white to

showcase the suggested accommodations. The layers I included were a chemise, corset, bustle, petticoat, overskirt, and sleeved bodice.

The chemise in this case serves as the base layer over which all other layers are placed, so it received the most care since it would come in contact with a lot of exposed skin. On the left side, I applied lace along the neckline and armhole as instructed by the pattern. I attached the front and back panels with a standard plain seam and finished the raw edges with pinking shears to reduce fraying. On the right side, I bound the neckline and armhole with soft ribbon so that the only part of the seam finish that would rest against the skin was the stitch line. I attached the panels with a flat-felled seam so that the bulk of the seam allowance was secured to the right side of the fabric, leaving no excess material to brush against the skin. The chemise is not visible to the audience, so if needed, I could completely forego attempts to make the chemise look ‘nice’ or frilly and solely build it as a sensory-friendly undergarment. If purchasing a chemise instead of building it, I suggest staying away from polyester if possible, as it is typically less breathable.

I created a mock corset for only the right side of the dress to demonstrate the choices available for corset boning since the corset would not be visible under the left side layers. Some neurodivergent actors may prefer to wear a typical corset, so these accommodations are offered on the chance that an actor needs less pressure on their torso, or a costume requires the look of a corset without requiring the structure. The corset demonstrates four different boning materials and techniques: steel spiral boning, featherweight boning without casing (to mimic a zip tie), flat steel spring boning, and casing without boning. Another option could include the insertion of a section of stretchy side or back panel, which can also be found on cheap ready-made ‘corsets’ that are designed for looks rather than support.

For the bustle, I offered two styles of supportive undergarment. For the left side, I bought a lobster tail bustle and split it down the middle, and did the same with a tie-on bum roll for the right side. Whereas on the left side, the wearer would have the pressure of the corset, bustle, petticoat, and overskirt with separate fastenings for each, on the right side I sewed the bum pad onto the corset and removed the ties so that there would be one less layer separately attached to the waist. This is an experimental technique which would need to be used in rehearsal to determine its durability – it is meant to demonstrate the potential rewards of taking a creative approach to working around sensory challenges. An additional note – placing a stiffened and well-fitted corset over the chemise and under all other layers allows the weight of subsequent layers to be distributed around the whole torso instead of a thin band on the waist. This may ease some discomfort with waist pressure.

The overskirt on the left side is modeled off the early bustle period, where skirts were worn over bustle cages and involved a great deal of fabric, especially when the skirts had trains. Some of the structure is created by the cartridge pleats at center back, and the rest is taken care of by the cage. The overskirt on the right side is a fan skirt inspired by the style coming into fashion in 1890, which was more likely to be worn over a bum pad instead. This is an example of a design accommodation that could be made – both styles would be worn at the time the play was produced, but the one on the right is slightly more low-profile and conducive to freer movement while still giving the silhouette of the time. With the bum pad and lack of train, the fan skirt may be lighter and easier to navigate. I noticed when I tried on the lobster tail bustle that some of the strings that kept the cage from swinging around my legs fell below the chemise and bounced against my legs when I walked. This could be remedied by a longer chemise, stockings, or adding a thin piece of fabric to the bustle interior that would lay between the body and strings.

Finally, the sleeved bodices on the left and right sides are both inspired by the ‘leg-of-mutton’ style that was popular in the late 1800s. However, the bodice on the left has a high, stiff collar and a tight full-arm sleeve, while the bodice on the right has a lower neckline and is only a partial sleeve. Some survey respondents stated that they could not stand having material around their neck. By lowering the neckline, the costumer can stay visually historically accurate while also removing a large source of discomfort from the gown’s design. Necklines that stopped right under the chin and others that are similar to a modern sweetheart neckline were both in use during this time period. For the sleeves, an actor may struggle with the inconsistent pressure and restrictive nature of historical sleeve designs such as the one I chose for the left side. On the right side, I demonstrated an equally (if not more) dramatic sleeve with an interior lining that has consistent pressure along the upper arm and does not restrict the wearer from raising their arms or bending their elbows. Take care that the material used to line the inner sleeve is a tight enough weave to prevent the netting or other material used to support the poof of the sleeve from being felt through the inner layer. This can also be a concern if using crinoline to structure a skirt and can be addressed by adding another interior layer with a tight weave or using an alternate structural material. I used a few strips of crinoline to structure the right sleeve and was unable to feel it through the muslin when I tried it on.

Tactile Guidebook Turned Tactile Table

I had originally planned to create a simple scrapbook-style guidebook to accompany the costume as I wanted it to represent a few potential accommodations that weren’t as effective or applicable to the dress form model. I did not end up completing the guidebook as originally imagined due to time constraints and a lack of need for the additional method of presentation. Instead, I gathered a number of costume items that I had made or bought that had resulted in a

variety of sensory experiences, and I laid them out on a small table at my presentation for audience members to interact with. The items included several pieces of a Halloween costume I had made, the other halves of the bustles on the dress form, a tag removed from a pair of pants I wear regularly, and a chemise I purchased recently off of Amazon.

In the fall, I decided to make a Rapunzel costume for Halloween. I wanted to make a corset, a full and half skirt, and a blouse. I spent the majority of my time making the corset and was left with very little time to finish the rest. I had to take shortcuts in order to have something wearable by Halloween and in doing so, the costume became really uncomfortable. The sleeve I chose for the blouse was quite similar to the right side sleeve on the blouse for this project. While the inner layer of the sleeve was soft and comfortable, the outer layer was an iridescent organza that frayed easily. My quick fix meant that the itchy, fraying edges of the organza in the armhole seam brushed directly against my skin. I also hastily applied lace to the neckline (the same kind as used on the left side of the chemise neckline) without finishing the seams, so the gathering and fraying edges were also up against my skin. The combination of sensory discomfort, exterior stress, and overwhelm from the party environment resulted in a panic attack. Ironically, the corset was well-fit and lined with a smooth satin, but it could not make up for the other discomforts. I rewore the costume a few days later with a soft t-shirt in place of the blouse and no petticoat beneath the skirt. With these changes in place, I was able to enjoy myself and focus on things besides my clothing and the way it felt. It was a humbling experience for me as a sewer: as much as I wanted to pretend that I could do things quickly and a little sloppily and still be okay, I just couldn't. Situations like this are common in theatre, where demands are high and time is short. I presented the corset, sleeve, and petticoat from this costume as part of the tactile table, and explained the story to those who interacted with the items. I also included the other

halves of the two bustles to provide the audience with a version they could be rougher with and examine more closely.

The commercial tag I included was from a pair of pants I'd owned for a couple years. I originally removed it because it was irritating my skin and making me uncomfortable. It does not feel as bad to the touch initially as it does when repeatedly rubbed against the skin – this is a reminder that placement must be considered. Tags that would usually be put at the nape of the neck or small of the back could be installed in a side seam or pocket. Alternatively, the studio could decide that the actor's clothing can be written on directly with a laundry Sharpie, as is sometimes done with undershirts, or left unlabeled if absolutely necessary. Another tag option I like is the precut labels used in the TCU Costume Studio. They do not have any sharp edges, are soft to the touch, and are secured in a way to where they cannot flip up, which could cause a tag to irritate the skin or become visible onstage. Any material on which laundry Sharpie writing is visible can be used as a tag too. Tags in clothing items that don't directly touch the skin, like jackets, blazers, and scarves, should be okay to be labeled in a standard manner.

Finally, I brought a chemise I'd bought off Amazon. I had concerns about the gathers and elastic around the neck and wrists as well as the material itself, but I was pleasantly surprised when it arrived. It was a synthetic fabric, but very light and breathable. The gathers were faced with a soft elastic that laid smooth against the skin but still allowed the neckline and wrists to stretch. It made for a much more pleasant sensory experience.

The audience for my final presentation mentioned that they enjoyed getting to touch the materials I provided. If I were to do it again, I would pull material swatches as well and create some samples of different types of seam finishes.

Sample Measurement Form

The accommodation that the survey group most wanted to see implemented was a place to indicate sensory needs on the measurement intake sheet that most costume shops have an actor fill out at the start of the show process. This document stays with the costumer, providing guidance on measurements and fit. Some forms have spaces to indicate allergies, but none of the respondents nor myself had ever encountered a form that provided space to write in sensory information. I have included an updated version of the TCU Costume Studio measurement sheet in Appendix E as a sample. We updated the document last year to use gender-inclusive language, which was a wonderful step in the right direction. The reformatting and removal of a few unnecessary measurements left room for me to include a small section on sensory needs. If an actor has more involved sensory needs, the best course of action will likely be an open discussion with the costumer about their options. Having a measurement form that shows that a costumer is open to these kinds of conversations can help put the actor at ease and make it more likely that they will advocate for themselves. Ultimately, how effective is a costume design if it results in an actor facing further difficulties in performing their best? We are all working together and will have the best chance at producing good work if everyone involved is well-supported.

CONCLUSION

Accommodations should be advocated for in areas like costuming that deal directly with sensory experience. However, just like clothing, accommodations are not one size fits all; they are extremely individual. While I offer suggestions here, one's best bet as a costumer is to approach the actor with open communication and an open mind, trusting that they know their body best. Sensory experiences fall on a wide spectrum. Some survey respondents loved

pressure, but some couldn't stand it. Some reported no sensory issues whatsoever, while for others their sensory experience plays a huge part of their life.

Working towards accommodations like those discussed throughout this paper that are geared towards neurodivergent people holds benefits for everyone. Every single one of us has negative sensory experiences – very few people like the feeling of wet jeans, or itchy, scratchy tags on their neck, or chunky seams that leave red marks on your skin; it's just that for some, the consequences of that experience can be so much more severe. The new technologies, materials, and techniques we have access to now enable us to seek out better ways to create clothing so that the wearers can direct their attention elsewhere.

It is important to note that not all solutions even solve the problem. I once purchased a pair of underwear where, instead of sewing a tag into the waistband, the manufacturers had printed the information on the fabric itself with some sort of grippy, raised material. I found this purported solution to be almost more uncomfortable than a simple tag, which I would have been able to remove myself. This is why communication is key – if we do not work with the individual for whom the accommodation is designed, we may miss the point and end up creating a separate issue.

Providing accommodations isn't outlandish or even new – we have, in the history of our art, often adjusted the way we have done things to improve performance. Opera corsets give the look of the garment without compromising breathing room and comfort, dance and ballet costumes use alternate materials to maximize flexibility and breathability, and theatre costumes are adjusted so that they can be quickly and easily removed or put on for the purpose of quick changes. Making similar changes to costumes to suit the sensory needs of an actor is simply the next step in our ever-evolving art form.

Ultimately, implementing the vast majority of these accommodations comes down to two things: money and time. If our communities and society do not culturally and financially support the arts, none of this is possible. Many studios and designers would love to offer these things or provide better costumes, but must throw things together because there simply aren't enough resources to go around. Implementing lasting change along with inclusivity will be difficult to accomplish without adequate funding and resources. It is expensive and time-consuming, but so worth it. We have a lot to gain by supporting the arts and the artists within it.

Appendix A: Survey Questions

Age?

Do you identify as neurodivergent?

In the context of this study, the term "neurodivergent" refers to individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD).

You do not need to be formally diagnosed to answer "yes."

Which condition(s) do you identify with? Select all that apply.

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD)
- Unsure
- No formal diagnosis
- Other

Have you performed in a costumed theatrical production, and/or identify as a theatrical performer?

Gender?

- Male
- Female

- Non-binary / third gender
- Prefer not to say

Do you experience sensory processing differences?

Sensory processing differences are defined here as an over- or under-reactivity to sensory stimuli like lights, sights, sounds, textures, movement, etc. Certain stimuli can provoke a strong reaction in an individual. Common triggers might include bright lights, noisy environments, or certain textures like scratchy fabrics, but can vary widely from person to person.

How do you define the physical or emotional reaction you have when you encounter a sensory trigger?

Sensory triggers are defined here as a sight, sound, smell, taste, or sensation that causes a negative emotional or physical reaction in an individual. For example, "when I wear tight clothing, I feel like I can't breathe and start to panic."

Reminder: You may leave any question blank if you are unsure or don't want to answer.

Does putting on or wearing everyday clothing cause you discomfort?

- Never
- Rarely
- I'm not sure
- Sometimes
- Always

Do you encounter sensory discomfort when being costumed for a performance?

- Never
- Rarely
- I'm not sure
- Sometimes
- Always

Which of the following have caused sensory discomfort for you in a theatrical costume? Select all that apply.

- Tags
- Material (Itchy, rough, etc.)
- Fit (Tight, loose, just wrong, etc.)
- Seams (Rough, too noticeable, thick, etc.)
- Restricted movement (Can't raise arms, spread legs, etc.)
- Other (*fillable*)
- None of the above

Please rate your answers from least to most uncomfortable, with 1 being the highest discomfort.

Please rate the comfort level you experience when you wear clothes that involve each feature listed below.

Scale: Extremely uncomfortable | Somewhat uncomfortable | Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable | Somewhat comfortable | Extremely comfortable

Sight

- Bright colors
- High-contrast patterns (ex. black and white stripes)

Sound

- Fabric noise (ex. windbreaker material, crinkling, swishing)

Texture

- Itchy fabric (ex. cheap lace, wool)
- Rough fabric (ex. upholstery, burlap)
- Smooth fabric (ex. satin, athletic material)

Touch

- Physical touch during fittings
- Seams
- Thick fabric
- Thin fabric
- Tags in clothing
- Headwear (ex. hats, mask)

Pressure

- Tight clothing
- Loose clothing
- Uneven pressure (at waist, wrists, etc.)
- Elastic (at waist, wrists, etc.)

Miscellaneous

- Restrictive (ex. can't raise arms, move legs all the way)

- Exposed skin
- Multiple layers (ex. long-sleeve shirt under jacket)
- Other (*option here to write in an answer*)

Please rate the degree to which you feel an uncomfortable costume would negatively influence your performance.

- None at all
- A little
- A moderate amount
- A lot
- A great deal

Have you communicated concerns about your costume to a costumer or costume studio before?

Did they accommodate your request? How? If not, why?

Are there any accommodations you'd like to see offered in theatrical costuming?

Examples: an option on the initial measurement form to indicate additional sensory needs, greater communication with the costumers, reduced/increased fittings, option to use own undergarments, more/different undergarments, etc.

Is there anything else you'd like to mention?

Appendix B: Short Answer Survey Responses

How do you define the physical or emotional reaction you have when you encounter a sensory trigger?

- “I tend to either disassociate or start panicking to the point of having a panic attack or I just feel nauseous”
- “I feel like I can’t breathe and my throat starts to get dry”
- “Specific tactile stimuli cannot be ignored. Fingernails on netting, denim, canvas, or similar fabrics create a full body shudder that is sometimes powerful enough to cause gagging.”
- “When there’s a texture I don’t like I physically recoil back and sometimes gag”
- “Overwhelm, get tired much easier/faster”
- “I feel intensely uncomfortable when exposed to certain stimuli. For example, if I’m wearing clothing that touches my neck I feel like I’m choking. When there are sounds that are too loud I want to clamp my hands over my ears because it feels like my brain is going to explode.”
- “It depends on the stimulation. For me, related to fabrics and costumes, if it is scratchy or rough I can feel uncomfortable/distracted by that sensation for as long as I am wearing it. Basically, a certain portion of my mental energy is continually going to regulating my discomfort from that sensation while I’m also trying to focus on blocking, emoting, etc.”
- “When in particularly loud, bright, and/or crowded environments, I can get overstimulated quickly. Feeling certain textures and hearing particular sounds also makes me very uncomfortable.”

- “For me it’s very mild, to the point where I assumed it was normal that certain things felt or looked so vibrant. I have generally learned to just be ok with the discomfort because adults around me didn’t understand that what I was feeling was really disconcerting”
- “I have difficulty focusing and shut down”
- “Noises are loud and some scenic equipment is dangerous”
- “certain sounds make me angry and want to throw up, certain textures make me feel like i can’t breathe or like i want to throw up”
- “It’s a bit like a million angry bees inside my skin. Nerve pain, emotional distress, and brain fog take over when I’m overstimulated in any way. Though, sometimes I get emotional and feel mood swings during times of overstimulation.”
- “So for me it's a combo. I'm actually allergic to fragrance and died laundry detergent so sometimes I don't know if it's the actual fabric or if it's what they've cleaned it in. Scents give me headaches. When I'm overheated I start to hyperventilate. When things don't/aren't fit/fitted properly it drives me to distraction. Tech week is challenging enough and then you add costumes.”
- “if I wear clothing that I can feel the tag or seams in, it is all I am able to focus on.”
- “When I realized I am more anxious while wearing a piece of clothing than when not wearing it.”
- “If I’m wearing scratchy fabric, things with patches, or costumes where you can feel the seams; I will have panic attacks and sometimes I will even try to scratch my skin off after I take it off.”
- “Tight clothing makes me anxious, certain textures like scratchy wool or flannel make me feel overwhelmed and irritable like I have an itchy rash”

- “when i have an adverse sensory experience, my body tenses up and i have a tendency to either go nonverbal or let out an involuntary noise”
- “My heart rate rises and tension manifests in my abdomen and shoulders. Tight fitting costumes and scratchy fabrics such as lace, mesh, and sequins are some of my worst triggers. I become visibly uncomfortable and it feels like I can’t focus on anything else but my overstimulation.”
- “It just makes me shiver like a gross texture will make my skin crawl”
- “Certain textures make my whole body feel disgusting and full of pins and needles. For me, those textures can be hard to determine by sight alone and depends a lot on the blend of the fabric.”
- “Nothing super specific and consistent but I do get anxious in certain fabrics and I can’t keep wearing it without doing specific actions!”
- “When I hear loud/repetitive noises I become very angry/irritable and shut down”
- “If I become overstimulated I first become irritable, if it continues my heart rate rises, I have to focus on keeping my breath even, and I feel twitchy.”
- “When a sudden loud noise, I feel scared and startle. The sound is painful to my ears. In theater, this happens with mic feedback and microphones that are turned up too loudly as well as music player very loudly.”
- “When I wear specific types of material and can feel/hear them move against each other or my skin I skin. Sometimes if I’m really overwhelmed by that or other combinations of stimuli, I’ll shudder”

- “When i wear tight clothes i feel like im trapped and when i hear loud noises i feel my anxiety start to increase and my vision gets blurred. I also get very agitated when im overstimulated”
- “I get nauseous when exposed to bright light.”
- “I have the hyper focus kind of adhd and have VERY sensitive skin. So if make up or costumes are irritating me it’s all I can think about and can cause a lot of frustration and anxiety”
- “there are certain textures of fabric that I absolutely cannot touch, for example suede, if i even barely touch suade it sends shivers down my entire body and i feel dirty until i bathe or forget that i touched it.”

Write-ins for “Other” option: Which of the following have caused sensory discomfort for you in a theatrical costume?

- “Any kind of heavy fabric that gets unavoidably caught on nails when dressing or while performing.”
- “If costume is dusty (sometimes the case when stored in warehouse or thrifted) it can cause significant allergy issues for me — that’s probably been the worst costume situation I’ve experienced. Eyes watering, difficulty breathing, etc. As HSP can have high sensitivity to detergents, dust, scents, etc.”
- “When there’s like boning and there’s no cushion between yourself and the structure”
- “Thickness of material, not breathe-able causing a sweaty and heavy feeling”

Did they accommodate your request? How? If not, why?

- “Yes, but it took them a while and a few reminders”
- “Yes and no! For shoes I got help”
- “Yes. Altered fit, changed trim, once even switched costumes”
- “When I was still in school the costumer responded negatively, but was also still a student. When my tag would be out when in college they would ALWAYS tuck it back in and would never cut it when I asked multiple times. We also had sewn in name tags that were THE WORST.”
- “It depends. Some costumers are better than others. Some are very kind and accommodating. Most recently when they did not, it was because we didn't have time for adjustments and actors had to make do.”
- “It depends on the production and situation. Some have been very accommodating and responsive. Some have been dismissive (for various reasons from not caring to just being too busy or stressed)”
- “I was assigned to wear a very tight hat that over time would hurt my head. I ended up wearing it in the show, but only for a short time.”
- “Yes somewhat, but the nature of the costume has always been that it would be a little uncomfortable unless the entire design would be changed”
- “in professional settings, yes, in highschool they did not”
- “At that point I didn't know I had ADHD and I think I came off as bratty and rude. They did their best but with a grudge. I still don't know how to tell people in a general I know these are my weaknesses but I'm working on them and it's just who I am but I also have

these amazing strengths. It's hard to know how to communicate these things without offending someone or making them feel like they're incompetent at their job. “

- “They did not accommodate. They were not really aware of the challenges nor did they care to understand. When asking if I could wear a slip under my dress so it wasn’t as itchy it was denied.”
- “They were awesome and we worked together to find a solution.”
- “Budget reasons”
- “i told them that i needed insoles for my boots since they had very hard soles. they couldn’t give me any since they didn’t know my requirements but they told me i was allowed to bring my own and put them into the boots”
- “I had an off the shoulder dress that was slightly too large for me that wouldn’t stay up while dancing. We added an elastic belt overtop the dress and it felt much more comfortable and secure.”
- “They listened and altered”
- “No because they didn’t want to or they said it looked fine.”
- “Yes, changed the costume/found a time for me to change out of it”
- “Not always. Sometimes they deem it as insignificant enough that I can just “deal with it” if it doesn’t keep me from being able do perform”
- “They were accommodated.”
- “Yes after I brought it to attention on like allergies but otherwise I try to communicate from the beginning about my needs. I wish I didn’t have to all the time though”

Are there any accommodations you'd like to see offered in theatrical costuming?

- "I think the suggestion about a note on the measurement form could be extremely helpful"
- "Assistance with shoes that are comfortable and keep me safe. If I bring up a potential safety issue, I would like it to be addressed. I had no holder for my sword in a production. They told me to put it in my belt and I mentioned it was loose. In the middle of a run, the sword stabbed me in the foot. Listen to the actor when they say they feel unsafe."
- "Early decisions on undergarments so fitting are done with the appropriate garments, not guesstimated and then fitting wonky."
- "I think a general education and awareness about neurodivergency in general would really help. I feel like a lot of the times when you ask for accommodations you are looked down upon or labeled as difficult. The tag thing specifically.... Oh so awful. I remember working with student designers in college was also a lot harder in terms of being listened to when asked for accommodations, so a general education around it would probably help."
- "Using my own undergarments and shoes is very helpful. Also having enough time to make adjustments to costuming would be very helpful."
- "I would love if the costume fitter/designer would ask about and take into consideration the sensory needs of the actors. I'd also like to be asked first before I am touched and to have them tell me where they're going to touch me first."
- "Yes, questions on initial measurement form are a great idea as I think it helps to have these conversations on the front ahead before costume decisions have been made and also because many neurodivergent people communicate more effectively in writing than

verbally. Having some categories to spur thought may be helpful as you mentioned while assessing for preferences/needs like, quality of fabric, smooth or rough, tags, types of shoes (this is big one for me!), scents from detergents, undergarments, restricted movement, etc... perhaps with a likert scale rating system to the side of page to rate level of discomfort 1-5 for each domain. And of course leaving space for writing in “other” as every neurodivergent person has unique needs.”

- “I have yet to be told I have to wear certain undergarments. I would rather die.”
- “An option on initial measurement to assert good and bad materials, preferred tightness or looseness, allowance for honesty about discomfort”
- “Ask people what they are comfortable wearing”
- “that example would be perfect”
- “I would love the option to use my own undergarments and communicate sensory needs to the costuming department and director.”
- “Do you prefer more form fitted or looser clothing? Are you okay with clothing touching your neck? (I'm not, it makes me feel claustrophobic) Would you like us to remove tags from your costume if possible? Would you prefer extra fittings to make sure you are comfortable in your costumes, if time allows?”
- “Better communication on fabric choices/if there’s any sensory challenges that we need to work around. Ability to do measurement form in private”
- “If there was like a place on the costume sheet/audition form that said like fabrics/ things to stay away from or special requests so it doesn’t feel like it’s only for neurodivergent individuals”

- “A way to indicate additional sensory needs, increased fittings, option to change undergarments to sensory needs, or additional time in costume before performances to adjust to fit/fabric”
- “i think an addition on the measurement to indicate sensory needs would be a wonderful addition, even if it won’t always apply to me!”
- “A place to list sensitivity to fabrics on measurement sheets and definitely yes to the option to use personal undergarments and additional undergarments. Ability to try on costume and test any movement restrictions before costumes are finalized/not enough time to correct.”
- “All of the above examples. I’ve been in many many shows with lots of wonderful costumers that I haven’t felt comfortable or known how to discuss sensory issues in a way that wouldn’t inhibit the way they do their job.”
- “I’m not sure.”
- “Option to indicate needs”
- “Taking a more serious care of scent overstimulation. Washing with unscented soaps and sprays. I often request to have a corset because it keeps me grounded and calm on stage. Also being aware of the shoes I will wear as it can affect my sensory input of a scene”
- “an initial measurement form to indicate sensory needs and greater communication with the costumers”
- “A way to communicate sensory needs would be nice to see on measurement forms.”
- “My company always asks on the costume form for any physical or mental needs for costuming, offers sessions where someone takes your measurements or you take your own, and asks about allergies and needs so that the actor only has to say it once. I wish all

did this because I've never had a theater ask my allergies or physical needs when costuming."

Is there anything else you'd like to mention?

- "Personally really enjoy wearing corsets and back supporting garments. The pressure is comforting, but top garments are not the same, there has to be structure beneath"
- "Thanks for doing this study! It is encouraging to see groups work to become more inclusive to folks with diverse sensory needs!"
- "It's not as much of a problem for me as other people, but it definitely can contribute to being overstimulated especially when it is already loud and there are bright lights/people talking/etc."
- "I became a costumer because of my experiences as a neurodivergent actor suffering like this. I would love to see more designs with lining and more accessible closures, because I know it can be done."
- "Many costumers now ask if you're allergic to any detergents or softeners, but I wish more did."
- "most of my sensory issues in the theatre come less from the costuming and more from the sound, lights, and set"
- "I have physical restrictions due to chronic health issues that mean I can't wear tight clothes on my waist. I wish the physical AND mental were asked about and accommodated for"

Appendix C: Historical Costuming Inspiration Images and Design Sketches



Fig. 1 Blue cotton walking suit (created in 2003)



Fig. 2 Sketch of woman in 1890s dress



Fig. 3 Original production of *The Importance of Being Earnest*



Fig. 4 Tea gown



Fig. 5 1893 dress



Fig. 6 Theatre TCU's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Lady Bracknell)

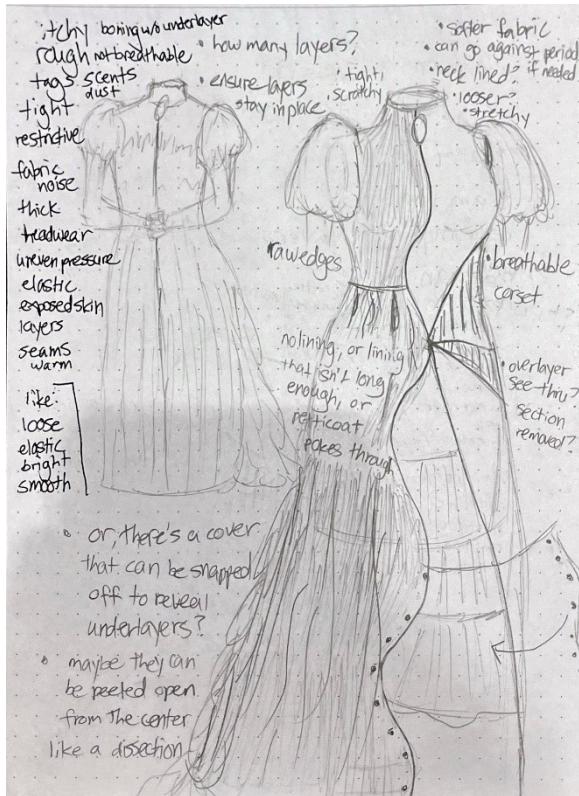


Fig. 7 Initial design sketch

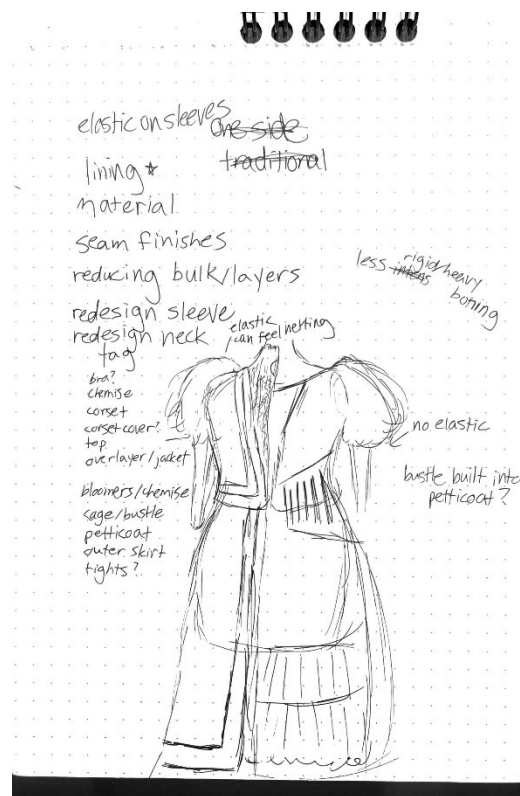


Fig. 8 Revised design sketch

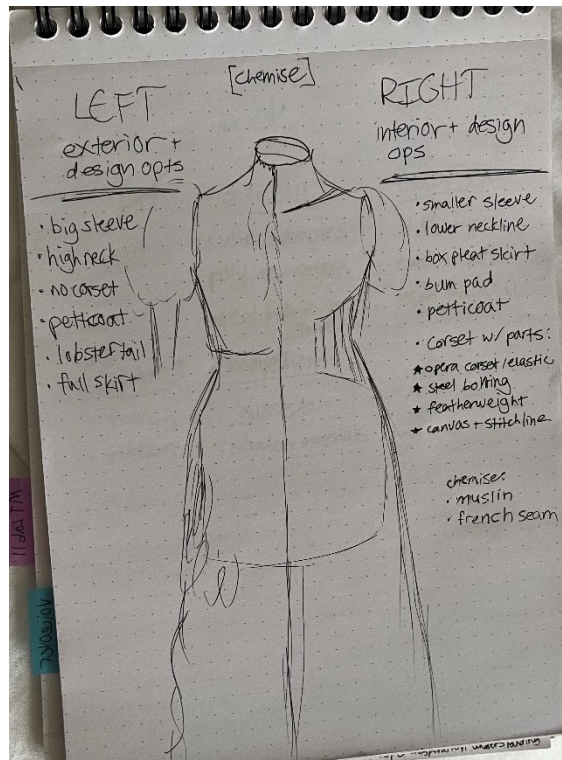


Fig. 9 Final design sketch

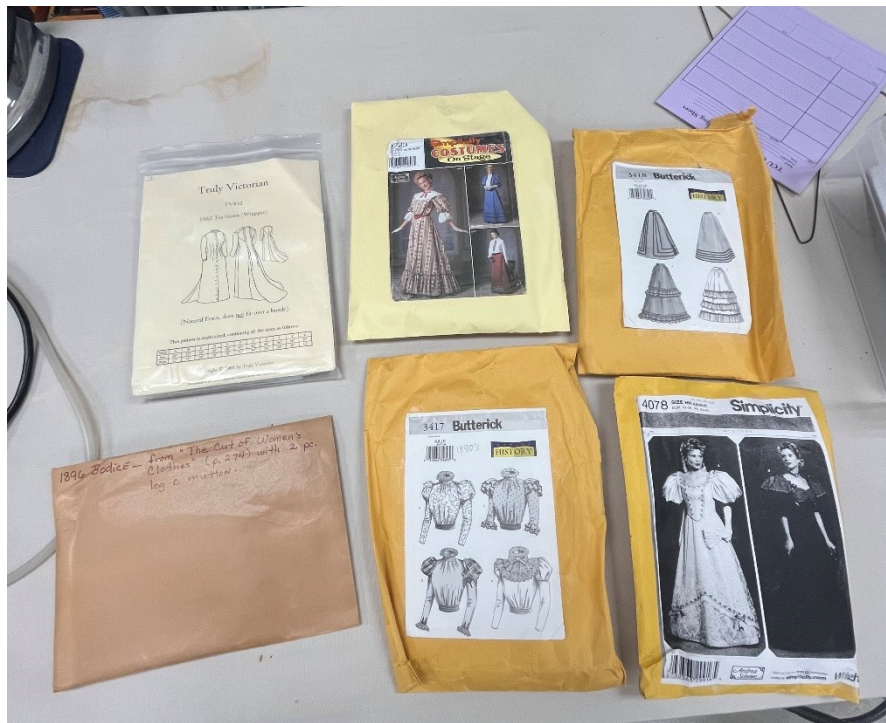


Fig. 10 Patterns used, both for inspiration and construction

Appendix D: Images of Construction and Final Product

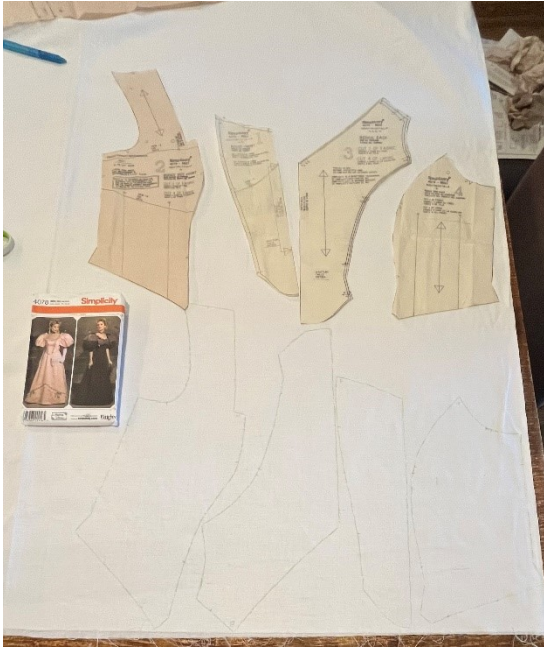


Fig. 1 Tracing and cutting pattern pieces

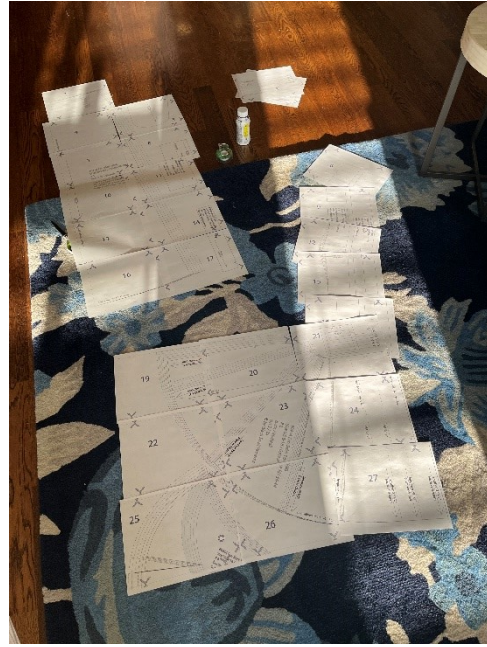


Fig. 2 Assembling pdf patterns



Fig. 3 Front of Honors Day version



Fig. 4 Back of Honors Day version



Fig. 5 Chemise



Fig. 6 Chemise left side neckline



Fig. 7 Chemise right side neckline exterior



Fig. 8 Chemise right side neckline interior



Fig. 9 Chemise left side armhole detail



Fig. 10 Chemise left side pinked plain seam



Fig. 11 Chemise right side French seam



Fig. 12 Full lobster tail bustle and petticoat



Fig. 13 Split bum roll and lobster tail bustle



Fig. 14 Cartridge pleats on left side early bustle skirt



Fig. 15 Corset piece with boning options

(Left to right: featherweight plastic "zip tie," steel spiral, flat spring steel, empty featherweight casing)



Fig. 16 Final costume front



Fig. 17 Final costume back

Appendix E: Sample Measurement Form

TCU Costume Studio Measurement Sheet

NAME: _____ **PHONE:** _____

PRODUCTION: _____ **DATE:** _____

ROLE: _____ **TAKEN BY:** _____

HEAD		BACK		GENERAL	
Head Circumference		Shoulders Point to Point		Height	
Mid-Neck		Yoke Back		Weight	
Base of Neck		CB Neck to Waist		Shoe	
		Nape to Floor		Tights	

FRONT AND WAIST		ARM		STORE SIZING	
CF Neck to Waist		Side Neck to Shoulder Point		Suit	
Yoke Front		Nape to Shoulder Point		Pants Waist	
Bust Point to Point		Nape to Elbow		Pants Length	
Bust Half Front		Nape to Wrist		Shirt Neck	
Overbust		Shoulder Point to Elbow		Shirt Sleeve	
Chest/Bust		Shoulder Point to Wrist			
Underbust		Underarm to Wrist		Bra	
Waist		Armscye		Dress	
High Hip	@ 3"	Bicep			
Full Hip	@	Elbow			
		Forearm			
		Wrist			

LEG		MISCELLANEOUS	
Outseam to Below Knee		Outseam to Below Knee	
Outseam to Floor		Outseam to Floor	
Inseam to Floor		Inseam to Floor	
Thigh		Thigh	
Under Knee		Under Knee	
Calf		Calf	
Ankle		Ankle	

ALLERGIES? Wool ___ Fur ___ Feathers ___ Dyes ___ Detergent ___ Metals ___ None ___

ANY TATTOOS? IF SO, WHAT AND WHERE? _____

EARS PIERCED? YES ___ NO ___ **LEFT OR RIGHT HANDED?** RIGHT ___ LEFT ___

PRONOUNS? _____ **NOTES:** _____

ANY PHYSICAL / SENSORY NEEDS? _____

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