Northern Ballet

Job Description

Head of Wardrobe

Department: Technical Department

Reports to: Technical Director

Direct Reports:

- Senior Wardrobe Manager (Administration)
- Senior Wardrobe Manager (Wigs, Hair & Make-Up)
- Senior Wardrobe Manager (Making)

The Head of Wardrobe has overall responsibility for all staff within both the Costume and Wigs Making Team and the Touring Wardrobe Team through direct and indirect line management arrangements.

Location: Northern Ballet, Leeds

Contract: Full Time, Permanent

Job Purpose

The Head of Wardrobe is responsible for the strategic leadership, management and delivery of all wardrobe, costume-making, shoes, wigs, hair and makeup activities across Northern Ballet's repertoire, both new and existing productions. As the senior leader of the entire Wardrobe Department, the postholder has responsibility for both the Costume Making Team based at Quarry Hill and the Touring Wardrobe Team who support rehearsals and performances across Northern Ballet's repertoire.

The role ensures that the artistic vision of each production is realised to the highest standards whilst maintaining effective budgetary control, operational efficiency, and safe

working practices. Whilst the role provides oversight and leadership of touring wardrobe operations, it is primarily based in Leeds and does not routinely accompany productions on tour.

A key responsibility is assessing the practical and financial viability of costume, wigs, hair and make-up designs, preparing accurate cost estimates for new productions and revivals, and advising the Technical Director on budget implications and resource requirements.

Key Responsibilities

Leadership and Management

- Lead and manage the entire Wardrobe Department, including the Costume and Wigs Making Team based at Quarry Hill and the Touring Wardrobe Team, ensuring effective communication, consistent standards and collaborative working across all areas of the department.
- Provide strategic and operational leadership for wardrobe services across all Northern Ballet activities, ensuring the effective integration of costume production, wardrobe maintenance, and performance support functions.
- Directly line manage:
    - Senior Wardrobe Manager (Administration)
    - Senior Wigs, Hair & Make-Up Manager
    - Senior Wardrobe Manager (Making)
- Set departmental objectives and performance standards and support the professional development of team members.
- Conduct regular staff appraisals, providing constructive feedback, identifying development needs and agreeing clear objectives in line with organisational policies.
- Ensure effective communication and coordination across all areas of the Department.
- Oversee workforce planning, recruitment, training and succession planning within the Wardrobe Department.
- Promote equality, diversity and inclusion within departmental practices.

Production Planning and Delivery

- Lead the wardrobe planning process for all productions, revivals, tours and special projects.
- Work collaboratively with designers, choreographers, and other departments to realise production requirements.
- Ensure effective coordination between the Costume and Wigs Making Team and Touring Wardrobe Team to support the full lifecycle of productions from initial design and construction through to rehearsal, performance, revival and touring activity.
- Assess, with the Senior Wardrobe and Wigs Managers, the feasibility of costume, wigs and make-up designs, identifying practical challenges, construction requirements and resource implications.
- Manage the relationship between specialist pointe shoe manufacturers and the purchase of custom pointe for dancers at Northern Ballet.
- Develop production schedules and delivery plans to ensure work is completed to agreed deadlines.
- Oversee the delivery of costume construction, fittings, alterations, maintenance and performance support.
- Ensure the highest standards of costume presentation and performer support are maintained.
- Support the Audiences and Communications Department in the delivery of marketing campaign photo shoots and electronic press kits.

Budget Management and Financial Control

- Prepare, manage and monitor wardrobe budgets for new productions, revivals and touring requirements
- Provide detailed and accurate cost estimates based on design concepts, specifications and production requirements.
- Evaluate design proposals and advise on cost-effective solutions whilst maintaining artistic integrity.
- Identify potential budget risks and develop mitigation strategies.
- Advise the Technical Director on the financial implications of design decisions,

material selection, staffing levels and production schedules.

- Produce regular budget forecasts and expenditure reports.
- Ensure all expenditure is effectively managed and remains within approved budgets.

Design Realisation and Technical Assessment

- Review, with the Senior Wardrobe and Wigs Managers, costume, wigs, hair and makeup designs and assess:
    - Practicality for performance
    - Durability and maintenance requirements
    - Construction methods
    - Staffing implications
    - Touring and storage considerations
    - Budgetary impact
- Recommend alternative solutions where designs present operational or financial challenges.
- Collaborate with Designers and Artistic teams to balance artistic ambition with available resources.

Wardrobe Operations

- Maintain oversight of both workshop-based costume production activities and touring wardrobe operations, ensuring consistent standards, procedures and service delivery across both teams.
- Oversee costume stock, shoes, wardrobe assets, wigs and make-up inventories.
- Ensure appropriate systems are in place for asset management, maintenance and storage.
- Develop departmental procedures that support efficient operations.
- Ensure all productions receive appropriate wardrobe support during rehearsal, technical and performance periods.

- Maintain high standards of costume care, conservation and presentation.

Health, Safety and Compliance

- Ensure compliance with all relevant health and safety legislation and Northern Ballet policies.
- Promote safe working practices throughout the department.
- Undertake and review departmental risk assessments as required.
- Ensure the safe use, storage and handling of costumes, fabrics, equipment, wigs, cosmetics and specialist materials.
- Maintain compliance with safeguarding, sustainability and environmental policies.

Strategic Contribution

- Contribute to the wider strategic development of the Technical Department.
- Support organisational planning for future productions, capital investment and resource development.
- Attend Production Meetings and Heads of Department Meetings as required.
- Identify opportunities for operational improvement, innovation and efficiency.
- Maintain awareness of developments in costume production, wardrobe technology and industry best practice.

Person Specification

Essential Knowledge and Experience

- Significant senior-level experience in costume production, wardrobe management or a related performing arts environment.
- Experience leading and managing multiple specialist teams, ideally across distinct operational functions such as costume and wigs production, wardrobe performance support or touring operations.
- Experience managing departments that operate across both permanent and touring environments.

- Proven experience of managing complex production budgets and resources.
- Demonstrable experience of cost estimating and financial planning for theatrical productions.
- Knowledge of costume construction, wardrobe operations, wigs, hair and makeup processes.
- Experience working closely with designers and creative teams to realise artistic concepts.
- Knowledge of health and safety legislation and best practice within a production environment.
- Experience of delivering multiple projects to demanding deadlines.
- Good IT skills, including Microsoft Office or similar software

Essential Skills

- Experience working with repertory companies or maintaining costume stock across multiple productions.
- Knowledge of costume storage, cataloguing, archiving and stock management.
- Experience supporting new commissions, revivals and remounts.
- Understanding of the specific demands of ballet costumes, including freedom of movement, durability and quick changes.
- Experience working with freelance or casual staff teams.
- Knowledge of sustainable costume practices, including reuse, repair, recycling and responsible sourcing.
- Excellent leadership and people management skills.
- Strong budget management and financial analysis capability.
- Ability to assess design feasibility from both practical and financial perspectives.
- Excellent planning, organisational and project management skills.
- Highly developed communication and negotiation skills.
- Strong problem-solving and decision-making ability.

- Ability to balance artistic requirements with operational and financial constraints.
- Proficiency in budget preparation, reporting and forecasting.
- Experience supporting apprentices, students, placements or early-career wardrobe staff.
- Awareness of access, inclusion and body confidence considerations in fittings and wardrobe practice.
- Experience working with costume hire, external makers, suppliers and specialist craftspeople.
- Knowledge of health and safety requirements specific to wardrobe, wigs, hair, make-up and touring environments.
- Experience overseeing or managing wardrobe operations for large-scale touring productions.
- Full UK driving licence.

Personal Attributes

- Collaborative and approachable leadership style.
- Highly organised and detail oriented.
- Commercially aware with strong financial judgement.
- Resilient and adaptable under pressure.
- Committed to excellence, quality and continuous improvement.
- Passionate about supporting the artistic ambitions of Northern Ballet.

Key Working Relationships

Internal

- Technical Director
- Artistic Team
- Designers
- Dancers and Company Members

- Stage, Lx and Workshop teams
- Finance Team
- Audiences and Communication Department
- Development Department.

  External

- Freelance Designers
- Costume and Fabric Suppliers
- Specialist Pointe Shoe Manufacturers
- Specialist Makers
- Wigs, Hair and Makeup Suppliers
- External Production Partners

Decision Making Authority

The Head of Wardrobe is responsible for making operational decisions relating to costume production, touring wardrobe operations, staffing, scheduling, resource allocation and approved departmental budgets across the entire Wardrobe Department, while providing expert advice to the Technical Director on design feasibility, cost implications and strategic resource planning