

Helpful Hints: How to Talk to a Costume Designer

Elevator Pitch:

Whether you're discussing your piece with the producers of the show, designers, or even just trying to convince your friends to come see your work it's so important to have an elevator pitch! I'm sure you've all heard the term before, but imagine you're trapped in an elevator with this person and you only have till the ride is over to convince them that your piece is the best one. Be concise. Whittle your description down to roughly 1 minute, keeping only the key points of what inspired you to create this dance and why it is important for people to see.

Yes, I'm hired to design your work but imagine if I wasn't and you had to convince me that I absolutely had to costume your dance.

WHY:

Try to always have a "why" to back up your reasoning for each aspect of your dance. Why that music, why that move there, why that color light, and in my case, why that color, fabric, style etc. Not only does it help me further understand your piece and motivation but it also gives me a great jumping off point when delving into my research for the costumes. You might even realize you have justification for things you didn't even realize.

Research:

One thing to know about costume designers is we're extremely visual people! (Shocker, I know) That being said, any kind of imagery you can bring to an initial design meeting is SO HELPFUL. It can be a piece of art that embodies the style or color palette you want for your piece, it could be a leaf you found outside, an article of clothing you own, literally anything! One of my all-time favorite examples is when a dancer at another school I work for brought in a cut piece of a Wawa bag because it was the exact color she wanted her dancers in. Get creative! Nothing is stupid, I promise. Anything that connects you to your piece, or demonstrates what you want to convey to the audience visually is fair game.

Aim High:

In a perfect world I would love to design the million dollar, perfect, beautiful costumes that we would all love for you to wear but alas sometimes I fall just a bit short. Sometimes within the constrictions of timeline, man-power, budget, etc. you just don't get the dream costumes. That being said, it's my job to get as close to the original idea as possible so always think big and we can water it down afterwards. Just because we're limited to the constraints doesn't mean starting with an unrealistic goal is off the table. Aim high, and trust that a professional designer knows what they're doing.

Trust the Process:

Please, please, please, be open to a designer's input. I know you might be dead set on an idea but there's a chance that it might not work on stage as well as you think. Trust that designers know what they're doing based on their past experiences. I can't speak for others, but I know I personally try to honor original ideas and wishes as much as possible when I can. Remember, we as professionals are here to take your work to the next level. :)