Developing Collaborative Approaches to Preventive and Interventive Conservation in the Collecting and Care of Costumes at Scottish Opera.

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Abstract

Key words: theatre costume, collaboration, object biography, performance, value, function, studio asset, heritage.

The central issue regarding conservation of theatre and opera costume is the conflict of interests between theatre practise which tends to focus on future productions and commercial pressures and the aims of conservators, who want to preserve the material culture of past productions as evidence of what the theatre has produced. Using the costume department at Scottish Opera as an example, this research aimed to challenge the tension between theatre's commercial pressures for the future and conservators looking at the past. The research examines the tension between costume as a studio asset versus pieces of institutional heritage. The result of this research is an exploration of conservation strategies that can be inserted into the running of the opera company whilst minimising the implications on theatre practice. The focus is to broaden understanding of preservation of textiles and in turn consider how this transmits to the conservation of performance pieces, widening the methods of decision-making for conservators. It proved that costume still in use is heritage and that its function as tool in creating art gives it the status of art in its own right.

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Introduction

The central contention in the conservation of performance costume is that studio practise has tended to focus on future productions and the running of a company as a business. This works in the opposite direction to conservators, who want to preserve the past productions and keep them as evidence of what the company has produced. I have chosen to work with Scottish Opera since the Head of Costume, John Liddell is starting to consider the impact of his work at Scottish Opera and his "legacy"[1]. Many famous actors and designers have worked at Scottish Opera during their careers and have left a legacy for the institution through performance and artistic talent. I want to challenge the attitude of the opera company and consider ways in which conservation practice can be absorbed into the day-to-day running of the wardrobe. Conversely, I want to broaden the conservator's knowledge of the use of these costumes to aid an understanding of how to identify their value and role when considering conservation treatments.

Due to the original nature of my research, there is limited information about the conservation of opera costume specifically. Consequently I will also need to consider conservation of costume for film, ballet and theatre. It is therefore worth acknowledging some of the differences in film, theatre and dance costume. One if the greatest differences in the condition of dance costume, is the way in which choregraphy is reflected in extensive wear of the costume. In the *Preserving Iconic Theatre Costume* symposium, Jane Pritchard for the V&A said that they had fewer dance costumes in their collection since dance costume is often overworn and the use is so aggressive.[2] They have similarities to theatre costume in as much as they are viewed from a distance and would be created in similar studios with similar time restraints. Film costume on the other hand, is much more detailed and is often given more time with greater numbers of people working on them. However, the overruling similarity for all costume, which makes them comparable for this research, is that they are still presented in a performance context and all still demonstrate the issues of value, function and significance, as well as having design concepts connected to them and undergoing alterations, repairs and storage. Throughout this research, I will be considering the

[1] John Liddell, interview by Cecilia Voss, Scottish Opera Production Studios, 19th May 2015.
[2] Jane Pritchard, "Preserving Iconic Theatre Costume," (symposium at the University of Notre Dame, London, 1st April 2015)

theatre costume produced at Scottish Opera, although much of the research is also relevant to other performance pieces.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this dissertation is not to fundamentally change the attitude of theatre or conservator but to make aware the differing perspectives of two industries that work with costumes. It will act to question what value and significance costume holds and therefore at which point they become heritage pieces, if indeed they do.

In order to do this my study will be divided into four chapters:

Chapter One will examine existing research and literature from which my own research progresses. I will look at a research project at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), entitled *Encounters in the Archive* in 2012, about the embodiment of performance in costume focussing on reactions to performance pieces when taken out of the performance setting. I will also examine the recent *Hollywood* exhibition also at the V&A. In contrast I will review the *Preserving Iconic Theatre Costume* symposium in April 2015, where several theatre companies came to discuss the options in collecting and preserving theatre costume. Finally, I consider conservation ethics in determining treatments in relation to value, significance and role.

Chapter two will discuss why theatre costume needs to be conserved, arguing that costumes are heritage pieces. I will aim to understand the value and significance of theatre costume from a theatre and heritage perspectives and discuss at what point costume transitions from tool to heritage piece. The information about theatre will mostly come from an interview conducted with John Liddell at Scottish Opera. Information about conservation will be obtained from resources on conservation ethics and frameworks.

Chapter three will be of greatest relevance to practitioners at Scottish Opera. I will look at the potential and practicalities for conservation at Scottish Opera It will first be necessary to define the remits of conservation in order to understand the breadth or otherwise of conservation. This will look at existing definitions of conservation and analyse and the relevance to theatre practice. I will then compare the aims and objectives of conservation treatments to those of theatre practitioners, developing on

the definitions of conservation. I will also briefly describe the chemical, physical and ethical considerations in conservation treatments. The aim of this chapter will be to broaden theatre practitioner's understanding of textiles.

The fourth and final chapter will be a culmination of this research and its implications for conservators. It will begin by analysing ways in which theatre costume is currently conserved using case studies and consider how my research might change the way treatments are approached. It will conclude by summing up how this thinking fits in with the ethical discussions in the proceeding chapters, including topics such as object biography, value and performance embodiment.

Interview with Scottish Opera

The main resource on theatre practice is from an interview conducted with Scottish Opera. Based in Glasgow, it is Scotland's largest opera and performing arts company and takes seriously its reputation as Scotland's National opera company. Founded in 1962 it has grown across Scotland with the commitment of bringing opera to as wide an audience as possible.[3] The company owns the Theatre Royal in Glasgow and has a production studio built in 1997 in Edington Street, just north of the city centre.

Each year, Scottish Opera puts on at least five main stage productions in Glasgow and takes smaller scale productions across the country to a wide range of communities and venues in the interest of widening participation. There is an education team which works to inspire people through opera and broaden knowledge and understanding through work with educational institutions and community outreach. It also works with emerging artists in all areas of its work. Funding for such projects and the running of the company comes in part from public and private funding and from box office sales.[4] It is supported by the Scottish government.

In an interview conducted in May 2015 (appendix 1) Liddell described the way the wardrobe is run and the making and use of the costumes he produces. He described the process from the making of costume including their revivals to the storage of costumes and the decision-making in disposing of costumes at the end of their lives. He then went

[3] "About us," Scottish Opera, https://www.scottishopera.org.uk/about-us (accessed March 2015).
[4] Ibid.

on to elaborate on their collecting policy or lack thereof and his own personal knowledge and opinion of conservation practice and its utility at Scottish Opera. As part of this interview two particular costumes were examined, one of a piece still in use and one that had been put on display as a costume of particular significance.

In the making of costume, Liddell set out how the costumes are made using the best quality materials, carefully picked out by designers. Costumes in use for the main stage productions and for 'live shows' (shows that may be revived in the foreseeable future) are kept in covered racks specific to the performances in the basement of their building in the city centre. They keep 'bibles' alongside these productions with a record of all the elements that make up a costume. Shows are decided to be 'dead' when the company choose they no longer want to revive them. Liddell points out that this is often a decision based on the condition of the set although audience reception of the production plays a discerning factor. At this point costumes are assessed on their condition for re-use and either absorbed into the day-to-day costume store or sent to charities and amateur drama groups. Bibles are often disposed of when the production is dead and no other records are kept. There is no catalogue of costumes in the store and no pictorial evidence of the original costume concept. The script and original designs are rarely, if ever, kept.[5]

In addition to the interview, two condition assessments were carried out, one of a dress still in use and one of a dress on display. The dress in use is from Eugene Onegin designed by Deidre Clancy, worn in 1979, 1980, 1981. It is a high waisted dress, replicating fashions of around 1830 of purple shot silk with a silk chiffon overlay. It is kept in their day-to-day store but was being prepared for lending to an amateur dramatics society. On display in the Liddell's office was a dress designed by Philip Prowse worn by the Lady of the Night in The Magic Flute performed in 1983. It is a late 18th Century replica dress made of blue devoret chenille velvet over gold and dark blue brocade. Full condition reports can be found in the appendix. The purpose of having these assessments is to focus the theoretical discussion of the interview in an object-based framework.

Throughout the course of this dissertation, the content of the interview will be expanded upon and used as primary evidence. However it is worth bearing in mind the limitations of interviews as a form of oral history. Rebecca Quinton describes this as "the

[5] Liddell.

process of collecting a personal testimony delivered in oral form."[6] It enables the author to access information that may not be published in formal sources. It would also mean information that was not considered relevant to or reproducible in any published literature could be obtained including intonation and interaction.

The greatest limitation of the interview process is the skill of the interviewer since the questions asked and the manner of asking the questions can greatly impact upon the quality of the answers.[7] This can be regulated by extensive preparation but this bias should always be recognised as a limitation of the technique. Moreover the interpretation of the results is marked by subjectivity, both during the interview and after. The interview itself can be infringed upon by the situation and will never be a true account of practice as the interviewee is likely to be led by the interaction with the interviewer. This generates some ethical implications of the interview process, as interviewers may be swayed by the situation to give information that they might not otherwise have given. This will again depend on the skill of the interviewer to obtain the most unbiased information. While, in the case of this research, the interviewer and interpreter are the same person and therefore misunderstandings about the information sought can be minimised, it is worth remembering that the closeness to the material may result in biases, which will need to be mitigated.

The majority of interpretation of the interview material will therefore be very superficial, taking the information given at face value. However, extensive analysis and criticism will be carried out on the published material and the way this fits with the information obtained during the interview.

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[6] Rebecca Quinton, "Oral History and Artist Interviews," (lecture, University of Glasgow, 21st November 2013).
[7] Stanley Payne, *The Art of Asking Questions*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

Chapter 1:
The Current Situation: Theatre Costume and Conservation Literature and Research

While the conservation and making of costumes is clearly divided by differing priorities and attitudes to these performance pieces, it can also be argued that there is significant overlap in the position these costumes hold in cultural heritage. Literature about theatre costume and its heritage appears to divide roughly into three sections: first, is function of costumes within the theatre context, their role on stage and purpose as part of the production; second is the role of museums and heritage institutions in preserving costumes no longer in the performance context and the ways in which their value is framed in archival contexts; and finally the developing practise of theatre institutions to begin a process of collecting and the consideration of items of costume as institutional heritage.

The majority of this chapter will consider the collecting of costume since, although there is extensive published literature about the function of costume in productions, it is not the main focus of this study, but is important in understanding costume from the theatre perspective. I will review the preservation of costume in a heritage context, discussing the *Encounters in the Archive* project at the V&A and the *Hollywood* exhibition and collecting in a theatre context, using the *Preserving Iconic Theatre Costume* symposium as well as other associated literature. The final section will also consider conservation ethics about role and function of costume and other contexts where conservation is carried out on objects which are still in use.

The Function of Costumes within the Theatre Context

The majority of scholarship on costume looks at how costume functions as a symbolic representation of character on the stage. Scholars such as Hollander and Aston[8] would argue that costume holds semiotic motifs that correspond to motifs held in the memory of the audience. The audience take on the crucial function as receiver of the semiotics,

[8] Elaine Aston, *Theatre as Sign System: A Semiotics of Text and Performance,* (London: Routledge, 1991); Anne Hollander, *Seeing through Clothes,* (New York: The Viking Press, 1978).

not as a single entity but as a culturally defined entity. Hollander in particular highlights the ways in which the semiotic function of costume leads to pieces becoming iconic.[9]

There is in addition to this theoretical approach to costume, some practical literature. In *Costumes and Chemistry*, Sylvia Moss uniquely considers some of the more unusual materials used to create theatre costume.[10] While this book is aimed at the practitioner as a guide to how to create costume and the methods of using these materials it also presents some of the chemical compositions of materials which provide useful clues for the conservator. Interestingly many of the same materials are used in conservation and theatre such as mylar/melinex® and fosshape™.

Preserving Costumes in Museums and Heritage Institutions

Developing from Aston and Hollander's account of the meaning of costume on stage is a project undertaken at the V&A in 2012, entitled *Encounters in the Archive*, which focussed on reactions to performance pieces when taken out of the performance setting.[11] In this project, six costume designers and researchers were invited into the V&A's Theatre and Performance Archives and shown an iconic piece of theatre costume. Their reactions to the pieces in the archives were filmed to explore the extent to which the performance could be reflected through the costume. The purpose of this research was to present an object based methodology for costume research but also to highlight the role of conservators and archivists in the life of the costumes after performance.[12]

As a result of the *Encounters in the Archive* project, Donatella Barbieri, a research fellow at the V&A, wrote an article focusing on one of the pieces found in the V&A archives, the clown costume of Charlie Keith. In this she focussed on the historical and social context of the costume when still used in comparison to its position in the archive. This article focussed on the key issues raised in the Encounters project and the way in which performance and social context is embodied in the costume in the archive.[13] It highlighted the need for additional information of the performance context in order for the holistic understanding of the piece and begins to acknowledge the methodology of

[9] Hollander, 305
[10] Sylvie Moss, *Costumes & Chemistry: A Comprehensive Guide to Materials and Applications* (New York: Costume & Fashion Press, 2001).
[11] "Introduction," Encounters in the Archive, http://www.encountersinthearchive.com/introduction/ (accessed January 2015).
[12] "Research," Encounters in the Archive, http://www.encountersinthearchive.com/research/ (accessed January 2015).
[13] Ibid.

material culture, that physical evidence of culture is held in objects they have or make, and is fundamental in assigning value to heritage pieces. Critically, Barbieri looks beyond what she names as the "limitations of semiotics"[14] and begins to consider costume as something with movement and body and a performance context.

Recently, especially with exhibitions such as *Hollywood* at the V&A in 2012, there is an increasing awareness of the performative "value" of these costumes as representations of the production. This is the idea that an inanimate object contains within its physical state, an embodiment of the whole intangible theatre experience, the actor and the performance. I will refer to these properties collectively as the performance context.

The *Hollywood* exhibition gave the public the opportunity to see costumes which had been held in private collections or in studio archives. The display was set to demonstrate the ''central role costume design plays in cinema storytelling''[15] by presenting the costumes as much as possible within a film-setting. This was achieved through film footage and dialogue about characterisation. The purpose of the emphasis on character was to demonstrate the manner in which character stays embodied in the costume through our cultural associations.

Debroah Nadoolman Landis, the Senior Guest Curator of the exhibition and editor of the catalogue, describes costume as ''part of our shared global mythology''.[16] She explains that costume has ben assumed into the audiences' subconscious in such a way that character becomes embodied in the piece. This is exactly the same argument Barbieri sought to explore, except *Encounters in the Archive* looked from the archive/heritage point of view and the *Hollywood Exhibition* focussed on the context, in this case film. This overlap shows the extent of overlap in the objectives of theatre and heritage practitioners: that costume represents more than a tangible object. This concept will be discussed in more depth later. The key dilemma in the collection of these pieces, as presented by these projects, is that context is dependent on the visual reception of the

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[14] Donatella Barbieri, "Encounters in the Archive: Reflections on costume," V&A Online Journal 4 (2012), http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/research-journal/issue-no.-4-summer-2012/encounters-in-the-archive-reflections-on-costume/.
[15] "Hollywood Costume," V&A, http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/exhibitions/exhibition-hollywood-costume/ (accessed March 2015).
[16] Deborah Nadoolman Landis, " Setting the Scene: A Short History of Hollywood Costume Design 1912-2012," in *Hollywood Costume*, ed. Deborah Nadoolman Landis, 42 (London: V&A Publishing, 2012).

audience as Aston and Hollander point out, without that level of subconscious embodiment, the costumes become meaningless.

Another example of where these objectives overlap is the work done on the conservation and replication of Scarlett O'Hara's green-velvet curtain dress in the 1939 film *Gone with the Wind.* In the article by Jill Morena, she describes the project undertaken by the Harry Ransom Centre at the University of Texas between 2010 and 2014. She explicates the process of conservation and how the revelation of degradation or alterations impacted upon the decisions in the creation of a replica for display.[17] The decision was made early on in the process that the original was too weak for display so replicas were created which were designed to best represent the "authenticity"[18] of the original. Although not directly about theatre costume, it demonstrates how considerations about role and value can impact upon conservation decisions and so shall be re-addressed in the final chapter.

Collecting in Theatre Institutions

As the *Hollywood* exhibition establishes, the dilemma of a collector is that once the costume is no longer in use as a performance piece, it no longer has the same significance. This was the main topic of discussion at the symposium, entitled *Preserving Iconic Theatre Costume* in April 2015 in London, where representatives from several theatre companies came to discuss the options in collecting and preserving theatre costume.

There is a move for theatrical institutions to collect comprehensive reflections of their institutional heritage. The Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) is one such institution, which although having a collection dating back to 1879 are only now looking for ways to fill gaps in their collections, such as character gaps or actor gaps in a way that represents a holistic picture of their company.[19] There are also theatres in North America which are starting to think in this way, such as the Stratford Festival Theatre in Ontario which was represented at the symposium.

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[17] Jill Morena, " Defintions of Authenticity: a Study of the Relationship between the Reproduction and Original Gone with the Wind costumes at the Harry Ransom Center," in *Authenticity and Replication: The 'Real Thing' In Art and Conservation,* eds. Rebecca Gordon, Erma Hermens and Frances Lennard, 119-130 (London: Archetype Publications, 2014).
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.

Key questions raised at this symposium included what are the ethical implications of collecting costume, especially when they are intended to be short-lived and the purpose of keeping them when they are so delicate.[20] The main issue here was how to conserve something that was not designed to be conserved and therefore the vital role of conservators. There was no suggestion that design and making methods should be changed, but an awareness that materials and construction present certain challenges. It also highlighted the importance of record keeping, when an object is too weak to be used or displayed, it can still be kept with a collection through records. Conversely there was discussion about why they shouldn't be conserved and so why this conversation was necessary at all. This is the fact that a limitation in time and resources makes it difficult to conserve in an industry which is always moving forward to the next production.[21] The conclusion was that conservators and collectors had to allow the theatres aims to be at the fore whilst pushing forward the preservation of the costumes.

This ties in with the role of the institutions in preserving their own heritage. In the case of *Encounters in the Archives*, the items were held by a third party, the V&A, thereby taking the costumes out of context as far as is possible, but the time and resources were available. In contrast a collection held by the theatre company such as the RSC, keeps its link to the theatre and therefore according to the method of collections management and documentation can hold greater significance and value but may be at greater risk physically. The purpose of collections management is to keep together significance and object. From a heritage point of view, significance gives the costume its value as shall be discussed in the next chapter.

Another institution that has begun a programme of collecting is the Cirque du Soleil in Canada. Sylvie Francois, head of costume for Cirque du Soleil who later retrained as a conservator was involved in the establishment of the memoire corporative project, in which they was a move to begin accessioning Cirque du Soleil's "corporative products into living records".[22] The greatest challenge in this programme of collecting was that the collection was still designed to fit in with the corporate nature of the company, unlike where it is non-profit, whilst developing a general understanding of their "status

[20] Christine Schindler, "Preserving Iconic Theatre Costume," (symposium at the University of Notre Dame, London, 1st April 2015)
[21] Jane Pritchard, "Preserving Iconic Theatre Costume,"
[22] Sylvie Francois; Claude Brault; Mary Brooks;, "Memoire Corporative: Strategies in Creating a Theatrical Costume Collection while Performing Art" (paper presented at the North American Textile Conservation Conference: Conservation Combinations, Asheville, North Carolina, 2000).

as artefact"[23] throughout the company. It showed that the establishment of such a project is possible although unique. Collections management was key to the success of the project and so will be touched upon in the section of collections management potential at Scottish Opera.

Object Biography and Conservation Ethics

In conservation the embodiment of performance corresponds to the idea of object biography, which is an essential factor in conservation decisions. Object biography is the idea that "every thing has its history as every person has his own biography".[24] It suggests there is more to the preservation of an object than its physical state but it has alongside it a personal history and in the case of theatre costume, it also has the performance context.

The main question in the object biography methodology for textile conservators is at what point in the biography the object should be preserved at. This is especially true of theatre costume which is frequently altered and adapted for different performers or productions. It is a question of at what stage the item becomes a heritage piece with value. Kopytoff further problematizes this by suggesting that value, or commodity as he terms it, is changing and fluid, shaped by the culture which commoditises it.[25] This sense of cultural significance ties in with the cultural semiotics used by theatre costume scholars who claim significance is culturally bound. Therefore heritage pieces like costume pieces need to be considered in their cultural context or perhaps for the case of theatre costume, their performance context.

Kopytoff also argues that giving biographies to objects "makes salient what might otherwise remain obscure".[26] By this he is implying that biography aids in interpretation in a way that could not be achieved through looking at an object alone. He is further enhancing the sense that significance and value come from the object as a part of a life process, not just viewed at one stage of its life, but is ever changing in meaning.

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[23] Ibid.
[24] Asa Briggs, *Victorian Things* (London: Batsford, 1988), 27.
[25] Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. A. Appadurai, 64-91. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
[26] Ibid, 67.

The implications of this way of thinking for a conservator are complex and that will be the purpose of the final chapter. As mentioned there is the question of at which stage in life the object should be preserved at but in addition there is the question of what the object should be preserved as. This is the idea that an object such as a theatre costume at one stage of life may be a functioning costume piece and at another a heritage item. It's role is therefore as fluid as its meaning. In addition Dinah Eastop suggested that role affects treatment resulting in an object being treated differently dependent on function.[27]

Role becomes a more complex question when considered in light of objects still in use, especially when these objects have significance beyond their function. There is no published literature about the conservation of theatre costume still in use but there is reference to the issues in literature about other textile pieces still in use. Maria Grabowska, in her dissertation entitled *Well-worn issue: Conservation of ecclesiastical textiles while still in use, on examples from Poland and the United Kingdom* points out the key problems in conserving Catholic textiles which still need to function as textiles but are tied up with their religious significance.[28] This work is a useful analogy for theatre costume as significance and value is more obvious.

Grabowska notes that the core to conservation is to safeguard objects for the future which often means limiting their use so that in using the object in fact goes against that fundamental ethic.[29] She acknowledges that this might change depending on the object being conserved. Her example is that a painting gains in use through its conservation and its use has no long-term impact on its deterioration (except the effects of light in the gallery which can be minimised). However a textile object most likely will be affected by remaining in use through physical stress and chemical degradation, especially if that use is to be worn. Therefore as a conservator, conserving an object for wear is a conflict of ethics. This is exacerbated by the discussion on function and value. An objects whose value is tied up in function as with theatre costume, looses its need for conservation

[27] Dinah Eastop, "Decision Making in Conservation: Determining the Role of Artifacts," in *International Perspectives on Textile Conservation: papers presented from the ICOM CC Textiles Working group meeting*, Amsterdam*, 3-14 October 1994 and Budapest,11-15 September 1995,* ed. Ágnes Tímár-Balázsy and Dinah Eastop, 43-46 (London: Archetype Publications, 1998).
[28] Maria Grabowska, "Well-worn issue: Conservation of ecclesiastical textiles while still in use, on examples from Poland and the United Kingdom" (MPhil Dissertation, Centre for Textile Conservation, University of Glasgow, 2014).
[29] Ibid, 32.

when the function is taken away from it. This tension will be a central consideration in the course of this research.

The current collecting trend within theatre institutions shows that there is some precedent for theatre companies to want to preserve some of their past. But curators of these collections will say it is a constant tension with the need to push forward future productions as I mentioned before. Most of these collections do not work with conservators so the specialist knowledge is not available to them. There is therefore a need for developments in collections management and conservation in these collections. Moreover, from a conservation standpoint, an understanding of the motivating factors in theatre institutions aids in conservation treatment decisions.

In the next chapter, I will consider the tensions surrounding object significance, value and role. This will take into consideration the arguments about performance context and embodiment, both cultural and performative. It will also acknowledge the sense of shifting role and how that impacts upon conservation decisions.

Chapter 2:
The Value of Theatre Costume and the Reasons to Conserve and Collect it

The aim of this chapter is to establish the value of conservation for theatre costume and the reasons to conserve and collect it. This includes theatre costume still in use and costume which has been archived. In order to do this I will discuss whether or not they are heritage pieces, especially whilst still in use and if not, at what point they become heritage.

In order to be able to start considering how conservation may or may not benefit the work at Scottish Opera, it is first necessary to understand why costume is of value both within theatre and archive. I will do this by analysing the value of costume in heritage archives and the interview undertaken at Scottish Opera in order to assess the value of costume, its role and function.

The Value of Theatre Costume

The topic of 'value' in the interview highlighted the differences between conservation and theatre ethics. Liddell did not like this term since he felt it differentiated too much from the function for which the costumes were created.[30] I asked him what value costume held to the company and conversely to him personally. This was to try and ascertain whether value, as has been defined previously, was not given priority in the theatre context because of time and the commercial needs to drive the business forward rather than a lack of opinion as to the costumes heritage and cultural significance. Whilst John could accept them as having some degree of cultural value, he felt it could not be one of his priorities, monetary value took precedence. However, he did acknowledge a degree of "sentimentality" and "pride"[31] which is highly suggestive that the opinion is there but subordinated.

His later point about 'arête' of costume allows a framework through which conservation and theatre ethics can be united. The ancient Greek concept of arête roughly translates

[30] Liddell
[31] Ibid.

as 'excellence' and often relates to prowess in warfare or heroism. However Aristotelian philosophy began to consider arête in terms of virtues and human morality and was considered intrinsically linked to a person's character. It is this which gives a useful definition for theatre costume, that the value of the costume lies in its function, function as a changing concept but one embodied in the person or in this case, the object. This ties in with all the ethical discussion up to this point, Kopytoff's idea of flexible significance, object role and the embodiment of performance. Without function the costume has no arête.

I will therefore be considering the costume in its varying functions to ascertain its value, first as a studio asset, then as an art piece in itself, then as public heritage and finally as institutional heritage.

Costume as Studio Asset

In the catalogue to the 2012 Hollywood exhibition Deborah Nadoolman Landis outlines the life of costumes in a Hollywood studio. She discusses the way costumes were owned and kept by large studios with the Head of Wardrobe in charge of their care and maintenance. As smaller independent production companies the expense and time in creating a costume piece had a monetary worth tied up in the studios net worth. As such they become studio assets.[32]

A large proportion of the interview with Liddell was taken to outline the extensive skills and materials in the manufacture of his costumes. In the making of costume, Liddell set out how the costumes are made using the best quality materials, carefully picked out by designers. Some fabrics are dyed to suit the designers' discerning eye. The costumes are then cut and constructed by skilled professionals, fitted individually to the actors before being finished to a high standard.[33]

During the interview, an example was created of an average costume as a useful way to consider the cost and resources in creating each piece. This average costume as Liddell points out fitted in between the extremes of a simple pair of pyjama bottoms and a full 18th century costume, so is very much a rough estimation. He predicted it at taking 30

[32] Deborah Nadoolman Landis, "The Exhibition Odyssey," in *Hollywood Costume*, ed. Deborah Nadoolman Landis, 178-187 (London: V&A Publishing, 2012).
[33] Liddell

hours to make this average costume with ¼ of the time at the cutter rate of £15 per hour and the remaining ¾ at the maker rate of £10 an hour. This comes in at around £200 for the staff hours. Materials were estimated at roughly £400 including 20% for trimmings. Our average costume therefore has an average time cost of 30 hours and monetary cost of £600. Each production will have a chorus of at least 20 with several costume changes each. It would be safe to state that around 100 costumes could be made for each live show at a cost of £600 each and is likely to be more for the larger main stage productions. In addition, the highest level of skill, fabric and knowledge is used at each stage of the production process. Although for the purposes of this research budgetary information was not discussed, this gives an idea of the monetary value of the costume.

Using the Hollywood studio as an analogy, a huge amount of net worth is tied up in these costumes at Scottish Opera. They are often re-used in revivals. When the production is revived, costumes will be brought out again and fitted on the new cast. Usually costumes are altered to fit but on occasion new costumes need to be made matching the original concept in the bible. However Liddell suggested that out of 20 chorus costumes, only 2 or 3 are likely to be unalterable to the new cast.[34] Moreover in 2012, the costumes at Scottish Opera were put up for auction to raise funds for building work at the Theatre Royal. This is further evidence of their monetary value.

Even if they only have value to Scottish Opera while their function still lies in the live shows, that is a key time where conservation practise can be absorbed into their care. Moreover, monetary value is better maintained if the condition of the costume is maintained. It is clear that the record keeping is essential at this stage as is their storage until the production is revived. These will be discussed in further depth in the next chapter.

Costume as Art

In the discussion about value, Liddell emphatically described the costume as a tool, with no value beyond its function. However he described them as a tool for making art and although he was concerned about being pretentious in his assertions he acknowledged

[34] Liddell

that the costumes were part of the work of art.[35] I would therefore argue that therein lays their value. As part of a work of art they become art in themselves.

Museums such as the V&A label themselves at museums "of art and design"[36] and have as part of their collection historical fashion and theatrical costume. The difference may be that these pieces have been accessioned into a collection and no longer are in use. However, likening costume to art enhances their need for conservation and provides a useful conservation framework for objects still in use. As mentioned in the first chapter, Grabowska describes how the conservation of painting is different from textile conservation since use does not contribute to the degradation in the same way. However contemporary art, especially installation art has a more invasive use that is likely to impact upon its degradation. Research is starting to be undertaken about how ways modern art can be conserved in light of the range of materials used in their construction and their manner of display.

In 1993, a committee on the Conservation of Modern art was set up to begin establishing a methodology for the conservation of modern art that is complex in material and significance.[37] It took 10 pilot objects and carried out multi-disciplinary research into their conservation, the conclusion of which was that additional information had to be stored alongside the artwork in order to understand both the range of unique materials and also the intention of the artists. Documentation was key to this, especially with pieces still in use such as installation art, which are often by nature ephemeral or temporary.[38]

The paper by Carol Stringari, *Installations and Problems of Preservation*, outlines the key issues in documentation of installation art. She argues that in these instances the focus of the work of the conservator shifts. Documentation allows intention and materials to be replicated by a conservator and thereby the role of the conservator becomes less about preservation and more about reproduction.[39] It is the interpretation of the work that has lasting significance.[40] I would argue this is the case with theatre costume, when

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[35] Liddell.
[36] "Homepage," V&A, http://www.vam.ac.uk/ (accessed July 2015).
[37] Dionne Sillé, "Introduction to the Project," in *Modern Art: Who Cares?*, eds. Ijsbrand Hummelen and Dionne Sillé, 14-19 (London: Archetype Publications, 1999).
[38] Ibid, 18-19.
[39] Ibid, 18.
[40] Carol Stringari, "Installations and Problems of Preservation," in *Modern Art: Who Cares?*, eds. Ijsbrand Hummelen and Dionne Sillé, 280 (London: Archetype Publications, 1999).

productions are constantly being revived and costumes altered. For theatre costume, conservation is as much about the physical materials as the designer's concept. Both can be argued to be part of the costume's heritage.

Costume as Public Heritage

In order to understand theatre costume as heritage it is necessary first to define heritage and discern at what point theatre costume becomes a heritage piece. The Oxford Dictionary defines heritage as:

1. Property that is or may be inherited; an inheritance.
2. Valued objects and qualities such as historic buildings and cultural traditions that have been passed down from previous generations.
3. Denoting or relating to things of special architectural, historical, or natural value that are preserved for the nation.[41]

Clearly the definition of heritage is fundamentally linked with the concepts of value and significance already discussed. The other key point to take from these definitions is the idea of inheritance and future generations. The Code of Ethics for museums explicitly states that museums are ''institutions that collect, safeguard and make accessible artefacts and specimens, which they hold in trust for society'' and in so doing they ''hold collections in trust for society'', ''involve communities'' and "safe-guard the long-term public interest.''[42]

Scottish Opera is not a museum so perhaps it is easy to negate these definitions as irrelevant to the discussion of conservation at Scottish Opera. However Scottish Opera is a public funded cultural institution and as such fits within the same publically oriented responsibilities. That is not to say that Scottish Opera has a duty of care for cultural artefacts in the same way a museum does but that the costume produced in Scottish Opera has the same cultural significance and hereditary value for society. Looking to the policies and mission statement of Scottish Opera, it is keen to represent its nation

[41] *Oxford English Dictionary 3rd Edition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
[42] "Code of Ethics for Museums," Museums Association, http://www.museumsassociation.org/ethics/code-of-ethics (accessed October 2013).

through widening access to opera and public engagement. It is a national institution and as such has value or significance to the public.[43]

Education and access are things Liddell is keen to encourage as my research with him demonstrates. He regularly allows tours of the studio from educational institutions and interested groups. The rationale behind this is to demonstrate the great skill in the making of costumes and to draw notice to an otherwise overlooked part of the production process. Liddell is aware that many people do not understand the process by which the costumes come to be on stage.[44] For this reason he has several costumes on display around the lobby, the board room and the theatre. He picks these costumes based on what seem to be the most beautiful or impressive to meet his ends. He is keen to exhibit the skilled workers at Scottish Opera. Moreover, he displays pieces by famous designers, such as the Philip Prowse dress in his office. It is these pieces that he would most likely denote 'value' to, which implies there is some consideration of the art value and heritage value of the costume at Scottish Opera.

This is the extent of display and there have never been formal exhibitions of costume and no has there been much consideration of such exhibitions, not out of lack of interest, just lack of discussion. There is the knowledge of other institutions' formal displays such as at the RSC and the success of them. However the logistics of Scottish Opera having an exhibition is something that requires thought that has not yet been given.

The next issue to address will be at what point these costume pieces become pieces of heritage. This can include them as heritage pieces no longer in use and heritage pieces that still have a function. Returning to the discussion about costume as art, the obvious answer would be that they become heritage as soon as they are created or going further back, it is possible to consider them heritage as soon as they are conceived. In this way the concept art becomes a vital part in their object biography and therefore an integral part of the final piece. However, as Liddell's display practise shows, final pieces are given heritage significance, when still in use, they are just 'tools'. In this way, it is perhaps indicated, as has been argued by Kopytoff and the ancient Greek concept of arête, that since value changes, the moment of heritage changes. This will be a crucial point to remember in the final chapter on the implications of this research on

[43] "About us," Scottish Opera, https://www.scottishopera.org.uk/about-us (accessed March 2015).
[44] Liddell.

conservation decisions. A further aspect of heritage that changes, it to whom the heritage is relevant. Here it is argued as public heritage but it can also be seen as institutional heritage. Returning to the discussion of cultural bound semiotics, the audience (the public) are crucial in assigning meaning to the costumes.

Costume as Institutional Heritage

In addition to the public cultural responsibilities, Scottish Opera can be argued to have internal obligations to preserve its own heritage. Outside the interview Liddell mentioned 'institutional heritage' and his awareness of the legacy he is part of creating. Producing up to 5 main stage productions a year, there is a great amount of artistic talent being produced at Scottish Opera. Despite the concerns of theatrical institutions to move forward to the next productions, Liddell's response to value, in that he recognises it as part of his "patrimony",[45] show that there is a need within the company to recognise its own achievements.

Liddell also talks about the differing approaches of other theatrical institutions and their attitudes towards collecting and record keeping. In his words, they are surprised by his lack of records dating back over the lifetime of Scottish Opera and he is surprised by their decision to keep everything.[46] The RSC have a collection since it is part of the funding charter of the company: that they continue to care for and add to collection, continue to inspire and be inspired by Shakespeare outside performance.[47] The collection dates back to the establishment of the original theatre and so the collection is an inherent part of the institution. It therefore has recognisably different objectives from Scottish Opera. However, as mentioned, the mission statement of Scottish Opera has similar aims in widening access of their performances and so costume is another means through which RSC is obtaining education and public access outwith the performance. In their own words "our collection brings to life the world of the theatre over 400 years".[48]

The Royal Opera House has an equally comprehensive collection although they are less specific about their objectives in collecting, most likely since it has similarly been as part

[45] Liddell.
[46] Liddell.
[47] Catherine Simpson, "Preserving Iconic Theatre Costume," (symposium at the University of Notre Dame, London, 1st April 2015).
[48] "Collection,'" RSC, http://www.rsc.org.uk/explore/collection/ (accessed April 2015).

of the institution since its founding in 1732. The age of these institutions may have a considerable part to play in their collecting policy. A move for collecting and the establishment of museums marked the 18th and early 19th Centuries.[49] The cultural priorities of the age may have directly impacted upon the foundation of theatre related collections. Scottish Opera, as a younger institution has different priorities and therefore a collection has not yet, been considered a necessary part of the institution.

Aside from differing objectives, staffing and space are the main obstacle to collecting on this scale at Scottish Opera. The other obstacle is the interpretation of costume and their function, in that they are things that need to be seen and worn and a catalogue or record is useless in understanding them as theatrically functioning pieces. Liddell states in the interview that they are "using the costumes as costumes for people to wear".[50] Again we are returning to Kopytoff and arête and value in function. Moreover, held in this statement is the sense of embodiment of performance context. Without the function as pieces of theatrical costume, to be worn, they loose significance and value.

In this chapter I have looked at varying functions of costume within a performance and archived context in an attempt to prove them as heritage pieces. In so doing, I have established that function and value are intrinsically linked and that as function changes so can value. However I have also demonstrated that heritage comes about through their association with art and cultural endeavours and as such they hold significance to the public as well as the institution.

Using this discussion about value and function, the next chapter will discuss what can be done in terms of conservation and collecting at Scottish Opera. It will draw on the points where value has been ascertained and tie in with the objectives and priorities of Scottish Opera in terms of their collecting policy and definition of costume as tools.

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[49] Michael Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).
[50] Liddell.

Chapter 3:
Conservation Potential within Scottish Opera

This chapter will consider some of the ways in which conservation practice can be used in the context of Scottish Opera. It is not intended as a set of hard and fast rules or a need for a complete change in current practises. The previous chapter set out how theatre costume has value and heritage significance and this chapter aims to show ways in which theatre costume can begin to be treated with this having been acknowledged. It begins to show some of the main techniques in the conservation of heritage pieces and provides an awareness of alternative ways of working with textiles. It will include where relevant the conservation techniques and a chemical, physical or ethical background which should work to ground some of the ideas and provide justification for their suggestion.

This chapter begins by exploring the remits of conservation both practical and ethical. An overall definition of preventive and interventive conservation as practical conservation shall be considered throughout. That is the definition presented by Jonathan Ashley-Smith that the purpose of preventive conservation is to maintain the value of the object and that the purpose of interventive is to restore value to a de-valued object.[51] Similarly Igor Kopytoff looks at issues of evidence of use or object biography within the objects condition.[52] It is at this point that the two practices of interventive and preventive conservation coincide; at this point within interventive work the ethics of "maintaining the object's value"[53] are presented. Also considered in this chapter will be methods of collections management and education and display possibilities.

The Remits of Conservation

Conservation is defined by Dinah Eastop in her book *Upholstery Conservation* as "the process of investigation, preservation and interpretation."[54] This definition highlights

[51] Jonathan Ashley-Smith, *Risk Assessment for Object Conservation*, (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1999), 125.
[52] Igor Kopytoff.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Dinah Eastop and Katherine Gill, "Upholstery Conservation as Preservation, Investigation and Interpretation," in *Upholstery Conservation: Principles and Practice,* eds. Dinah Eastop and Katherine Gill, 1-9 (Oxford: Butterwoth-Heinemann, 2001).

the breadth of conservation and acts as a good starting point to begin pin-pointing the ways in which conservation plays out within that breadth. She then goes on to explain how this practically applies to conservation, in particular upholstery conservation. However Frances Lennard and Patricia Ewer summarise this in their book chapter entitled *Treatment Options – What are We Conserving*, in which they place Eastop's practical application into a broader ethical framework.[55]

In this chapter Lennard and Ewer point out that conservation adds to the value of the object by contributing in these three ways, whether this is through the ways in which scientific investigation can be applied to an object, or the manner in which it is displayed or the way in which function is preserved through treatment or the information held about the object as part of the collection.[56] In combining all three aspects of conservation the argument is that we can get a more holistic picture as to the significance of the object. Significance has been mentioned in the previous chapter as intrinsically tied up with value. It suggests that treatment alone is not enough to conserve the significance and that the conservator's role is to add to the value of the object through investigation, preservation and interpretation.

This definition will be an important one to apply to the use of conservation in a theatre context since it is unlikely that much interventive treatment will be applicable to theatre practice, although this might be proved wrong. Another key point to take from the Eastop, Lennard, Ewer approach is the case study given where Jedrewska claimed that to preserve an object's authenticity it was necessary to first accept that it had undergone changes.[57] In the theatre context, change is part of the function, and flexibility and adaptability result in a costume being re-used. In order to accept this it is necessary to preserve all elements of object biography for which there may be evidence within the object or as part of adjacent research.

Taking all this into consideration, the remits of this research need also to allow for the remits of conservation. This in one and the same time makes the subject matter simpler and also more complex. Simpler in that more aspects of theatre practice can be

[55] Frances Lennard and Patricia Ewer, "Treatment Options- What are we Conserving?," in *Textile Conservation: Advances in Practice,* eds. Frances Lennard and Patricia Ewer, 53-62 (Oxford: Butterwoth-Heinemann, 2010).
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid, 54.

considered, and more complex in that the multiplicity of theatre costume comes to the fore.

Interventive Techniques

Interventive conservation seeks to actively work on the object itself in order to improve its condition physically, chemically and aesthetically. Treatments are overseen by the ideals of "a treatment which is reversible" or as more recently asserted "re-treatable".[58] The object must not be changed irrevocably and there are conservation guidelines to ensure this.[59] These guidelines have changed over recent years to reflect changes in the ethical frameworks of the heritage sector. Dinah Eastop, as mentioned previously, suggests that the object has a role to play within the collection or exhibition[60] and the method of professional treatment should be in keeping with this.

Interventive treatments can include a range of treatments varying from stitched supports to wet cleaning to bleaching. Whilst these treatments are an integral part of the stabilisation of objects in the heritage context they may not be entirely applicable to the fast pace of the theatre. However, I shall none the less highlight a few areas where interventive treatments could be of use to Scottish Opera in light of the discussion about their value in the previous chapter. Although interventive treatments may not be directly applicable I hope in outlining their benefits, it will result in a greater understanding of the physical and chemical processes that costume undergoes and may help to increase the longevity of the costume in use. Conservators are always required to fully justify their choices in any interventive treatment and so in these suggestions I will treat the justification as though working on a heritage piece.

The interview with Liddell raised some points where theatre practise differs from conservation practise in their approach to working with textiles. Starting from the making of the textiles, to the repair methods and the cleaning. He set out the way in which costumes are produced, the materials used, the dyeing and ageing processes and the methods of fitting. It was interesting that the materials chosen were often the best available quality, using mainly natural fibres as a means to best replicate the period look

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[58] Ann French, "A Re-evaluation of the Conservation of the Othery Cope," in *Mind the Gap! Forum of the ICON Textile Group*, ed. by Alison Fairhurst, 32-40 (London: Icon Textile Group, 2010).
[59] "ICON Professional Guidelines" ICON Institute of Conservation, http://www.icon.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&id=121 (accessed March 2014).
[60] Dinah Eastop, *Decision Making in Conservation.*

of the costume being created.[61] From a conservation point of view natural fibres are used extensively wherever possible, in part to match the fibres of the historical textile but also because conservators have a greater knowledge of how natural fibres degrade and so can predict to an extent the lifetime of objects and their treatments.

In the discussion about the re-use of costumes, the methods of cleaning were mentioned. Liddell described the way in which, during the run, whites such as shirts and camisoles usually cotton, are cleaned using any commercial detergent regularly, usually after each performance, but other elements of the costumes are not cleaned until the end of the production unless there is some pressing need. At the end of a run, whites are again washed and other items are put in an ozone cleaning cabinet.[62] The ozone cleaning system works by replacing O^2 with O^3 which kills bacteria and thereby removes perspiration odours but does not remove stains. Stains are not always cleaned, since they are not always noticeable from the stage but when necessary they are sent out for dry cleaning or spot cleaned in-house.[63]

Conservators would only remove any soiling that was having a detrimental affect on the condition of the textile. This lines up with the aims of the theatre, where stains are only removed where they impact upon the visual aesthetics. Therefore there is a level of tolerable soling in both practices. Where this differs is the definition of tolerable soiling and the methods to remove it.

In conservation, the purpose of cleaning is to remove soiling that may exacerbate the degradation of the textiles and in order to increase the chemical stability of the textile. Soiling in a theatre context is likely to come from perspiration, sebum (fats and oils secreted through the skin) and make up. Dust may also accumulate during storage. Treatment of soiling would vary greatly on the condition of the textile and may range from a gentle vacuum suction on the area to wet cleaning (cleaning with water and detergent). Vacuum suction would most likely be an applicable method to remove soiling such as dust from the surface of the textile. However, soiling from perspiration, sebum and some make up often have acidic properties, since bacteria generate acidic metabolic products and therefore a more interventive treatment would be considered. The bacteria themselves are also likely to 'feed' off the textiles through their enzymatic

[61] Liddell.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.

actions. Acidic products left on the textile cause a chemical change of the fibres by creating or breaking bonds in the molecules.[64] It can through the same process affect the fastness of dyes, which in the theatre context can have a detrimental affect on interpretation since colours are often carefully selected by the designers. Evidence of this can be seen in the dress from Eugene Onegin where the dye has bled into the lining around areas prone to perspiration. These effects are particularly true on natural materials.

The ozone system presents an interesting alternative to wet cleaning as the removal of bacteria would also alleviate some of the degradation consequences. However it would not be enough to neutralise the acidic by products; they would need washing away. Liddell mentioned that whites are often washed in detergent. The choice of detergent can have an impact on the treatment, with some detergents in conservation being better suited to cotton and others to silk. In any case, it is necessary to test the stability of the fabric dye. As swatches of all fabrics are retained in the production bible, this can be tested before any wet-cleaning conservation is undertaken. Some commercial detergents can leave products such as whitening agents, which can fluoresce under certain lighting.[65] This may be something that needs to be considered in the production context, depending on the lighting used. Without changing the detergents used, this can be minimised by thorough rinsing and using the detergents in lower quantities.

The choice of detergent quantity in conservation is based on the critical micelle concentration (CMC). Wet cleaning is made effective by the addition of detergent which lowers the surface tension of the water allowing the water to permeate the soiling. The CMC is the point where this lowering of surface tensions is at its optimum. Excess detergent does not increase the wash efficiency, it will simply result in an oily residue from the detergent which is difficult to rinse.[66] CMC varies for individual detergents, temperature of the water and softness of the water. It is possible to calculate the CMC but it is time consuming and requires specialist knowledge and would not fit in with an industry whereby choice of detergent frequently changes. Short of using conservation grade detergents for which these calculations exist, the best solution is to minimise the amount of detergent used and thorough rinsing. The best way to ensure all detergent is

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[64] Dinah Eastop and Agnes Timar-Balaszy, *Chemical Principles of Textile Conservation,* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1998), 158.
[65] Ibid, 209-210.
[66] Ibid, 209-210.

removed is to take a small sample of the water from the last rinse and shake it, observing whether or not any bubbles from the detergent form.

The final point to discuss in interventive practices is that of repairs. Costume in use will inevitably get damaged on a regular basis. The Eugene Onegin dress at 35 years old has evidently undergone many alterations and repairs. A repair on this dress was undertaken on the front skirt which had been ripped longitudinally, there was also similar rips on the collar, repaired at a different time in a different thread. Further areas of damage had not been repaired. All areas were simply re-stitched using a whip stitching joining the two edges of the rip.

Stitched support in conservation tries to avoid putting any supportive stitching in damaged areas, since they are already weak and far more susceptible to further damage than strong areas. This is almost always done using a patch onto which the weak area is supported. Couching is then carried out across the damage from strong area to strong area. Couching is far more time consuming than whip stitching so it is not practical in the time restricted environment to introduce a new slower method of repair. However the method of patch support is something worth consideration since in the environment of the studio, there is more than likely to be scrap of matching material upon which the damaged areas can be supported subtly and securely. A similar support has been carried out on the lace collar of the Eugene Onegin dress, indicating it is already practise at Scottish Opera. Couching is one of several conservation methods that could be considered at the end of runs. It is at this point where conservation could be best applied before production costume go into storage. Correct storage minimised the need for repeated repair and that is the purpose of preventive conservation.

Preventive Conservation

The Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI) present 10 factors that influence an object's preservation, known as agents of deterioration. These are fire, physical forces, water and flood, pollution, pests, loss and vandalism, dissociation of objects from a collection, temperature, RH and radiation in particular light.[67] It is these factors that preventive

[67] "Preventive Conservation and Agents of Deterioration," Canadian Conservation Institute, https://www.cci-icc.gc.ca/resources-ressources/agentsofdeterioration-agentsdedeterioration/index-eng.aspx (accessed February 2014)

conservation seeks to regulate in order to maintain Ashley-Smith's value, ensuring the preservation of the object.

Recently preventive conservation has come to the fore as a sustainable means by which to ensure this preservation.[68] By maintaining environmental factors such as RH and light, the need for interventive work is reduced, freeing up the time of those in the care of the collection to work on other objects or in the context of the theatre, to drive forward the next production. Preventive conservation works to minimise risks to collections, the two key practices being environmental monitoring and pest management.

Pest management is a problem all industries face. Liddell at the end of the interview mentioned that at Scottish Opera there is a moth problem which is not surprising and several furs were disposed of due to an infestation. There was evidence of insect frass and live moth on the dress designed by Philip Prowse from The Magic Flute displayed in his office.

According to Mel Houston, Preventive Conservator for National Trust of Scotland, pests need three things to survive: a food source, warm, dark, un-disturbed spaces and oxygen. If you remove one of these factors, you are likely to remove the pests.[69] The simplest way to manage this according to Houston is to clean and in so doing both remove the food source and disturb them. This includes getting into corners and under carpets, to disturb the pests as much as possible. In museums, pests are often found in the corners of rooms where the public don't walk. It is also essential to monitor the number of pests in order to ensure the work done in eradicating them is effective

Fabric stores could be a prime location for moth infestation as could the costume store. Moreover, turning on the lights regularly in these locations, will create an in-hospitable environment. One way to monitor favoured locations is with insect traps. These either come as blunder traps which help determine whether there are pests and what sort they are or pheromone traps which also work as treatment, luring in male moth, hopefully before they mate. However there is some uncertainty as to whether pheromone traps lure in moth from outside, thereby increasing the moth population.

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[68] Megan de Silva, and Jane Henderson, "Sustainability in conservation practice." *Journal of the Institute of Conservation* 34 (1) 2011: 5-15.
[69] Mel Houston, "Integrated Pest Management," (lecture, University of Glasgow, March 2014).

In terms of treatment, removing warmth and oxygen seem the most commonly used in the museum context. While the ozone system might seem to be effective in killing pests on the costumes and the lack of oxygen would be enough to kill the live moth, it is not certain the length of time in the ozone system would be enough to kill all the eggs. Further research regarding the use of ozone as a specific pest treatment would need to be carried out. A treatment known as anoxia is used by conservators which places the object in a oxygen free environment for around 72 hours, although this can vary for species.[70] Moreover treatment is only effective if the environment is also treated. Objects which are frequently moved, require regular treatment.

Freezing is the most common treatment used in museums, often when objects come from different museums and after display. Freezing is 100% effective and harmless to the object if done correctly. Costumes need to be wrapped in polythene to prevent condensation and kept in the polythene until thawed. A standard chest freezer is effective at the most basic level since the temperature only needs to reach -30ºC. Like the anoxia treatment, 72 hours is recommended although a week is more usual to kill all eggs. It is worth noting that the temperature has to be reached as quickly as possible since some pests can adapt quickly to colder temperatures.

The other element to preventive conservation that will be discussed in this section is environmental monitoring. This includes factors such as light levels, temperature and relative humidity. Textiles in particular are damaged by light and humidity. Light is difficult to minimise in a theatre context, since the very function of costume is that they are presented in stage lights. However, it is the times they are not used that is crucial. Light is energy and when the energy hits the textile, it triggers a chemical reaction which breaks bonds in the fibre molecules.[71] UV light is most damaging to textiles. Light is also particularly damaging to dye fastness and as mentioned before that can have a detrimental impact upon interpretation.

In conservation, a small amount of light is considered acceptable, since the energy is not enough to cause significant damage. It is as the amount of light adds up that damage is caused, this is known as cumulative lux. Over a year, the cumulative lux should be no

[70] Michael Rust and Janice Kennedy, "The Feasibility of Using Modified Atmospheres to Control Museum Pests." in *GCI Scientific Program Report* (California: The Getty Conservation Institute, 1993).
[71] Eastop and Timar-Balaszy, 19.

more than 500,000 for museum objects.[72] The damage is irreversible. I am not suggesting that Scottish Opera put in place light monitoring but just that there is an awareness that after long periods of time on stage, the less light exposure to the costumes the better. Blue wool tests are used by museums as a simple means by which risk of light to costume can be monitored. This works by putting two dyes samples where the costume is stored, one covered over, so it is possible to compare the amount of fading in the samples. If the difference is extreme, measure can be taken to lower levels before damage is caused to the costume. Simple practises such as UV filters on windows or black out blinds for stores can be greatly beneficial.

Temperature and humidity is the last factor to consider. Whilst optimum humidity is considered to be between 40-60% RH (the proportion of moisture in the air), it is more important that a constant is maintained since fluctuations cause physical stress on the objects as they expand and contract in different humidities.[73] Changes in temperature can cause changes in RH. Although it is not possible to control the environment in the stores, it is possible to employ the system of conservation heating to try and regulate the RH and temperature as much as possible. Conservation heating works by monitoring the relationship between RH and temperature and then adjusting the temperature to maintain RH.[74] So for example if the RH is getting too high, the sensors activate the heating so drying out the environment until an optimum RH is achieved at which point the heating is turned off. This would not necessarily require expensive equipment. There are easily available humidity indicator cards that show the percentage of moisture in the air. In future building restoration and particularly costume display programs, data loggers can be installed in critical production, display and storage areas to monitor light, temperature and humidity.

Collections Management

In the CCI agents of deterioration, one of the factors affecting the deterioration of objects is the dissociation of objects with a collection. This includes the loss of the object and loss of information pertaining to the significance of the object, again returning to the idea that the significance gives an object its value. The method by which collections experts keep a record of the association of objects is through collections management.

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[72] David Thomson, "Light," (lecture, University of Glasgow, February 2014).
[73] David Thomson, "RH and Temperature," (lecture, University of Glasgow, February 2014).
[74] National Trust, *The National Trust Manual of Housekeeping: The Care of Collections in Historic Houses Open to the Public*, 109, (Henry Ford Estate collection: Elsevier, 2006).

For a museum to become accredited, it has to fulfil certain collections management standards. These include standards about the type of documentation required to be associated with the collection. The purpose of these standards are both to ensure accessibility to the collection, to ensure they know what they have and where it is and as evidence of ownership and accountability, where the responsibility of care lies.[75] As mentioned previously, part of the purpose of documentation is to aid in the interpretation of the collection, one of the remits of conservation defined by Dinah Eastop. Therein lies the rationale behind the documentation standards, in order to prevent the dissociation which would render the collection valueless.

Approaches to how to archive, what to conserve and at what level vary greatly in the theatre. From a conservation perspective, it is easy to say Scottish Opera should begin keeping everything. Although there may be a backlog of information lost, it is possible to begin the process of collections management from this point on. With the benefit of digital storage, bibles could be kept on a hardrive, as could information about materials, design specifications and alterations. However, due to the resources available at Scottish Opera, it is more practical to focus collections management on what would be beneficial to their work. In order to determine what this is, it is important to return to the arguments about the value of their costume.

The main obstacle in the interpretation of costume and their function is that they are things that need to be seen and worn and a catalogue or record is useless in understanding them as theatrically functioning pieces, in understanding their value. Therefore associated documentation needs to be useful in that interpretation.

Two case studies are useful to consider at this point, the first is the Conference on Modern Art and the second is the project at Cirque du Soleil. Both of these projects, revealed the importance of documentation, especially in the context of installation art, where the original is temporary. At Cirque du Soleil, only one example of several copies were kept, the others considered tools but the one as a representation of the production.[76] This is especially interesting in light of Liddell's definition of the costume as tools and the manner in which costumes are altered and re-used. The physical

[75] Malcolm Chapman, "Collections Management," (lecture, University of Glasgow, March 2015).
[76] Francois, Brault and Brooks, 97

incarnation may be a tool as with these pieces but the record and concept is where the value is held.

Documentation in the museum context is extensive and there are multiple software packages that are used to create comprehensive databases. However, something simpler can be equally as effective. Liddell mentioned a map created in the live stores indicating where costumes for certain productions were situated. This is a form of cataloguing which allows a record to be kept of the location of the costumes which are still in use and suggests that cataloguing is not an entirely unfamiliar concept. Other smaller institutions use spreadsheets. The advantage in terms of documentation, is that a catalogue allows all elements of the costume conception and creation to be held together digitally, even if there is not physical space to store them. This means the significance and value of the pieces are not lost, even when the costumes are re-used. As with record keeping, these databases can be created from the present until there are sufficient resources to update past productions.

A further benefit of cataloguing systems is that it makes the collection more accessible to the public, which aids in education and outreach activities.

Education and Outreach

As argued previously, the costumes at Scottish Opera, as a public-funded institution, have cultural value for the public. The RSC exhibition, *In Stitches*, in 2013, displayed some of the most famous pieces in their collection, either by designers or the actors who wore them. It also acted to demonstrate some of the skill and craftsmanship that went into the making of the costumes.[77] This is exactly what Liddell wishes to present in his small displays and these displays act to present the institutional heritage within the institution. It is the public heritage I wish to explore in terms of exhibitions. Museums create exhibitions in order to fulfil their objectives of making the collection accessible. With the objectives of outreach at Scottish Opera, display allows the public the opportunity to access the costumes close up in much the same way. The success of many recent costume exhibitions indicates the popular reception of such exhibits. As with these successful museum exhibitions, it would provide another outlet through which Scottish Opera can fulfil its public outreach objectives.

[77] "In Stitches," RSC, http://www.rsc.org.uk/explore/collection/ (accessed July 2015).

It is also worth noting that preventive conservation has fed into exhibition design in which more frequently the advice of conservators has been sought to minimise the need for further interventive treatment at the end of the period of display.[78] Therefore if these practices are instigated, costumes that may still be needed for live productions can be used without any long-term implications. Exhibits of Scottish Opera costume within a museum setting maybe a way to ensure the good display practice including preventive aspects and correct mounting (fitting the mannequin to the dress rather than adapting the costume) which could minimise risk to the costumes. It could also be a way in which the logistics of exhibition management can be passed onto an experienced third party whilst still keeping the collaborative interpretation of such an exhibition.

Conservation in this chapter has been considered in a broad sense to demonstrate the wide range of practices that can aid to the preservation of costume. Many treatment options and practices have been left out since they would not fit in with the work done at Scottish Opera. Some practices at Scottish Opera are already in place that will benefit the preservation of their costumes, such as the ozone machine and an awareness of how it may be involved in pest treatment and the move to keep records digitally. These things can be enhanced with some of the above suggestions. There are also many interventive methods that are already in keeping with the style of repair at Scottish Opera, including patch support. This proves that many of these suggestions are not entirely new and therefore hopefully simpler to absorb into current practice.

[78] Toby J. Raphael, "Preventive Conservation and the Exhibition Process: Development of Exhibit Guidelines and Standards for Conservation," in *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 44, no. 3 (2005).

Chapter 4
The Impact of Collaboration for Conservators

The aim of this final chapter will be to consider how an understanding of theatre practice can impact upon the work of the conservators. This is in light of all the discussions about object role and object biography and how these factors differ for theatre practitioners and conservators. In order to begin considering this impact I will look at some of the work of conservators in order to highlight where issues have arisen as a result of theatre practice. This will then work as a starting point from which I can compare the knowledge gained from collaborating with a theatre institution, in this case Scottish Opera.

In considering the work of conservators, I will pick up on the definition by Dinah Eastop as "investigation, preservation and interpretation" as well as considering the categories set in the previous section of preventive, interventive, collections management and display.

Treatment of Performance Costume

As mentioned in the introduction, there is little published information about the conservation of theatre costume, as such I shall additionally be considering dance and film costume in this section. Much treatment has been undertaken on the Diaghilev costumes in the V&A Theatre and Performance Archives. In 2011 the V&A undertook extensive conservation treatments of Ballets Russes costumes for the exhibition *Diaghilev and the Golden Age of the Ballets Russes*. In a short film about the conservation, Jane Pritchard the co-curator of the exhibition describes how a variety of "elements" were brought together for the exhibition, including costume, music, sets and posters to capture the work as a whole.[79] Pritchard also mentions where objects are lost, in this case she uses the example of two Picasso sculptures. They had records of their appearance and were able to re-construct them to be displayed alongside the original material.

[79] Jane Pritchard, interview by V&A channel, V&A, 2012.

When talking about the choice of costumes, Pritchard describes the way they "looked sad in the store, because they don't come to life," and that in the conservation and mounting of the costumes they are "reawakened from the past and take on a new life."[80] This shows the importance in the conservation about returning value, as stated by Ashley-Smith.

As an example of where role and function has been considered in the decision-making process, the replication and conservation work done on the green curtain dress from *Gone with the Wind* is a convenient place to begin this discussion. Jill Morena, looks at the relationship of authenticity between original and replica and how that impacted upon the decision-making process of what to copy of the original in the replicas and what, if any conservation could be carried out on the originals without corrupting their significance. The directive was to create "a stitch by stitch 'exact duplicate' of the original costumes," but they wanted to capture them in their "current state". [81]

In the main this directive was followed but three aspects of the replication challenged this directive. The most notable of these was the replication of the fading of the original. Over time the dyes had faded following the drape of the gown when previously on display. To follow the directive would mean copying the fading but this was dismissed due to the 'aura' of the authentic. It was argued that the audience memory of the Technicolor green outweighed the need to replicate the original.[82] The theory behind this called into question the issues of at what stage in the object biography an object should be conserved. It also acknowledged the extent to which embodiment of performance and the culturally bound interpretation of that embodiment is vital in giving meaning to the object. In this case, the replicas had importance because of what they represented. However it is important to remember that evidence for the replicas came from the originals and the originals hold further evidence, such as the fading, that was not replicated.

In contrast the decision-making process around the removal of wire in the hem of the original, involved consideration about a movable state of authenticity. Morena argues that inserting wire in the hem for display in 1974 "ruptured" the authenticity[83] and so the decision to remove it was a choice about the object's biography. The wire was

[80] Ibid.
[81] Morena, 123.
[82] Ibid, 130
[83] Ibid, 128

inserted to give the gown the sense of movement in the display more in keeping with the "aura" of the original.[84] However it was felt that in this case, unlike with the fading, it was more authentic to take the gown back to the original of the film.

In this example the alteration was a result of display, which suggests highly that authenticity lies in the original function of the costume. Display is a means by which the significance and interpretation can be presented but in the decisions about the point of the object's life to conserve it at, it is more important to consider the function that gives it significance. It therefore falls to the conservator through investigation to find evidence as to the function, in order to capture "authenticity" and significance that hasn't been impacted upon by later, non-original, functions.

A treatment carried out on a child's fairy dress costume by Katy Smith at the V&A, presented similar issues about the stage of conservation. Poor storage had resulted in a change in the appearance of the costume and so she set out with the aim to "improve the overall condition and aesthetic."[85] This was done by a series of interventive treatments, including extensive humidification and cleaning to restore the costume to its original appearance. Smith had a photograph to work to but in her article she explains how evidence in the original helped her determine conservation treatments, including scientific analysis.

In these three examples, the common theme is the evidence in the costumes of their significance. This is the object-based research Barbieri presented in *Encounters in the Archive,* looking to the objects for information. However, as with the inclusion of posters and designs with the Diaghilev costumes, further significance can be assigned through associated objects. I have argued throughout this research that associated information is key to assigning significance to costume, that they need the embodiment of the performance context to be truly valuable. It is necessary to elaborate on evidence given from an examination of the object to further understand the use of the object and therefore the justification in decision-making. I will end my research by relating this discussion back to the collaboration with Scottish Opera.

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[84] Ibid, 128

[85] Katy Smith, "Conservation of a child's fairy costume," *V&A Online Journal* 60 (2012). http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/conservation-journal/spring-2012-issue-60/conservation-of-a-childs-fairy-costume/.

Collaboration and Treatment

Three key issues appear to have developed from the analysis of the interview with Scottish Opera in light of the discussion about value. That is:

1. Costumes only have value while their function still lies in the live shows;
2. Since value changes, the moment of heritage changes;
3. They are things that need to be seen and worn.

The purpose of this section is not to determine whether these statements are a finite truth but to acknowledge that they are part of the costume, in that they reflect the attitudes of the theatre companies to the costumes they produce. As conservators, there is a constant desire to work within the brief of the client and to include them in conservation decisions. That is why an understanding of theatre practice is so vital.

These three statements are a means by which this collaboration has aided in this collaborative understanding. The statement that 'they only have value while their function still lies in the live shows' is the argument about costume as studio asset. It is possible to reflect that once that function has gone, the value has also gone but I would argue, it indicates that conservators need to establish the point in the costume's biography where the function gave value. It is at that point they have cultural significance. This significance can be an advantage when creating public exhibitions within a theatre or museum or marking pivotal points in the theatre's history as well as a means of encouraging public participation.

Similarly, 'since value changes, the moment of heritage changes', takes into account the changing value of the costume throughout its biography. It acknowledges that as perspective changes, value changes and so in order to be denoted a heritage item, it is necessary to first to understand the arête of the costume, that the value lies within an ever changing function.

Function, I would argue, lies in the final statement, "they are things that need to be seen and worn". From all perspectives costume loose part of their intrinsic nature when not presented as things seen and worn. This is something to be remembered in interpretation and display. As with the Diaghilev exhibition, the *Hollywood* exhibition or the *Encounters in the Archive*, the costume comes to life when they are re-instated in their embodied performance context.

Conclusion

This research has worked to assess the tensions between the aims and objectives of conservator and theatre practitioner. I have aimed to broaden knowledge and understanding of theatre costume, especially that of Scottish Opera, in order to determine how conservators and theatre practitioners can collaborate on the conservation of costume. As such, I have worked to define what value theatre costume has and in so doing, establish whether there is a need for conservation within an active studio context. As a result, I have attempted to prove that theatre costume is heritage although the moment of heritage arguably changes. Developing on from the work of theatre semiotics, it has become clear that context and the culturally bound interpretations are key to denoting value to costume. I have elaborated on the idea of studio asset and as such have tried to suggest the importance of their preservation in light of their monetary value.

In light of this, I set out some examples of where conservation can be absorbed into the day-to-day running of the wardrobe at Scottish Opera and in turn, I have highlighted where conservation practice can acknowledge the difference in significance when conserving theatre costume. These examples were produced taking into consideration the different priorities of a theatre company and the work they currently carry out on the care of their costumes. For, Scottish Opera, I hope I have provided an alternative way to think about value.

Much of the research with archived costume has proved how important the performance context is to the interpretation of costume. Therefore, much in keeping with the objectives of Scottish Opera, these costumes should not be kept in a collection that isn't used. Either through revivals or display, as Liddell states, the costumes need to be seen and worn. Documentation therefore becomes increasingly important, especially in an industry where the material culture is ephemeral and ever changing and there is a constant drive forwards. It is not an argument that the original is the most significant but that the culmination of the object's biography creates an arête which is fluid. The performance context, although "dead" when the costume is no longer in use, can be re-created in the retention of this associated evidence.

Since, this research is new, it has had to remain relatively broad and as a result has raised more questions than answers. Whilst this has been a limitation to a research

project of this size it has acted to determine the potential for further research. Specific research could include further analysis into the use of the ozone system and perhaps consider how it could work within a conservation setting. Similarly, research could be carried out on the ethics of conservation treatments, elaborating from the final chapter, where only a few key considerations were touched upon.

The main result of this research, is that it has proved that collaboration has worked to enhance knowledge and understanding of theatre costume in so doing has hopefully enabled both conservators and theatre practitioners to think differently about their work. Previously, different approaches were taken, not out of lack of willingness but out of a lack of knowledge. These ways of thinking can only be determined if they are discussed. I hope this work has begun this discussion, which can feed into new and established institutions and practices.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview with John Liddell, Head of Costume at Scottish Opera, May 2015

Interviewer: Cecilia Voss, MPhil Textile Conservation student at the University of Glasgow
Interviewee: John Liddell, Head of Costume at Scottish Opera

Note: This interview has not been included in the online version of this dissertation. Pages 49-60 are blank. A full transcript of the interview is available in the hard copy.

Appendix 2: Conservation Reports of Case Study Costumes

University of Glasgow, History of Art Textile Condition Report		
Object Name: Dress for Eugene Onegin	**Object Type:** Costume	**Character:** Lady of the Chorus
Designer: Deidre Clancy	**Location:** Day to day store Scottish Opera	**Dates of Performance:** 1979, 1980, 1981
Conservator: Cecilia Voss	**Date of report:** 24/5/2015	**Condition:** Fair

Brief Description: High-waisted dress, replicating fashions of around 1830 of purple shot silk with a silk chiffon overlay. The sleeves have silk puffs and arms of a purple net. There is gold embroidery and sequins on the skirt.
Dimensions: Waist: 1090 mm Length from Shoulder to Hem: 1020 mm

Overall Images:	
Front:	**Back:**

Condition Assessment:
Overall Condition: Fair The dress is structurally sound although there are several rips in the chiffon. It has undergone many alterations and there are some previous repairs. **Soiling/Staining:** There is some staining from make up around the neckline, especially at the back inside collar. There is also pink staining around the collar and the front proper left bodice panel, possibly from dye bleed (figure 1). This could have been caused by cleaning, although due to the isolated areas is more likely caused by perspiration. **Creasing/Distortion:** The skirt is slightly creased, probably as a result of being crushed in storage. **Damage/Loss:** The chiffon is worn around the neck, waist and front fastening, most probably from being worn and fastened. The belt has been completely worn (figure 2). There are tears in these worn areas and along seams in the chiffon of the skirt, especially around the embellishments where the weight of the sequins have caused strain (figure 3). **Previous Repairs/Alterations:** Several of the tears in the skirt seams and around the neckline have been repaired using a whip-stitch. The thread used is different in each instance suggesting the repairs have been carried out at several times. There is a repair patch under the lace at the front proper right fastening supporting an area of missing lace (figure 4). The dress has been altered several times and there are many stitch hole indicating where seams have been moved in the bodice (figure4). Moreover there is an extra panel of a different purple silk inserted at the front proper right panel as well as panels of black silk chiffon over the front of the bodice. This along with the evidence of previous seams suggests the dress has been made bigger at some point.

Condition Photography
Figure 2 Image showing potential dye bleed around the collar **Figure 1 Image showing chiffon worn at belt and waist** **Figure 3 Image demonstrating where the weight of the sequins is causing strain on the chiffon** **Figure 4 Image of patch under area of missing lace and evidence of stitching from older seams in the bodice**

University of Glasgow, History of Art Textile Condition Report		
Object Name: Dress for The Magic Flute	**Object Type:** Costume	**Character:** Queen of the Night
Designer: Philip Prowse	**Location:** Office of Head of Costume, Scottish Opera	**Dates of Performance:** 1983
Conservator: Cecilia Voss	**Date of report:** 24/5/2015	**Condition:** Excellent

Brief Description:
Late 18th Century replica dress made of blue devoret chenille velvet over gold and dark blue brocade. There is boning in the bodice and a train at the back of the skirt.
Waist: 800 mm Length from shoulder to hem at front of dress: 1080 mm Length from shoulder to hem of train: 1650 mm

Overall Images:

Condition Assessment:
Overall Condition: Excellent **Soiling/Staining:** There is some dust over the shoulders and the upper surfaces of the skirt. **Creasing/Distortion:** There is some minor creasing on the pleats of the underskirt skirt and around the gathering of the overskirt. **Damage/Loss/Previous Repairs:** The metal threads of the brocade are slightly pulled in some places and some parts of the embellishments are fraying. This is most likely an inherent flaw in the vulnerable nature of the material as it is worn. The back of the underskirt has also ripped at the hem where it has probably been caught during wear. **Display:** There are both live moth and evidence of frass on the skirt. The dress has been pulled in at the back to fit the mannequin and is as a result sagging slightly off the shoulders.

Condition Photography:
Figure 3 Image of the pulled threads of the brocade **Figure 4 Image showing the rip at the hem of the underskirt** **Figure 5 Image of shoulder placement on mannequin**

Appendix 3: Notes from the Preserving Iconic Costume symposium April 2015

Jane Pritchard, Curator of Theatre collection at V&A

Christine Schindler, Curator at Stratford Festival Theatre, Ontario, Canada

Catherine Simpson, RSC collections officer

Jane Pritchard

Started in 1920s as predominantly papers and drawings – Britian should pay attention to its theatrical history. Acquisition by V&A in 1987, re-housing in Blythe House, 2007 greatly improved storage to roller-racking and tyvek bags. Soon acquiring BFI collection to moving into film as well as theatre.

Costume began to be collection in 1970s, mainly from private collectors at auction. Performing arts fund under the V&A umbrella decides what can go on display/what can be conserved "audition the costumes"

Represent "great designers", "great ladies", "celebrate makers, designers and people who wore them" – who made and who designed are equally important.

Also reflects social history, ie Charlie Keith costume.

Some materials make it difficult for them to survive i.e metal foil, Philip Prowse, Wooden Horse: cellophane, Oliver Messel, Midsummer; gunk (paint and glue), Ian Morley, Revenger's – n.b need to think about how they would have looked on stage.

Edward Scissorhands gloves – information about evolution of gauntlet with physiotherapists, had information about actor and design process because of interesting development – acquisition of other material enhances knowledge of construction

Christine Schindler

Largest theatre collection in North America – includes all records, stage management, designs, costumes, props, documentation and research. Archives located off-sight with rental section, scenic shops and call centre – renovated warehouses 100,000 sq ft, 18,000 sq ft archives including space for research and display.

1953 Richard III came into collection augmented with drawings – have costumes significant from their history because of actors, directors or unique staging

mandate: to celebrate designers – represent the design concept of the production and represent the skills of the makers = approx. 2 costumes pre production, 25 costumes per year (others from the season go the warehouse for re-use for 2 years, rental after

Once in archives costumes are kept, costumes in rental are disposed of when they can no longer be used. Disposal is handing down to schools, am. dram. etc

Funding in the main comes from ticket sales (the organisation) so the budget is reactive

Priorities: 1. Preserving, stabilise through storage and preventive 2. Conserved if going in exhibition – always looking for student projects for conservation

Why preserve?: internal purposes i.e. production team, re-staging, supporting other departments (design), saves budget; research i.e. design students; access and education, exhibitions and starting to think about community outreach

Mandate: archive supports training and education of the arts –transmits knowledge and skills to next generation.

Bibles are kept for logistical and technical information i.e. where to buy things

Catherine Simpson

Founded 1880s in a section of the Shakespeare theatre, from 1964 cared for by Shakespeare Birth Trust, now stored off-sight industrial building adapted to a stable environment but there is no access to researchers

Roller racking "wardrobes" (from productions) covered in calico, accessories in acid free boxes but stuffed!!! Garment bags (pull on pull off) and padded hangers aren't suited to costumes. Some heavier costumes should be boxed

Funding charter: continue to care for and add to collection, continue to inspire– to learn and be inspired by Shakespeare outside performance

"The star system" = major actors represented by costumes in the collection (but how do you know they are going to be stars) – also bring together collection of regular actors, showing loyalty and part of RSC team

How and why: as a working theatre the priority is not with the museum – a costume will be re-used if it can be to save money, money is primary aim

There are guidelines but in reality just take what they can, when they can – takes time to move from the theatre to the collection esp. big productions

Practical issues: is there space for it? Can they be cared for effectively? – no point taking them in if not i.e. issues of staff, housekeeping. The life of the costume and making process greatly impacts on their preservation – no point taking them in if they are going to degrade.

When collection they think about what they have and how to enhance it i.e they have loads of Anthony and Cleopatra but not other characters from A+C, gaps i.e. Helen from All's Well – try to accurately represent what's on stage.

Provenance is important, there is not point caring for unknown objects.

Significance: designers, actors, important to RSC, ground-breaking moments in history of theatre, work of the staff – "important for staff to be engaged"

Important to be a source of outreach – through research, through exhibitions i.e. exhibition "Shakespeare In Stitches" – "tangible way of connecting public with items", "make them accessible by keeping them"

Public engagement, research and learning, historical objects deserving of preservation.

Why not preserve them? Why do we need to have this conversation?

Jane:

- lack of ability, lack of resources, lack of skills and knowledge

- the ones that can do it are better funded i.e. V&A collection allows for those that might otherwise not be preserved

– in theatre the first concern is the next production and the box office (practical elements) "working in the opposite direction, working to preserve things that already exist rather than working to get them out"

- dance companies in particular keep for re-production so are overworn, theatre rarely re-vives – productions which are more high profile/successful are in worse condition.

Should we move the responsibility to a 3rd party outside the theatre?

Jane:

- depends on the willingness and commitment of the theatres so is the best place to control and maintain
- if theatre closes collection is moved elsewhere so need 3rd party i.e. V&A but need to justify keeping

Christine:

- 3rd party = less priority to the collection, the institution is the main stakeholder

Catherine:

- RSC are dedicated to the collection and like to use internally – best kept in the company

Jane:

- keep documentation and a few representative examples especially in a facility with limited conservation, an alternative is to make them accessible online

What are the ideal storage conditions?

Jane – purpose built facilities, enclosed roller racking and tyvek covers, avoid light, dirt and have temperature control, ideally have space available in stores for researchers

What are the ethical implications? Especially when they are intended to be short-lived?

Christine

- not meant to have a life, reflected in the rapidly degrading fabrics – in conflict with the role of the archivist

- needs to be a collaborative process with wardrobe to decide what to preserve, if expensive to make = like to be re-used
- how do you preserve something that's not meant to be preserved? – need to involve conservators

Catherine:

- a designer at RSC said "yesterday is irrelevant to me"
- not keeping them means they are lost for good, can't be used
- 'fighting an industry which wants to go forward"

Jane:

- "keeping bits of and never the whole"
- collections are "different from the live experience"
- can be enhanced with other elements i.e. recordings
- "inspiration goes beyond the inspiration of a performance"

Forward thinking in documentation and space? i.e. 3d imaging, paper patterns, swatches – other methods of record taking

Catherine:

- thinking about 3d imaging for model boxes (extremely bulky and ephemeral) and possibly costumes
- a better record would keep outfits together
- problems keeping paper and physical together = ideas of digitisation

Jane:

- interested in new materials – need to document and interviews with designers

Christine:

- looking at recording production process i.e. the making process (there are actor and costume photos in the bibles) – need to capture the process working with wardrobe to do while producing = acting ahead of the degradation process

If they are too delicate what are we keeping them for?

Try to limit access but also find a way that they can be seen - nothing should be kept that no one can be seen - try to keep records as much as possible.