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Production & analysis of dance costumes

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Abstract

Using Gerber AccuMark Pattern Design Software, I have designed a jazz dance costume. The costume, which will be showcased in the Dance Department's Annual Undergraduate Senior Projects Concert, is based upon the basic leotard and follows the history of jazz dance aesthetics. I experienced the entire production process, from creating the design to sewing the final products together. Although specifically made for the Senior Projects Concert, this dance costume could be sold to any jazz, lyrical, or contemporary dancer in any size or color(s).

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PRODUCTION & ANALYSIS OF DANCE COSTUMES

By

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A Senior Thesis Submitted to the

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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation

with Honors in Apparel, Textiles, & Merchandising

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Production and Analysis of Dance Costumes

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Abstract

Using Gerber AccuMark Pattern Design Software, I have designed a jazz dance costume. The costume, which will be showcased in the Dance Department's Annual Undergraduate Senior Projects Concert, is based upon the basic leotard and follows the history of jazz dance aesthetics. I experienced the entire production process, from creating the design to sewing the final products together. Although specifically made for the Senior Projects Concert, this dance costume could be sold to any jazz, lyrical, or contemporary dancer in any size or color(s).

Production and Analysis of Dance Costumes

Context

As an Apparel, Textiles, and Merchandising major with a minor in dance, I wanted to combine my studies to create a diverse senior thesis project. I have combined my apparel making techniques with the elements of dance to create multiple dance costumes for my senior thesis project. This involved creating the costumes using Gerber AccuMark Pattern Design Software and a Gerber cutter, assembling the final products with various sewing machines, and wearing the costumes by my fellow dancers as they perform.

Project Details

The costume I have created is a two-piece jazz dance costume. This costume will be worn by my selected dancers in the dance department's Undergraduate Senior Projects Concert on April 11, 2015. The top is a sports bra style bralette with a small scoop neck in the front and multiple crossed straps in the back. The bralette is accompanied by high-waisted shorts with fabric draping to one side. Both the bralette and the shorts have two different colors of fabric. Each costume was custom-made, based on individual measurements, to fit each dancer perfectly. Three base sizes were originally created (small, medium, and large) and modifications were made as needed. The costumes were designed to match the aesthetics of the song and dance I have choreographed while maintaining functionality for the dancers. The costumes must be able to withstand the movement and range of motion of the dancers' bodies. This requires the fabric to stretch. The costumes must also allow for the exposure of skin in appropriate places so that, in

lifts, the dancers do not slip and fall. Thus, there are no sleeves nor mid-section. The costume consists of shorts instead of pants so that the dancers' legs are the primary focus during specific movements and so that the leg joints have as much mobility as possible.

Marketing/Demographic Research

My target market for my costume is specifically the dancers in the piece I have choreographed for Eastern Michigan University's Dance Program Senior Projects Concert in April. Certainly, my costume could be sold to a much larger demographic group. This would include dancers of all ages. The style of the costume, though, would benefit those performing either a jazz, lyrical, or contemporary dance. This costume is not designed for a hip-hop, ballroom, or character dance. Currently, if I were to sell my costume, my target market, to start, would be dancers within the United States. This would prevent complications with foreign currency and expensive shipping costs. Due to the United States having a large dance population, this would provide a decent-sized demographic of all ages. I believe, though, that the costume would do very well in other parts of the world as well.

If I sell the costume to the public, my demographic would not be age restrictive which would benefit me greatly. I would be able to market to dance studios, K-12 education programs that offer dance, colleges and universities with dance majors and minors, dance companies, and to the numerous online retailers who sell dance costumes. According to the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO), there are approximately 32,000 dance studios and schools in the United States. Dance studios, from personal experience, usually have between twenty-five to a few hundred dancers.

Even if each dance studio in the United States had only twenty-five dancers, there would be approximately 800,000 dancers to whom I could market my dance costume. Studio dancers are just one sample of my demographic. The NDEO estimates that 6,000 schools in the United States offer dance within their K-12 curriculum. Also, the NDEO states that there are about 665 colleges and/or universities that offer a dance degree of sorts, whether it be a major or a minor. This adds a committed set of dancers to my demographic. Additionally, in 2012, there were 353 non-profit dance companies, each within a specific budget (National Company Roster, 2014). However, this doesn't account for the many other non-profit companies with different budgets nor for the for-profit companies (National Company Roster, 2014). With all of these different marketing opportunities, there is a very large demographic for my dance costume.

Colorway / Line Specification / Model Variation

All of my materials have been chosen from Jo-Ann Fabrics. The current colorway of this costume is a sparkly silver base, purple bindings and straps, and a white, sequined draping fabric. The colorway of this costume could be dramatically altered; it could be a combination of multiple colors or be one solid color for the entire costume. This costume has been custom sized to fit each dancer. If this costume were to be sold online, in stores, or in a catalog, basic sizes such as X-Small, Small, Medium, Large, and X-Large could easily be created by grading each pattern piece. If this costume were to be sold online, dancers and dance teachers would have a variety of sizes and colors from which to choose. If this costume were chosen for a group dance, each dancer could have a different color or color combination. Quite often dancers in the same dance do not wear the exact

same costume. For my dance, I have chosen the same costume throughout for aesthetic purposes as well as for cost savings and fabric efficiency.

Price Points: Fabrics, Findings, and Final Product (Retail)

I have selected three different materials to create my dance costumes. For the main portion of the bralette and the shorts I have selected a silver performance knit mystique fabric that is 90% polyester and 10% spandex. This fabric was \$10.19 per yard. I purchased six yards of this fabric, bringing the total cost to \$61.14. The fabric I chose for the straps and the binding of the shorts is a solid purple performance fabric. It is 85% nylon and 15% spandex and was also priced at \$10.19 per yard. I purchased three yards of this fabric bringing my total cost to \$30.57. The other fabric I purchased was the charlize stretch sequin lace. This fabric is 95% nylon and 5% spandex. It was priced at \$14.99 per yard, and I purchased 2.667 yards of the fabric. I bought the 0.667 yards of fabric at a 50% discount bringing the total to \$39.98. The thread needed to sew the costumes together was part of my own inventory, thus it added no cost for my findings. The total cost of all three fabrics and my findings (\$0.00), plus tax, totaled \$120.86. I have made seven costumes, each costing approximately \$17.27. If I were to retail the dance costumes I would mark them up 150%. This would bring the retail cost to \$25.91. This would allow me to earn a profit of \$8.64 per dance costume.

Bill of Materials	
Stitches per Inch	22
Thread	Previously Purchased
Materials Used	Polyester and Nylon with Spandex
Silver Fabric	6 yards at \$10.19/yard
Purple Fabric	3 yards at \$10.19/yard
White Lace Fabric	2.667 yards at about \$14.99/yard
Total Costs	\$120.86

Explanation of Fabrics, Findings, and Materials Used

I used performance fabrics with spandex for the main pieces so that they allow the dancers to move about freely and stretch as needed. This also allows them to breathe heavily as the dance requires a lot of energy and effort. The binding and straps are thick nylon. I chose a thicker material for these areas because their purpose is to stabilize and hold the garments in place. I am using a lace for the draped fabric so that it flows freely and has a light appearance. I chose the silver and purple colors to compliment the aesthetics of the dance.

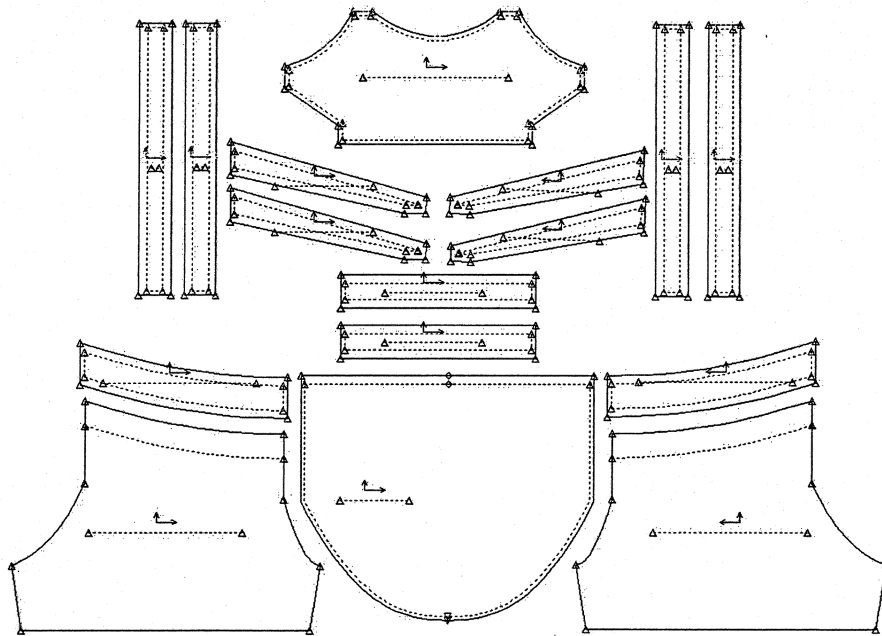
Production of the Costumes

The production process for these costumes began with a flat sketch of my design idea. This was followed by taking measurements of the dancers' bodies to create the costumes. Based on these measurements, I drafted pattern pieces in the Gerber AccuMark Pattern Design Software in three different sizes. I then cut out these drafted pieces on scrap fabric and had my dancers try them on for fitting purposes. I determined which size combinations for bralette and shorts fit each dancer best, and what modifications needed to be made to that size in order for it to fit them even better. After making the changes necessary and figuring out how many of each size I needed to cut, I then followed through with the final steps of producing the costumes.

I started by making all of the changes to the pattern pieces in the design software and saved them under the dancers' names. I purchased the fabric based on the estimates I made from the mock costumes. A few steps later, I was able to lay the pattern pieces on digital fabric which is referred to as a marker. This allowed me to see how to cut out all

of the pieces. I then sent that information to the cutter. After laying the actual fabric down, the machine cut out the pattern pieces. I then gathered the pieces and sewed them together to create the final product.

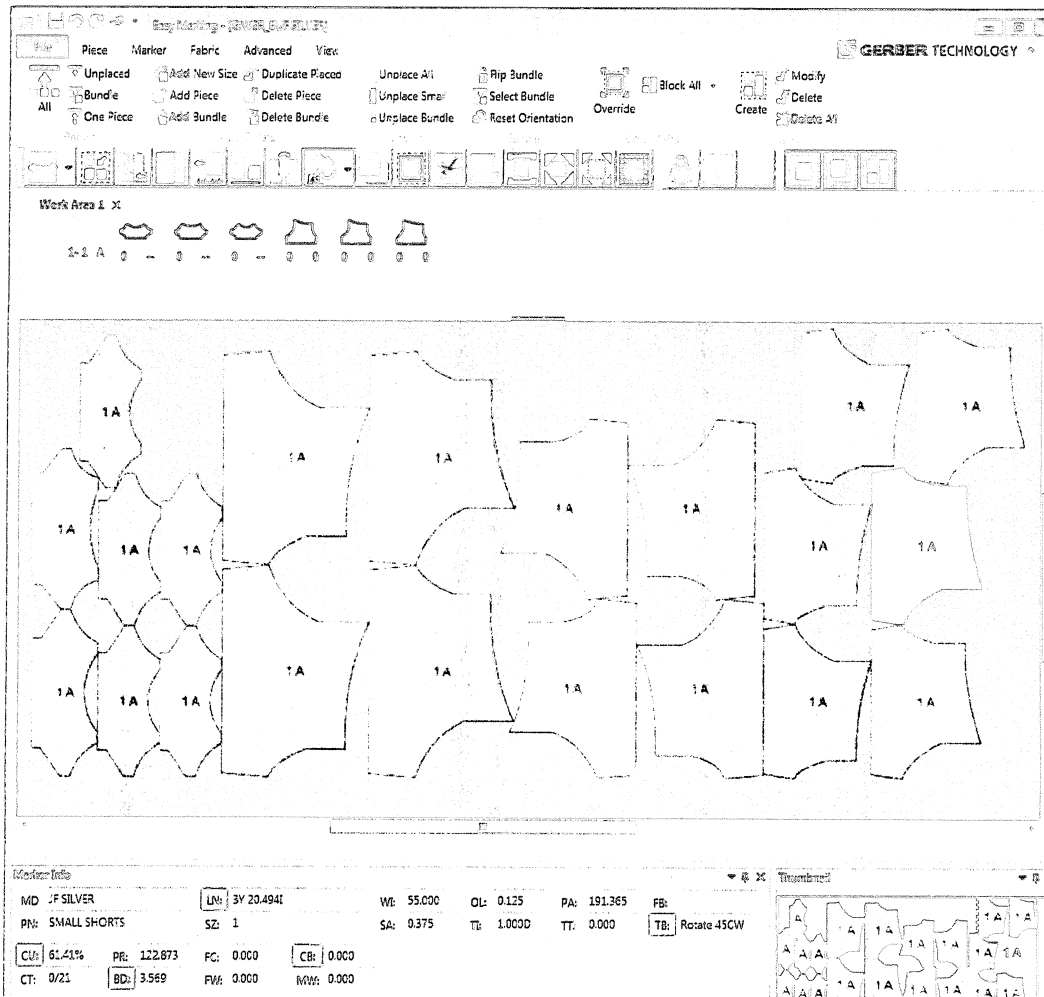
Pattern Pieces



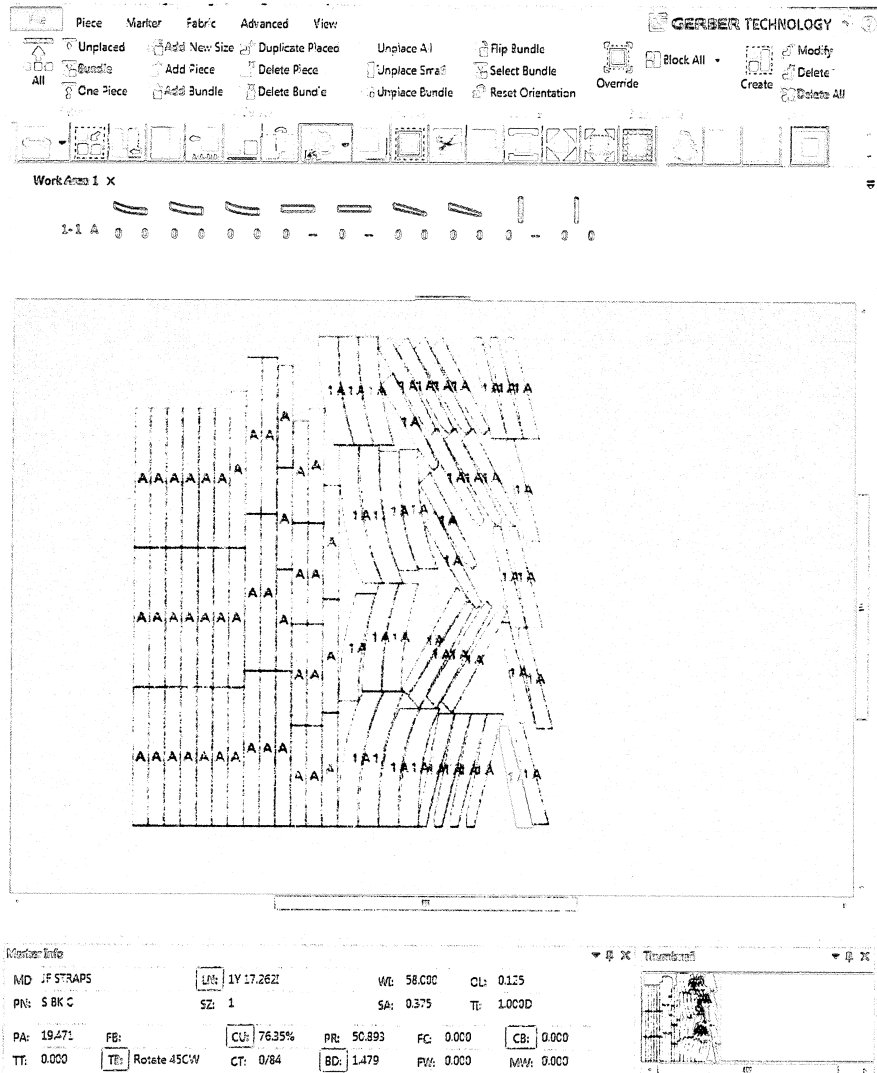
This is an orange peel of the costume pattern pieces for one of the dancers. I created each of these pieces from scratch in the Gerber AccuMark Pattern Design Software. Each size has the same pieces included; the only variation is the dimensions of the pieces themselves.

Markers for Cutting

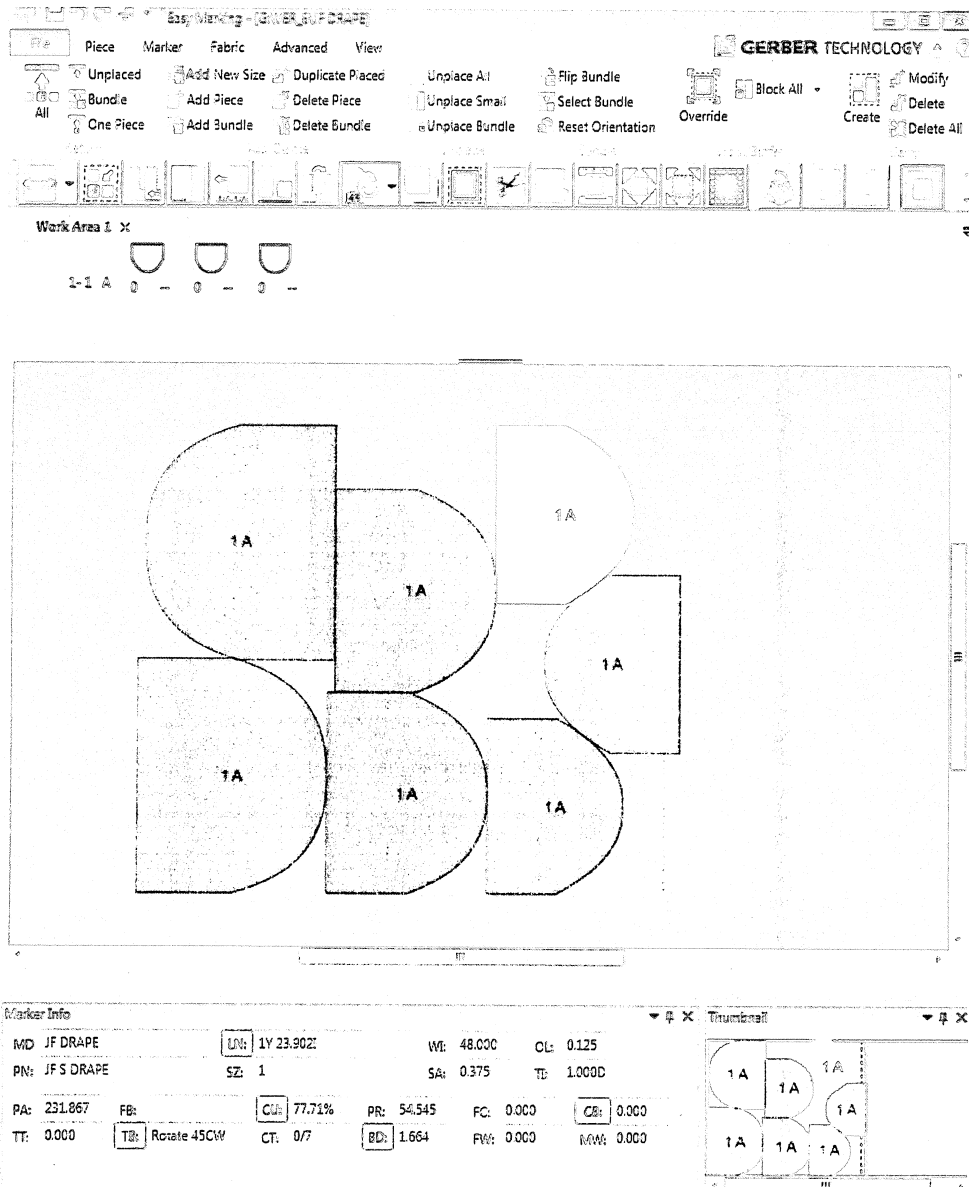
Each different type of fabric requires its own marker. All of the pattern pieces that are to be cut out of the same fabric can be combined in one marker. In this case, since I am using three different types of fabric, I have to lay three different markers.



This is the marker for the bralette and shorts. These pieces were cut out of the sparkly, silver fabric.



This marker is for the purple fabric which is used for all of the straps and bindings. After cutting this marker, the most challenging task was keeping the pieces organized. I had to strategically separate the pieces so that the correct pieces are sewn together.



This marker is for the draping fabric on the costume. These pieces were cut out of the white sequined fabric.

Sewing Steps

In order for the costumes to be assembled properly, I created a sewing order and began doing one costume at a time. I soon realized that I could move much quicker, and speed up the sewing process, if I used a mass production methodology. I stopped assembling one costume at a time, and began completing one step at a time on each costume. This allowed me to use one color thread at a time without having to constantly switch between two different colors. I began by sewing the edges of all of the skirts first, followed by sewing all of the shorts together, and so on. The steps I took are as followed:

- Serge skirt edges (silver thread)
- Serge shorts together (leaving space for shorts binding) (silver thread)
- Sew hem of shorts (white thread)
- Sew edges of the tops (white thread)
- Top stitch the shorts binding and drape fabric to the top of the shorts (purple thread)
- Sew all strap edges (purple thread)
- Sew straps to each top (purple thread)
- Top stitch the back cross straps to the back binding (purple thread)
- Sew straps and cross straps to top (purple thread)
- Sew back binding to top (purple thread)



Fashion, dance, and the way of life all influence each other (Steele, 2005).

According to the History of Jazz Dance, starting with traditions of the African American people, jazz rhythm and movement made their way over to the United States in the late 1800's to early 1900's. When the term "jazz dance" was first created, it was, in actuality, tap dance set to rhythmic jazz music. As time passed, more solidified dance moves, such as the Charleston, became a part of what was actually considered "jazz dance." At this point in time, jazz dance was considered a type of social dance. There were no "costumes" worn. Everyday clothing was worn, and the dancing took place at local venues. It wasn't until the 1950's that a technique for jazz dance was created by Katherine Dunham, and it began to be recognized as a performing art. Jack Cole followed Katherine Dunham in creating a jazz technique. Many choreographers started to create performing art works and present jazz dance choreography in Broadway shows and even incorporate jazz into ballet performances. Jazz skyrocketed from there. It was adopted by many choreographers who then placed their own spin on the style, but they all required highly-trained dancers. Today there is a set of moves that are considered jazz dance moves which are placed into the many different styles of jazz dance. Examples of these different

styles include modern jazz, fosse jazz, and contemporary jazz. Jazz dance is also commonly used in music videos today due to its upbeat and fast-paced movement.

History of the Leotard

The leotard is still extremely common today, and it is the basis from which I designed my jazz dance costume. I have decided, due to the range of motion that I am requiring of my dancers, that they need something that will not restrict their movement. For this reason, I have chosen fabrics that are very similar to those used for leotards. I have modified the design so that it is aesthetically pleasing and relates to the style of jazz that I have choreographed. According to Efimova, the leotard was first invented by circus performer Jules Léotard. Jules wanted something that would not constrict his body and that would show off his muscular build. This became popular with dancers as they require the same functionality in their garments for their art. The leotard was first popular with men, but as women were allowed to reveal more of their body, they modified the leotard to fit their figure.

Why This Product and What I Hope to Achieve

I chose to create this product because I wanted my dancers for my Senior Projects dance piece to have a costume that coordinated well with the dance and that also fit them well. Unlike most college choreographers, I did not want to purchase a basic everyday outfit to serve as a costume simply because it was affordable and cute. The outcome I am striving to achieve is a costume that fits each of my dancers well and that matches the theme of my dance. It is my hope that this project will serve to inspire other college-level choreographers.

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