

JOB DESCRIPTION

Role / Title: Assistant Head Scenic Artist

Reports to: Head Scenic Artist

Location: Bob and Tamar Manoukian Production Workshop,
Royal Opera House Production Park, Purfleet

Manages: Scenic Artists (Permanent and Freelance), Labourers.

Liases with: Designers, Production Managers, Project Team Managers,
Scenic Construction, Prop Makers.

Overall Purpose of the Job:

To support the Head Scenic Artist to manage the scenic staff and workshop to achieve the highest standards of quality; speed and economic efficiency with due regard to Health & Safety and security policies of the ROH. Work is normally carried out in the Scenic Workshops, but may be required at the Covent Garden site, other rented premises or performance venues. Work on new and revival productions for Royal Opera, Royal Ballet, Birmingham Royal Ballet, ROH2 and Education “On the Road”.

Key Accountabilities:

- Deputise for the Head Scenic Artist in her absence

Scenic Painting

- To work as a Scenic Painter.
- To support the Head Scenic Artist to help realise artistic requirements using a wide variety of techniques, materials and finishes as appropriate.
- To modify any completed works during production if alterations are required and to undertake repair and refurbishment of scenic finishes either during use or to maintain existing scenery.
- To provide regular information regarding progress of work to the Head Scenic Artist to help reporting on scenic painting problems at the earliest possible stage.
- To develop drawings, paintings and colour tones in accordance with the design concept.
- To prepare samples to designers specifications.
- To regularly test and experiment with new paints and techniques.
- Ensure up to date information regarding quality, efficiency, materials and technology. To be fully conversant with required standards.
- To endeavour to meet deadlines always monitoring and ensuring the highest standards of craft work.

- To support the Head Scenic Artist to liaise closely with Designers to satisfy their requirements consistent with the Royal Opera House policies, resources and financial constraint and provide support / advise as requested.
- In the absence of the Head Scenic Artist to help ensure a close liaison with HOD Scenic Construction, Project Team and Production Managers.

Staff Management

- In the absence of the Head Scenic Artist to supervise and monitor staff to ensure the highest appropriate standards of craft work are maintained at all times.
- To support the Head Scenic Artist to build an effective team providing support, supervision and motivation, encouraging development of staff and their skills, assessing and recommending training as appropriate. Carrying out induction, coaching and training as required.
- Ensure health and safety and correct working methods in the workplace (meeting COSHH standards) are adhered to.
- In the absence of the Head Scenic Artist ensure work is planned, scheduled and distributed as to meet required deadlines.
- Ensure staff have up-to-date information regarding quality, efficiency, materials, technology and progress of their work.
- Ensure the staff understand the need for and implement internal customer care, responding positively and effectively to any problem, query or complaint.
- To support the Head Scenic to ensure staff understand and implement all Royal Opera House policies, union agreements and industrial relations legislation required by or pertinent to their role.
- In the absence of the Head Scenic Artist check and authorise timesheets, sickness notes, holidays, etc.
- In the absence of the Head Scenic Artist ensure staff participate in education and public relations events as required.

Financial

In the absence of the Head Scenic Artist:

- To estimate the cost of painting the show in man-hours and to estimate the cost of materials needed, to the requirements of the designers i.e. paint, plaster, glue, sponge etc.
- To advise where necessary on the best materials to use for the effect that is required.
- Prepare costing for materials and labour as requested on new productions, revivals and outside commercial work.

Administration

- Ensure proper liaison with other relevant departments as required.
- Check sets in other theatres as requested.

In the absence of the Head Scenic Artist:

- Order stock as necessary, ensuring invoices are checked and passed on as appropriate.
- Ensure that the workshop is secured, maintained and adequately equipped for its purpose.

- Check stores and report on necessary repairs as required.

Personal Development

- To participate in continuing professional development in order to develop and enhance artistic and management skills.
- To regularly test and experiment with new paints and techniques.
- To participate in education and public relations events as required.
- Attend rehearsals as and when appropriate.

Continuous Improvement

- Instil a culture of continuous improvement for safety and technical excellence across all operations

PERSON SPECIFICATION:

Essential Skills, Knowledge and Experience:

The skills required for the Assistant Head Scenic Artist at the ROH are, in many ways, unique. The sheer scale of the stage and the proscenium arch make the ROH the largest stage space in the country. The artist needs to have an understanding of the scale and relative distance to the audience. This scale and distance has to be taken into account when painting cloths and structures. The opera and ballet companies employ materials and techniques that are rarely used in the commercial theatre. For example:

- There is a tradition within the ballet for the use of profiled cloths that need to be “netted”. This technique is to ensure the cloth remains flat and hangs in an exact manner. This netting technique is particularly employed when traditional methods of foliage are painted.
- For opera and ballet we use at least three types of gauge that vary in degrees of transparency. The painting techniques for gauze painting are of a precise nature and again require a high degree of expertise.
- Within the last decade, a number of new plastic materials have been introduced in the theatre. They require the understanding of new painting techniques that are capable of using the transparent and opaque qualities of these materials.
- The use of appliqué cloths is common at the ROH. The ability to use and construct various materials requires a thorough understanding of the nature of these differing materials: their transparency or opacity, the way that paint will adhere, their stretching or shrinking qualities etc.
- From painting a piece of metal to look rusty – to painting a copy of a Rembrandt, the artist has to be versatile. As with perspective landscapes and trompe l'oeil, the artist is acutely observant of shape, line and colour, all observed constantly to interpret from a scale design to the larger set.

As can be noted from the above examples, the work carried out within the ROH Scenic workshop is complex and diverse.

The ideal candidate will have:

Knowledge

- BA in Theatre Studies or equivalent qualifications or experience

Experience

- A significant and extensive period of experience as a Scenic Artist working on major international Opera and Ballet stage scenery.
- Experience of staff management within a scenic artist environment.
- Excellent knowledge and experience of scenic artistry using a wide variety of techniques and an understanding of period styles and history.
- Excellent specialist knowledge and experience of working with Opera and Ballet scenery.

Painting skills

- Ability to work from scale drawings, models, plans, sketches, verbal ideas and references.
- Excellent ability to use colour to very exacting standards and awareness of susceptibility of colours and mixes of shades.
- An understanding of the scale and relative distance to the audience.
- Excellent awareness of textures of using various materials.
- Excellent knowledge and experience of profiled netted clothes used in Ballet productions.
- Experience of working with transparent gauze material and the relevant painting techniques for gauze painting.
- Sound knowledge and experience of relevant painting techniques required for use with plastics that are capable of using the transparent and opaque qualities.
- Experience of working with appliqué cloths and the ability to use and construct various materials in a way that paint will adhere, their shrinking or stretching qualities etc.
- Sound experience and knowledge of perspective landscapes, line, colour and shape.
- Proven ability to interpret from scale design to the larger set.

Technical skills and experience

- Understanding of the stage working practises
- Experience of costing scenery painting projects to design specifications (Desirable)
- Experience of budgeting within a scenic artist department. (Desirable)
- Experience in the use of workshop and stage machinery (Desirable, training given by ROH).
- Awareness of Health and Safety requirements in a scenic workshop.
- First Aid qualifications (Desirable).
- Basic computer skills.

Supervisory skills

- Ability to supervise the painting of stage scenery.
- Possession of proven strong leadership qualities.

Personal aptitudes

- Able to work on own initiative and carry out delegated projects with a minimum amount of supervision.
- Able to work under pressure.
- Able to work within a team.
- Able to multi task, working on multiple shows, able to focus on more than one production at a time.
- Good interpersonal and communication skills.
- Helpful, positive and flexible approach.
- Reliable and responsible.
- Excellent personal time management.
- Self-motivation to acquire new skills and knowledge.

Job Requirements

- Able to travel within the UK and overseas.
- Physically capable of undertaking the requirements of the position including bending, reaching and stretching for long periods of time and some climbing.
- Flexibility regarding hours of work i.e. Evenings/weekends/bank holidays if required to ensure that the painted scenery is ready for the start of the production.

Note: This Job Description reflects the current situation. It does not preclude change or development that might be required in the future.