

# Costumes

**D**ear *Edwina JR* is a show written, directed, produced and performed by kids, and it is extremely important to keep this in mind when costuming. Each character's outfit was picked out and put together by one of the neighborhood kids. This means nearly all of your costumes could be pulled from your actors' closets! Have fun embracing your inner child and start sifting through old dress-up clothes to put this show together. Also, *Dear Edwina JR* takes place in the 1990s (you'll notice references throughout, like cordless phones and videotapes), so keep that in mind when you're designing your costumes – it's a great source of inspiration!

## The Big Picture Approach

The main goal in costuming will be to create a specific style that is achievable, visually interesting and still flexible enough to allow for some variety in each of the different species.

Whichever style you choose, remember these three essential points:

1. Your students need to be able to safely and comfortably move in their costumes.
2. Your students need to be clearly heard onstage.
3. Facial expressions are very important, and masks and large amounts of makeup often hide or distort them.

There is no right and wrong answer here, so work with your team and make a choice. Don't fear the simple solution. These answers may better suit your student performers while saving you time and money as well.

## Use Base Costumes

Every character in *Dear Edwina JR* can easily wear one base costume for the entire show. Feel free to add different accessories, especially for the vignette characters, but most of the time your actors will wear their base costume. Determine what direction you want to go with your base costume – for instance, you could ask all the kids in the show to wear blue jeans and tennis shoes. For this show, it's likely that the actors might choose an outfit they would actually wear to school on any given day, and that works well

as long and everyone looks cohesive as a unit. Another great option is to put your cast in matching t-shirts in a variety of colors, bringing them together as an ensemble. Once you have your vision, make sure to clearly communicate to the actors what pieces they'll be expected to provide.

## Guidelines for Base Costumes:

- Costumes should be character and age appropriate.
- Costumes should fit within a determined color palette, which the director decides upon.
- Costumes must allow for easy movement onstage.
- Costumes should be made of a light, breathable fabric to prevent overheating.
- All shoes must be comfortable and appropriate for dancing.

## A Note About Color

Create a color palette for your show to help tell your story and to identify characters. For example, dressing the Cheerleaders in yellows and reds and Susie and the Napkins in purples and blues will clearly distinguish the two groups from each other. You can also use color to highlight individual characters. When making color choices, be sure to think about the color of your theater's curtains and any backdrops or scenery you will be using so your costumes don't blend into their surroundings.

## A Final Note

The costumes must allow the actors to sing, act and move comfortably. Remember, lights add heat, hats fall off and an understudy may have to wear another actor's costumes, so the more actor-friendly the costumes, the easier you make it on your students to give their best performance.

## Costumes By Character

The following section supplies additional details for each character's costume design, and is based on the idea that each character is using a base costume. Keep in mind these costumes are put together by kids for *Edwina's* show and do not have to be picture-perfect.

**EDWINA SPOONAPPLE** is the writer, director, and star of her own production. This is a big night for Edwina and she would choose a special outfit to impress the crowd. Keep Edwina in her own color palette so she will not blend in with the other kids.

**KELLI POSHKONOVICH** is the prima ballerina of the show, and would definitely dress to make it obvious. Either add a tutu to a base costume, or go for the full leotard, tights and tutu. Just make sure your actor is comfortable in the costume and can easily dance around the stage.

**BECKY** should coordinate with the other cheerleaders. However, Becky is the Head Cheerleader, so make sure that she is accessorized to stand out.

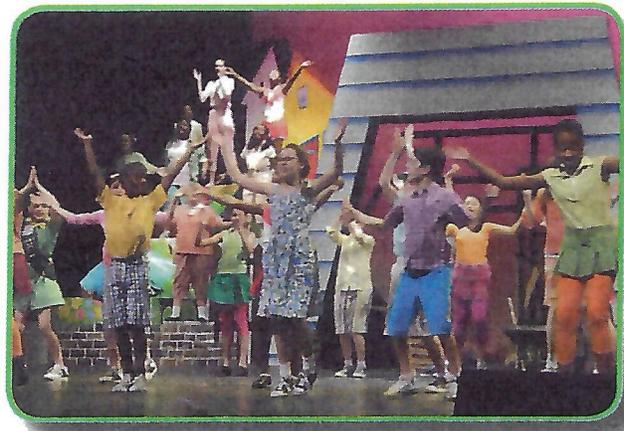
Dress the **CHEERLEADERS** in matching, traditional cheerleader uniforms, or dance pants and color-coordinated t-shirts. The Cheerleaders have lots of movement throughout the show, so make sure they are able to perform their routines in their costumes. Accessorizing with pom-poms is a great choice, especially if the cheerleaders are wearing dance pants and t-shirts.

**MYRA SPOONAPPLE** is Edwina's older sister. As the show's music director, she has an official, important position in the show and should dress the part. Putting a simple jacket over a base costume is an easy way to achieve this and differentiate Myra from the other kids.

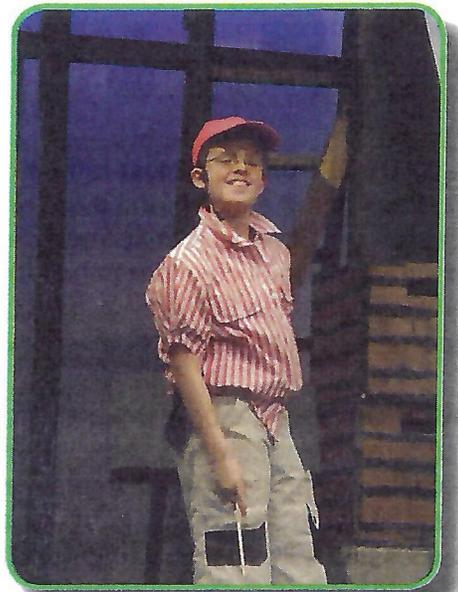
**CORDELL, LARS** and **BILLY** are the Vanderploenk triplets. Dress them in matching colors so the audience sees they are a group. Dark pants and dark t-shirts are great, especially since Cordell and Billy are on the production crew. Remember that Lars will need a pair of crutches for most of the show.

**ANNIE** is a dedicated Girl Scout and wears her uniform with pride. If you can't find a complete uniform, just the hat and vest are great to help the audience recognize her right away.

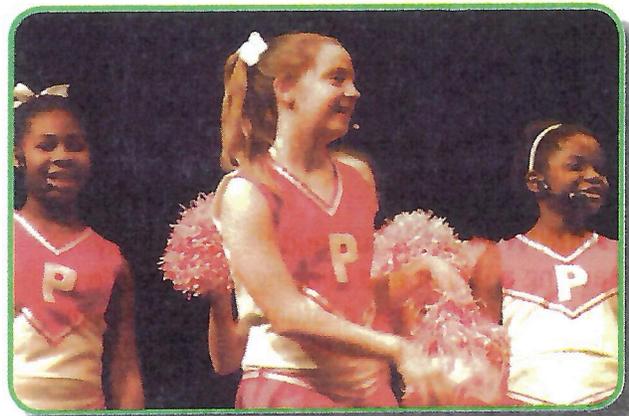
**SCOTT KUNKLE** is the show's emcee and should be dressed to impress both the audience and Edwina, his true love. Put him in his Sunday best, or just have him wear a bow tie with a t-shirt for an awkward and endearing



"The Dear Edwina Show"



Scott Kunkle.



Becky and the Cheerleaders.

look. It's fun to give him accessories that transform him for "Edwina", like a popping a collar on his shirt, turning a cap backward or dramatically removing a pair of glasses.

**BOBBY** should stand out a little from the other kids, especially when he first meets Edwina. Try giving him a leather jacket or boots, or put him in a color that no one else is wearing. He does need to blend in with the ensemble after "Up On The Fridge", so make sure the costume choice isn't distracting.

**JOE SPOONAPPLE**, Edwina's older brother, is the drummer. Since Joe is a little older, feel free to lean into some 90s styles and dress him casually in ripped jeans, a button-down flannel shirt and combat boots. Add a hoodie sweatshirt tied around the waist and you're set!

Since **KATIE SPOONAPPLE** just ran away from camp, dress her in a jacket and a hat, with a backpack or duffel back to accessorize. Make sure the audience understands that Katie is younger than Edwina – a pair of bright glasses or a pigtail hairstyle both work well.

The **KIDS** serve as the both the audience and performers for Edwina's show. Again, base costumes are very helpful here – jeans, jewel-toned t-shirt and sneakers are great. Add accessories like baseball caps and headbands.

**APHRODITE COLOSSUS ATHENA SWENSON** adds a toga-like piece to her base costume. Consider additional embellishments, like sandals or a headband, to further emphasize her Grecian identity.

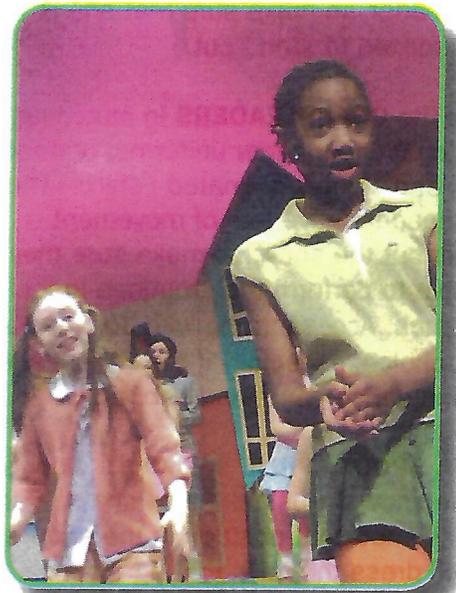
**SUSIE AND THE NAPKINS** are a rock band, and should be coordinated. Studded jackets, sparkly headbands and boots will bring out their rocker vibe.

**JOHNNY** wears a suit and tie, but simply adding a jacket and slipping on a necktie or bow tie to his base costume will be enough to identify this character.

The **QUEEN OF BOOLAH BOOLAH** wears a crown. Consider adding a long purple robe or a cape to emphasize her royalty.



Kelli and Edwina.



"Paw Paw, Michigan"



Susie.

**ABIGAIL**'s problem is her obnoxious brother, so make sure her costume contrasts Frank's. Neat, pulled-back hair and a dress or a crisp tucked-in shirt is great for Abigail.

**VLADIMIR** wears a dark and creepy cape with a high collar. Any leftover Dracula costume from Halloween is great! Vladimir should also have a hook for a hand. For this costume, feel free to reach out to your cast – someone's bound to have an old Halloween costume lying around. Remember, the hook should be plastic, lightweight, and be concealed easily in Vlad's sleeve.

Give **SHELLEY MARY** and **BIRTHDAY GUESTS** a happy birthday crown, cone hats and balloons to add to their base costumes. For **FRANK**, think of a modern day Eddie Munster. A cape similar to Vladimir's will work, just add a leather jacket and have the actor slick back his hair.

**FRANK'S MA** wears an old dress or apron and a bonnet or wig. Add a shawl and some glasses to complete her look.

**CARRIE** is an exaggerated Valley Girl. She should be ultra-coordinated with big sunglasses and a chic purse – think pink, like Elle Woods from *Legally Blonde*.

**CHEF LUDMILLA** can wear a chef's jacket or an apron with a large, outlandish chef hat and ridiculous oven mitts.

The **FAIRY FORKMOTHER** is a fun, easy costume to create. Repurpose an old white or silver prom gown and accessorize with wings. Adding a piece like a fork-wand or a crown that honors her cutlery namesake is a nice touch. Glue some plastic forks onto a headband, spray paint or cover them with glitter, and voilà, you have a cutlery crown.

**WILLIAM** and **SONOMA** are the Fairy Forkmother's assistants. Dress them in black, like servers at a high-end restaurant, with white towels draped over their arms.

**PERIWINKLE** is shy, and probably not the flashiest dresser. An oversized, comfy sweater in a shade of blue works well. Feel free to accessorize Periwinkle with over-sized glasses and a matching headband.



Chef Ludmilla, the Fairy Forkmother and Edwina.



Vladimir.



"Hola, Lola"

**HARRY** should represent the kids' understanding of Hawaiian culture. Put him in a lei or even a grass skirt to make the reference clear.

**LOLA** wears a piece that references traditional Peruvian clothing. This can be something like a black skirt with colorful embellishments or a red, embroidered jacket. Research to find what works best for your production.

**ZIGGY** wears a beanie, a tie-dyed t-shirt and jeans. The **BAND** can either simply be dressed as the neighborhood kids, or you can accessorize them in the reggae style like Ziggy.

**MARY SUE BETTY BOB** is a traditional, good ol' farm girl and should be accessorized as such. Give her a gingham shirt, a cowgirl hat and some boots, and a ponytail tied back with a bandana.

**FARMER JERRY** proudly wears overalls, boots and a cowboy hat. Farmer Jerry is even folksier than Mary Sue Betty Bob, so give him small accessories to help drive this home, like a bandana in his pocket or some work gloves.

Keep the **PIGS** simple by adding a small snout and ears. The audience will get the picture without the need for a full, head-to-toe pig ensemble. Remember, all of the vignette costumes must be easy to get on and off, and the character change may happen in full view of the audience.

## Caring for Costumes

When a generous donation of clothing is given to your organization, there are a few steps that can be taken to properly clean the garments. First, put each piece into a heavy-duty freezer bag, making sure to squeeze out as much air as possible before sealing the bag closed. Next, lay the bags of clothing into a chest freezer (not a regular refrigerator). Leave the clothes in the chest freezer for at least three days, then transfer to a regular refrigerator for two days, and after taking the bags out of the fridge, allow them to sit – sealed – for one more day. Upon opening the bags, immediately place the garments in a dryer on hot for 15 – 30 minutes. After that, the machine-washable clothes will be ready to put through a regular washing cycle.

Remember, if you see or smell mold of any kind, dispose of the garment and any garments it came into contact with – better safe than sorry!

Maintaining costume cleanliness during the run of a show can be tricky as well. In a perfect world, all costumes would be washable, but in reality costumes run the gamut – there are any number of glued-on, painted-on, glittery, or vintage garments that simply cannot go into the washing machine. For those delicate or specialized costumes, professionals use garment spray. This spray kills bacteria, eliminates odor, and refreshes otherwise un-washable costumes without damaging them. If you're interested in using garment spray, research it online and make sure your administration approves of this method of cleaning, and ensure that you have the means to properly store it. Garment spray should be locked away in a closet or an office in between uses.