**11 Tips For Applying Your Own Stage Makeup**

By Katelynn Johnston

Theatre is all about telling a story. Transporting the viewer to someplace else, far away for just a few hours. While your performance is what will ultimately sell the story, your appearance is part of that package. From the moment those lights hit your face.

The first time I tried to apply my own makeup for a dance performance, I ended up looking like an extra from the Michael Jackson ‘Thriller’ video. Not good for an upbeat jazz number where we all wore neon poodle skirts. Since then I have learned a lot about the art and magic of stage makeup .

**Here are a few tips to help you avoid my embarrassing fate and apply your stage makeup like a pro:**

**1. Act like a Boy Scout**

Don’t forget to prepare your skin before you start. Moisturize and apply a primer to help the makeup to last longer and keep both your skin and pores happy.

**2. Less is not more**

The adage does not apply in this situation. Packing on the foundation will ensure that when the stage lights hit you, your face does not appear shiny or melt into the curtain. Key tip: don’t forget to apply foundation to your neck as well or you will look like you are wearing a mask. Not great, unless you are playing the Phantom or Lady Gaga. Concealer is also crucial for hiding the evidence of your late night rehearsals under your eyes. Just be sure to find the right shade for your skin tone in both concealer and foundation. Search out a consultant in the store or if all else fails, dab a little of the tester bottle on your hand and see if it blends nicely.

**3. It’s all in the eyes**

Liquid liners are the way to go to avoid the smudging you will get from a pencil. When choosing eye shadows, browns, pinks and golds tend to work best and show up well onstage. You will want to avoid a smoky eye unless it is specific to your character. When it comes to your lashes, false ones can indeed be your friend as they show up well for the audience. While they seem like a pain, all it takes is a little bit of practice to put them on. It can be tempting to buy cheap ones at dollar stores that come with cheap glue, but I assure you, this is one situation where you usually get what you pay for. Your eyes will be itching the whole show. Good lashes will stand the test of time and be easy to wear.

**4. Pucker up**

For starters, chap stick is your friend on a regular basis. Not only do some of them taste great, having smooth lips helps to avoid lipstick clumping. Before applying lipstick, run a wet toothbrush over your lips a few times to help exfoliate. Then choose a bright color, pink or red for ladies is pretty safe. Pick a long lasting lipstick to avoid having to reapply multiple times.

**5. Highlighting**

I know contouring and highlighting are really hot right night, but it is very easy to overdo. Stick to highlighting your t-zone and under your eyes to be safe. However, blush your cheeks to your heart’s content! You may feel you look like the clown of your childhood nightmares with those overly rosy cheeks, but from the audience, it will appear perfectly normal.

Don’t forget to fill in those brows! A friend of mine once forgot, and because she was blonde and had applied foundation over top of them, when she got onstage it looked like she had lost her eyebrows in a tragic barbecuing accident. Highly embarrassing. To avoid moments like these, don’t forget that brow pencil.

**6. Seal the Deal**

Using a setting powder, loose or pressed, will help to ensure your face stays picture perfect throughout the show. My personal preference is the light reflecting powder, helping to combat shine once again from sweat or oily skin.

**7. Special Features**

Some shows will call for special effects makeup. Youtube and Pinterest can be a gold mine for how-to tutorials if you are panicking. After all, practice makes perfect. But here are a few tricks I have gleaned over the years.

**8. Scales**

Mermaid? Dragon? Lizard from The Magic School Bus? Get yourself a

cheap pair of fishnet stockings and cut a piece as large as the area you are making scaly. Hold the stocking over the area and use a brush to apply shimmering eye shadows in your desired colors generously. When you lift the stocking off, you will have created the appearance of scales.

**9. Bruises**

Creating bruises are all about smudging and blending. Shadow colors like black, purple, yellow, blue and even red are great colors to layer. Remember, fresh bruises would be red, black and purple, while a healing bruise would be yellowing.

**10. Aging**

Give yourself a few wrinkles with the help of Liquid Latex. Haven’t got any? Non-toxic school glue also works well. Apply it to the area and let it dry. Accentuate the now wrinkled area by applying makeup to it. Make sure the makeup gets in the creases.

**11. Open Wounds**

Once again, reach for that Liquid Latex or non-toxic school glue and apply to the spots that you want to be the outside of the wound. Once dry, cover with foundation and then apply red and black shadow or makeup paint to the inside to simulate blood. Don’t forget to add red or purple makeup to the outside for swelling; it will make it appear more realistic.