

Like many other young people, you are seriously considering whether to become a make-up artist, and you are in the process of finding out about the different ways of taking up this profession.

However, before you pursue this career path any further, you should pause for thought and carefully consider whether this is precisely the profession you think will suit you and in which you will feel happy. Many potential applicants have been inspired by films or personal impressions to apply for a place to study wigs, make-up and special make-up effects. That is wonderful. But do you know what you will be letting yourself in for in practice? If, in the course of time, your expectations turn out to be different from the reality, it can be bitterly disappointing for the person concerned. Every year, so many young people apply for a place on the Programme of Studies in Wigs, Make-up and Special Make-up Effects at the Theatre Academy August Everding that this wish can only be fulfilled for a few of them. In making an application, you are sending an important signal in planning your future, and we have the job of checking whether your wish corresponds to your talents and the demands of the profession. In so doing, we take a long-term perspective. Our wish is that the path you take is the right one for you and that it will give you personal satisfaction.

So it is not only your heartfelt desires that are crucial for planning the future, but also your talent. The question always arises as to whether a person's innate abilities are valued and needed by his or her environment. In his programme *Glücksbringer* (i.e. bringer of good luck or lucky charm), cabaret artist Dr Eckart von Hirschhausen tells a lovely story about the interaction between talent and the environment, which we recount here with his explicit authorisation:

The Penguin Story

Or: How to Feel in Your Element

During a cruise, on which I was employed as a presenter, I visited a Norwegian zoo. And there I saw a penguin sitting on his rock. I felt sorry for him: "Do you have to wear a dinner jacket too? So where's your waist?" And, above all, "Did God forget your knees?" My judgement was clear: a case of bad design.

Then I looked through the glass into the penguins' pool. And just at that moment, "my" penguin jumped into the water and swam right past my face. Anyone who has ever seen penguins under water is in no doubt at all. He was in his element! A penguin is ten times as streamlined as a Porsche! They are brilliant swimmers, hunters, underwater dancers! And I thought: "bad design!"

This encounter taught me two things. Firstly, how quickly I often judge and how I can be completely wrong. And secondly, how important the environment is for what someone can do well even to be recognised.

We all have our strengths, and we have our weaknesses. Many people are perpetually endeavouring to iron out their flaws. If you improve your weaknesses, you will be mediocre at best. If you strengthen your strengths, you will be unique. And if you are not like the others, take heart, there are already enough others!

Only rarely do people change completely and fundamentally. If you were born a penguin, even seven years of psychotherapy will not make a giraffe out of you. So do not spend too much time wrestling with yourself. If you are a penguin, don't stay in the steppes. Take small steps and find your water. And then jump! And swim! And you will know what it is like to be in your element.

So take the time to inform yourself extensively about the profession of make-up artist and to think as honestly as possible about your own abilities. We consider the following personality traits to be important in a theatrical make-up environment:

- Staying power: Changing or metamorphosing a person's appearance by means of make-up, wigs and special make-up effects is exciting, but often requires longer-term preparatory work. The area of wig-making, for example, makes up a large proportion of professional practice. Even a pro needs to work about 40 hours to complete a hairpiece. Can you imagine spending a large part of your working time knotting wigs and beards?
- Sensitivity: Make-up artists do not work by themselves but have direct contact with other people at moments of high tension. When performers put themselves in the hands of a make-up artist before they appear on stage, that make-up artist needs to have a feeling for how to respond to the performer's individual feelings so that he or she feels good. Nobody wants to have someone around who causes irritation at moments of tension and concentration.
- Feeling comfortable in the background: A make-up artist always plays second fiddle. His or her work contributes to the performance as a synthesis of all the artistic efforts involved, the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, but only in rare cases is it consciously recognised by the audience, and even in the production team, it is not always recognised by everyone.
- Ability to work in a team: Theatre and film work always involves teamwork, both in relation to the different professional groups involved (production team) and also within the make-up team. Do you like working with other people, do you coordinate with others, resolve conflicts fairly and wrestle with colleagues to find the best solutions?
- Flexibility: Rehearsals mean trying out different ideas. That means that various solutions are considered, but may also be rejected. Are you open to engaging with new ideas quickly, even if thought had been going in a different direction over the last few weeks? Are you willing to rearrange your schedule as required by project conditions?
- Frustration tolerance: How do you deal with a situation where you have put your heart into a piece of work and a set designer or director rejects it at the final rehearsal stage and you have to engage with new instructions? Do you have an idea of how performers behave when they have been made up and are wearing their wig and how they behave towards make-up artists? On occasion, even the greatest sensitivity does not help when a stage artist vents his or her private moods on bystanders. Can you deal with unfair behaviour or fits of anger?
- Manual dexterity: Working as a make-up artist requires a sure eye and a steady hand. Do you like drawing? Do you have hobbies in the area of handicrafts?

- Ability to cope with a heavy workload: Creative processes can rarely be reduced to a 40-hour week. Usually, time is short. How do you deal with a situation where you cannot implement your ideas in peace, but only have a fixed amount of time allotted to a task? How do you react when, at the final rehearsal stage, additional demands are made on you and your last free day is cancelled so the work can be completed in time for the first night?
- Creativity: In the area of make-up, wigs and special make-up effects, there are many possibilities for implementing a task, and often many possibilities that no-one has thought of yet. The requirements regarding creativity include being open to things that are new and unfamiliar as well as the need to be learning all the time and to be inspired by every possibility.
- Passion: If you choose this profession, you should live it and breathe it. The work itself has to give you great satisfaction, as generally, your commitment is neither given appropriate financial recognition nor time off in lieu.

Do not rely only on this text, however, but engage creatively with the profession in a multitude of different ways. What aims do you associate with this career aspiration? Can these aims actually be achieved in reality? Think about how your idea of the profession of make-up artist has developed. Does it derive from reports, from your own experiences, or has it come about through your own ideas of “what it might be like”? Try to put your picture into concrete terms by gaining as much personal experience as possible. Talk to make-up artists about their everyday working life. Try to do an extended internship in film or theatre-making. In that way, you can gain personal and direct impressions and make an on-the-spot assessment of whether your expectations correspond to reality and to your talents.

So finally, this is our wish for you: before you subject yourself to an assessment by strangers in the entrance examination, please examine yourself first. Do the demands associated with the real-life profession of make-up artist correspond to your personal strengths? Be honest and ask for open feedback from your parents and friends. They have got to know you over a much longer period of time and know you much better than the examination board of the Programme of Studies in Wigs, Make-up and Special Make-up Effects will be able to get to know you in a 30-minute interview. Do not leave it up to strangers to make the decision. Even if you pass the entrance examination, there is no guarantee that you will feel happy over the next few years, first of all during the programme of studies and later in the profession. It is essential that the choice you make is good for you, regardless of the outcome.

The penguin knows he can swim. He does not need a zoo keeper to explain that to him. He also knows that he will not be able to cope in the steppes. So he will not go there of his own free will. Think carefully about the giraffe and the penguin, the steppes and the water. Is make-up design **your** element?