

# Wigmaker to the Stars

Amanda Miller leads a harried life. Well, make that “hair-ied.”

For example, the New York-based wigmaker might awaken to text messages sent overnight from a movie set seeking three beards—right away. Another time, an urgent request might arrive for new, bright-red hairpieces she needs to show producers later in the day

The world of wigmaking opened up to Miller, '99, following a meeting with a professional hair and makeup artist when she was a theater student at U-M. She learned about wigmaking and, ultimately, tied her first wig knots. And when she was a sophomore, as friends performed in summer stock, she apprenticed at the Santa Fe Opera in wigs and makeup.

Miller's star has risen ever since in opera, television, film, and theater. She apprenticed for nearly 10 years, including work in another New York wigmaker's shop, and

opened her own shop in 2006 and a Web shop in 2012.

At the Metropolitan Opera, she was transformed from a craftsperson into a designer, she said. After that, for five high-pressure years at “Saturday Night Live,” she made what she calls “Frankenstein” wigs for hosts—cut and pasted from other wigs. For movies, she's created hair for actors Gwyneth Paltrow, Demi Moore, Keanu Reeves, and Paul Giamatti, among others. Last fall, she did wigs, makeup, and hair for “Cyrano de Bergerac” at Broadway's Roundabout Theatre Company. And earlier this year, she made custom sideburns for actor Jeremy Renner in “American Hustle,” a new film by David O. Russell, director of “Silver Linings Playbook.”

Miller increasingly focuses on screen work, she said, because of her long-term apprenticeship with an opera and Broadway wigmaker. “In starting my own business,”

Tools of the wig-making trade include those not only for hair on the head, but also facial and other hair.



PHOTOS BY SUSANNA BLÅVÄRG

she said, “I didn’t want to be a direct competitor. I love the film and television community in New York.”

Miller's Michigan childhood helped her envision her shop. Her father owned a shoe store, employing a cobbler whom she watched build orthopedics. She found this magical.

“Now in my shop, I try to remake that shoemaker shop,” she said, with an intern and a studio assistant to help her. The magic, she says, comes from the creative process—“working with your hands and building something from scratch.” In her shop, Miller molds custom head shapes and then uses silk, lace, and human and synthetic hair to make wigs.

While wigmaking may involve hair on the head, she said, in filmmaking “often what I make is chest hair, armpit hair, and particularly beards.” Body hair is not exactly conversation material, so her business requires discretion. That is why her 2012 Designing Women award in hair design from New York Women in Film and Television is meaningful.

“As a wigmaker, there are few opportunities for recognition on a public level.”

Miller is proving herself as the next big wigmaker, said Nicole Ledermann, a New York makeup artist and Miller's colleague and friend. “Because of her great sense of imagination and empathy, it's very easy to envision the character she's helping to create,” Ledermann said. “In New York, everyone knows Amanda now.”

*Lisa Klionsky*