

FASHIONNEXT

Twyce Styled interviews with Ariana Anderson

How did you get started sewing?

I was always making outfits as a kid out of pillowcases and sheets, but I didn't learn to actually use a machine until a Home Economics class in middle school. Then I took off sewing Halloween costumes and dresses for myself. I also made weird things too, including a duct tape prom dress! In college I got involved with the theater's costuming program, where I learned many more technical sewing skills and patterning skills. I apprenticed with a traditional tailor while studying abroad in Senegal, West Africa, and I really decided then that I wanted to do that for the rest of my life.

How did you get into bridal?

While I was in theater, making nineteenth-century ballgowns was always my absolute favorite work, so contemporary bridal wasn't that much of a stretch! The boning, corsetry, bustling, delicate fabrics, and general silhouettes often are pretty similar to the dresses from that time period. I had found Mignonette when I was in college, and immediately fell in love with the designs and general vibe. I was in communication with Kpoene' back then, but I needed to get more experience before she could really use me at the shop. For the first few years I worked maybe an average of four hours a week for Mignonette, while I primarily worked in various Chicago theaters, and then transitioned to working in a tailoring shop that did both men's and women's formalwear so I gained a lot more experience that I could really transfer confidently to working in high-end bridal exclusively.

Do you still have dreams for the future?

What a great question! I am currently living my dream in some ways, but my dreams are always expanding and evolving! We definitely dream about moving the shop to a bigger, fancier space, with enough space for more gowns, more brides, and more seamstresses! To continue making Mignonette a recognizable, respected name is a definite goal, and we would like to be able to sell the designer line in other stores or open our stores in other locations.

If you could start over, would you choose theater or bridal? Which pays more?

I'm definitely glad I had some time in theater because I think that really helped shape me into the worker I am today. I have had a lot of experience with a wide variety of fabrics, silhouettes, and personalities, and I think the engineering of many of the costumes I had worked on can also be used as references to figuring out creative solutions to any problems we might have in the bridal world. But ultimately I don't want to leave bridal. I love that every single garment I make or work on is going to be beautiful—that's not always the case with costumes! It's also such a cool experience to be so intimately a part of the process to prepare for one of the most significant days in someone's life. Wedding dresses have more meaning than any other clothing item, and that's such a privilege to be able to be a part of that!