

# Dressing a Diva - The Basic Lillian Pattern

By Michael Canadas

*The Lillian Dal Monte basic bodice pattern is designed to fit a 17-1/2" Jumeau French fashion lady with a kid leather body, but with small adjustments it can be made to fit any body type. I encourage you to have fun with this project, and be sure to channel your inner diva in the process.*

*REMEMBER to always make a muslin mockup of your garment. The mockup will afford you the opportunity to make all adjustments in the pattern before you cut into expensive material.*

## Bodice

**SEAM ALLOWANCE** Add 1/2" seam allowance to all pattern pieces. We have provided two bodice fronts showing different necklines, but feel free to re-shape the neckline to suit your design. This pattern has been utilized to make garments in silk, velvet, wool and cotton. All of the bodices in *The Romance* were made using this basic pattern.

**DARTS** Add if desired. In some of the bodices we added two side darts and an extra center seam. We made these decisions

depending on the fit desired, and the type and weight of the material utilized. When adding a center seam and/or darts, remember to add allowance.

**LINING** All garments in *The Romance* are lined. In some cases we used lightweight silks, yet others were lined with cotton, depending on the purpose of the garment. A few of the opera costumes were lined with lightweight buckram so that the garment could stand on its own, keeping its shape just like a real opera costume.



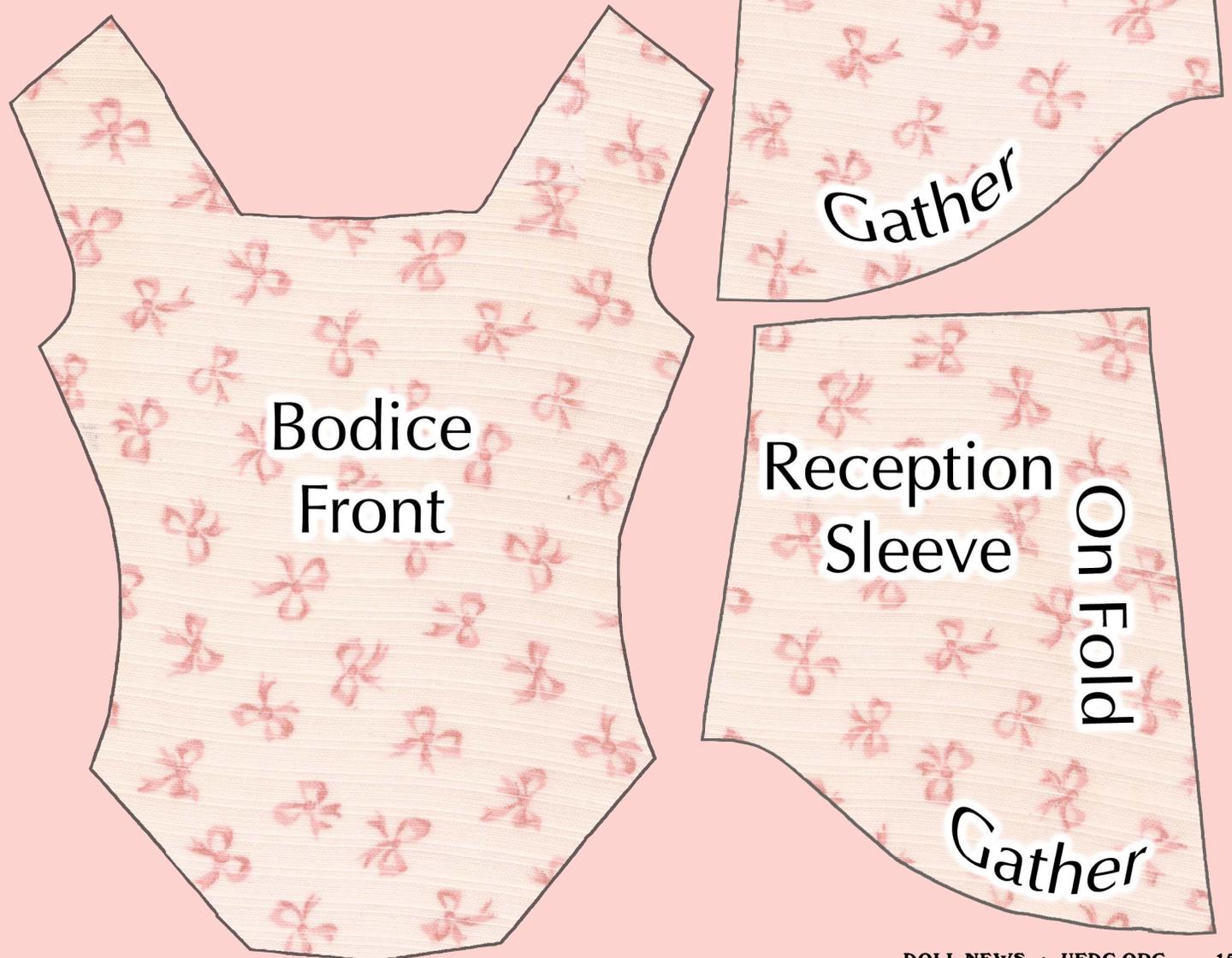
**BACK** We have given you one pattern piece for the back, but remember to cut two! Feel free to reshape the back piece to your design. Countless treatments for the back of a garment were utilized in the years from 1860-1870. You can easily go from day to night with experimentation.

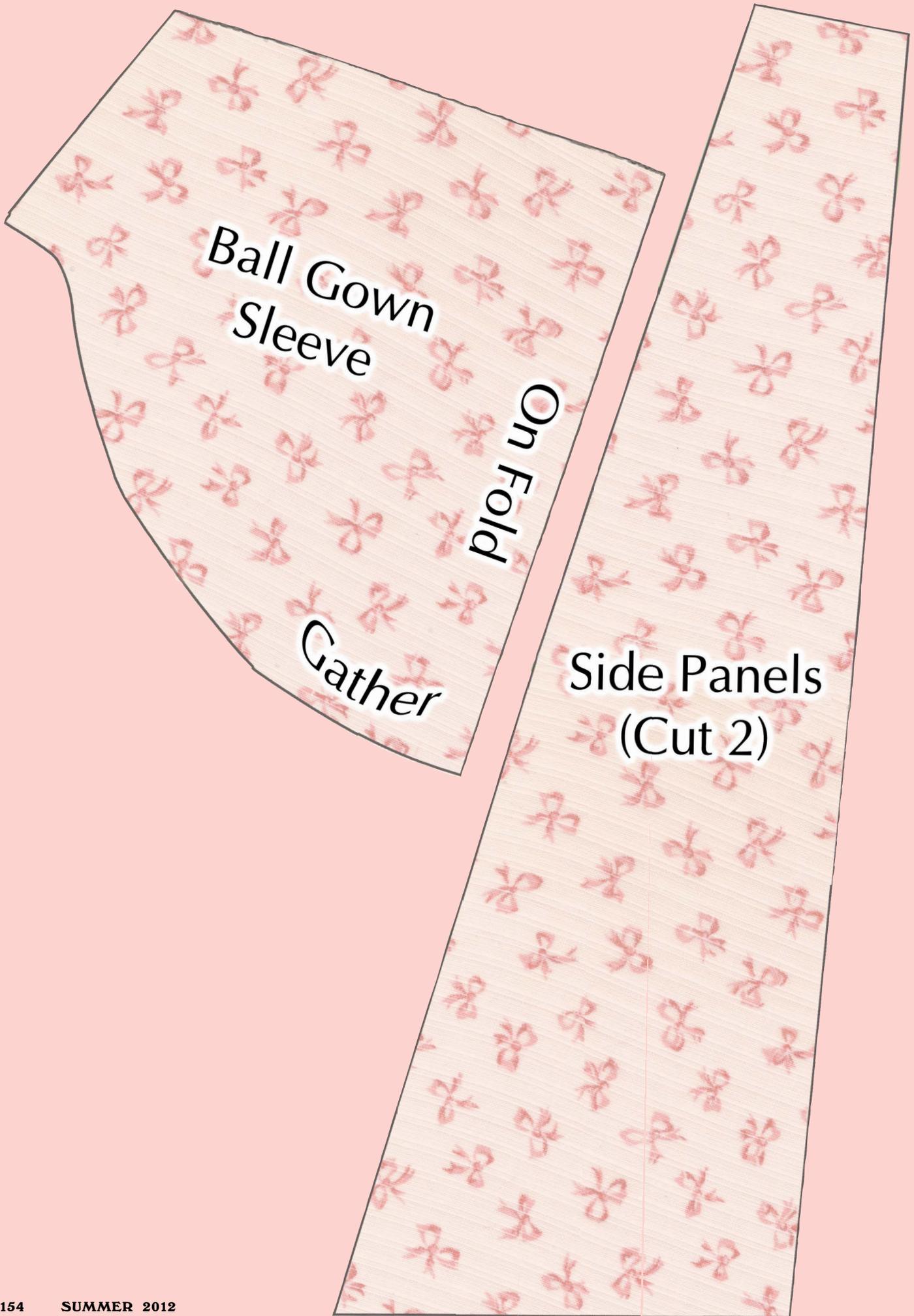
**SLEEVES** We have provided three styles – a daytime suit long sleeve, an evening reception short sleeve, and a pouf ball gown sleeve. All should be gathered and set in. In *The Romance*, cuffs were often given a piped edge. Use the style of sleeve that suits your doll’s arm type and shape, and play with the design of the sleeves. Remember, sleeves can be one of the most artistic components of a dress.

**FINISHING** Seams are handsewn, or machine sewn in the construction of your garment – your choice. We utilized both methods. The inside of the bodice and skirt should be finished using sewing tips that are available in the last two years worth of *DOLL NEWS* pattern supplements.

**PRESSING** Be sure to remember to **always press your seams** during the construction of your garment.

**TRIMS** This is where you can have fun, a lot of fun! Use your imagination to dress your own diva. We used fur, lace, piping, beads, ribbon, rope, metallic tape, soutache trim, buttons and flowers. Flowers were widely used to decorate gowns, during the time frame in which our story is set.





Ball Gown  
Sleeve

On Fold

Gather

Side Panels  
(Cut 2)



On Fold

Skirt  
Front

On Fold

## Skirt

We have given you two pieces to help you create a coordinating skirt. **You must add 2" of length at the bottom/hem of both pattern components**, because the full size pattern pieces would not fit on these pages. Please measure your doll, just in case the 2" suggested addition to length is not appropriate for your particular doll.

As instructed, the front of the skirt is to be cut on the fold. Cut two side pieces. The pattern for the back of the skirt is not provided here, you must create your own. It is simple to do. You can easily create a long train for evening, or a short train for a daytime skirt.

A good rule of thumb is add the width of the front and two side panels after they have been sewn together, and take that measurement times 4, in order to arrive at the width for the back of the skirt. For evening wear, you may want to increase that number to 5 for added drama. The train can be whatever length you desire.

The skirts in *The Romance* had both side and back openings. Most openings were encased in the lining of the garment. Our subject doll, Lillian Dal Monte, has a 7 ½" waist, but be sure to measure your doll and let that be your guide.

We used a 1" wide waistband on the fold, and incorporated many different gathering techniques to create our garments. Many different techniques for skirt gathering and pleating are available in the last two years worth of *DOLL NEWS* pattern supplements.