


CECELIA PODOLAK

THE CLASSICS

BY SUSAN NEALL



Cecelia Podolak is a University Professor with a Master's Degree in Clothing, Textiles and Merchandising. She specialises in teaching and writing about jacket construction, fitting, professional pressing and has created a well designed pattern range of today's classics.

Cecelia started her career as a secondary school Home Economics teacher, but after four and a half years she decided to go back to university to specialise in clothing and textiles and completed her Masters. It was during this time that Cecelia took a three-week traditional tailoring course at the University of Seattle that finally set her future direction.

After initially moving from the United States to Canada to teach tailoring, pattern making and general clothing construction at the University of Manitoba, Cecelia succumbed to the dream that all great 'fabriholics' have and opened a fabric shop in Vancouver BC, with her business partner, Arlee Gale. Cega Fabrics specialised in beautiful, quality fabrics, mainly imported from Europe. But, as with most fabric shops today, Cecelia and Arlee soon found that they needed to continue to teach to support their salary from the shop. Cecelia still teaches for the University of British Columbia, offering up-date courses for secondary school clothing; textiles teachers.

Armed with all of this fabulous knowledge and experience Cecelia still had to ask "What will I do with the rest of my life?" when the much loved fabric shop was eventually sold. The answer came when the first sewing shows in

Canada started in 1988. Starting with pressing demonstrations and one-hour seminars, and initially only selling pressing equipment and information booklets, Cecelia was soon approached at the shows to write. She has since written many articles and a book for Threads, articles for Sew News and we are very pleased to announce that Cecelia will soon be contributing to Australian Stitches.

THE CLASSICS

The Classics pattern line was developed to cater to the demand of fashion sewers attending the shows across America and Canada and fill an otherwise empty niche.

Cecelia found that many of the other independent pattern companies were targeting 'quick & easy' or 'wearable art' and seemed to have forgotten the basics that make up 80% of most people's wardrobes.

She started with a classic cardigan-style jacket and has continued to add solid wardrobe pieces in patterns that marry contemporary techniques with traditional principles.

Cecelia said during our interview: "If I can construct a garment completely by machine and it looks great then, YES! But if I would get a better quality





result with traditional methods then I will hand-sew.” Apart from using industrial sewing techniques, The Classics patterns also differ in their fit. They are designed to fit the mature figure and are fuller in the bust, waist and hips and if you compare the measurements with any major pattern brand you will quickly see the difference.

Many of the designs include sizes 2–24 in multi-sized patterns and the more detailed jacket patterns come with a very comprehensive and easy to follow instructional booklet, rather than the regular guidesheet. Cecelia is a strong advocate of the ‘tissue-fitting’ method and guides the sewer through the fitting and sewing process.

Throughout the patterns the seam allowances vary in width to accommodate different sewing and fit needs and there are several industrial and European influences in the techniques used. The pant pattern has a 1cm (3/8in) crotch seam that becomes wider as it approaches the back waist (like men’s trouser) and has a European cut to the crotch curve. This means that the back crotch is longer and deeper, the front crotch is short and the inner leg seams sit further towards the front of the body. This is also seen in menswear to fit their flatter lower backside shape; and this shape is very often the curse of the mature woman! The pant also has a straight centre front seam to accommodate a tummy and the great pockets have a tummy stay to keep them from gaping.

The shirt has 1cm (3/8in) seams throughout which eliminates bulk and makes the collar easier and quicker to sew and turn. The bust darts are pressed UP in the European manner and offers a very flattering look. There are optional waist darts for fit. The skirt has a 1cm (3/8in) seam allowance at the waist and 1.9cm (3/4 in) at the side seams to add



MEASUREMENT DIFFERENCE CHART

Size 14	The Classics Patterns	McCall’s Patterns
Bust	102.0 cm (40 in)	92cm (36 in)
Waist	87.5 cm (34 1/2 in)	71cm (28 in)
Hips	110.5 cm (43 1/2 in)	97cm (38 in)

weight and help the skirt hang well. The skirt includes a mock wrap, so no unwanted upper leg shows when sitting or striding for the bus, and the vent lining is sewn in with a great industrial technique that makes the application quicker and the garment stronger in wear.

The casual jacket has a slightly dropped shoulder line to give that casual look and allow other garments to be worn comfortably underneath, but is not too large under the arm. This is a very easy, unlined casual jacket, with an excellent mandarin collar and stand and I would thoroughly recommend it.

The notched collar jacket has 1cm (3/8in) seam allowances around the centre front, neck edge and collar, for easier construction. The collar is completely shaped and sewn before being sewn to the neck edge. The cardigan jacket includes directions for sewing the lining in entirely on the machine. Sleeves have slightly reduced ease in the caps which make them easy to set in with almost any fabric.

The dress has waist tucks which extend into hip darts in the back for a more flattering fit. 1cm (3/8in) seams are used with the set-in sleeve and the collar/neck edges. There is a small amount of ease in the sleeve cap but the sleeve sets in with no ease threads.

The Classics Pattern Line was developed due to popular demand. They are multi-sized and include instructional booklets or guidesheets which feature industrial sewing techniques.

Extract from an article by Susan Neall, Australian Stitches, Vol 13, No 2.

PHOTO CREDIT: AUSTRALIAN STITCHES.

