

Theatre Major Career Guide

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So I have a BA in Theatre Arts, Now What?

by Jeremy Cloyd

Theatre is a collective and collaborative event. Each time a group of Theatre Artists undertake a new production, it asks them to bring each of their special skills to the table. Everything from playwriting, designing, dramaturgy, and performance becomes both relevant and necessary. This sets theatre apart from any other art form.

One thing we hear all the time as young Theatre Artists is that a college degree isn't required to work in theatre. Is this true? Yes. Is it also true that you don't have to have a degree to work in most fields? Yes. So why do Theatre Programs exist? The simple answer is the make you more marketable and increase your chances of getting work in a field that is intensely competitive.

One thing that seems to lead to great success in finding work in the theatre field is the combination of an undergraduate degree, internships within the theatre industry, additional training (master classes, workshops, conservatory, etc), experience working in theatre, and, most importantly, a passionately positive attitude. Anyone graduating with a BA in Theatre should come out of that program with some incredible skills such as improvisation, project management, budgeting, collaboration in diverse environments, work ethic, difficult decision making, presentation skills, and doing what needs to be done.

While most Theatre Majors will pursue careers in the theatre industry or larger arts world, these skills can and will lead to success in many many many other fields.



Skills

Analysis

Problem solving
Analyzing and interpreting the emotions and motives of others
Understanding ideas within historical/social context
Comparing and contrasting ideas/information

Artistic/Technical

Explaining concepts
Ability to concentrate and practice intensely for long periods of time
Sound, lighting, costuming, makeup and design techniques
Good health, stamina and body coordination

Communication

Public speaking
Communicating ideas and emotions creatively
Speaking articulately and listening introspectively
Voice control and modulation

Organization

Self-discipline
Working under pressure and meeting deadlines
Interacting with colleagues in a team setting
Ability to maintain composure when faced with the unexpected





Career Opportunities

Professional Acting

- Thick skinned
- Able to perform in front of large groups
- Articulate

Playwriting

- Excellent writing skills
- Understanding of the English language

Directing

- Creative vision
- Articulate
- Strong leader

Set & Costume Design

- Research skills (history, period, story)
- Budgeting
- Drawing, painting, model building

Stage Management

- General knowledge of acting, directing, set design, lighting, costuming, etc.
- Strong leader
- Organized
- Strong communication skills

Dramaturg/ Literary Management

- Research skills
- Critical analysis of text/story
- Strong writing skills

Theatre Education

- Passion for teaching young people
- General knowledge of all aspects of theatre
- Opportunities to teach in schools, colleges/universities, & professional theatres

Drama Therapy

- Double major in Psychology & Theatre
- Patience
- Tact
- Artistic Ability
- Understanding of Theatre

Arts Administration

- Understanding & appreciation of theatre & the arts
- Strong business acumen
- Organized
- Finance & marketing skills





Who Employs a Theatre Major?

- Community Organizations
- Educational/Cultural Institutions
- Fundraising Firms
- Television/Radio/Film
- Production Companies
- Colleges, Universities,
- Schools
- Theatres
- Touring Companies
- Arts Councils
- Libraries
- Performing Arts Organizations
- Amusement and Theme Parks
- Cruise Lines
- Film Companies
- Entertainment Law Firms

What are some jobs Theatre Majors have had?

A BA in Theatre is a broad degree. This is important because it allows students to build skills that can be applied to a variety of careers. While this list includes many positions within the theatre industry, it also includes positions in which theatre majors have applied the skills gained through their study of Theatre.

- Prod. Support Services
- *Arts Council Director
- Booking Agent
- Arts Administration
- Lighting Designer
- *Managing Director
- Actor
- Electrician
- *College Professor
- Company Manager
- *Business Manager
- Special Effects Technician
- Development Director
- Audience Relations Specialist
- Publicist
- Artist-in-residence
- *Drama Therapist
- Grants Specialist
- Director
- Voice-over Artist
- Acting Coach
- Producer
- Personal Manager
- *Literary Agent
- Development Associate
- *Community Arts Center
- Public Relations Director
- Theatre Teacher
- Director
- Dramaturg
- Scenic Designer
- Coordinator Hair/Makeup
- Property Designer
- Carpenter
- Artist's Agent
- Casting Director
- Scenic Artist
- Marketing Director
- *Theatre Librarian
- Press Agent
- Outreach Coordinator
- Draper
- Costume Designer
- Box Office Manager
- Stage Manager

* requires an advanced degree



Where are our alumni?

- Actors Bridge Ensemble
- Unto These Hills
- Snow Camp Outdoor Theatre
- Missoula Children's Theatre
- Thunder Bay Theatre
- Matt Davenport Productions
- Live Arts and Attractions
- Tidewater Stage
- Pioneer Playhouse
- Flashback Theater Co.
- Southern Kentucky Film Commission
- Collaboraction Theatre Company
- Point Park University
- 20% Theatre Company
- Midland Center for the Arts
- Reutan Collective
- Mary Baldwin University
- Regent University
- National University of Ireland Galway
- Florida Studio Theatre
- University of Idaho



Earnings



**Directors & Producers
held approx. 152,400
jobs in 2018**

**Actors held
approx. 64,500
jobs in 2018**

**Lowest 10%
<\$34,450/year**

**Median pay
\$34.46/hour**

**Highest 10%
>\$163,540/year**

**Lowest 10%
<\$9.05/hour**

**Median pay
\$17.54/hour**

**Highest 10%
>\$61.74/hour**

Work hours for producers and directors can be long and irregular. Evening, weekend, and holiday work is common. Some work more than 40 hours per week. Many producers and directors do not work a standard workweek, because their schedules may change with each assignment or project.

Work hours for actors are extensive and irregular. Early morning, evening, weekend, and holiday work is common. Some actors work part time. Few actors work full time, and many have variable schedules. Those who work in theater may travel with a touring show across the country. Actors in movies may also travel to work on location.



Graduate School Options

Master of Arts (M.A.)

This is often referred to as a research degree and provides students with a strong background in theatre history, dramatic literature and theory and criticism. Students also explore creative areas of special interest including dramaturgy, playwriting, design and directing. Completion of the M.A. degree typically requires a thesis. The Master of Arts in Theatre is intended as advanced education for students with substantial background in theatre who wish to expand their knowledge and skills in theatre and drama for the purposes of preparation for doctoral studies, preparation for MFA training, enhancement of secondary school teaching skills and credentials or enrichment for other personal goals. An M.A. usually takes 1 to 2 years to complete.



Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.)

The M.F.A. is a terminal degree in many areas of theatre. The most common areas of study are: acting, directing, drama and theatre for youth, playwriting, theatre technology, theatrical design and theatre management. Completion of the M.F.A. degree typically requires a thesis. An M.F.A usually takes 2 to 3 years to complete.

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

The primary credential for college level teaching is the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), although one can teach with a master's degree in some areas of theatre. The Ph.D. typically involves both course work and a major research project. The traditional career for recipients of the doctorate degree is college teaching and research. The Ph.D., however, can lead to a wide variety of career options such as working as a consultant for an arts agency or nonprofit organization, or working as an official in a national or state arts policy organization (e.g., National Endowment of the Arts, state arts councils.) A Ph.D. usually takes 4 to 6 years of full time study.



Online Resources for Theatre Majors

Job Listings

Alliance of Artist Communities

<http://www.artistcommunities.org/>

The Alliance of Artists Communities is the service organization for the field of artists' communities and residencies. They maintain artist residency listings, advocate for artist residency programs and communities, and offer professional development for artists. Their website includes job postings.

Americans for the Arts

<http://jobbank.artsusa.org>

This advocacy organization supports the arts in many ways. Their job bank is the premier electronic recruitment resource for the industry and includes national job listings for all of the fine arts. It includes postings in academia, arts administration and management. Check out the rest of their site for other helpful arts resources.

Art Job

<https://www.artjob.org/>

Comprehensive, up-to-date national listings of jobs, internships, fellowships and other employment opportunities in the arts.

ArtSearch

<http://www.tcg.org/artsearch/>

The publication from the Theatre Communication Group for full-time, part-time, seasonal, year-round and internship opportunities in the performing arts.

Backstage Jobs

<http://backstage.com/>

Free job listing service for all behind-the-scenes jobs in the live entertainment industry.

Entertainment Careers

<http://www.entertainmentcareers.net/>

Jobs, internships and career information in the entertainment industry.

Greenlights

<http://www.greenlights.org/>

Greenlights is a provider of nonprofit strengthening and support services including professional development events, workshops, and a job board containing hundreds of postings by member organizations.

Idealist

<http://www.idealists.org/>

Idealist.org connects people with job, volunteer and action opportunities posted by 90,000 organizations around the world.

League of Resident Theatres

<http://www.lort.org/>

LORT is the largest professional theatre association of its kind in the United States. This site has links to 74 member theatres in every major market. LORT also maintains collective bargaining agreements for actors, directors, choreographers and designers.

National Performance Network

<http://www.npnweb.org/>

NPN brings to national attention some of the most exciting and stimulating new work in dance, theater, music and multidisciplinary art being created across the United States through both direct and indirect support to touring artists.

New York Foundation for the Arts

<http://www.nyfa.org/>

This website provides a number of services for artists including job and internship postings, funding opportunities, arts advocacy and services for artists. They also maintain an online newsletter covering current issues affecting artists.



Online Resources for Theatre Majors

Job Listings

Playbill Online

<http://www.playbill.com/>

This site claims to be "THE Source on the Web for Broadway Theater Information." And it lives up to its name, providing a wealth of information for both theatre goers and professionals. Check out their "Casting and Jobs" section which is divided into the following categories: performer, technical, design, administrative, academic and the mysterious "other."

The Playwrights Center

<http://www.pwcenter.org/>

An incubator of new work for the stage, and the nation's most powerful resource for playwrights.

Showbiz Jobs

<http://www.showbizjobs.com/>

Search engine for all types of jobs in the entertainment industry.

Theatre Communications Group

<http://www.tcg.org/>

The national organization for the American theatre with over 440 member theatres offers a wide array of services.

University/Resident Theatre Association

<http://www.urta.com/>

The University/Resident Theatre Association is the country's oldest and largest consortium of professional theatre training graduate programs and associated professional theatre companies.

USA Jobs

<https://www.usajobs.gov/>

USAJOBS is the U.S. Government's official system/program for Federal jobs and employment information. They offer an excellent page dedicated to students and recent graduates seeking Federal jobs.

Professional Organizations

Actors' Equity Association

<http://www.actorsequity.org/>

The Actors' Equity Association is the labor union representing over 40,000 American actors and stage managers working in the professional theatre. Their website contains information about the union and its various departments, programs and contracts, as well as industry-related news and casting notices.

Actor's Fund

<http://www.actorsfund.org/>

This amazing resource offers a wealth of information for actors, dancers, musicians, producers, directors, carpenters, stage hands, singers and others in the spotlight and behind the scenes. They also have a terrific resource center for health insurance as well as human services for people with HIV+/AIDS and the elderly. Highly recommended.

American Alliance for Theatre & Education

<http://www.aate.com/>

The mission of AATE is to promote standards of excellence in theatre and theatre education, connecting artists, educators, researchers and scholars with each other, and by providing opportunities for our membership to learn, exchange, expand and diversify their work, the audience and their perspectives.

American Federation of Television and Radio Artists

sagaftra.org

The primary role of Screen Actors Guild concerns the members' wages and working conditions on their jobs, most Guild resources are spent on enforcing the contracts under which the members work. However, their web site has a terrific links page.



Online Resources for Theatre Majors

Professional Organizations

Association for Theatre in Higher Education

www.athe.org

The Association for Theatre in Higher Education is an organization of individuals and institutions that provides vision and leadership for the profession and promotes excellence in theatre education. ATHE actively supports scholarship through teaching, research and practice and serves as a collective voice for its mission through its publications, conferences, advocacy, projects, and through collaborative efforts with other organizations.

Association of Performing Arts Presenters

<http://www.apap365.org/>

Excellent site for those interested in arts administration positions in the performing arts. Includes a job bank.

Lincoln Center Directors Lab

<http://www.lct.org/directorsLabMain.htm>

The LCT Directors Lab is a developmental program for nurturing stage directors from around the country and around the world.

Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of America

<http://www.lmda.org/>

Professional organization with a variety of helpful resources and links.

New Dramatists

<http://newdramatists.org/>

New Dramatists is a unique resource for the American Theatre. The company is dedicated to the playwright and serves as an artistic home, theatre research and development center, and writers colony for the national theatre just a few steps from Broadway. The company finds and nurtures new talent through a competitive, membership selection process and a seven-year playwright development program.

Professional Lighting & Sound Association

<http://www.plasa.org>

The professional association for technologies in theatre and stage production.

The Dramatists Guild of America

<http://dramatistsguild.com/>

The Dramatists Guild of America is the only professional association for playwrights, composers, and lyricists. Membership is open to all dramatic writers, regardless of their production history.

United States Institute for Theatre Technology (USITT)

<http://www.usitt.org/>

The Association of Design, Production, and Technology Professionals in the Performing Arts and Entertainment industry.

