

Drama Major

CAREER GUIDE



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Table of Contents

Why Study Drama?.....	4
Skills of a Drama Major.....	5
Career Definitions.....	7
Things to Consider in High School.....	13
Career Requirements: Post-Secondary School.....	13
Career Requirements: Certification.....	14
Career Requirements: Graduate School.....	14
Employers.....	15
Work Environment and Job Satisfaction.....	15
Starting Out.....	16
Further Resources.....	17
Sources.....	19

Career Index

Business	p.7	Management	p.10
Advertising & Marketing	p.7	Arts Management	p.10
Agent/Talent Manager	p.7	Box Office Manager	p.10
Casting Director	p.7	Dramaturg/Literary Manager	p.10
Producer – Film	p.7	Stage Manager	p.10
Producer – Stage	p.7	Wardrobe Supervisor	p.10
Producer – Television	p.7		
Production Assistant	p.7	Performance	p.10
Public Relations	p.8	Acting	p.10
		Comedian	p.11
Directing, Design, & Writing	p.8	Dancer	p.11
Choreographer	p.8	Model	p.11
Costume Design	p.8	Puppeteer	p.11
Directing	p.8	Radio/Television Announcer	p.11
Lighting Design	p.8	Singer	p.11
Playwright	p.8	Stunt Performer	p.11
Property Designer	p.8		
Screenwriting	p.8	Technicians	p.12
Set Designer	p.9	Broadcast Technician	p.12
Showrunner	p.9	Carpenter	p.12
Sound Designer	p.9	Electrician	p.12
Technical Director	p.9	Grip	p.12
		Hairstylist	p.12
		Makeup Artist	p.12
Education	p.9	Rigger	p.12
Drama Therapist	p.9	Scenic Artist	p.13
College Professor	p.9	Special Effects Artist	p.13
Teacher – Primary & Secondary	p.9	Stagehand	p.13
		Tailor/Seamstress	p.13

Why Study Drama?

For those pursuing a college education, the choice of a major is not a decision taken lightly. Additionally, for those who seek a career in the dramatic arts, knowing how to begin is tricky and confusing. In all the noise of today's information age, making life-altering decisions can be difficult. To cut through the chatter, here are some thoughts on exactly why a college education in drama is worth it.

A degree in drama will open a lot of doors. Aside from acting, drama majors also go into fields such as technical theatre, stage management, directing, producing, writing, design, arts administration, theatre education, theatre technology, public relations, and drama therapy.¹ Beyond that, close to one-half of all visual and performing arts majors will end up working in fields unrelated to their undergraduate degree (similar to almost all college majors).² A major in drama can take someone into business, management, engineering, communications, sales, and much, much more.

Why do drama majors find themselves in technology and business fields? Simply put, that's the way the world is shifting. As technology improves and renders entire industries obsolete, the job market is valuing a different kind of skillset. In a global study of over 1500 CEOs from 60 countries and 33 industries, IBM found that the most important skill those CEOs possessed was creativity.³ Another skill drama majors have that gives them an advantage? Being adaptable. On average, a person between the ages of 25 and 45 will hold 11 different jobs in their lifetime.⁴ Right now, employers are competing for workers who learn quickly, are adaptable and resourceful, and have skills that apply to a variety of challenges and tasks. Drama majors check each and every one of those boxes.⁵ More numbers on the topic: the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that by 2022, 1 million Americans will enter the workforce as educators, and another 1.1 million will enter in sales. However, job growth for software engineers is only 279,500.⁶ The future will not be kind to those seeking careers in narrow, highly specific technical fields.

Another common concern about investing in a college drama education is the viability of a career in the entertainment industry. It is true that having a college drama degree does not guarantee success in such a highly competitive field. However, it is one of the best ways to increase one's chances of advancement, through gaining experience, networking, and developing one's skillset.⁷

College students do not have to choose between keeping their career options open and pursuing their passion. Making a living in drama is possible, and there are endless areas of specialization to choose from. In the meantime, drama majors can have a better college experience – and make better grades – by studying something they're passionate about.⁸

¹ UT Fine Arts Career Services, 2015

² Tepper, 2013

³ Tepper, 2013

⁴ Tepper, 2013

⁵ Tepper, 2013.

⁶ Anders, 2015

⁷ UT Fine Arts Career Services, 2015

⁸ Dennard, 2014

Skills of a Drama Major⁹

Communication Skills

Majoring in drama will strengthen interpersonal communication skills tremendously through acting, speech, and voice classes. For theatre technicians, working on crews will teach students how to communicate information to others clearly and precisely. These types of communication skills are taught to employees in workshops – already having these skills gives drama majors an advantage.

Hand-in-hand with the above are public speaking and presentation skills. Acting classes and performing in productions instill students with confidence and provide experience in performing and speaking in front of an audience. Everything mentioned above makes for great presentation skills, which sets drama majors apart in the workplace.

Teamwork

A theatrical production is, at its core, a team of people with diverse skills bringing together incredibly varied areas of expertise to create a unified work of art. Each area – the designers and directors, management, lighting, sound, costumes, the actors, the stagehands, the scenic painters – work together, completing very different tasks that all add up to the same thing. This concept, inherently taught in a theatrical setting, is invaluable at any workplace.

Working in a theatre means encountering and cooperating with many different types of people. All of these individuals will have different communication styles, work ethics, and behavioral quirks. Learning to work with all kinds of people is not a skill to be taken lightly. Drama majors will learn firsthand that everyone brings something to the table. Respect for colleagues leads to a healthier workplace, and employers will take notice of it.

Just as important as respecting colleagues is respecting protocol. In theatre, following protocol is integral. Not adhering to shop safety rules is highly dangerous, and not completing proper checks before a performance is reckless. Following the rules of conduct ensures a smooth, efficient experience for everyone involved. Knowing where one stands in the chain of command (director → stage manager → crew head → crew technician) prevents unnecessary conflict. Understanding and applying this to other settings makes drama majors stand out.

Adaptability

Drama majors have to be able to learn quickly. If they don't have that skill at first, they will when they graduate. No matter what area of specialization the student is in, drama majors have to absorb and comprehend a lot of information quickly and accurately in order to complete their tasks. This increases listening skills as well.

In a technical theatre setting, new problems will arise and need to be solved daily, often with whatever resources are already at hand. Being able to see a problem, assess it, and solve it effectively with creative solutions is a highly prized skill. For actors, the experience of analyzing a script strengthens critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Working on a single production, one drama student might paint a scenic unit, build a flat, hang lighting instruments, run props and costumes backstage, assist with special effects makeup, and even go onstage as an extra. What role a student takes on will be different from semester to semester, production

⁹ This section is adapted from essays written by Louis E. Catron, Tom Vanderwell, and Brian Sibley. Information on where to find the original essays can be found in the list of sources at the back of this guide. For further reading: www.chronicle.com/article/Why-Theater-Majors-Are-Vital/235925/

to production, week to week. Drama students inherently learn how to step outside of their comfort zone – this is useful in every area of life.

Self-Discipline

Being in theatre means maintaining a balance between theatre work and personal life. This experience means that drama majors learn how to govern themselves and their time effectively. They gain the ability to be in the present and leave other concerns (relationship problems, financial stressors, homework, frustrating days at work) at the green room door. Time management skills become second-nature.

Drama students learn the importance of being on time. Tardiness is disrespectful to everyone else involved in the production, and drama majors understand this. Employers value those who meet deadlines and are rarely late.

Working on a theatrical production inherently involves a lot of pressure, and often a lot of intense situations. Learning to work effectively when deadlines are too close for comfort, and in moments of crisis, leads drama majors to keep their cool. This is a useful skill in every work environment.

Responsibility

Drama students will inevitably get the chance to take on a solo project or to assume a leadership position. These opportunities aren't common among other undergraduate college majors. Being a drama major teaches the ability to work independently with minimal direction. There will be opportunities to direct, design, serve as the head of a crew, and more. Direct experience in team and project management is a huge advantage.

Decision-making skills also improve as a drama major. Many situations in theatre require making difficult decisions, decisions involving cost and effect, and decisions surrounding long- and short-term goals. A drama student learns the importance of taking responsibility for decisions that ended badly and builds their critical thinking and analysis skills in the process.

Resilience

It may be cliché, but those involved in theatre do learn how to handle rejection. Being able to handle frustrations and disappointments is an important life skill, and no field teaches it faster than the arts.

Taking criticism without making it personal is a hard task for some. Drama students have more experience with it inherently. Feedback is given on every task, assignment, and audition. Notes are given after every rehearsal. Drama majors learn to take necessary criticism with a professional attitude, without letting it get under their skin.

Being involved in theatre means long hours and hard work. A painter will spend hours hand-painting scenery that gets thrown in the trash as soon as the final performance is over. For a production to succeed, everyone has to give one hundred percent, and be motivated solely by the promise of a job well done. This work ethic will carry over into other areas, such as academics and in the workplace.

Self-Advocacy

One of the most important skills drama majors will learn is self-advocacy. They learn to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Even better, they learn how to do this objectively, without bringing pride into it. Drama students will become confident in their abilities and will be able to advocate for themselves in all areas of life.

Career Definitions¹⁰

Business

Advertising & Marketing

Advertising and marketing managers plan, organize, and oversee the execution of campaigns to generate interest in products, events, organizations, or services. Advertising/marketing managers typically have a bachelor's degree and work experience in advertising, marketing, promotions, or sales. *The annual median wage for advertising and marketing managers is \$128,870. Employment for advertising managers is expected to grow 6.3 percent over the next ten years.*

Agent & Talent Managers

Agents find jobs for performers, and in return, receive a commission for each successful job. Agents (also known as business managers) will also be in charge of negotiating salary and advising performers on how to develop their careers. Agents typically have a bachelor's degree and less than 5 years of work experience in a related occupation. *The annual median wage for agents is \$73,740. Projected growth from 2018-2028 is at 10.4 percent growth.*

Casting Director

Casting directors organize and supervise the casting process for films, TV shows, advertising campaigns, and theatre productions. No formal education is typically required, but casting directors need an understanding of acting ability and some experience in a related occupation. *PayScale.com reports that talent directors earn a median salary of \$93,027. According to available data, employment for casting directors is expected to grow at the average rate for all occupations.*

Producer

Producers make the business decisions for a film, TV, or stage production. They procure the funds, make hiring decisions, set budgets, and approve major decisions, among other responsibilities. Most producers in film, TV, or theatre have a bachelor's degree and several years of experience in a related occupation. *The median annual wage for producers is \$74,420. Employment of producers over the next 10 years is projected to grow 4.8 percent.*

Production Assistant

The position of production assistant is the typical entry-level job for those seeking careers in entertainment business, producing, or directing. Production assistants have a diverse range of responsibilities, and typically work on film and TV sets. Most production assistant jobs are temporary, and no education is usually required. *The median annual wage for production assistants according to Salary.com is \$31,170.*

Press Agents & Public Relations

Publicists, also known as press agents or public relations managers, direct efforts to generate a positive public image for their employer, organization, or client. Public relations specialists have the same objective, but this title typically requires minimal experience (compared to managing positions, which require work experience) and pays less. Managers and specialists typically need a bachelor's degree in public relations, journalism, communications, English, or business, and some managing positions require a master's degree. *Median annual wage for managers is \$116,180, and \$61,150 for specialists. Projected job growth for specialists is 6.4 percent, and growth for managers is at 7.8 percent.*

¹⁰ Some of the descriptions found below were adapted from University of Texas Fine Arts Career Services' "A Career Guide for Theatre Majors." Information on where to find the original publication can be found in the list of sources at the back of this guide. Statistics and other information are sourced from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (unless stated otherwise).

Directing, Design, & Writing

Choreographer

Choreographers are the creative minds behind dance performances. They ensure that the performance conveys the intended ideas, themes, and narratives. Choreographers may be consistently employed with a company or school, or they may be self-employed. Almost all choreographers started out as dancers, and every choreographer needs years of experience and training before becoming successful. The necessity and nature of formal education/training depends on the type of dance the choreographer specializes in. *The median annual wage for choreographers is \$46,330. Projected job growth for choreographers is at -2.8 percent, as the industry is highly competitive.*

Costume Designer

Costume designers create costumes that fit with the overall vision of the production, whether that is a film, TV show, dance performance, or stage production. Most costume designers have a bachelor's degree in a related field (fashion design, fashion merchandising, etc.). *The average yearly salary for costume designers according to Salary.com is \$38,900. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a projected job growth for fashion designers of 1 percent.*

Directing

Directors are in charge of the production of films, live theatre, TV shows, and other performance forms. They make the creative decisions and coordinate all the areas of production to uphold their vision. The responsibilities of a film, stage, and TV director differ, as does the work environment, pay, and educational requirements. *According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the annual median wage for directors (of all kinds) and producers is \$74,420. Projected job growth for the same is at 3.6 percent.*

Lighting Designer

Lighting designers typically have a bachelor's or master's degree, and use computer lighting software and lighting instruments to create the desired look for a production. *The average salary for set and exhibit designers is \$61,020, and the projected growth for set and exhibit designers is 5 percent.*

Playwright

Playwrights write the scripts for stage productions, and often work freelance. There are no standard educational requirements for playwrights, but bachelor's and master's degrees increase employment chances and necessary skills. *The median annual wage for writers and authors is \$63,200. Projected job growth for writers and authors between 2018-2028 is -0.1 percent.*

Property Designer/Props Master

Props masters design, build, and organize the props for a production. Some props masters earn their positions through work experience, and others pursue degrees in drama or design. *The New York Film Academy reports that props masters can earn \$30,000 in most of the United States and \$60,000 in Los Angeles.*

Screenwriter

Screenwriters write the screenplays for filmed productions, including movies, TV shows, commercials, and more. They often work freelance. There are no requirements to be a screenwriter, but degrees and courses exist to develop skill and increase employment chances. *The median annual wage for writers and authors is \$63,200. Projected job growth for writers and authors between 2018-2028 is -0.1 percent.*

Set Designer

Set designers, also called scenic designers, create floor plans and models according to the specifications, needs, and desired style of the production. They work closely with the director to ensure consistency of vision. A bachelor's degree is typical. *Median annual salary of set and exhibit designers is \$54,600. Projected job growth for set and exhibit designers from 2018-2028 is at 4.7.*

Showrunner

A newly developing career in the entertainment industry is the TV showrunner. Showrunners often take on the responsibilities of the producer (and are usually credited as such), but also takes on creative responsibilities in developing the characters and writing. They have the final authority on both the business side and the creative side. *The median annual wage for producers is \$74,420. Employment of producers over the next 10 years is projected to grow 4.8 percent.*

Sound Designer

Sound designers work with sound engineering software to create sound cues for live performances or sound effects for movies, TV, video games, and more. A certificate or associate's degree is sufficient for some sound design positions, but there are bachelor's and master's degrees in the field as well. *The median annual salary for all sound engineering technicians is \$52,390 and the projected job growth for all sound engineering technicians is at 2 percent.*

Technical Director

Technical directors coordinate and oversee the various technical areas of a live production, including construction of the set, lighting, props, etc. *PayScale.com lists the average salary of a technical director as \$96,589.*

Education

Drama Therapist

Drama therapists work closely with medical professionals to treat and rehabilitate people with physical, mental, and emotional disabilities. Drama therapists need a master's degree in psychology and drama therapy. *PayScale.com lists the average salary of a drama therapist as \$44,825. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects the job growth for all therapy fields between 2018-2028 at 21 percent.*

College Professor

College professors teach undergraduate and graduate students pursuing advanced degrees in higher education. They work at public and private colleges or universities, professional schools, and junior/community colleges. *The median annual wage for all postsecondary teachers is \$75,440, and \$69,530 for arts, drama and music professors. Employment for all college professors is expected to grow by 9 percent, and 7.9 percent for arts, drama, and music professors.*

Primary/Secondary School Teacher

Primary and secondary school teachers teach students in public or private elementary, middle, and high schools in a variety of subjects, including the arts and drama. Teachers at this level of education typically need at least a bachelor's degree and must have a state-issued teaching certification. A certification for teaching in high schools may require college-level study in the subject the individual wants to teach. *The median annual wage for preschool teachers is \$30,520 at 7.1 percent projected job growth; for kindergarten teachers is \$56,850 at 3.8 percent; for*

elementary school teachers is \$59,670 at 3.3 percent; for middle school teachers is \$59,660 at 3.5 percent; for high school teachers is \$61,660 at 3.6 percent.

Management

Arts Management & Arts Administration

Arts organizations have a number of administrative, business, or management functions. For example, an art gallery needs managers to coordinate exhibits, and a concert hall or theatre needs managers to write press releases, coordinate marketing, schedule tours, and generally run the business side. Most of these positions will require at least a bachelor's degree, and many will require a master's degree. *The average median salary for management occupations is \$105,660. Job growth for management occupations is projected at 6.9 percent.*

Box Office Manager

The box office manager handles ticket sales and related operations for the theatre company, movie theater, museum, performance venue, or other location with ticketed entry. Many employers will prefer to hire those with at least an associate's degree, though work experience in customer service and sales-related fields is also necessary. *According to PayScale.com, the average salary of a box office manager is \$39,169.*

Dramaturg/Literary Manager

A dramaturg serves as a researcher and advisor for a production. They analyze the script, research for historical context, and communicate the relevant information to the director, cast, and crew. The distinction between a dramaturg and a literary manager is that a dramaturg has duties related to a specific production, and a literary manager has ongoing duties with the theatre company beyond a single production. *The average base pay of a literary manager is \$46,722 per year, according to glassdoor.com.*

Stage Manager

Stage managers take over the responsibilities of the director during performances. In addition, stage managers coordinate scheduling, communicate with all relevant personnel, update the script as changes are made, record blocking, and call cues during the run of the show. Stage managers should know a little about every area of theatre. Work experience in theatre is generally the only requirement, but formal education helps employment chances. *Payscale.com lists the average salary of a stage manager as \$41,153.*

Wardrobe Supervisor

Wardrobe supervisors coordinate the costuming and all related operations during the live performance, photography shoot, or filming session. *The average salary for wardrobe supervisors is \$55,580, according to PayScale.com.*

Performance

Actor

Actors perform in a wide variety of mediums – commercials, films, live theatre and musical theatre, television, and audio voice-over are only a handful of the possible performance mediums. The work environment, job growth, educational requirements, and compensation will vary depending on the specific industry. *PayScale.com lists the average salary of actors at \$50,129. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, job growth for actors is projected at 0.9 percent.*

Comedian

Comedians often perform stand-up comedy at performance venues, large or small. They might also arrange contracts to perform on TV. Many comedians also work as actors, performing in comedies as well as other genres. Many comedians only have work experience, but others choose to pursue degrees in performance. *PayScale.com lists the average salary of actors at \$50,129. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, job growth for actors is projected at 0.9 percent.*

Dancer

Dancers perform in a wide variety of venues, and there are different training requirements for the varying styles of dance. Some work in companies, and others are self-employed. *Projected job growth for dancers is at -0.6 percent.*

Model

Models pose for artists, photographers, and videographers to advertise products or promote organizations/companies. The work environment for models varies widely, and most work part time with periods of unemployment. There are no formal education requirements. *Median annual for wage for models is \$28,350, and projected job growth for modeling is at -5.7 percent.*

Puppeteer

Puppeteers operate puppets in live or recorded productions. Depending on the production, the puppeteer may be visible or invisible to the audience. Degrees for puppetry exist up to the graduate level, but work experience is the only requirement for most employment opportunities. *Ziprecruiter.com lists the average annual pay for puppeteers as \$51,826.*

Radio/Television Announcer

Radio and television announcers provide commentary for scheduled content on radio or television. Some are self-employed, and some work part-time. This includes talk show hosts, radio disc jockeys, broadcast announcers, public address system announcers, and podcasters. Many announcers have a bachelor's degree in a relevant major. *Median annual wage for radio/television announcers is \$34,630. Projected job growth from 2018-2028 for radio/TV announcers is -7.3 percent.*

Singer

Singers perform for live audiences and record their work in studios for further distribution. The requirements vary based on the style of music – for example, performers of classical music and opera typically need a bachelor's degree. *PayScale.com lists the average annual salary of singers as \$41,708. Projected job growth for musicians and singers is at 0.2 percent.*

Stunt Performer

Stunt performers are actors who specialize in dangerous acts, such as combat, high-speed driving, horseback riding, falls, and much more. Stunt performers appear in films and TV, stunt doubles stand in for other actors just for stunts, and daredevils perform their stunts for a live audience. There is no standard training requirements for stunt performers. *Careertrend.com reports the average salary of a stunt performer ranges from \$62,000 to \$70,000.*

Technicians

Broadcast Technician

These technicians operate and maintain equipment in radio, film, and recording studios. Other employers include hotels, stadiums and other entertainment venues, and schools. Broadcast technicians usually need certification or an associate's degree at the minimum. *Median annual wage for broadcast technicians is \$40,570. The projected growth rate for broadcast technicians is at 1.1 percent.*

Carpenter/Scene Shop

Scene shop carpenters are responsible for building the sets for a production. Generally work experience in carpentry is required. *The median annual salary for carpenters is \$48,330. Projected job growth for carpenters is at 8 percent.*

Costume Attendants

Costume attendants are in charge of maintaining costumes for performances. They may also assist with costume changes during performances. This is an entry-level position and requires little or no experience. *Median annual wage for costume attendants is \$41,410. The expected job growth from 2018-2028 is project at 5.1 percent.*

Electrician

Electricians are responsible for installing, repairing, and maintaining the electrical equipment of a theatre or other entertainment venue. Electricians will typically go to a trade school or complete an apprenticeship to become proficient in their trade. *The median annual wage for an electrician is \$56,180, and job growth between 2018-2028 for electricians is at 10.4 percent.*

Grip

A grip is a member of the crew at a studio that is responsible for building the set and handling the equipment that supports the cameras and lighting instruments. This is an entry-level position. Some grips, like the key grip and the best boy grip, are not entry-level, require more work experience, and will get paid more. *The average base salary of a grip according to salaryexpert.com is \$50,136. Job growth for grips from 2018-2028 is projected at 8 percent.*

Hairstylist

Hairstylists work on individual performers in a production to achieve the desired look for each performer. Hairstylists need to receive an associate's degree in cosmetology, and most states require hairstylists to be licensed. *The median annual wage of a hairstylist is \$26,090. Job growth is projected at 8.3 percent.*

Makeup Artist

Makeup artists in the entertainment industry uses cosmetic techniques on individual performers to achieve the desired appearance, whether for a film, a newscast, a photography shoot, a dance performance, live theatre, a concert, or TV. This can include special effects makeup and prosthetics. Makeup artists most often have at least a bachelor's degree in drama. *Median annual wage for makeup artists is \$75,730, and projected growth rate for this profession is at 7 percent.*

Rigger

Riggers set up the rigging for live performances. Other employers outside the entertainment industry include construction companies, manufacturing plants, and logging- and ship- yards. This is an entry-level position. *Median annual wage for riggers is \$50,860. The rate of projected growth for riggers is at 5.5 percent.*

Scenic Artist

Also known as a charge artist or scenic painter, the scenic artist paints the set for stage, TV, or film productions. Most scenic artist positions require formal training, which can be achieved through a degree in drama or an arts-related degree. *Salary.com reports the median annual wage for scenic painters is \$50,975.*

Special Effects Artist

Special effects artists use computer graphics programs to create special effects for movies, TV shows, and other media. A bachelor's degree in a related field, such as animation, is usual. *Median annual wage for multimedia artists and animators is \$72,520. Projected job growth is at 4 percent for multimedia artists and animators.*

Stagehand

Stagehands are manual laborers who carry out a wide variety of tasks. Most commonly they are responsible for building and placing scenic units. Many stagehands work gig-to-gig, helping the crews of performers such as bands and musicians set up for live performances. Working conditions and employers vary widely. This is an entry-level position. *Median annual wage for stagehands, according to PayScale.com, is \$43,448.*

Tailor/Seamstress

Tailors and seamstresses, also known as sewers, build the costumes for a production. To be hired in the entertainment industry, relevant work experience is necessary. This is an entry-level position. *Median annual wage for tailors is \$31,520. Projected job growth for this field is at -6.4 percent.*

Things to Consider in High School

Developing drama skills while still in high school is beneficial. It allows exploration and experimentation in different areas and gives potential actors and technicians a head start in real-life experience. Potential drama majors should consider taking whatever drama or theatre classes are available at their high school, join drama clubs and other relevant organizations, and audition for productions or sign up to be on production crews. Theatre history or theatre appreciation classes are a good idea, and if the individual is interested in musical theatre, then additionally music classes and choir. Potential technicians should look at classes relevant to their desired field. Anyone interested in the arts should consider classes that improve communication skills, such as English and psychology.

In addition to the above, interested high school students should devote time to their own independent study of theatre and related topics, and explore other opportunities available to them outside of high school. The "Starting Out" section on page 16 lists some ideas of how to begin.

Career Requirements: Post-Secondary

Depending on several factors (such as area of specialization, personal learning style, financial resources, and others), further formal education is not mandatory to succeed in drama. Many successful professionals did not go to college or have any formalized training. However, for certain specializations – teaching, for example – degrees and certifications are required. Even when it's not a requirement, continued education can be a great advantage for those seeking

careers in the entertainment industry. It provides experience, the chance for mentorship, and of course, a structured, thorough education. For more thoughts on why a degree in drama is desirable, see the “Why Study Drama?” section on page 4.

There are many options when it comes to formalized education in drama. Many 4-year universities have strong drama programs, and there are conservatories that specialize in it. It is also becoming more and more common for college students of all majors to obtain an associate’s degree at a community college, either on its own or with intent to transfer to a 4-year university. The right choice between the options above should be considered on an individual basis, with thought given to all relevant factors (area of specialization, personal learning style, financial resources, location, etc.). The two most common undergraduate degrees in drama are:

Associate of Art (A.A.): This is a degree most commonly offered at 2-year community and junior colleges. Completion of the A.A. degree usually takes around 2 years and can be earned with the intent to transfer to a 4-year university (though not always). One of the benefits of attending a community college is the completion of all core requirement classes before transferring to a costlier 4-year university. Drama majors can expect to take a variety of drama classes, including acting, theatre history, stagecraft and technical theatre, and others.

Bachelor of Arts (B.A.): This provides students with a rounded education in drama and theatre, and includes courses in acting, theatre history, dramatic literature, technical theatre – including hands-on practicum or lab courses, and courses specific to their area of specialization. Students will also have to follow the core requirements of both the college and the state. Completion of this degree usually takes 4 years. The B.A. is recommended for those who intend to move forward to graduate studies.

Bachelor of Fine Arts (B.F.A.): This is similar to the B.A. degree, but can serve as a terminal degree, and include more specialization. Drama students attending conservatories will most likely be pursuing a B.F.A., and students who obtain this degree often don’t intend to enter graduate school. Completion of this degree usually takes 4 years.

Career Requirements: Certification

To teach in public schools, interested drama majors must earn a teaching certificate. (To teach in higher education, a master’s degree is the minimum.) To obtain this certification, students must complete a degree in theatre education or complete a certification course simultaneously with an undergraduate drama degree. These degree plans include many of the same courses listed above in the “Post-Secondary” section but will also include education courses and supervised practice teaching.

Career Requirements: Graduate School

As mentioned above in the “Certification” section, drama students must earn at least a master’s degree to teach in higher education. In addition, pursuing a master’s degree in acting and technical theatre fields can increase hiring chances – some professional theatres hire

exclusively those who have obtained this level of education. Below are the three most common graduate degrees offered in theatre.¹¹

Master of Arts (M.A.): This provides students with a strong background in theatre history, theory, and criticism. It also allows further specialization into areas such as dramaturgy, playwriting, design, and directing. Completion of this degree will usually require a thesis and take 2-3 years. This degree is recommended for those who are preparing for doctoral studies, who wish to teach in some areas of higher education, want better hiring chances, or for personal enrichment/other personal goals.

Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.): The terminal degree in many areas of theatre. Most commonly studied at this level are acting, directing, theatre education, playwriting, theatre technology, design, and management. Completion of this degree usually takes 2-3 years.

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.): The master's degree will allow drama students to teach at the college-level in some areas of theatre, but the terminal degree for those who wish to become a college professor is the doctorate degree. While this is most commonly pursued by those interested in college teaching and research, the Ph.D. can also lead to careers as consultants for agencies, non-profits, and even national or state policy organizations (such as the National Endowment of the Arts or state arts councils). It will usually involve course work and a major research project and will take 4-6 years of full-time study.

Employers of Drama Majors

As stated in the “Why Study Drama?” section on page 4, a major in drama can take someone into business, management, engineering, communications, sales, and more. This makes a definitive list of employers for drama majors nearly impossible to compile in a concise, helpful manner. However, below is a general list¹² of common employers for those pursuing relevant careers in drama.

- Community organizations
- Fundraising firms
- Production companies
- Theatres
- Arts councils
- Libraries
- Cruise lines
- Educational/cultural institutions
- Television studios
- Radio stations
- Film studios
- Colleges/universities
- Elementary, junior high/middle, and high schools
- Touring companies
- Performing arts organizations
- Amusement and theme parks

Work Environment

Work environments for those in the entertainment industry vary drastically, depending on many factors. These factors include, but are not limited to, the specific job (film actor vs. drama therapist, company manager vs. audiobook narrator, etc.), the scale and resources of the employer (a large-scale film studio vs. an independent studio), and the intended length of

¹¹ UT Fine Arts Career Services, 2015

¹² UT Fine Arts Career Services, 2015

employment (gig-based stagehand work vs. a literary manager with long-term employment at a theatre company). Some people in the entertainment industry will travel regularly, some won't. There is no way to generally characterize the work of environment of everyone in the entertainment industry; research into the working conditions of specific specializations is recommended.

Something to consider: a great portion of those in the entertainment industry, across a wide variety of specializations, will not have consistent employment. Full-time jobs do exist, but many people, especially performers and technicians, will work gig-to-gig. This means that periods of unemployment are commonplace, and many people choose to work other part- or even full-time jobs to supplement their income. With all of this said, there is a lot of evidence that those in the entertainment industry will experience high job satisfaction, even with periods of unemployment and lower rates of pay.¹³

Starting Out

Steps to increase theatrical skills that can be taken right away:

- Improve theatre literacy – read scripts! They can be found in bookstores, online, and through local libraries. Additionally, if accessible, attend local theatrical productions.
- Study theatre history, acting theory, stagecraft, and other relevant topics independently! Online resources, books, documentaries, and much more are always available. Free resources can be found online and through libraries (and the digital services libraries subscribe to).
- Volunteer or audition at community theatres!
- Research specializations in drama – the career index at the beginning of this career guide is a helpful place to start!

¹³ Jacobs, 2017

Further Resources

Actor's Fund

www.actorsfund.org

Resource center for actors, as well as human services resources.

Alliance of Artist Communities

www.artistcommunities.org

A consortium of artists' communities which offer residencies in all disciplines.

American Alliance for Theatre Education

www.aate.com

Connects artists, educators, researchers, and scholars with each other to provide educational opportunities.

Association of Performing Arts Presenters

www.artspresenters.org

Resource for opportunities in arts administration/management. Includes a job bank.

Association for Theatre in Higher Education

www.athe.org

Resource center for both individuals and institutions. Includes a job bank.

Backstage Jobs

www.backstage.com

Membership required. Job listing service for opportunities in live entertainment.

Bureau of Labor Statistics

www.bls.gov

Statistics on job outlooks, earnings, etc.

Educational Theatre Association

www.schooltheatre.org

Advocate organization for theatre education.

Entertainment Careers

www.entertainmentcareers.net

Jobs, internships, and career information.

International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees

www.iatse.net

A union representing workers in the entertainment industry.

Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas

www.lmda.org

Resources for literary managers and dramaturgs.

National Performance Network

www.npnweb.org

NPN brings to national attention new, ground-breaking work in multiple disciplines.

New Dramatists

www.newdramatists.org

Theatre research center and writers colony for national theatre, focusing on playwrights.

New School Library Theatre Resources

<http://guides.library.newschool.edu/c.php?g=416866>

Extensive research material related to theatre.

New York Foundation for the Arts

www.nyfa.org

Resources for artists and those who support artists.

Playbill Online

www.playbill.com

Information for both professionals and theatre-goers, focusing on Broadway theatre.

Playwrights Center

www.pwcenter.org

Resources for playwrights.

Professional Associations and Organizations Actors' Equity Association

www.actorsequity.org

A labor union representing American actors and stage managers working in professional theatre.

Screen Actors Guild

www.sag.org

A labor union representing entertainment professionals.

Showbiz Jobs

www.showbizjobs.com

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

Southeastern Theatre Conference Inc.

www.setc.org

Search engine for full-time or summer employment.

Texas Educational Theatre Association Inc.

www.tetatx.wildapricot.org

Membership required. Workshops and college audition opportunities.

Theatre Communications Group

www.tcg.org

Resource for full- and part-time, seasonal, year-round, and internship opportunities in the performing arts.

Theater Mania

www.theatermania.org

Guide to finding discount theatre tickets for most theatres in the U.S.

United States Institute for Theatre Technology

www.usitt.org

Job listings for technical theatre.

University/Resident Theatre Association

www.urta.com

The country's oldest and largest consortium of theatre graduate programs and associated theatre companies.

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