

THEATER

What can I do with this major?

AREAS

PERFORMING

Stage
Television
Radio
Motion Picture
Video

EMPLOYERS

Community theaters
Regional theaters
Commercial theaters
Summer stock theaters
Dinner theaters
Children's theaters
Repertory companies
University theater groups
Touring companies
Industrial shows
Show groups
Amusement and theme parks
Television/film studios
Radio stations
Nightclubs
Cabarets
Cruise lines
Acting conservatories
Public or community programs

STRATEGIES

Participate in acting workshops, courses, and seminars to get advice and experience and to make contacts with others in the field.

Join unions, e.g. Actors Equity Union, or actors' guilds to stay abreast of opportunities and developments in the field.

Get as much acting experience as possible. Perform in school productions, community theater, summer stock, etc. to hone acting skills.

Pursue training through acting conservatories or mentoring from a drama coach.

Develop a wide range of skills, such as singing, dancing, or acrobatics to be more versatile.

Gain related experience by working in a college radio or television station.

Consider getting modeling experience.

Learn a foreign language and train with a dialect coach.

Prepare a professional resume that lists your acting experience. Have your resume attached to or printed on the reverse side of an 8" x 10" photograph of yourself.

Be prepared to make the rounds. Distribute your resume to numerous agencies and offices. Follow up with several personal visits.

Secure an agent or manager to help find jobs.

Be aware that more opportunities exist in large cities such as New York and Los Angeles.

Learn about the entertainment industry as a whole. Take courses on entertainment law, business, management, etc.

An extensive network of contacts is essential. Get to know people working in your field and related areas.

Consider whether you want to pursue acting as a full-time job or as an avocational interest.

AREAS

EMPLOYERS

STRATEGIES

DIRECTING

Direction
Technical Direction
Casting
Set Design
Stage Management
Support Staff

Theaters of varying types
Television and motion picture studios
Video production companies
Other performance venues

Seek formal training and experience in acting first. Develop leadership skills through participation in campus and community organizations. Gain both directing and technical experience by participating in college productions. Gain technical experiences in local theaters. Participate in the Director's Guild Training Program. Volunteer with directors in local theaters to become familiar with the environment. Serving as an assistant is a great way to get started in this area. Experience with fund-raising is important. Volunteer to do this with local theaters and arts councils. Learn what types of permits and insurance are needed to film or perform in certain areas.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Stage Management
Stage Director
Set Design/Construction
Property Design
Lighting Design
Sound Design
Costume Design
Camera Operation
Hair/Make-up
Special Effects
Wardrobe
Prop Management
Broadcast Technology
Riggers
Electricians
Carpenter/Scenic Artist

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Learn to work well on a team. Develop a sense of artistry and creativity. Become involved in the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE). This organization can give you information about becoming an apprentice as well as help you make valuable contacts. Get experience. Offer your services to school and local theaters. Read industry magazines and books to learn about your area. For sound design: Become familiar with computer technology as digital sound effects and electronic music replace traditional means of sound design. Take courses in computers, math, and physics. For costume design: Supplement your program with courses in art history and fashion design. For set design: Take courses in architecture and design. Learn about different eras in history in order to recreate on stage. A basic knowledge of history and architecture is helpful.

AREAS

WRITING

Scriptwriting
Playwriting
Screenwriting
Journalism
Publicity (Press Agents)
Research

EMPLOYERS

Theaters
Television/film studios
Television stations
Radio stations
Video production companies
Magazines
Newspapers
Freelance

STRATEGIES

Take courses in English and journalism to hone writing skills.
Review plays, movies, and TV shows for school or local newspaper.
Get as much writing experience as possible. Write for the college newspaper, enter playwriting contests, etc.
See many different productions and shows. Read a variety of scripts to see how they are developed.
Gain experience as a freelance writer or editor in other employment settings.
Learn how to film shoot because screenwriters will typically "shoot script" in which a synopsis of a story is prepared so directors can make recommendations.
Theatrical press agents publicize and promote theatrical productions. They write press releases and arrange press conferences and other media events. Take courses in related areas such as public relations, advertising, and business to prepare for this field.
Reporters spend time on the set absorbing everything. They interview actors as well as craftspeople.
Researchers gather information for movie writers. They may also track down photographs or historical documents to make the film more authentic.

BUSINESS

Producing
Management
Agents
Marketing and Advertising
Fundraising and Development
Coordination of Volunteers
Administration of Arts Programs
Box Office Sales
Promotions

Theaters
Arts councils
Television/film studios
Broadway
Road company productions
Regional theaters
Stock productions
Dinner theaters
Cabarets

Secretarial/clerical positions in theaters and studios are often stepping-stones to other positions and a good way to make contacts.
Gain undergraduate training in business, public relations, communications, advertising, and theater.
Complete an internship in area of interest.
Develop skills in leadership, negotiation, budgeting, and fundraising.
Get as much experience on the college and local level as possible to develop a strong resume.

AREAS

EMPLOYERS

STRATEGIES

EDUCATION

Private Instruction
Teaching
Research

Public and private schools, K-12
Colleges and universities
Performing arts centers
Various types of theater
Freelance

For K-12, obtain certification for the state in which you wish to teach. Obtain dual certification for more teaching opportunities.
Get experience in various areas of theater and working with young people.
Obtain a graduate degree to teach on the college level. Develop one or two areas of expertise within theater arts.
Join the National Association of Dramatic and Speech Arts or the Association for Theater in Higher Education.

GENERAL STRATEGIES

- Complete an internship or an apprenticeship with a local theater. Participate in summer stock. Gain as much experience as possible.
- Network: Talk with people working in the field to find out about jobs and opportunities. Join professional groups to make contacts.
- Read newspapers and periodicals related to the theater to keep up with new developments. Read the "trades"--magazines and newspapers that report events in the entertainment industry. Read the "Theater" section of daily newspapers to find out about upcoming productions.
- Join a relevant union or guild to be eligible for work assignments.
- Get your foot in the door and get involved with productions anyway you can. Be prepared to do various tasks assigned by stage managers or producers.
- Volunteer with fundraising efforts for the arts.
- Be aware of scams. Check out the legitimacy of agencies and companies before paying any fees.
- Be prepared to move to a metropolitan area where more opportunities exist.
- A career in the arts takes patience, dedication, and luck!
- Have a back-up plan. Be aware that actors and directors may face frequent and long periods of unemployment. Develop skills that qualify you for other jobs while you wait for opportunities. Consider pairing theater with another career interest or major to open up more career possibilities.
- Theater helps students develop verbal and written communication, public speaking, and teamwork skills. These transferable skills are valued by many types of employers. In particular, positions in sales, marketing, management, and public relations may be open to students with theater degrees.
- There are many ways to be involved in theater arts while working in another career field if you choose not to pursue theater as your way to make a living.