

# Career Connections

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## Theatre and Film

### OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM

Actors, directors, designers, and playwrights are certainly important to the theatre, but they are not the only theatre professionals! Skilled technicians are in high demand, and many of these careers require substantial creativity, training, and experience. Producers, stage managers, studio artists, project managers, human-resources experts, researchers, educators, administrators, fund-raisers, scholars, legal experts, financial supervisors, and many others also find satisfaction in putting their skills to work in an artistic environment. Whatever your major, the Theatre and Film Career Connections program will offer you the opportunity to see how your interests and abilities might be welcome in the fields of entertainment and performing arts.

The objectives of this Career Connections program are to provide a basic process for an interested person to investigate any of the various theatre-related careers and to establish a means for such a person to find advice, introductory experiences, and other foundations of an informed decision regarding a career.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Exploring Options

Ask a faculty member in Theatre or Communication Departments how someone with your interests might explore career options in theatre, film or television. Take a class or volunteer to work in support of the various projects in production around campus. Some students may wish to contact an alumnus of the Department of Theatre who works in their area of interest for another perspective on theatre training and careers; names of alumni can be obtained through the Theatre Department or the Career Center.

The Career Center has many other valuable resources—take an interest survey or personality profile. Look at employment newsletters like *ArtSearch* to see the number and variety of positions in arts-related organizations. Read theatre-related periodicals in Duggan Library and search the Internet for examples of people with your interests and abilities working in theatre. See the United States Institute for Theatre Technology, on the web at [www.usitt.org](http://www.usitt.org), for an overview of the current work in the technical side of theatre. Search the web sites of individual theatres for their job openings and career opportunities. Try the Theatre Communications Group, at [www.tcg.org](http://www.tcg.org), to begin an online search--their "Links" page is very detailed. A Google search on a particular job title is also a good way to begin.

## **Academics**

### ***Choosing Your Major***

The theatre is a place where every discipline is required. Many theatre students are double majors, and many theatre professionals were not theatre majors in college. Experience in doing theatrical work is necessary, however, to theatre-related careers.

Everyone interested in a theatre career should have as much knowledge of theatre history and dramatic literature (especially the works of Shakespeare) as they can absorb. After this general recommendation, academic pursuits will be much more specialized.

Actors, playwrights and directors may wish to study psychology, philosophy, anthropology, or history. Designers will find inspiration for their work in studies of studio art and art history, music, anthropology, or the natural sciences. Technicians, depending on their specialty, will find study of music, physics, studio art, art history, or cultural history most valuable in their careers. Those who are pursuing theatre-related careers outside of the artistic specialties will find value in courses related to their various fields, and anyone pursuing the Theatre and Film Career Connections may also wish to cross-reference with other Career Connections such as those in Non-Profits, College Teaching, Journalism, or those from other fine-arts disciplines. Studies in classics, aesthetics, modern languages, and world cultures are especially recommended for those interested in college teaching or other theatre-related education.

### **Co-Curricular Activities**

Experience is the best teacher. Whatever your area of interest, try it on for size. There may even be funds available to support your work, through grants available from the college or other sources.

### ***On-Campus Activities***

There are always theatre, television, and film productions under way on campus. Most of these are generated by the departments of Theatre or Communication, but some are the work of individuals or student organizations. Get involved by offering your help, and be conscientious about showing up. Be humble and willing to undertake whatever work may be needed in your field—that's how everyone starts.

### ***Off-Campus Activities***

There are many opportunities in the area. Local schools need help organizing student performances. Community theatres and small professional theatres exist in the area, and some important regional theatres are nearby. Internships, apprenticeships, volunteer work, and field trips are great ways to expand your understanding of the profession you're investigating. Summer academic programs are offered by many theatres and arts-related institutions. You may wish to take such a class in the summer, and you may even find that you can teach some of them!

## **Work Experience**

### ***On-Campus Jobs***

There are many employment opportunities with academic departments or administrative offices that would provide excellent work experience and teach you some of the basic skills of the profession you're exploring. Start with the *Artsearch* newsletter and ArtsLynx ([www.artslynx.org](http://www.artslynx.org)) to see the skills required in job descriptions in your field, and then find a campus job in which you can develop some of those skills. While this may be in the Department of Theatre, your interest might be well served by a job elsewhere. Check the campus classifieds, and ask faculty and staff for guidance.

### ***Related Summer Jobs***

The theatre is one of those rare fields where entry-level jobs proliferate in the summer. Your Career Connections advisor and the Career Center staff can help you find the resources you need to locate and pursue the summer jobs that will help you toward a career. The *Summer Theatre Directory* gives information on summer theatres' locations, seasons, casting practices, and other employment opportunities.

### ***Internships, Apprenticeships, and Other Good Starts***

Internships are an important and traditional means of entry to theatrical professions, and these career paths are still respected. Many professional theatres offer internships in Acting Design, Production, Casting, Development, Public Relations, Human Resources (often referred to as Company Management in the theatrical community), and other fields. Compensation is often minimal (sometimes even non-existent!), but the experience gained can be of enormous value. Interns also make many professional contacts and may find themselves offered employment through the personal networks they develop. The Career Center and your Career Connections advisor can help you find appropriate internship opportunities.

### ***Further Training and Education***

There are many excellent programs offering graduate degrees in various theatre disciplines, including management. The Master of Fine Arts (MFA) is an artistic degree, usually sought by actors, directors, playwrights and designers, and some institutions offer an MFA in Theatre Education. The University/Resident Theatre Association ([www.urta.com](http://www.urta.com)) is a good place to start looking for performance-related degree programs. Some institutions offer advanced degrees in stage management and theatre technology. A Master of Business Administration (MBA) in Theatre Management is available from some universities. The doctoral degree, a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) is primarily for those who are interested in teaching at a college or university, although some directors and critics hold PhDs.

Outside of academics, advanced training is an important part of many theatre-related professions. Some people find advancement by becoming a direct student of (or assistant to) an individual artist or other theatre professional. Actors have innumerable opportunities for formal study with teachers of acting, voice, and movement, in private studios, or institutional workshops, without ever undertaking an advanced degree program.

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