



Careers in the Arts

The Arts involve many people working together in an elaborate process that requires collaboration and dedication. Careers in the Arts span a wide variety of fields (non-profit arts venues, universities/colleges, non-profit youth programming, etc). The descriptions below offer an introduction into career possibilities in the arts.

Part 1: The Creative Process

The creative process begins with an idea or concept. This may start from the vision of a producer, artist or artistic director.

Artistic Director

The artistic director is responsible for the overall vision of a creative production. They guide the team of artists and creative collaborators into a cohesive production. The artistic director in communication with the administrative team or producer must also be aware of the financial limits of the production.

Artist(s)

The person or group of people who create the artwork, (including dance, drama, film, visual art pieces, or music etc.). The artist has ideas, concepts, images or emotions that he/she wants to convey to the audience. In dance the artist is called the choreographer and they design the sequence of steps and style of execution. The choreographer selects dancers during auditions. In rehearsal the choreographer teaches the dance and helps dancers perfect the execution of the steps. Dancers have to be very versatile, able to adapt to many different techniques of dance and learn and memorize movement quickly.

Musicians

These artists compose the music or perform the music of another composer. Sometimes prerecorded music may be used to support a larger artistic project (such as film or dance) while other times artists commission a new piece of music from a composer. Synthesized music using computer technology is another creative avenue for artists.

Costumes

A costume designer creates the designs for the costumes. The designer works very closely with the artistic director to ensure that the artist's vision is reflected in the costumes. Depending on how elaborate the costumes, sometimes many people are required for the creation and maintenance of one costume.

Makeup

A makeup artist supports the costume designer in the overall presentation of the performer. The make-up artist can express a person's age, health, character, injuries and many other qualities.

Scenery

The set designer creates the design for props and sets. Props and sets are used in a variety of ways to enhance the overall setting and support the performers projected intent to the audience.

Lighting

The lighting designer creates a design using lights, color, and special effects. Lights can be used to create a mood. This designer works very closely with the artist and all the other designers to create an atmosphere that enhances the performance.

Part 2: Production Staff

A full production staff behind the scenes before and during the performance creates the presentation that you experience.

Producer

In large-scale artistic productions such as films, a producer determines the big plan including bringing together the creative staff and financial personnel.

Production Manager

The production manager oversees all aspects of the production, which may include everything necessary to create or reproduce the performance. If this is a traveling production then she/he contacts the theaters to determine if they have the necessary equipment, facilities and staff needs for the performance.

Stage Manager

The stage manager is responsible for the entire performance. He/she is the supervisor of the crew, performers, and musicians. When the crew arrives at the theater in the morning, the stage manager divides the crew into specific work groups.

Tour Manager

The tour manager is the liaison between the business office and the staff on tour. As the liaison, he/she has to keep in constant contact with the office. For instance, the tour manager for a dance company makes arrangements for a doctor to be available in case there is a dance injury. Also, he/she is the press liaison on tour, arranging any interviews or photo sessions. The tour manager schedules all travel and lodging reservations for the performers and the Production staff.

Lighting Supervisor

The lighting supervisor is responsible for maintaining the original lighting plots designed by the lighting designers. Once the load-in is complete, she/he directs the crew in hanging and focusing all lights. Each light has to be hung and focused individually.

Master Electrician and Assistant Electrician

The electricians are responsible for renting all of the lights for the tour or maintaining the lights in a theater.

Costume Supervisor and Wardrobe Assistant

The wardrobe staff is responsible for the costumes. The wardrobe staff must measure each performer for a costume. Before a tour begins, they purchase all materials needed to keep the costumes in good order. Before each performance they oversee the repairing, cleaning and pressing of all the costumes. During the performance, the wardrobe staff assists the performers in dressing for quick changes and stand in the wings to stitch, sew and repair costumes in case of an emergency.

Master Carpenter

The carpenter builds the scenery. They also build road boxes that store the equipment during the tour. He/she is also responsible for all soft goods: legs, scrims, and boarders, in addition to hiring stage crews for the performances.

The Flyman

The Flyman moves the scenery, backdrops and curtains up and down in the space above the stage.

Property Master (Props)

The prop master is responsible for the props in each work. In addition, he/she is responsible for ordering any materials for the upkeep of the props.

Sound Engineer

The sound engineer is responsible for renting or taking care of all sound equipment needed for the performance. The music is sometimes taped onto Digital Audio Tape which has a high sound quality. If there is a new work in the repertoire, the engineer is responsible for the recording of the music. During the performance, he/she controls the sound system. Additionally the sound engineer may work with a sound designer for special effects. A sound designer synthesizes sound through the use of a computer and other technologies. Sometimes the sound designer is also a musician.

Part 3: Administrative Staff

The administrative staff is a crucial and creative aspect of any professional artistic endeavor.

Executive Director

The executive director oversees all administrative activities and staff. She/he is responsible for all business aspects of the organization including budgeting and strategic planning. She/he works closely with the Board of Directors, the Artistic Director and all department directors.

General Manager/Director of Production

The general manager hires and supervises all production staff. As general manager, he/she works closely with the booking representatives to develop a domestic and international tour for the artistic company or presenting organization.

Company Manager

The company manager is responsible for all of a company insurance, royalties, and international communication for permits and visas. He/she must keep a detailed record of insurance claims and injuries and has to ensure that royalty payments are made to artists, choreographers, composers, costume designers, etc.

Development Department

Development is responsible for securing the financial support for the organization. The staff applies to various types of funding organizations: the government, corporations, foundations and individuals throughout the year.

Finance Department

Finance is responsible for maintaining all financial and accounting aspects of the company including payroll of the staff, production crew and performers.

Marketing Department

Marketing is responsible for all publicity materials and public relations. They communicate with the public in a variety of ways i.e. the organization's website, newspapers, magazines and social media. They communicate with the press when information is requested and solicit and purchase press and media coverage.

Education and Community Engagement Departments

Education Department is responsible for coordinating school and community activities. Education staff also develops materials pertaining to learning and the arts. The Community Department coordinates a variety of collaborations with community organizations.

General Administrative Staff

Every organization needs a general administrative staff to assist in the everyday running of the organization. This staff includes receptionists, department personnel and administrative assistants.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is a volunteer group from various backgrounds that oversee the policies of the Company. They support the Company's fundraising efforts and must ensure its financial stability. In addition, they lend their professional expertise to the growth and development of the Company.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

DEI staff are responsible for responsible for implementing diversity, equity and inclusion strategic priorities and vision in partnership with others within an organization. These positions cultivate institutional justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives through the development of data metrics aligned with the goals and objectives in the strategic plan. They may also initiate and develop relationships with key external organizations, individuals and stakeholders from diverse communities, and assist with the development, research and planning of key training sessions.

Teachers/Instructors/Professors

There are many opportunities for you to be involved in teaching others in the arts. This can be in a local youth arts program, a non-profit theater/company or arts venue, or at a college or university. You can go to school to obtain degrees in many of the arts related fields mentioned in this document, apprentice in a position, and/or take classes for particular elements in the arts.

As you have learned, there are many career options in the world of performing arts. People with a variety of talents are always needed and welcomed in the arts.