

THEATRE CAREER GUIDE

Fine Arts Career Services

The University of Texas at Austin

   @UTFACS

UTexas.edu/finearts/careers

FACS@austin.utexas.edu

512-232-7333

FINE ARTS CAREER SERVICES OFFERS:

ONE-ON-ONE ADVISING

Resume and cover letter reviews, mock interviews, graduate school advising and general career exploration. Call us for appointments!

JOB BOARD

Fine Arts Works is exclusively for COFA students and alumni. Check it out at bit.ly/fawjobs

PROGRAMMING

Tips and Tiffs professional development workshops, *Creative Exchange* guest speaker series and info sessions on FACS-specific initiatives

FUNDING

Intern Scholarship, Professional Development Travel Initiative (PDTI), New York Seminar Scholarship and more. bit.ly/facsfuns

AND MORE

Online internship classes, New York Seminar spring break trip, Networking Night and more!

FINEARTS.UTEXAS.EDU/CAREERS - FACS@AUSTIN.UTEXAS.EDU - 512-232-7333

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on taking the next step in thinking about your career in theatre! As a theatre professional, you may work as an actor, educator, production staff, administrator or a combination of all four. Whether you are a freshman or nearing graduation, now is a good time to think about your future. This career guide is meant to give you broad information as you picture yourself working in different environments. You are welcome to meet with Fine Arts Career Services for further guidance! We are here to brainstorm different career paths, give guidance on professional documents or help you find the right job or internship for your goals.

ACTING

Finding work as an actor can be challenging, but the work is immersive, satisfying and fosters constant growth. Actors often build up their resume serving in a wide spectrum of roles in various industries.

While you are still a student, perform as often as possible on- and off-campus. Summer Stock programs are a great way to network and travel to work with new people, while building up your acting credentials.

In the early stages of an acting career, there can be long periods of time off between shows, and finding means to financial stability can be challenging. While the archetype of the starving actor is to wait tables, you have a long list of great skills as a theatre major that can assist you in a wide range of jobs!

Working in arts administration is a great way to build up other parts of your resume while you continue to progress as an actor. Many arts organizations (including non-theatre organizations) would greatly benefit from your knowledge of the fine arts as well as your dynamic speaking and audience engagement skills.

Theatre majors possess excellent storytelling skills and are uniquely gifted in summarizing broad concepts into interesting and digestible segments. These abilities are valuable for many disciplines of arts administration. For more information, read the arts administration section of this guide and check out our [Arts Administration Career Guide](#).

After completing 50 weeks of work at an equity-membership theater, you can apply for the Actor's Equity Association. If you were to be cast in an equity role, this would immediately make you a member of Actor's Equity. Joining Actor's Equity Association can lead to the next level of performance opportunities towards a more sustainable acting career.

THEATRE EDUCATION

For the purpose of this guide, we are defining theatre education as more than just jobs within a school district. Theatre is taught in many places, and many theatre professionals become educators, even if their degree is not in theatre studies.

To get a job as a school theatre teacher, you will need to hold a state teaching certificate. If you are a theatre studies major, this process will be laid out by your faculty, but it usually involves student teaching, a criminal background check and the passing of licensing exams. If you do not earn a degree in theatre studies but want to become a teacher after graduation, certification programs outside of universities exist. Through a combination of coursework, exams and student teaching, it is possible to become a credentialed teacher after you graduate.

If your goal is to work in schools, get in front of students while you are still in college. You could help with summer theatre camps for young kids, or work as an assistant producer at a community children's theatre. Gaining these experiences early will strengthen your resume and prepare you for your first teaching jobs.

Working as a theatre teacher is a highly rewarding career that combines the creation of live theatre, pedagogy and advocacy. Theatre teachers find great joy in sharing their passion for theatre with young people as they learn about the various facets of production. The experience of teaching theatre at the elementary, middle and high school level varies widely, so it is essential that you explore your strengths and interests when it comes to teaching different populations.

The Texas Educational Theatre Association (TETA) maintains a large and thorough job board at tetatx.com. If you are looking to leave the State of Texas, many other state theatre education agencies maintain similar job boards.

THEATRE EDUCATION *(cont.)*

Most professional and children's theatre companies have education departments with staff whose purpose it is to educate the patrons and consumers.

Some nonprofit organizations exist to support theatre education in low-income or underserved regions. Some performing arts centers have education initiatives of their own. These positions combine strong administration and advocacy skills, as well as a passion of bringing live theatre to all audiences. While these positions may not directly involve acting, they require a vast knowledge of the various aspects of theatre production.

THEATRE PRODUCTION

Working on the production side of theatre requires a complex knowledge of all the moving parts associated with live productions. Directors possess a vision for how projects will come together and the people skills to foster a collaborative and comfortable working environment. Directors are fabulous negotiators that foster compromise between various creative entities. Successful directors will also possess administrative and entrepreneurial skills as they will often be expected to speak to the public, serve on the business side of the operation and understand how various facets of a production fit together.

Technical theatre specialists are highly specialized in their craft. Be it costume or set design, sound or lighting, these positions are best learned on-site and with hands-on experience. If you are interested in working in these fields, find as many work opportunities as you can. Internships allow you to explore various technical aspects of theatre and help you identify which specializations best align with your skills. Both theatre companies and theatre venues employ technical theatre specialists.

THEATRE ADMINISTRATION

Regardless of your long-term career goals, experience in theatre administration is a priceless. In many smaller theatre operations, individuals are working in creative and administrative roles simultaneously. Working in theatre administration involves being methodical and highly organized. Even those roles that are “desk jobs” in appearance often call on individuals to be highly versed in the inner workings of theatre. These professionals work in marketing, community engagement, development (fundraising), education (mentioned above) and operations. Specialized skills required for these positions can be acquired through internships or a minor in arts management. For more information, check out our Arts Administration Career Guide!

JOB TITLES

Education

Theatre Teacher
Theatre Professor
Education Manager

Acting

Actor
Acting Coach
Artist-in-Residence

Production

Dramaturg
Director
Producer
Scenic Designer
Carpenter
Lighting Designer
Electrician
Hair and Makeup Artist
Stage Manager
Costume Designer
Casting Director

Administration

Theatre Administrator
Business Manager
Audience Relations Specialist
Outreach Coordinator
Grants Specialist
Marketing Associate
Development Manager
Community Arts Center
Director

VIEW YOURSELF MULTI-DIMENSIONALLY

In the modern arts world, the more students can see themselves as a multi-faceted professional, the better. If you are working as a theatre teacher, that doesn't mean you can't build a professional performance resume at the same time. If you are working in the marketing department of a performing arts center, you will be developing useful skills to help market yourself. We encourage students to diversify their skill set! Every opportunity can be used as a chance to grow.

LET'S TALK ABOUT MONEY

Starting out as an actor, director or technician often means freelancing. Financial stability as a freelancer is possible with careful management of funds and consistent research into upcoming opportunities. As a freelancer, it is wise to sit down with a certified financial planner to develop a plan for how you will process payments from various theatre companies and venues and how much you need to put aside for income tax. Individuals working as theatre administrators or educators are more likely to see full-time salaries including benefits.

FURTHERING YOUR EDUCATION

A *Master of Fine Arts (MFA)* is a degree that students often use to gain more experience, build their resume or study with a certain institution or mentor. While an MFA is not necessary for many employment opportunities, it could be useful in becoming more specialized or pivoting to a different city or region. Students should weigh the pros and cons of attending graduate school carefully and seek multiple opinions on how this could impact their career trajectory.

...NOW WHAT'S NEXT?

Maybe reading this guide has left you with questions, or feeling unsure about which career opportunities you want to explore.

That is okay!

Setting up an appointment with Fine Arts Career Services is a great way to brainstorm your next steps, whatever your goals may be!