

Drama Major

CAREER GUIDE



ACC
ALVIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

DRAMA

drama@alvincollege.edu

281.756.3607

alvincollege.edu/drama

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Drama Skeptics: Read This First

When it comes to career paths and how we approach work, it's a whole new world out there. Whether it's changing attitudes post-pandemic or the influence of a new generation - Gen Z's top priorities when it comes to seeking a job include a sense of purpose and workplace flexibility, factors not as important to previous generations¹ - the landscape has changed over the past few years. While a career in the theatre and entertainment industries has always been more viable than most realize, here are the reasons why you should consider an Associate's degree in Drama *now*.

An Associate's degree in Drama is one of the most flexible you can consider and opens many doors beyond theatre careers. Over one-half of all college students will end up working in fields unrelated to their undergraduate degree.² Drama majors also go into writing, design, arts administration, education, library sciences, technology, trade careers, public relations, law, psychology, marketing and sales, communication, engineering, and management. The skills taught in a two-year Drama program translate exceedingly well to all of these fields and more (see the next section). An Associate's in Drama makes for an excellent starting point for many career paths, not just those directly in the entertainment industry.

Students have a better college experience - and therefore make better grades - when studying something they're passionate about³. An Associate's in Drama allows them to do that while keeping their career and transfer options open - not to mention saves them money by allowing them to complete their basics before transferring to a costlier 4-year university.

But transferring is not their only option. ACC's Drama program is designed so that students are ready to enter the workforce as soon as they graduate. If they're pursuing a career in the theatre industry, they can begin immediately. Our technical theatre students have been hired as stagehands, designers, and stage managers, and our actors have found performing work at professional theatres and other venues. Our graduates who have sought work outside of the theatre industry report their theatrical skills and education have directly contributed positively to their hiring prospects and job performance.

Another common concern about investing in a college drama education is the viability of a career in the entertainment industry. At this time, such a career is more viable than ever. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that overall employment in entertainment occupations will grow faster than the average for all occupations through 2033 due to growth of the industry and the need to replace workers.⁴ Studying drama in college is one of the best ways to increase one's chance of advancement through networking and structured skillset development.

But why ACC? Because of our strengths: we are the only community college in the area with a musical theatre degree - a field that is seeing a boom in popularity; we offer valuable workshops and field trips; internship opportunities; access to networking; individual mentorship; work-study positions; and a strong support system and community. You will have hands-on learning experience starting in your first semester, and your time at ACC is tailored to you and your individual aspirations. Everyone at ACC Drama and Musical Theatre is ready to help you get where you want to go.

1 McKinsey Quarterly, 2024

2 Intelligent, 2022

3 Dennard, 2014

4 Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024

Skills of a Drama Major

Academics

Literary Theory & Analysis

From: Script Analysis course, practical application in rehearsals

Entertainment careers: Directing, producing, choreography, costume design, lighting design, playwriting, property design, hair and makeup design, screenwriting, set design, showrunning, sound design, technical directing, arts management, dramaturgy/literary management, acting, theatre education

Also applies to: Careers in writing and publishing, marketing & advertising, journalism, communications, education, publishing, law, library sciences, arts administration

Historical Analysis

From: Theatre Appreciation course, research for projects and productions

Entertainment careers: Arts management, playwriting, screenwriting, dramaturgy/literary management, theatre education

Also applies to: Careers in law, journalism, writing and publishing, education, library sciences, arts administration

Research Skills

From: Script Analysis course, research for Practicum projects and productions

Entertainment careers: Directing, choreography, costume design, playwriting, property design, hair and makeup design, screenwriting, set design, showrunning, sound design, technical directing, arts management, dramaturgy/literary management, acting, theatre education

Also applies to: Marketing, education, the sciences and soft sciences, psychology, writing, journalism, law, library sciences

Science & Mathematics

Anatomy

From: Stage Makeup & Voice for the Theatre courses, practical application for productions

Entertainment careers: Hair and makeup design, acting and voice acting, hairstyling, makeup artistry

Also applies to: Education, medical writing, standardized patient training, cosmetology, graphic design and animation

Geometry

From: Stagecraft & Theatre Practicum courses, practical application on production crews

Entertainment careers: Costume design, lighting design, property design, set design, technical directing, carpentry, theatre technicians, riggers for film and TV

Also applies to: Construction sciences, architectural design, interior design, engineering, civil engineering, education, fashion design, product design, graphic design and animation, the sciences, video game design/development, trade careers

Trigonometry

From: Stagecraft & Theatre Practicum courses, practical application on production crews

Entertainment careers: Costume design, lighting design, property design, set design, technical directing, carpentry, theatre technicians, riggers for film and TV

Also applies to: Construction sciences, architectural design, the sciences and soft sciences, engineering, interior design, civil engineering, education, trade careers, fashion design, product design, graphic design and animation, video game design/development

Physics

From: Stagecraft & Theatre Practicum courses, practical application on production crews

Entertainment careers: Lighting design, set design, sound design, technical directing, carpentry, theatre technicians

Also applies to: Construction sciences, architectural design, education, the sciences, website development, technical writing, design engineering

Design

Color Theory

From: Stagecraft, Stage Makeup, & Theatre Practicum courses, practical application on production crews

Entertainment careers: Costume design, lighting design, hair and makeup design, property design, set design, technical directing, scenic painting, makeup artistry

Also applies to: Marketing and advertising, graphic design and animation, cosmetology, interior design, fashion design, product design, video game design/development, trade careers

Drafting & AutoCAD

From: Stagecraft & Theatre Practicum courses

Entertainment careers: Lighting design, property design, set design, technical directing, theatre technicians, carpentry

Also applies to: Construction sciences, architectural design, design engineering, engineering, civil engineering, trade careers, product design

Practical & Trade Skills

Shop Skills

From: Stagecraft & Theatre Practicum courses

Entertainment careers: Costume design, lighting design, property design, set design, sound design, technical directing, theatre technicians, carpentry, stagehands, scenic painting, broadcast technicians

Also applies to: Construction sciences, trade careers, product design

Basic Electricians' Skills

From: Stagecraft & Theatre Practicum courses

Entertainment careers: Lighting design, electricians, broadcast technicians

Also applies to: Trade careers, construction sciences

Employer-Valued Soft Skills

Public Speaking

From: Voice for the Theatre and Acting courses, performing in productions

Applies to: Any kind of performing, leadership and management roles in any field, education and teaching

Communication & Teamwork

From: Theatre Practicum courses, practical application on productions, workshops

Applies to: Any job working alongside others, leadership and management roles in any field

Adaptability

From: Practical application on productions and workshops

Applies to: Any fast-paced or unpredictable work environments, jobs with a focus on problem-solving

Self-Discipline

From: Practical application in the classroom, on productions, and in workshops

Applies to: Any job involving deadlines, any fast-paced or unpredictable work environments

Leadership & Responsibility

From: As crew leaders in Practicum, in management positions for productions, as directors for workshops

Applies to: Leadership and management roles in any field, independent work, self-employment

Resilience

From: Practical application in auditions, on productions, in Theatre Practicum, and workshops

Applies to: Self-employment, independent work, auditioning- or gig-based work

Self-Advocacy

From: Practical application in auditions, on productions, in Theatre Practicum, and workshops

Applies to: Self-employment, independent work, auditioning- or gig-based work

Entertainment Career Definitions¹⁰

Business

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 2023 median annual wage for agents was \$84,900 or more. Projected growth from 2023-2033 is 9%, faster than average.*

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. *According to glassdoor.com, the median pay for casting directors is \$133,000 per year.*

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 2023 median annual wage for producers and directors was \$82,510. Projected growth from 2023-2033 is at 8%, faster than average.*

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. *According to glassdoor.com, the median pay for film production assistants is \$50,000 per year.*

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 2023 median hourly wage was \$25.00. Projected job growth for choreographers is 6%, faster than average.*

¹⁰ Some of these descriptions 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).

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 \$71,244.*

Director

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 2023 median annual wage for producers is \$82,510. Projected growth from 2023-2033 is at 8%, faster than average.*

Intimacy Professional

Intimacy professionals ensure a safe and ethical environment for actors performing intimate material on television and film sets. Intimacy professionals include intimacy coordinators, gender consultants, topic expert consultants, and choreographers. *According to studiobinder.com, intimacy professionals make around \$61,000 per year, but this can vary due to experience and other factors, as this is a gig-based career.*

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. *Ziprecruiter.com reports the average yearly salary for lighting designers is \$67,794.*

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 2023 median annual wage for writers and authors was \$73,690. Projected job growth for writers and authors between 2023-2033 is 5%, as fast as average.*

Property Designer/Prop 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. *According to ziprecruiter.com, the average yearly salary for props masters is \$83,148.*

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 2023 median annual wage for writers and authors was \$73,690. Projected job growth for writers and authors between 2023-2033 is 5%, as fast as average.*

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. *Ziprecruiter.com reports the average yearly salary for set designers is \$45,949, with the top earners making \$65,681 per year and the 25th percentile making \$38,200 per year.*

Showrunner

Showrunners often take on the responsibilities of the producer for TV series (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 2023 median pay for producers is \$82,510. Projected growth from 2023-2033 is at 8%, faster than average.*

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. *According to ziprecruiter.com, the majority of sound designers in the U.S. earn between \$74,500 and \$93,000 annually.*

Technical Director

Technical directors coordinate and oversee the various technical areas of a live production, including construction of the set, lighting, props, etc. *Glassdoor.com lists the median pay of technical directors as \$156,000 per year.*

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. *The 2023 median annual wage for therapists was \$63,650. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects the job growth for therapy fields is 12%, much faster than average.*

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 2023 median annual wage for all postsecondary teachers was \$84,380. Employment for all college professors is projected to be 8%, faster than average.*

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 2023 median annual wage for preschool teachers was \$37,130 and projected at 4% average growth; for kindergarten and elementary school teachers was \$63,680 at -1% decline in growth; for middle school teachers was \$64,290 at -1% decline in growth; for high school teachers was \$65,220 at -1%, a decline in growth..*

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. *Zippia.com reports that arts managers make an average of \$51,805 per year and arts administrators make an average of \$65,300. Depending on the position, it is possible to have a higher yearly salary, especially for positions that require master's degrees.*

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 salary.com, the average annual pay of a box office manager is \$64,511.*

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 hourly pay of a dramaturg is \$26, according to ziprecruiter.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. *Glassdoor.com lists the median pay of a stage manager as \$80,000 per year.*

Wardrobe Supervisor

Wardrobe supervisors coordinate the costuming and all related operations during the live performance, photography shoot, or filming session. *The median pay for wardrobe supervisors is \$75,000 per year, according to glassdoor.com.*

Performance

Actor

Actors perform in a wide variety of mediums – commercials, films, live theatre and musical theatre, and television 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. *According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the 2023 median hourly wage for actors was \$20.50, and job growth for actors is projected at 5%, as fast as average.*

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. *According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the 2023 median hourly wage for actors, which includes comedians, was \$20.50 per hour, and job growth for actors is projected at 5%, as fast as average.*

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. *The 2023 median wage for dancers was \$24.95 per hour, and job growth is projected at 6 %, faster than average.*

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. *The 2023 median hourly wage for models was \$22.80 and projected job growth for modeling is at little or no change.*

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 hourly wage for puppeteers as \$21.37.*

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. *The 2023 median hourly wage for broadcast announcers and radio disc jockeys was \$21.58 and projected job growth is at little or no change.*

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. *The 2023 median hourly wage for singers and musicians was \$39.14 and projected job growth is at 2%, slower than the average for all occupations.*

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. *Ziprecruiter.com reports the average salary of a stunt performer is \$69,442.*

Voice Actor

Voice actors are actors who specialize in providing the voices for animated films and TV, dubbed foreign language TV and movies, video games, advertising, podcasts and other short form content. They may also narrate audiobooks. Voice acting is gig-based, and the work environment, job growth, educational requirements, and compensation will vary depending on the specific industry. *According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the 2023 median hourly wage for actors was \$20.50, and job growth for actors is projected at 5%, as fast as average.*

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. *The 20223 median pay for broadcast technicians was \$54,160. The projected growth rate is at 3%, as fast as average for all occupations.*

Carpenter/Scene Shop

Scene shop carpenters are responsible for building the sets for a production. Generally work experience in carpentry is required. *The 2023 median pay for carpenters was \$56,350 Projected job growth for carpenters is at 4%, as fast as average.*

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. *The 2023 median pay for costume attendants was \$52,370 The expected job growth from 2023-2033 is at 7%, faster than average.*

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 2023 median pay for an electrician was \$61,590, and job growth between 2023-2033 for electricians is 11%, much faster than average.*

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 mid range salary of a grip according to careersinfilm.com is \$59,000.*

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 2023 median pay of a hairstylist was \$35,080. Job growth is projected at 7%, faster than average.*

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. *The 2023 median pay for makeup artists was \$47,390, and projected growth rate for this profession is 9%, much faster than average.*

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. *The 2023 median annual wage for riggers was \$56,220, and projected job growth is at 5%, as fast as average.*

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. *Glassdoor.com reports the average salary for scenic painters is \$51,497.*

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. *The national average pay for stagehands, according to glassdoor.com, is \$54,143 per year.*

Tailor

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. *The 2023 median pay for tailors was \$36,650. Projected job growth for this field is declining.*

Wigmaker

Wigmakers specialize in the design and construction of wigs. Formal education or on-the-job training in theatrical design and cosmetology is beneficial to those seeking to become wigmakers. *The Economic Research Institute reports the average salary for wigmakers is \$48,119.*

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.

Explanation of Degrees & Certificates

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 the entertainment industry. 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 increase hiring chances for those seeking careers in the industry (and some professional theatres hire exclusively those who have obtained certain levels of education). It provides experience, the chance for mentorship and networking, and of course, a structured, thorough education. For more on why an associate's degree in Drama is desirable, see 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 all options should be considered on an individual basis, with thought given to all relevant factors.

UNDERGRADUATE

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 core requirement courses before transferring to a costlier 4-year university. Drama majors can expect to take a variety of drama courses, including acting, theatre history/appreciation, 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.

Teaching 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 but will also include education courses and supervised practice teaching.

Skill-Based Certifications: A variety of certifications can be pursued to increase hiring chances. Some such certifications can be obtained as part of a drama major's undergraduate education. Examples include Stage Combat certification.

Other Professional Certifications: Some careers in the theatre industry can be pursued with, or require, specific certification. Employers may prioritize candidates with these credentials. These certification courses are often offered by colleges, professional organizations, or online. Examples include sound engineering certificates and intimacy coordinator training programs.

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

ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY

- Production companies
- Theatres
- Arts councils
- Cruise lines
- Television studios
- Radio stations
- Film studios
- Touring companies
- Video game companies
- Animation studios
- Dance companies
- Performing arts organizations
- Amusement and theme parks
- Audiobook production companies

OTHER INDUSTRIES

- Community organizations
- Fundraising firms
- Libraries
- Educational/cultural institutions
- Colleges & universities
- Elementary, junior high/middle, and high schools
- Private schools
- Non-profits

Example Non-Entertainment Career Paths

Careers in Management or Marketing

A.A. in Drama (*literary analysis & research skills, public speaking*) → relevant undergraduate program → enter workforce

Careers in Law

A.A. in Drama (*literary theory, history, & research skills, public speaking*) → pre-law undergraduate program → law school → enter workforce

Trade Careers

A.A. in Drama with a focus on Technical Theatre (*mathematics, drafting/AutoCAD, shop skills*) → enter workforce

Fashion or Product Design

A.A. in Drama with a focus on Technical Theatre → relevant undergraduate design program → enter workforce

Library Sciences

A.A. in Drama (*performance, public speaking, literary theory*), especially with a focus on Theatre Education → enter workforce OR relevant Bachelor's degree & subsequent Master's in Library Science

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!

Meet Our Graduates



JOHN RAYMOND BARKER holds an MFA from the University of Houston School of Theatre after earning his Bachelor's from Texas A&M at Commerce and an AA in Drama from ACC. In January 2019, John made his network television debut guest starring on *Law & Order: SVU* on NBC.



ABI HARRIS graduated from the University of Houston and is now an IATSE Local #1 stagehand, scenic charge artist, and props designer in New York City. She has also worked on concerts and other events such as the Wimbledon Championships.



WESTON BARNWELL is a graduate of Syracuse University, one of the top three drama programs in the country, and now works in the TV & film industry in Los Angeles with Michael Greathouse, a producer who is also an ACC alumnus.



KATRINA MUELLER is a graduate of Vancouver Film School, one of the world's top film schools. She participated in the ACC Summer Children's Theatre Festival since she was six years old and graduated from our program with an A.A. in Theatre.



JUSTIN MORGAN BROWN is a Houston-area actor who graduated from ACC with an A.A. in Theatre. He is a three-time nominee in the largest audience-choice theatre awards in the Houston region.



NEVAEH MANSUR is an ACC Musical Theatre graduate. She transferred to North Central College Chicago where she will graduate with her Bachelor's in musical theatre. She recently completed an internship at The Alley Theatre in Houston.



DILLON DEWITT is a Houston-area actor who graduated from Northwestern State University with a degree in theatre performance and directing. He has performed in music videos and local film and TV projects. Dillon recently was named Best Supporting Actor in the 2024 Houston Press Theater Awards for his role in Catastrophic Theatre's *It is Magic*.



SHANNON KOMLOFSKE is a graduate of ACC Drama and Northwestern State University who is a professional scenic artist. She has worked for, among others, Cobalt Studios, Utah Shakespeare Festival, and TEDTalk.

Further 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.

American Theatre Magazine

americantheatre.org

The online home of American Theatre magazine, with content updated daily.

Applied & Interactive Theatre Guide

<https://www.tonisant.com/aitg/>

Covers non-traditional theater and theater as a social resource, including Improv, Drama Therapy, Sociodrama, Theatre of the Oppressed, and more.

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 & 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.

Entertainment Community Fund

www.actorsfund.org

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

Houston Casting Calls & Auditions

<https://www.castingnetworks.com/houston-casting-calls/>

Search for acting auditions in Houston including film, television, commercials, theater and voiceover roles.

Houston Film Commission

<https://www.houstonfilmcommission.com/news-and-events/cast-and-crew-calls/>

Cast and crew calls from the Houston Film Commission.

International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees

www.iaatse.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.

National Theatre Black Plays Archive

<https://www.blackplaysarchive.org.uk/>

An online catalogue of production premieres in the UK of plays written by Black British, African, and Caribbean playwrights.

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.

Performing Arts Reading Room

<https://www.loc.gov/research-centers/performing-arts/>

A digital library of music, theater, and dance from the Library of Congress.

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.

Theatrecrafts.com

<https://www.theatrecrafts.com/pages/>

Links to sources on many aspects of staging, including props, special effects, sound, wardrobe, etc. Also has extensive glossary of stage terminology.

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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