

Drama and Theatre Studies

Drama and Theatre Studies is a subject with a long history. The earliest known dramatic productions took place in open-air theatres in ancient Greece.

The theatre is still popular across the world. Productions range from Shakespeare plays at Stratford-upon-Avon to comedy shows in the upstairs rooms of pubs.

People's reasons for going to the theatre are equally varied. Some go to relax and escape. Others go to be emotionally stirred, and to gain deeper insights into life.

Skills you will learn

Drama and Theatre Studies at A level could teach you a wide range of skills, including:

- how to breathe correctly and project your voice
- how to move well on stage
- how to use body language (posture, gestures, etc)
- stage combat and fencing
- acrobatics and tumbling
- dance skills (including jazz, tap, and social dancing)
- how to read and interpret a script
- how to improvise (develop an idea or character without a script)
- the special requirements of acting in film and television
- how to perform Shakespeare and other classic works.

You might also cover other areas, such as singing, speaking verse, the use of masks, stage management, technical skills (eg, sound and lighting operations), make-up, writing for performance, publicity, and the history of drama and the theatre.

The skills learned through drama can help to develop your self-confidence, imagination and communication skills.

Most people who want to work in this field study at a drama school.

There are a number of British drama schools offering courses accredited by the National Council for Drama Training (NCDT). Some professional courses include advice on applying and auditioning for work.

Careers using Drama and Theatre Studies

Actor/actress - Actors and actresses work in live stage performances and/or recorded media such as film and television. Their job is to bring to life, as effectively as possible, the role they are playing. They use their own experience and emotions to help them portray characters. Actors and actresses usually work under the guidance of a director, who has to make sure that the cast performs well and provides an effective interpretation of the author's text. Many actors and actresses have periods of unemployment between jobs. During these times, they may have to take on other jobs. There are many different routes into this career. While there are no minimum requirements, most entrants complete a professional training course at a drama school.

Stage Manager - Stage managers work 'behind the scenes' in theatres, arts centres and so on, helping productions to run smoothly. They make sure that the actors and actresses are ready on time, that props and stage furniture are in the correct position for each scene, and that cues are given to sound and lighting operators at the right moment. In small theatre companies, stage managers may also look after other areas of a production, such as lighting design and set construction. As with actors and actresses, many stage managers complete a professional training course at a drama school.

Theatre Technicians - Theatre technicians work in a variety of roles in theatres and similar institutions. The job includes a range of specialisms. Lighting technicians install and angle floodlights, spotlights and so on, according to the directions of the lighting designer. They might also have to operate the lights during a performance, following the action on the stage and cues from the stage manager. Sound technicians create and record sound effects, background music and so on, while other technicians are responsible for areas such as set construction and special effects. There are no minimum requirements to enter these careers, but an active interest in theatre (eg, taking part in school plays and/or amateur theatre) is vital.

Costume Designer - Costume designers design and create the costumes used in theatre. For a historical play, this may involve a lot of research. Working to a budget, they decide how the costumes can be created to look as genuine as possible, while meeting the needs of the performers. For example, they take into account any quick costume changes during a production. This could mean using something like *Velcro* to fasten a garment, instead of hooks and buttons. Costume designers may supervise a team of wardrobe staff who have to prepare the costumes and ensure they are kept clean and in good condition throughout the run of a performance. The usual route towards a career as a costume designer is to complete a degree or HND in a relevant design specialism such as theatre, costume or fashion design.

Dramatherapist - Dramatherapists use drama to help people with physical, mental, social and emotional difficulties. Through drama, people can explore their personalities and experiences, communicate feelings and overcome social problems. When the dramatherapist first meets a client, they will listen and talk to them, assessing their problem and deciding on the most appropriate type of dramatherapy to use with them. Depending on the client's needs, they could be working with them in a group or one-to-one. Dramatherapy could involve stories, mime, role plays, movement and dance, or improvisations. For the client, the point is not about being a good actor or putting on a show for other people.

The process of creating drama is a type of therapy and can help the client in many ways. To become a dramatherapist, you'll need to complete a recognised postgraduate qualification in dramatherapy.

Arts Administrator - Arts administrators work in theatres, arts centres, theatre-in-education groups, etc. This is a large field covering a wide range of jobs. Arts administrators are responsible for various duties, from booking performers and negotiating with suppliers, to financial record keeping and accounting. They are also involved in publicity, media relations and box office operations. Arts administrators in small companies might also have secretarial or personnel work. There are a number of routes to becoming an arts administrator. One is to study for a degree in arts management or a related subject. Another is to obtain a relevant job (eg, in a theatre box office) and study part-time for further qualifications at a local college.

Dancer - Dancers perform, usually to music, in a range of settings, from theatres to nightclubs, hotels to holiday centres, cruise liners to Christmas pantomimes. There are various styles of dance including:

- classical ballet
- contemporary or modern dance
- musical theatre dance such as tap dancing
- social dance, such as ballroom and disco.

Many people begin by learning one type of dance, such as ballet, and go on to learn other styles later. All drama courses include an element of dance. Most dancers begin training early by attending part-time classes while still at school. There are also some full-time courses in ballet and musical theatre at specialist schools. Many dancers go on to obtain a dance-related qualification at diploma or degree level.

Drama Teacher - Drama teachers teach the skills of drama and theatre arts. They work in schools, colleges of further education, universities, specialist drama schools, youth and community groups and arts centres, and for local authorities as drama advisers. Many drama teachers working in schools also teach a related subject, such as English. They teach pupils how to study plays, write scripts, design sets, and direct and perform a piece of drama. Teaching methods include group discussions and role plays, demonstrations and play readings, audio-visual materials and the internet. Drama teachers also take pupils on theatre visits. Drama teachers have to plan lessons, mark work, write reports, go to meetings and give feedback. To become a secondary school drama teacher, you'll need a degree that leads to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), or to follow a relevant degree with postgraduate training leading to QTS.