DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 137 613 08 CE 010 742

AUTHOR	Allosso, Michael; And Others
TITLE	Exploring Theater and Media Careers. A Student Guidebook.
INSTITUTION	Technical Education Research Center, Cambridge, Mass.
SPONS AGENCY	Bureau of Occupational and Adult Education (DHEW/OE), Washington, D.C. Div. of Research and Demonstration.
PUB DATE	76
CONTRACT	OEC-0-74-9253
NOTE	144p.; For related documents see CE 010 734-744
AVAILABLE FROM	Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 (Stock Number 017-080-01640-1, $2.15)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$7.35 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Acting; Broadcast Industry; Business; *Career Exploration; Drama; Film Criticism; Film Production; Films; Instructional Materials; Literary Criticism; *Mass Media; *Occupational Information; Occupations; Playwriting; Radio; Resource Guides; Secondary Education; Television; *Theater Arts; Writing

ABSTRACT

One of six student guidebooks in a series of 11 arts and humanities career exploration guides for grade 7-12 teachers, counselors, and students, this student book on exploration of theater and media careers presents information on specific occupations in five different career areas: Performance, writing, production, business, and education/criticism. Each chapter includes general discussion of the field and what people in that field do, description of personality characteristics and interests that are appropriate, education or experience required, where and how jobs are found and the job outlook, and suggestions a person in the field would make to students. The chapters and jobs they cover are as follows: (1) Performance Careers (actors, entertainers, announcers, and directors), (2) Writing Careers (playwrights and scriptwriters), (3) Production Careers (designers, backstage theater work, and media production work), (4) Business Careers (producers, theater business and management, television and radio directors, agents and salespeople), and (5) Education/Criticism Careers (teachers and librarians, and writers about theater and media). Appended are a glossary, a list of addresses of professional associations, and a list of sources of additional information. (JT)

Exploring Theater and Media Careers

a student guidebook

BY
MICHAEL ALLOSSO
MARY LEWIS HANSEN, PROJECT DIRECTOR

RICHARD CORNELL, EDITING
SHEILA DUBMAN, ILLUSTRATIONS, EDITING

TECHNICAL EDUCATION RESEARCH CENTERS, INC.
44 BRATTLE STREET
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington: 1976

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402

Stock No. 017-080-01640-1

Developed and disseminated pursuant to Contract No. OEC-0-74-9253
for

Curriculum Development Branch
Division of Research and Demonstration
Bureau of Occupational and Adult Education
U.S. Office of Education
Department of Health, Education and Welfare

under

Part I. Curriculum Development in Vocational and Technical Education
Vocational Education Amendments of 1968
Public Law 90-576

<u>Discrimination Prohibited</u> - Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 states: "No person in the United States, shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefit of or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." Therefore, the Vocational Education program, like all other programs or activities receiving financial assistance from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, must be operated in compliance with this law.

The project presented or reported herein was performed pursuant to a contract from the U.S. Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare. However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Office of Education, and no official endorsement by the U.S. Office of Education should be inferred.

U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington: 1976

Photo Credits: cover and pp. 5, 28, 48, 49, 77, 99, Alton Miller, through the generosity of Arena Stage, Washington, D.C.; p. 119, Philip Ames, courtesy The Times-Picayune Publishing Corporation, New Orleans, Louisiana.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION 1

2. PERFORMANCE CAREERS 3

Actors 4
Entertainers 10
Announcers 18
Directors 24

3. WRITING CAREERS 29

Playwrights 29
Scriptwriters 37

4. PRODUCTION CAREERS 43

Designers 44
Backstage Theater Work 58
Media Production Work 75

5. BUSINESS CAREERS 87

Producers 88
Theater Business and Management 98
Television and Radio Directors 103
Agents and Salespeople 108

6. EDUCATION/CRITICISM CAREERS 115

Teachers and Librarians 116
Writers about Theater and Media 125

APPENDIXES

A. Glossary 131

B. Professional Associations 135

C. Sources of Additional Information 137

1. INTRODUCTION

When you think of careers in theater, film, and television, you probably almost automatically think of acting. However, there are many non-acting careers in theater and media.

As you glance through the lists at the beginning of the following chapters, you will notice a wide variety of jobs. Some of them may be completely unfamiliar to you. You will probably want to read about all the jobs, but first you might want to ask yourself the following questions:

A. Am I a doer, performer? Do I like to speak in front of groups? Am I agressive and willing to take risks?

B. Do I like to read and write? Might I want to write as a career?

C. Would I prefer working backstage in behind-the-scene jobs or designing for theater and/or film and television?

D. Am I interested in the business and money aspects of theater and entertainment? Can I organize well?

E. Do I like sharing what I know with people?

If you answered "yes" to question C, then you would probably find that Chapter Four is the most interesting to you. If you answered "yes" to question D, then Chapter Five would be more suitable. (The same, of course, holds true for the other three questions.) The beginning of each of these five chapters lists the jobs discussed in that chapter. By reading every chapter you will discover more about these jobs and decide if indeed they are jobs you might consider as a possible career.

The theater and media industries are composed of creators, business people, production people, and educators. When you sit at home watching "Rhoda" on television you see the products of all these people. Valerie Harper is visibly pursuing her career as a television actress. But did you ever think about all the other people involved in the production without whom we would never see Valerie Harper? What about the clothes she is wearing? She did not open her closet in the morning, put on a dress and wear it to the studio and then under the lights during filming. And what about the lights? Someone did not simply flick on a switch at the beginning of the show and flick it off at the end. And who decides how much light will be shining on Rhoda at a particular time? And what good is light if there is no one running the camera? And what about Rhoda's apartment? Who set it up and decided what was to go in it? And what about Valerie Harper? Who instructed her in the early stages of her career and helped her to develop her craft?

Each of these responsibilities represents different jobs and is important by itself. But these jobs are also an important part of creating a production. No one or two jobs alone is the most important in creating a tv show, film, or play. It is the combined effort of many individuals which makes the finished product. So if you like acting, you may find it easy to continue and read the first section of this book. However, if you are not interested in acting, do not give up. The other chapters will introduce you to the many non-acting jobs in theater, film, and television which are challenging and important.

Concluding this guidebook to careers in theater and media are 1) a glossary of unfamiliar terms, 2) a list of professional associations to which you can write for brochures and pamphlets about theater and media careers, and 3) the names of books and some films which will give you further information about aspects of theater and media. Your school counseling office and your local library are additional sources of information.

One of the best ways to learn is to talk with people who are involved in theater and media careers. Much of the information you will read in this guidebook comes from interviews with a large number of people who do the work described. The pages ahead will suggest your own questions for people working in theater and media as you think about your own career.

2. PERFORMANCE CAREERS

AM I A DOER, A PERFORMER?
DO I LIKE TO SPEAK IN FRONT OF A GROUP?
AM I AGGRESSIVE AND WILLING TO TAKE RISKS?

If your answer to the questions was "yes," then answer the following:

- Would I like to be an actor?

  Possible jobs are:

  Actor
  Double
  Stand-in

- Do I have some special talent, such as doing tricks or telling jokes? Do I like to perform in front of people, but not as an actor in a play?

  Possible jobs are:

  Mime
  Dramatic Reader
  Story Teller
  Comedian
  Master of Ceremonies
  Impersonator/Mimic
  Magician
  Hypnotist
  Ventriloquist
  Waiter/Entertainer
  Model
  Barker
  Show "Girl"

  Circus Performers
  Acrobat
  Aerialist
  Juggler
  Thrill Performer
  Ringmaster
  Stunt Person
  Fire Eater

- Would I like to be on radio and/or tv? Do I have a pleasant speaking voice?

  Possible jobs are:

  Broadcast Journalist
  Announcer
  Specialized Television Reporter
  Sports Announcer
  Disc Jockey

- Would I like to be in charge of creating a whole production?

  Possible jobs are:

  Director
  News Director
  Radio Director
  Technical Director
  Program Assistant (radio and tv)
  Assistant Director

ACTORS

If you like being in plays, read and memorize well, and have that extra sparkle that makes you stand out in a crowd, then acting may be the career for you. But don't depend on your "sparkle" to guarantee you an acting career. Acting is one of the most difficult and competitive careers in which to get started. In 1974 there were 10,000 people in the United States who called themselves "actors." Only 4,000 of them worked on Broadway, and many of those were only employed a small percentage of the year.

The statistics are discouraging. Broadway theaters are closing. Fewer movies are made every year. Half-hour television shows are being dropped in favor of longer episodes (two half-hour shows will employ more actors than one hour-long show). Reruns of old shows used to appear for only 13 weeks out of the year; now, we see 26 weeks of reruns per year, which, of course, cuts back the demand for actors. It is clear, in light of such facts, that very few aspiring actors ever receive any sort of recognition.

If what you have read so far scares you off, then skip this chapter and read about another field in theater and media. Acting is not for those who are easily discouraged. An actor must be able to cope with all sorts of discouragements: from finding that there are no jobs to being rejected from jobs that do exist. Young actors must be strong and courageous in the face of repeated failures. Most actors feel that a good sense of humor and self-confidence help in dealing with this problem of failure.

Actors say that you must be totally committed to your work. You cannot think that your work day is over when rehearsal (or performance) is over.

In order to be successful, most actors feel that you really have to care about the subject matter with which you are dealing. Your objective for acting should be to say something important to your audience. Your reasons for wanting to be an actor should be more substantial than the excitement of curtain calls and compliments after performances.

What Skills Do I Need to be an Actor?

Billy is in all the school plays, has a good sense of humor, and can memorize well. He is so dedicated to acting that he sometimes skips his homework to attend rehearsals. Does that mean that acting is the career for him? Not necessarily.

His ability to memorize well is useful, particularly in stock and repertory companies, which often rehearse and perform two different plays in one day. Summer stock actors sometimes have only two weeks in which to rehearse and learn the lines for a play. Actors in tv soap operas often have to memorize lines overnight. Memorization skills, however, are not

Actors perform in a scene from Thornton Wilder's Our Town.

quite as important to motion picture actors because they do not perform a complete production. Instead, they memorize only small portions of a script at one time, as scenes are rehearsed and "shot" individually and spliced together later on.

Although dedication is indeed an asset to an actor, dedication to a school play is not the same as dedication to a career in acting. Someone like Billy may not enjoy acting professionally as much as he enjoys it in school. School productions do not require the kind of life-time commitment that a professional acting career requires, in which good actors literally work every hour of the day. Rehearsals for live performances and production time for filming may run late in the evening and into weekends and holidays. Good actors spend what free time they may have thinking about or researching every role they play.

But learning and rehearsing specific roles are only part of an actor's work. Truly dedicated actors are keenly observant of other people. When actors are wolfing down a quick lunch, for instance, they are probably listening to the conversations at tables around them. The people at one table may be talking about the high cost of keeping up their yacht, and the people at another table may be discussing the intimate details of their private lives. Although these conversations may be irrelevant to the actors' current work, there is no telling when such dialogues may inspire an actor to play a role more effectively. The actors will certainly learn something just by observing the way those people speak, and the gestures and mannerisms they use.

Good actors also read, see plays, and send out resumes during their spare time. David, an actor working in Boston and New York, described the outside activities he participated in which enhance his career as an actor by saying:

> I see no distinction between what I do during my working time and what I do before and after. I send out resumes and photos. I meet with producers. I go to the theater to see other plays. Going to the theater is not purely entertainment. I see actors and benefit from their weaknesses and strengths.

David also listed some of the competencies an actor needs to succeed:

- Memorization
- Concentration
- Flexibility
- Voice and body control
- Singing and dancing
- Physical strength.

Why physical strength? According to David, most actors feel that they should be as physically fit as athletes. Their bodies should be strong enough to do a variety of tasks day after day without collapsing. As David said, "You must work as well on Sunday, after having done eight shows that week, as you do on Tuesday after you have had a full day's rest." Some activities actors may be called on to do which require physical dexterity and/or strength are: falling down a flight of stairs; wrestling with a 6'5", 210 lb. muscle man and being placed neatly in the orchestra pit; leaping off the stage into the audience, up the aisles, over peoples' legs, up to the balcony, and down a rope to stage level; dancing, dancing, and more dancing (including somersaults, cartwheels, splits, twisting, turning, jumping -- all over and over again); standing and waiting.

A young actor who can develop some or all of these competencies might have a better chance for a career in acting. Some skills, however, cannot be learned. Many actors feel that a good actor should have certain "natural" talents such as:

- A good imagination
- A keen sense of observation
- An intelligent and alert mind
- A pleasing personality
- Charm
- An ability to understand people.

While no one would contend that every actor has all of these characteristics (there are, for example, very nasty actors, who display no understanding about people at all), they are all valuable talents to have.

If you now feel ready to make the decision to be an actor, perhaps you should think about what

David the professional actor had to say when asked,

> When you committed yourself to the field of theater, did you have any notions about that field which proved to be unrealistic?
>
> Yes. I thought you could be successful if you were good -- you'd be immediately recognized! I was dead wrong. Your talent is not recognized unless you know how to make it saleable. I thought you could develop your talent really fast. I had no idea it took so long. I thought that if a person were intellectually bright he or she could be a good actor. That's not always true.

Advice to Students

Recently a very famous Academy Award winning actress talked about her career and offered some advice to students who are thinking about becoming actors. She said:

> Make sure you have talent. It's not easy to find work. Be sure you have some talent before you start looking.

This may seem like an abvious remark, but you should not minimize its importance. Billy might be a big star at Harry Hoover High, but how talented is he compared to other stars of the other high schools around the world? Billy could benefit by asking adults who know a lot about theater to assess his talents candidly. The more "judges" he could find the better it would be for him. His friends and family may tell him that he is excellent after every performance, but they might praise him no matter what he did. If Billy is going to be an actor, he must be realistic and able to accept criticism.

When asked what advice he would give to students interested in the theater David said,

> Get to know as many aspects of the theater as you possibly can -- no matter what your specific interest may be. See plays, film and television. Read. Write and produce your own plays. Theater can take place in the streets. Scenery can be painted on old sheets. Put on plays in the cellar.

David's "14 Steps to Being an Actor"

1. If there's nothing else which makes you happy in life, if you are honestly convinced that there is nothing else you want -- then be an actor.
2. Read, observe.
3. Be ready to take a lot of rejection and be strong enough to survive it financially and psychologically.
4. Make up your mind that you cannot become an actor overnight. Be willing to work your head off seven days a week.
5. Go into any other career unless you have that pain in your gut which says, 'I must get out in front of an audience.'
6. Be prepared to work at other things unless you are rich.
7. Go to as many plays as you can.
8. Work backstage.
9. Watch rehearsals, anywhere, anytime.
10. Imitate other people but know you eventually have to do it yourself.
11. Know who you are and love yourself.
12. Be yourself.
13. Keep healthy.
14. Be an athlete.

David also spoke in great detail about how totally inseparable his working life as an actor was from his private life as a husband and father. While he is playing with his daughter on the living room floor, he finds himself sputtering lines from his present play. At first his little girl would say, "Daddy, what are you talking about?" But now she is used to it and just passes it off as "that funny language Daddy always speaks."

What Do I Do Now?

If acting is the "right" profession for you, where do you go now? Most actors have some sort of college education. You might choose to go to a liberal arts college or to a specialized acting school. A liberal arts school gives you an advantage in that alternatives could be available if you decide not to be an actor after all. The advantage of a specialized school is that you would have a more intensive acting program from the start. Whatever you choose, you should look for a school which offers you an opportunity to participate in productions. Backstage work in summer stock productions is also good experience.

Of course, the other alternative would be to leave school and try to "make it" as an actor right away. This can be tough since it is hard to find a job without experience. If you are out on the streets looking for an acting job, you should register with all the casting offices, agents, and producers' offices in town. Make the rounds of these places everyday. Be a pest! Answer casting calls in theater newspapers. Make contacts. Meet as many people as you can. There is no telling who might help you to get an acting job.

If you are interested in motion picture acting, be advised that the road to Hollywood still detours at Broadway. You should take whatever "bit" parts are offered to you. Sometimes the steps up seem too small to bother with, but a young actor must be willing to work at even the smallest role.

Outlook

There are few possiblities for those who wish to act in the Broadway theater. Regional community and summer stock theaters as well as television offer somewhat better possiblities. Tv commercials are one of the best employment sources for actors. In general, musically oriented people have greater opportunities. While dinner theaters provide good acting opportunities, the outlook is dim for acting in classical, serious plays.

There are many people who consider acting their "career" although they earn no money at it. They may drive taxi cabs during the day to earn money and play small roles in the evening for which they are not paid. They act because they love to -- and that is their career.

There are many people who love to act in amateur productions. Most cities have community theater groups, with people who hold all sorts of jobs gathering in the evenings to put on plays.

People become professional actors because they love what they are doing, and because they do it well. Their love and dedication to their work enables them to sacrifice and accept hardships. In the words of a man who has been a professional actor for almost two decades:

> If there's nothing else which makes you happy in life, if you are honestly convinced there is nothing else you want -- then be an actor.

ENTERTAINERS

If you like to perform in front of groups, do you have to act in plays and movies? Not necessarily. You might be interested in performing in some specialized fashion or doing special tricks. Go back to the beginning of this chapter and look at the list of "specialized entertainment" jobs that exist today.

Before you set your mind on becoming a juggler or other kind of entertainer, you should understand one point: many of these careers are victims of fads. (One juggler said that his profession, which died out in the sixties, is coming rapidly back in style.) A ventiloquist does not report to an office or factory every day to "ventriloquize" for eight hours, and pick up a pay check at the end of the week; instead, he/she is hired by individuals and groups for special one-time appearances. It may be fashionable one year to have ventriloquists entertain at parties or bowling alleys, but the next year ventriloquists may be out of style and acrobats may be the current rage. Some job which does not appear on our list may become popular -- perhaps in 1985 every fashionable party will feature an aardvark charmer or mermaid impersonator. A magician responded when asked if the outlook is good for people wanting to be magicians, "It depends on the fad. Right now magic is a big thing. It might die out." Entertainers can always count on one thing -- instability!

Therefore, you should probably not think of entertaining as a livelihood. Most people who are entertainers must hold other jobs to support themselves. Entertainers might also be teachers, camp directors, salespeople or full-time homemakers. Many entertainers perform as a non-paying "hobby" rather than as a job.

There are lots of kinds of entertainers who might be hired by a family like the fictitious LaChaChas, who live in a wealthy suburban community. The LaChaChas frequently give parties, and usually hire entertainers to appear at them. For example:

- Lulu LaChaCha has hired a dramatic reader and a comedian to entertain at a baby shower for her sister-in-law Amelia. The comedian will tell funny jokes and stories to satisfy Amelia and her sisters who love to laugh. Lulu is also inviting some sophisticated friends who belong to the Shakespearean Play-of-the-Month Club. For their entertainment Lulu has hired a dramatic reader to present a monologue incorporating many of the Shakespearean roles. The dramatic reader will rely on voice changes instead of movements to hold the audience's attention.
- Leroy LaChaCha has just graduated from kindergarten and mother Lulu is giving him a big bash. Verna Van Waltzstein, next-door neighbor, hired a clown to perform an original comedy routine at her son's birthday party last year, and it was the talk of the neighborhood. In order to out-do Verna, Lulu is planning Leroy's party to include: 1) a story teller who will recite simple versions of classic fairy tales, 2) a hypnotist who will put unruly children into a trance to make them behave properly, and 3) a juggler who will balance Lulu's finest dinner plates on a stick while riding a unicycle. That line-up should keep the neighbors buzzing for a while.
- Lavinia LaChaCha is a 20-year-old, beautiful model. Last spring she modeled evening gowns in a fashion show at the big department store downtown. She was also a photographer's model for a few weeks, posing for a series of laundry soap ads. The local university just offered her a job as an artist's model for a few art classes. Her father, Louie LaChaCha forbade her to accept the assignment because she would have to appear in the nude. Lavinia got angry and ran away from home to attend a circus school.
- Louie LaChaCha belongs to the Fraternal Order of Reindeer. He and his fellow Reindeer have organized the first annual "Miss Reindeer Beauty Pageant." The first person they will hire is a master of ceremonies; the emcee will introduce the contestants and guest entertainers, tell jokes, and even sing a song while the judges make their final decisions.

While the contestants change into their swimsuits, a mime will entertain the audience with interpretations of various emotions through body movements, facial expressions, and gestures. The mime's act will include playing the role of a girl who has just been awarded the "Miss Reindeer" crown. Later, as the girls change from swimsuits to evening gowns, an impersonator will appear on stage, pretending to be everything from a toad to a dump truck.

Lavinia LaChaCha will, of course, be ineligible to participate in the contest.

The last time her father heard from her she was swinging from a trapeze and turning somersaults with an aerialist she had met in the circus.

Modeling

Modeling is a possible career for those interested in entertainment jobs. There are two kinds of modeling:

- Fashion modeling, in which people model fashions for prospective buyers either for commercial or personal use
- Photographic modeling, in which people model fashions to illustrate products to be advertised.

Fashion modeling employs the larger amount of people. Fashion models work in manufacturers' showrooms, department stores, and better dress stores. Photographic models work free-lance and generally take bookings through an agency. They could do still photography modeling or model for television.

The best background for a prospective model is to attend modeling school. However, although there are many modeling schools all over the country, many are inferior. Students are warned to choose schools which have a good reputation, good facilities, and a placement service to help the trained model find a job. It might be better for an aspiring model to go directly to an agency before spending money on a school, especially if he/she has already put together a good portfolio of photographs.

There are many people, both male and female, interested in modeling. Competition for all is intense. Many models work only part-time. There are some models who do nothing more than hand-out free samples in the makeup department of a large store once a month.

Even with all their activities, the LaChaChas have not met up with every kind of entertainer. There are still many others. For example, there are waiters who sing and dance as they wait on tables -- a restaurant in Washington, D.C., even has waiters on roller skates. People called "barkers" stand outside places of entertainment shouting to passers-by that the show is about to begin. There are show girls who dance in chorus lines or just stand around to fill up the stage in certain productions. There are also "exotic" dancers who probably would never be asked to perform at a LaChaCha party.

The circus employs other entertainers such as thrill performers, stunt people, and fire eaters. For those people, a willingness to take risks is a definite requirement for the job. No job is really "typical" of entertaining. It is possible, though, to look at a job as representative of all the others in this category. Puppeteers and magicians are good examples of representative jobs. Much information about these two kinds of career is applicable to other entertainment work.

For instance, self-discipline is required for all entertainment jobs. An entertainer needs the discipline to keep working to perfect his/her craft. It is not enough to simply perform "well enough." Patience is important too. The young magician who wants to saw a lady in half had better be able to put her back together again. That means the magician must learn the trick very, very well before trying it with a real lady!

Most of these jobs require a certain amount of flare and showmanship. An entertainer should be something of an actor. One magician said that he was always the "life of the party" and could easily organize groups into games. A puppeteer observed that a "sense of playfulness" is necessary. In general, entertainers claim that being outgoing and friendly is an asset to an entertainer.

Other important talents are: manual dexterity; common sense, finesse/poise; creative thinking, imagination, humor; commitment to the job at hand; aggressiveness; sometimes a strong speaking voice.

<u>A Juggler Said</u>

It takes just the right combination of temperament and self-discipline to be able to practice alone, hour after hour. It's quiet; it's introspective; it's been compared with Zen in the need for single-minded concentration.

I started out as a piano player in a band, but soon I became more interested in juggling than playing the piano. So I quit the band and began juggling full time. No work, no school, no band -- just juggling two straight years for eight hours a day.

As we look at each talent, it is clear that most of the entertainers must have the first one, manual dexterity. Without it, a magician could never pull a bouquet of flowers out of a cane. A puppeteer could never do several character changes in one show. A hyponotist would drop the watch in the participant's lap, a ventriloquist's dummy would have lockjaw, and a fire eater would have some nasty burns. Even a waiter/entertainer needs manual dexterity to avoid dropping pea soup in ladies' laps. Imagine what would happen to an acrobat with butterfingers!

Every entertainer also needs common sense to make decisions and gauge audience reactions. Finesse and poise are also important. A magician must do more than perform a set of tricks: he or she must do the routine smoothly and with an appealing sense of style.

Creativity is an asset in almost any job, but it is particularly important to an entertainer, who could easily grow stale doing the same material over and over again. In order to survive, an entertainer must have the originality and sense of humor to interest the audience and a genuine pride in his/her work. Commitment to the job at hand is necessary for all good performers. No matter how small the assignment, performers try to do their work to the best of their ability. For instance, a puppeteer asked to do a puppet show for a group of first graders should not go in thinking, "Well, they're just first graders. I'll throw something together, they'll never know the difference." Every audience deserves the best a performer can give it. Performance gives public exposure, and exposure leads to greater opportunities for employment. For example, the principal of the elementary school just might recommend that puppeteer to someone else who would want to hire him/her for a special job.

Aggressiveness may seem to be a personality trait common to all sorts of people. Entertainers, however, consider it a "talent" too, since no entertainer can begin a career without being aggressive. Unfortunately there is rarely, if ever, a newspaper advertisement saying, "Ventriloquist Wanted." Nor do circus tents have signs posted on the outside reading, "Juggler Wanted. Apply within."

Therefore, an entertainer seeking employment must be aggressive enough to create a demand for his/her talents: "You might be able to use a ventriloquist at your party," or "Wouldn't a juggler be a good addition to your variety show?"

Entertainers are always in the position of having to find new jobs. There are many ways to do this. James, for example, is a magician in constant search for employment. He first found work by telling all his friends that he was performing magic and was available for jobs. Next, he put an ad in the newspaper saying, "Magician Available for Various Function." He also paid a few radio stations for spot advertisements to announce over the air that, "James the Magician is a available for your parties and functions." Next he went through the phone book and wrote letters to anybody who he thought might want to hire a magician; he wrote to families, school systems, churches, department stores, country clubs, hospitals, and convalescent homes.

James has increased his advertising lately by having a brochure printed with his picture on the front, and by paying to list himself in the telephone Yellow Pages directory. He also leaves his calling card everywhere he goes.

James also feels that a good way to drum up business is by doing charitable performances. Jean, a puppeteer disagrees with James about this. She said,

> You had better decide early to work only for pay and then stick with your decision. Benefits are for the birds.

Even still, just a few minutes before she said this, she admitted that she herself had done many benefits. As James says,

> After all, someone in the audience of one of those charitable performances might like you, and hire you to do a paid performance for them sometime.

What Does an Entertainer Do Offstage?

James, the magician, is performing at a salesmen's convention. The entire act lasts for 40 minutes. Although James receives a generous salary for those 40 minutes, no one pays him for the two or three hours he spends working before and after his onstage work.

For example, James is called on Thursday night to do the convention which is scheduled one week from Saturday. That gives him eight days to think about his performance. Even though most of his act will be his standard set of tricks, he would also like to add a new one. He will probably spend several hours during the next week working to perfect the new trick as well as planning how he will work it into the rest of the performance. Like an actor, James must rehearse his act to keep it polished, smooth, and exciting. Unlike an actor, however, James must do this without the benefit of having a director to call rehearsals which force him to practice whether he feels like it or not or evaluate his performance to help him improve. Self-discipline is essential for James.

When the Saturday of the show comes along, James is well rehearsed. But is he ready to "entertain"? Not unless he is sure that his equipment is in good working order. Can you imagine James' embarrassment if he reached into a hat to pull out a rabbit and the ace of spades fell out of his sleeve and a bouquet of flowers popped out of his pockets?

The time James spends traveling to and from the shows, and the time it takes to set up and strike his act are also considerations. And what happens if the guest speaker at the salesmen's convention decides to speak a little longer than scheduled? James has to wait before he can do his act. After he does his act, people might have questions or ask him to do certain tricks again. All these activities add minutes or hours to his actual working time. What appears to be a large salary for a short amount of time turns out to be a moderate salary for many hours. James earns most of his income from a sales job, not from being a magician.

The puppeteer earns even less than James. When asked what percentage of her income comes from her work as a puppeteer, Jean answered: "Almost none. My income buys my equipment (which is expensive), pays for supplies, tapes of actors, etc. Nothing more."

When not giving shows, Jean molds puppet heads, writes scripts, sews bodies and clothes, and reads a lot; she also spends time rehearsing and calling on prospective employers--mostly schools. She takes drama and psychology courses to help keep her up in her field.

Most entertainers make a habit of watching their colleagues perform. James attends special meetings where magicians share ideas. He and several other magicians arrive at these meetings several hours early so that they will have time to share ideas, and maybe even swap a trick or two. Most entertainers also do a lot of reading in their field, but all agree they cannot learn solely from books. They say that it was necessary to teach themselves and to practice frequently. The best training aside from teaching oneself is to study with a person who is actually practicing the form of entertainment in which you are interested. There are also schools which can train you in specific disciplines such as magic. Puppetry is being offered in several university theater departments throughout the country; Jean, however, feels that the best preparation for being a puppeteer is to: become involved in school plays; study drama; read extensively (including stories and myths); have some training in painting and music. While an entertainer does not have to do all those things, many of them are useful preparation.

Why Do Entertainers Become Entertainers?

- Because they want to?
- Because they have the right kind of personality and talent?
- Because they like to please an audience?
- Because they care about the quality of popular entertainment?

All of the answers are correct! Of course, entertainers must indeed want to do what they do. Imagine if an idealistic 16-year old announced to his folks one night at the dinner table, "I have decided to be a tightrope walker when I graduate from high school." His parents would either laugh it off or forbid him to ever say such a thing. Most parents object to their child's wanting to become an entertainer. With that sort of negative feeling at home, an interested student must really want to be an entertainer. Competition is too tough for anyone who's just "pretty good;" so a unique talent is also a requirement.

Having a certain kind of personality is important for entertainers. A master of ceremonies cannot be shy. A singing waiter cannot be arrogant -- he or she is still serving people. A puppeteer must love children and storytelling.

> I like to see the effect my magic tricks have on people's faces.

These words of a magician seem to sum up why people become entertainers; they enjoy pleasing an audience. The most satisfying aspect of the magician's job is the pleasure of being able to surprise someone. Jean, the puppeteer, derives satisfaction from being the source of children's laughter.

"I felt as a student and as a teacher that a lot of material offered to children is boring, even insulting." The puppeteer said she felt that she could bring something new and good to the profession of puppetry. A concern for outstanding quality is common to many entertainers.

What Advice Would Entertainers Give to Students?

"Marry someone rich," was the advice Jean gave. Puppeteers, like many other entertainers, are poorly paid. Clearly, many entertainers must have some other sort of income. The magician went so far as to say that magic should be considered only as a part-time job. He feels it is nearly impossible to make a full-time living as a magician.

Other bits of advice were:

- Be a good salesperson
- Study other subjects -- for instance, the magician advised that a student should become involved in psychology, mechanical principles, drama, theater, and art if interested in becoming a magician
- Observe other people's acts and compare them to your own
- Don't think you can do it alone; you need lots of help and lots of training.

You might want to find out what sort of grant could be available for study in your specific discipline. (The American Magician Association can ~~furnish that sort~~ of information for careers in magic.) You might want to spend the day watching a professional entertainer, to see his or her daily routine. Most entertainment jobs require no formal education beyond high school. The best education is to study right alongside someone actually doing the job. You can, for example, take private lessons from a magician for $10 per half-hour.

Outlook

For entertainers, the job outlook is only as good as the opportunities they make for themselves. Entertainment is not like other businesses, in which a certain number of people are always needed. The demand for fire eaters can be zero one week; but 100 could be hired next week for a publicity stunt to demonstrate a new brand of lighter.

ANNOUNCERS

Would I like to be on radio and/or tv, and do I have a pleasant speaking voice?

Kristin, a high school senior, has a pleasant, well controlled voice, and a good sense of timing. She speaks very clearly (she won an award in the sixth grade for saying "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers" 20 times without making a mistake) and has a fine sense of grammar. She also keeps up with current events, enjoys her drama and music classes, and participates in after-school activities.

Kristin feels that she has the necessary talents and interests to become an announcer. She is not quite sure, though, if announcing is a good career for her. What is an announcer, anyway? What does an announcer do?

Announcing jobs fall into five categories. They are:

- Broadcast Journalist

  A broadcast journalist delivers the news over the television or radio. He/she may also research and write news stories, go out on assignments, and supervise filming.

- Announcer

  An announcer introduces guests on television shows. Some announcers, like Ed McMahon on the "Tonight Show" actually appear on the shows. In other cases, the announcer is heard, but not seen by the audience. People who host local talk shows can also be called announcers.

- Specialized Television Reporter

  Specialized television reporters are broadcast journalists who deal with one specific subject area, such as consumer affairs or weather. They also research and write news stories as well as appear on the air.

- Sports Announcer

  A sports announcer is a specialized reporter who describes the action of a sporting event on television or radio (sometimes called a sportscaster).

- Disc Jockey

  A disc jockey introduces recorded music on the radio. He/she also presents news and commercials and often comments on matters of interest to the audience. Disc jockeys often work without a script, "ad-libbing" much of their commentary. A disc jockey at a small station might operate the control board, sell broadcast time to advertisers, and also write and edit commercials and news. (In larger stations, these responsibilities are shared by a staff.)

  The time the disc jockey spends on the air is only a part of his/her working day. After each show, the "deejay" completes a program log which lists records and commercials played during the program. The programming for the next day must also be planned and prepared.

In general, announcers and broadcasters are active in community and public affairs. Many are involved in certain community events which happen before or after their usual working hours. A sportscaster, for instance, might be invited to present awards at a local football banquet. A broadcast journalist with whom we spoke played in a charity softball game against the firefighters of a nearby suburban community as a non-paying part of the job.

How Do Announcers Prepare For Their Careers?

If Kristin decides that she would like to pursue a career as a broadcast journalist, where should she begin? What sort of preparation does she need?

When television stations hire broadcast journalists, the applicant's prior experience is the most important job qualification. Educational background is important, but secondary. If two applicants had very similar experience, educational background would be a major factor in hiring.

With no experience, what should Kristin do? First of all, her high school schedule should emphasize English, public speaking, dramatics, and foreign languages (broadcast journalists have to accurately

Personality Characteristics

In addition to a broad range of academic backgrounds, broadcast journalists should have certain personality characteristics, such as:

- Aggressiveness -- In the positive sense of the word. You must go after what you want and not retreat at the sign of obstacles. Go out and find news stories yourself; don't wait for the news to come to you.
- Caring -- You must sincerely care about what you are doing. If you are researching and reporting on the deplorable conditions in a state hospital, you should really care about presenting this information to the public. An off-hand "it's only a job" attitude simply will not work in broadcasting.
- Fairness -- in the way you present the final product. If you are reporting on that state hospital and your instinct is probably to sympathize with the patients, you must be sure to consider the other side of the issue. Perhaps the hospital administration tried to improve conditions but met with a serious budget cut and uncooperative staff members. This information must also be presented to the public.
- Curiosity -- The desire to "be where it's at" is important to people in broadcasting. Broadcasters generally have a sincere curiosity about that lady who won the pie-eating contest; the sportscaster cares about how Hank Aaron felt when he broke Babe Ruth's record. Broadcasters usually ask questions for which
- Self-Confidence -- Newscasters are constantly meeting and dealing with people while thousands of viewers are watching and listening. Announcers have to be sure of themselves and often need the quick wit which stems from self-confidence to be able to think of something to say when the script runs out before the time does. Sometimes an announcer has to cut a person off because of time limitations, which also takes self-confidence.

pronounce hundreds of foreign names). Her sports and artistic hobbies are also good experience. It might help Kristin to join the debating team and the school newspaper; many professional broadcast journalists began their careers by writing for their high school newspapers.

After graduating from high school, Kristin could: 1) attend a vocational school which offers a program in broadcasting, 2) attend a college which offers a major in broadcasting, or 3) take a varied program in the humanities at a liberal arts college. If Kristin has any desire to work for a major network, college is probably her best choice. Without a college degree, it would be difficult for her to compete with the thousands of applicants who are college graduates.

Even if Kristin's educational background is ideal for broadcast journalism, she still needs some practical experience. She will have to start at the bottom. Shelby, a broadcast journalist at a major tv station in Boston, started as a "gopher" for a station in Seattle. (A gopher is the person who has to "go for" coffee, "go for" stamps, etc.) She ran errands, emptied wastebaskets, did whatever she could as long as she could be in the setting of a television station. Shelby's advice to students in search of employment was to "Get your foot in the door. Take the first job available." Eventually a student might, as Shelby did, work his/her way up to becoming a broadcast journalist.

A radio broadcaster must be licensed to operate turntable and control equipment. There are three classes of Federal licenses: the first is the most complete and complex, and the third is the simplest. For an aspiring dics jockey who does not want to become overly involved with engineering and mechanical technique, the third class would be preferable. Eighty percent of all operators have only the third class license.

A second class license is better for someone who is going to hold a technical job. The first class license is required for the person who maintains and repairs broadcasting equipment. It is also required for "combo" operators: announcers at small stations who are both disc jockeys and technicians.

It is possible to study for the third class license independently by reading Federal Communications Commission pamphlets. Then the applicant must take a written test at an FCC field office. If he/she passes the written exam, notification comes within a few weeks and a license is issued. It is, however, more difficult to prepare for a first or second class license. Attendance at a vocational school or college which offers the proper course of study is necessary. Even small stations will rarely consider hiring a beginner who has no license and therefore cannot do any technical work at the station. In addition to the license, any experience a beginner might have in writing, sales, or news gathering would also be an asset in job hunting, since announcers frequently take on many of these responsibilities too.

Auditioning is also part of the typical hiring process for any announcing job. (The national

Unions

In New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago, membership to the Screen Actors' Guild is required of all announcers who appear on television. Disc jockeys belong to the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists; those who operate the controls and turntables belong to the National Association of Broadcasting Engineers and Technicians.

networks will not even give an applicant an audition until he/she is a college graduate and has had several years of successful announcing experience. An audition for an announcing job can be a grueling experience. If Kristin were to audition in a radio station, she probably would be asked to: 1) read a passage on sight, 2) ad-lib for a few minutes on a specific subject, 3) read a difficult piece which could include some hard-to-pronounce foreign names, and 4) read a commercial or news bulletin. If she performs better than her competitiors do, she could be hired for a low-level announcing job, and could eventually work her way up.

If Kristin cannot find a regular job at a tv or radio station, she might consider temporary announcing assignments. An aspiring announcer might also hire a broadcast agent, register with a talent agency, and make sure his/her name is on the books of local stations and in the radio and tv departments in advertising agencies. Announcing jobs are hard to get, and a beginner must be aggressive in job hunting.

After becoming an experienced, top-quality broadcast journalist, Kristin might be promoted to news manager, sales executive, or publicity director. These advances would give Kristin more money, and different kinds of enjoyment, challenge, and responsibility.

What Advice Would A Professional Broadcaster Give to Students?

It's not a glamorous job. You may think about how wonderful it would be to have your hair done and to wear beautiful new outfits every night as you give the 6:00 newscast. Well, don't count on it!

Those are the words of a Boston newscaster. Eighty percent of all announcers in this country work on radio, not television. More importantly, announcers' time is generally inflexible. They are required to work in the studio a certain amount of time each week on a regularly scheduled basis. The broadcast journalist who receives a call to go out on an assignment in the middle of the night must do it.

What Kristin and other students aspiring to careers in broadcasting must realize is that most of an announcer's job is what Shelby calls "just plain, hard, crummy work."

Ethical Conflicts

Shelby faces certain ethical conflicts in her job. Those considering broadcast journalism as a career might consider the following potential situations:

Being given an assignment you do not want to do -- A broadcast journalist at an important station might be asked to interview the family of an accident victim. The journalist might feel that the family's grief should be private and such an interview is not news, but sensationalism. But it is his/her job to do this interview.

Being given a "boring" assignment -- A broadcast journalist may be asked to piece together speeches made by the president of a nearby state university at several past commencements. The speeches may be boring and the task of reworking them tedious, but he/she would still have to do it as part of the job.

Being an entertainer instead of a journalist -- Many professionals in this field dislike the trend in journalism of "entertaining" rather than reporting. They feel that they should be journalists first, and entertainers second. A good broadcast journalist should be more concerned with important issues than amusing stories. Important news is rarely entertaining, and it must be reported to the public in a serious fashion.

Shelby said:

> Some days I hate my assignments, but I do it because it is my job. There are lots of pressures and deadlines to meet. If a piece of writing is due two hours from now and it is not done on time, it does not go on the air. That's it. I am lucky because I work better under pressure.

Outlook

The world of broadcasting is constantly changing. There is a trend toward specializing in specific areas rather than in general broadcasting. On the local level, there is greater emphasis on news, with more and longer news programs appearing on the air.

The announcing field is highly competitive and jobs are increasingly difficult to secure. More women are being hired than in the past for news announcing and special programs, but opportunities for female disc jockeys remain limited. The number of new tv and radio stations in the U.S. is limited by law; thus announcing is not a "growth" field.

DIRECTORS

Would I like to be in charge of creating the whole production?

No single person is the "most important" in any television program, movie, or play. A production is the combination of many talents. One person, however, does have primary responsibility for the success of the production -- the director. This person brings the play or screenplay to life on the stage or screen.

What Does A Director Do?

As an actor your responsibility is clearly defined -- you are responsible for yourself. A director worries over sets, lights, costumes, and being a psychologist to the actors.

John, a director of plays on the West coast, explained what a director does -- "everything." The director is usually the only person in the production who has contact with every other individual involved in the play or film. He/she works with the producer to make major decisions about the production, and with the art director (films) and designers (theater). He/she will check their designs to make sure that they are practical and compatible with the director's own concept of the production, and that all the lights, costumes, and sets work together to present a unified appearance. On a film set the director works with the writers to make sure that their ideas can be carried out practically; the director of a play would work with the playwright if it were a new play being produced for the first time. A director might request certain changes which may displease the designers. A diplomatic agreement should be reached, but in most cases the director has the last word concerning what is best for the production.

For example:

During the production of Moliere's <u>The Miser</u> by a professional company working at a university campus, there was a conflict between the director and the costume people. An actor playing the Justice of the Peace worked out a "bit" in which he wore a beautiful purple robe backwards. The director wanted him to keep his robe backwards throughout the play. The director felt that the robe added to the comedy of the actor's role. The costume people did not like the idea because they thought that wearing the Justice's robe backwards would ruin its "aesthetic beauty." The director politely explained that this was not a fashion show, but a play. He then requested that the train on the robe be shortened so that the actor would not trip on stage. The costume people refused. The director said, "I would like that robe altered by tonight's rehearsal so that the actor can safely wear it -- backwards!" and then he stormed out.

The costume people still did not shorten the train. Instead they put a fastener to the "back" (actually the front) of the costume so that the train would be raised a little and the actor could walk safely. Even though the resolution was somewhat of a compromise, the director "got his way."

In a play and to a lesser extent in movies, the director is responsible for casting: for choosing actors and understudies. A producer, however, may assert some influence as to final casting decisions. The film director has the additional responsibilities of investigating and approving any distant locations which will be used, and working with the special effects and sound effects people.

A director must be completely comfortable with the script of the play or movie. He/she should be able to answer any questions the actors might have about their roles. The director must read the script several times before meeting with the actors, and must make many notes concerning blocking (where the actors move on stage), motivations (why the characters do what they do) and any additional characteristics the actors should express.

Finally, the director creates the atmosphere in which the actors will work, establishing the tone of rehearsals. If the director is stern and demanding, the actors are less likely to joke and laugh during rehearsals. If the tone is permissive and casual, the actors are more likely to try different experimental approaches to their characters.

What Skills or Talents Does A Director Need?

Much of a director's job involves understanding the needs and problems of the actors in the cast. A director should, then, have the same talents and skills as an actor. (See the section on actors at the beginning of this chapter.) A director cannot successfully help actors in their craft unless he/she has mastered that craft and can communicate knowledge clearly and express thoughts with inspiration and excitement.

A director must have an excellent imagination in order to elaborate on the script. Occasionally, directors will add pieces of music, dance, or other activities in order to clarify the production or to make it more interesting to the audience. A director must also be imaginative in suggesting movements and expressions for the actors to use in their roles.

Clearly, a director must have a talent for working well with other people. The director has a set goal in mind for the production and must secure the cooperation and talents of other people to realize that goal. Directors may have to argue with people, but they must be diplomatic about it. Battles with the crew should occur only, as one director said, "if everyone can kiss and make up afterwards."

The director is also responsible for keeping peace between the temperamental actors and the exacting backstage or camera people. Directors need to be good organizers and often good psychologists. They must understand people.

An Awkward Scene

A director of a teenage theater group was working on a scene in a big musical. The scene required the leading-male and female actors to kiss. The director started the scene several times without success. The boy simply would not kiss the girl.

The director told the stage manager to call a lunch break. As the cast was leaving, the director approached the male lead and tried to find out why he was having so much trouble with the scene. The boy explained that the leading lady's boyfriend was in the wings watching the rehearsal and giving him "dirty looks." The director assured the actor that the boyfriend understood the scene was part of the play. After lunch, the director cleared the theater of everyone but the boy and girl in the love scene. The three worked alone and achieved the feeling the director wanted, including the kiss. When the rest of the cast was brought back on stage, the young actor was able to do the scene with confidence.

A director needs to be highly dedicated, and must not count on earning a secure income. The pathway to becoming a director is every bit as insecure and lonely as the road one takes to become an actor. One director who went to New York when in his early 20's to "make-it" described his experience as a "lonely life" because he did not know anybody and made very few friends at the beginning. The aspiring director has to make many personal sacrifices, such as time spent with family, or working at other jobs not necessarily in the theater/media field.

What Background Should a Director Have?

Directing can also be compared to acting in terms of the background and experiences which might be beneficial. Participation in school plays, drama classes, and attending a college with a theater department are all helpful. A liberal arts background will help a director understand more about theater and life. A high school student who is interested in directing should do as much acting as possible, and see as many plays and movies as possible.

Many directors feel that an aspiring director must attend a university. In college a directing student has the opportunity, without fear of failure, to take the time to develop his or her craft and to find out if directing is really the desired career.

Another point was expressed by Bob, a successful director and administrator. He disagrees with the notion that college is the appropriate background for an aspiring director. Bob did go to college and upon graduation taught history at the high school level. While he was a teacher, he joined a community theater group. Eventually he opened his own community theater and left teaching; later he did some acting for movies and worked as a casting director for several films.

Bob feels that a director must learn to cope with failure, and that young people should go out and expose themselves to all aspects of theater. He feels that experimentation, coupled with failure, is the best way for a director to learn. "It is important to go out and do. Universities make you four years late," is his opinion. He feels the best experience is to "build your own company," as he did.

However, the best criteria for securing a directing job is experience. Because experience in the professional theater is difficult to acquire, a willing and talented student will find opportunities for acting and directing easier to obtain at a college theater.

Experience and self-confidence can also be gained in an amateur theater. One director, for example, learned her craft by teaching and directing plays in churches in her town. She also directed plays for local clubs and taught drama to children in her own home. Eventually she went to New York to try the professional theater. Growing discouraged by the lack of job opportunities, she went back to the Midwest where she now directs community theater groups for a small salary.

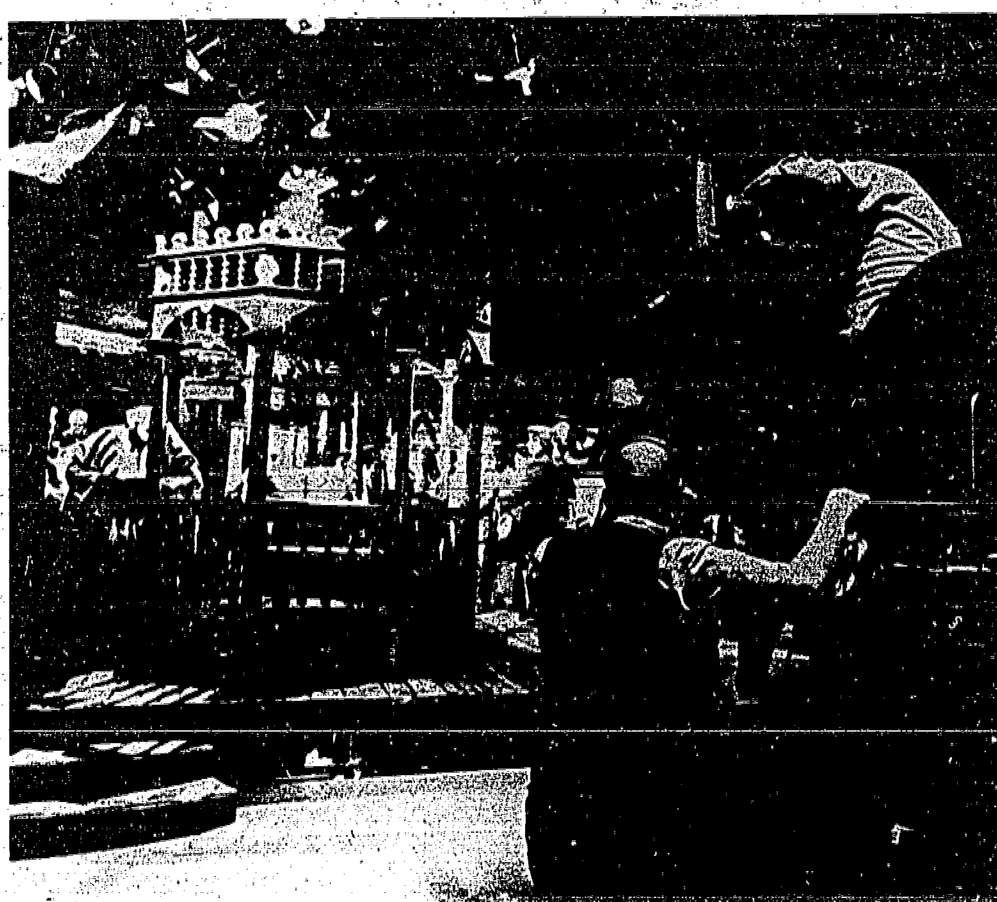
All young directors, regardless of their education, start at the bottom. Prior to becoming directors, people have held many different jobs including working as: stage managers, actors, dancers, prop handlers, stagehands, camera operators, writers, assistant directors, film editors, rug haulers, scenery painters, insurance salespeople, employment counselors. While all of these jobs are good experience for a director, backstage work is particularly beneficial, for a good director should know the workings of all the technical departments involved in a show.

How Do Directors Find Jobs?

There is no sure method for securing a directing job, but it might be wise to direct as many amateur plays as one possibly can, and then pester every producer in every nearby community to be hired. The more directing experience listed on a resume, the more attractive the young director looks to a producer. Professionals advise young directors to work even without salary, if necessary, just to get some experience.

Broadway theater and movie/television directing is often limited to older, experienced people. A student could not go to a movie studio, take a job as a messenger, and expect to become a director overnight. As one director said, "That would take about 30 years." In terms of film directing, educational films and commercials offer the best opportunities. Community theater groups offer job possibilities to directors, and people who teach theater and film courses in schools have directing opportunities.

The director is the last "doer" or "performer" discussed in this chapter. Although this person is not actually on stage or before the cameras, the director shares many traits and background requirements with the other professionals in this chapter.



In Washington, D.C., the Arena Stage production of The Dybbuk was videotaped for the Public Broadcasting System.

3. WRITING CAREERS

DO I LIKE TO WRITE?
WOULD I LIKE TO WRITE FOR THEATER, FILM, OR TELEVISION?

If you answered "yes" to both questions, then continue to answer the following questions:

- Do I like to write at my own pace without outside pressures?

  Possible job:

  Playwright

- Can I write quickly and under pressure? Would I like to work on a movie or television set?

  Possible jobs are:

  Screenplay or Scriptwriter
  Continuity Writer
  Scenario Editor
  Gag Writer
  Title Writer
  Reader
  Script Clerk
  Script Assistant

PLAYWRIGHTS

Karen is a high school junior who thoroughly enjoys writing. She writes short stories for the school's literary magazine and satirical dialogues for the school newspaper. Karen's favorite course is creative writing. She loves the hours she spends by herself writing. Is playwrighting a possible career for her?

Perhaps. But Karen will need great self-discipline to be a playwright. A famous writer once said:

> The hardest part about writing is getting your rear end on the seat. Writers love to be interrupted so that they won't have to work.

Even though there may be no specific deadlines, it is important for the playwright to continue writing all the time. It is much too easy to sneak off to the beach, knowing that no boss will be angry because the employee did not show up for work today. Many playwrights force themselves to stick to a nine to five working schedule, so that they have to write every day. As one playwright described,

> The total self-discipline needed to write is a kind of insanity or madness.

But it is the only way a playwright can accomplish any work.

A good playwright also draws heavily from observations of human nature. Successful playwrights have always based their characters on real people they have known or observed at some time in their lives, and are in constant search of actual dialogue to jot down in a notebook for future use. If Karen carried a notebook with her for one day as an experiment and listened to people all day long, she would have more to write than she would ever imagine. For instance: 1) a conversation between her parents at the breakfast table, 2) a fight between her brothers as they get ready for school, 3) a rundown on the latest "romantic" adventures of her two best girlfriends as they talk on the bus to school, 4) an exchange of complaints about job conditions between two cafeteria workers at lunch time, 5) an angry teacher's lecture to a disruptive student, and 6) gossip between two people at the grocery store, etc., etc., etc! A playwright would tell Karen to capture these exchanges on paper and to use them when she writes. Carrying a notebook and recording overheard conversations is part of a playwright's work.

Another skill needed is the ability to organize observations. This requires what playwrights call a "good sense of drama" -- the ability to translate observations into exciting and interesting exchanges between characters. Writing drama is much different from writing a character sketch or a short story, because it requires a special sense of form and organization. Scattered ideas and observations -- no matter how creative and incisive -- cannot stand by themselves if an audience is to appreciate them. If Karen, for instance, overhears an argument at her neighbor's house, she should be able to capture the feeling of that argument in a dialogue. If she is unable to do this, she is lacking one of the essential talents of playwrights.

When a play is being produced, the playwright usually attends rehearsals. This brings up another important characteristic of a playwright: flexibility. After a play is written and into production, the playwright should never consider it "untouchable." Many creative people come to work together on a play; the play itself is the expression of all these people. If one person in this "machine" is changed (if one actor is replaced by another, if a new costume designer comes in, etc.), the whole production is changed. Therefore, everybody's comments and feelings about the script are important. A playwright must remain open to suggestions and be willing to make script changes when the director feels that a change would help.

> Playwrights have to listen. Listen to actors, directors. If everyone's telling you something, try something else. Rework. If you're rigid, forget it. You don't always get George C. Scott to play the lead, so you'll often have to compromise on the effect of a certain character.
>
> -A Playwright

What Preparation or Background Do Playwrights Generally Have?

Karen reads and attends plays as frequently as possible. She is familiar with the sense of form in writing drama. In addition to her experience writing in class and as a hobby, is she now ready to become a playwright?

Probably not. Most playwrights feel that having a university degree is helpful for an aspiring playwright. College offers a structured environment in which a young playwright can find experienced guidance. Several universities offer playwrighting students the opportunity to see their own work produced in campus theaters. Production is often the best way to examine the strengths and weaknesses of a play, and of a playwright's talent.

Joseph, a playwright whose plays have been produced off-Broadway, says that he sharpened all of his writing skills at the drama school of a major university. It was at school where he realized that he was better than his competition, and that playwriting was a desirable career choice for him.

How Do Playwrights Make a Living?

In an ideal world, playwrights could spend all of their time observing and writing. In the real world, playwrights have to earn a living. For many, that means taking jobs which are totally unrelated to their writing. Examples of jobs which some current playwrights hold are: advertising copywriter, hotel and travel manager, clown, writer and advisor to political candidate, animal trainer for theater and tv commercials. However, even a part-time waitressing job at a local restaurant could be useful background for a playwright. It might at some point provide observations and experiences with people which could be the source of a play.

How Does a Playwright Get a "Job"?

Obviously in order for Karen to support herself as a playwright, she must write plays which will be produced. The process of having her first play produced could take many years. Even some of the most famous playwrights did not become professionals right out of college.

Influences

Joseph talked about the influences which brought him to playwriting:

> My parents influenced me in a way that made me not want to go into the theater. I came from a family in which every member was involved in the theater in some fashion. I fought joining that life-style for a while.
>
> The theater never awed me. I used to walk downstairs from my bedroom and there would be someone like Jackie Gleason sitting in the living room talking to my parents. I was always surrounded by 'show business.'
>
> I have always had, much to my chagrin, a great deal of encouragement from people in the theater. If it weren't for them, I'd be a happy, stable boy.
>
> I was a football player in high school -- I had no theater activities. I wanted to be a novelist.

Therefore, a definite interest in theater while you are in high school is not particularly necessary if you want to become a playwright. An interest in writing <u>is</u> important, however.

Tennessee Williams and Harold Pinter were both actors first. Arthur Miller was a scriptwriter for radio. William Inge was a drama and music critic as well as a teacher.

Playwrights are often subsidized by grants to write. When Joseph was a young man, the New York Council of the Arts awarded him a grant which paid him to observe professional shows in rehearsal and performance. Joseph described himself as "a young playwright who hung around." He met many people and had the valuable experience of watching professionals. Observing professionals at work and watching the mechanics of producing a new play were of tremendous value to Joseph in his career as a playwright.

Social "contacts" can be important to a playwright's career. Many playwrights have honestly said that "who you know" <u>does</u> matter in the theater. A playwright would have to continue to go to parties, conferences, and theatrical events, so that producers and directors would get to know and like him/her personally and professionally. A New York playwright says:

> If you're anti-social, producers won't touch your work.

He went on to talk about another characteristic of playwriting: "It's a team effort. If you have trouble with one guy on the team,

Becoming A Professional

Joseph explained how he became a professional playwright:

> There is no set outline. After you have written a play, find an agent. It often does not help very much, but if you get a good agent interested in your work, the chances are a little better that your play will be produced and earn some money.
>
> In my particular case, one event led smoothly to another. I needed money and began to write for television. I wrote a play that won a prize. The recognition from winning that prize got one of the finest schools in the country interested in me.
>
> I went to that school and majored in playwriting. One teacher in particular really helped me to develop my craft. I met a lot of other important people there who reached other people who could help me find professional employment as a playwright when I graduated. There is no one in the theater you cannot reach through someone else. From Robert Redford on, you can get their telephone numbers.
>
> I joined the New Dramatists Committee in New York which kept me in contact with more people in the theater. The theater in New York is a small, ingrown world. I met people who were in important positions, and I got into important positions.

the producer will use someone else." Karen must work cooperatively with all the members of the production for at least her first few jobs, or else she will establish herself as "difficult" and will find it impossible to find other playwriting jobs.

Do Playwrights Make Much Money?

Not usually. Joseph earned 100 percent of his income from playwriting in the 1960's but now earns less than 10 percent. He supplements his income by working in the hotel business.

Karen may write a good play which is produced. However, if it closes after one night, she won't make much money because the amount she is paid depends on how often her plays are performed. Successful playwrights can make as much as $2,000 per week during the run of a show, but that is unusual.

Karen would also make money if someone decided to turn her play into a movie -- provided she knew how to negotiate a contract. She would be wise to have a good lawyer do the negotiating for her (particularly if she does not have an agent, who incidently would take 10 percent of her salary). Sometimes it takes a lawyer longer to negotiate the terms with the producer than it does the playwright to write the play. The playwright, of course, makes no money during these negotiations.

Generally, a young playwright makes little or no money. That is why most playwrights need another source of income. Karen will either have to inherit money or be prepared to take a non-theater job in order to have some sort of income.

Advice from Playwrights for Interested Students

Several professional playwrights, both male and female, advise students like Karen who are interested in playwriting to:

- Write about what is close to you. Don't write a play which centers around a woman who leaves her beautiful family to live as a mystic in the Himalayan Mountains, unless you actually observed or studied such a woman. Write about people you know, and feelings you have experienced.
- See plenty of theater. Go to the theater as often as you can. Become familiar with the works of many playwrights.
- Don't waste time. Don't wait for that opportune moment when you can start asserting yourself as a professional playwright. Do it now.
- Know people who know people. The more people you know, the better it is for you. If they are successful before you are, ask them how their success might help you in terms of making connections.
- Connect with a theater. Plays are written to be played, and unless you can see your work performed you cannot successfully evaluate your strengths and weaknesses as a playwright. Places where you might see your work performed are university theaters, specialized drama schools, repertory companies, regional theaters, and New York City, both on and off-Broadway.
- Be careful of unrealistic expectations. Coming out of drama school, one playwright had offers for two of his plays, one for Broadway and one for off-Broadway. He was excited and thought that he was the greatest young playwright in the world. Then, nothing happened. He was terribly disappointed and showed it. Many people do not like to work with young playwrights because of their inability to accept failure. Be ready to be disappointed -- sometimes rather badly -- and not to let it upset you so much that you cannot resume your work and strive for a better opportunity next time.
- Keep a standard of professionalism; show up on time, don't deal on a friendship basis, etc. Your standards could

begin now in any involvement you might have with high school theater.

- Accept that there will be people in the theater who are only there as a hobby or because it is 'something different to try out for a while.' They will not be as dedicated as you (one playwright said that theater has more creeps per square foot than any other industry). You have to put up with phony people who really don't know what they are doing.
- Love the rehearsal process; learn to love actors. There are three steps in putting a play together: 1) the playwright writes, 2) the director blocks, works on relationships, etc., and 3) the actors take over the play. Most playwrights feel that the third step is the most exciting time. One playwright expressed herself accordingly:

  If you don't like the rehearsal process, you should not be a playwright. I see a dress rehearsal, then I leave. Eugene O'Neill never watched a play of his own with an audience. I prefer rehearsal-time to performance time.

- As a playwright, never try to direct. Once a show is in rehearsal, a good playwright never communicates directly with the actors. The professional chain of communication demands that a playwright discuss any problems or suggestions with the director, who then will speak to the actors. For instance, if an actor decided that his character should have a beard and walk with a limp, and the playwright felt that these characteristics were totally inappropriate, in terms of the way she imagined the character, she would discuss her objections privately with the director. He would then, if he so desired, tell the actor to omit the new characteristics.
- Don't make rehearsals a social gathering. The height of unprofessionalism is for a playwright to be having special relationships with members of the cast. A playwright who has several successful plays behind him said:

  The idea that everyone in theater is promiscuous is nonsense. In these days, the morality in the theater is of a different nature. Women are liberated. 'Don't put your daughter on the stage' is a fallacy.

- Be prepared to be an agent's tool. In the negotiating phase, artists (directors and playwrights, playwrights and actors, etc.) never relate to one another. The agents and the lawyers do all the business. Sometimes it is difficult to work while you are being bargained for and traded.
- Realize that critics are another controlling agent in the theater -- once again, not the artists. A playwright could write an excellent play, directed by a creative genius, and acted by

one of the finest casts ever assembled. The play could close two nights after it opens. Why? An important critic in New York gives the play a bad review. Critics have the power to make or destroy a show. (In this sense, repertory theater where critics have little power is an ideal situation.)

- Accept the fact that the theater is a weird business!

What is the Outlook for Playwrights?

A current statistic released by a famous American play publisher states that 99 percent of the aspiring playwrights in the United States would like to have a play produced on Broadway; less than one percent actually do see their plays produced there.

Karen would have to think about this statistic before she decided to become a professional playwright. Also, if she did not live in New York City she might consider moving there. Although there is an increase in regional theaters, New York remains the focus of theater.

Finally, if Karen were to broaden her scope and consider writing for movies and television, her chances would be better. Much of the work for writers, although it is not always "artistic," is in film and television. Fine plays are produced on television and shown only once to a huge audience. Many playwrights feel that, although they might prefer writing for live theater, television offers them a chance to bring drama to more people. Writing for television and movies changes the title of the career to "scriptwriter" or "screenplay writer," but as the next section discloses, there are similarities in the work -- as well as important differences.

SCRIPTWRITERS

Danny is a high school senior who wants to write for television or motion pictures. He has a good imagination and a knack for knowing what particular audiences will like. For instance, he wrote the scripts for a Student Council presentation given for junior high school students and their parents to introduce them to the high school. He included all the important factual information as well as several jokes and funny stories which thoroughly amused everyone. He also wrote and delivered an elaborate presentation at the annual awards dinner of the local 4-H Club. He wrote his script well enough to make all the parents feel proud, and to make his friends laugh. It takes a special skill to please two kinds of audiences with the same speech.

Insight into what appeals to audiences and knowing how to make the material appealing to many people are important talents of a scriptwriter. Other talents needed are:

Self-discipline. As a scriptwriter, Danny would have to force himself to write in a brief amount of time. Often scriptwriters are given deadlines in which they must create a story, scene, or dialogue overnight.

The ability to work under intense pressure. For example, the writers for a variety-comedy show must come up with new skits and jokes every week without falling behind schedule.

Observation skills. If Danny wanted to be a scriptwriter, he would have to be very observant of people around him. He would probably keep a journal of dialogues overheard between people.

Good research skills. Scriptwriters often do a lot of "digging" for information they might need in their scripts.

Knowledge of film production. Danny should know about film directing and editing. Most successful scriptwriters are familiar with the whole process of filming since they are aware of the limitations and advanatages of the medium. (See the first part of "Playwrights" for other talents scriptwriters might need.)

What Do Scriptwriters Do?

There are many different types of film and television scripts Danny might write.

- Drama

Dramatic scripts, both serious and comic, are the ones Danny is accustomed to seeing every day. For any weekly comedy or drama on television from "Happy Days" to "Medical Center," a new script must be written every week. Every movie which plays at the downtown cinema also fits in this category.

The scripts for these movies and tv programs are called screenplays. As a screenplay writer, Danny might write a script based on a book, a play, or some material that has never been published. "The Godfather" was based on a novel. "The Sound of Music"was based on the Broadway musical. The movie "Chinatown" is an example of an original script for a movie.

Sometimes a screenwriter will rewrite someone else's screenplay at the request of the studio. For example, Robert Towne, who won an Academy Award for his original screenplay of "Chinatown," also wrote the screenplay for "Bonnie and Clyde." The original screenplay for "Bonnie and Clyde" was written by two other writers, but it was Towne's version which was filmed.

Scriptwriters for television usually come up with their own ideas after the original cast of characters has been selected. Often the screenwriter (or scriptwriter) will also "create" the original characters.

- Documentaries and Special Features

Documentary scripts are as different from drama scripts as non-fiction books are from fiction. Danny might write a script for a short film describing some of the events of the Vietnam War. The script would indicate which photographs or famous film footage to include. Another example of a documentary is a script for a nature film about the ecological systems of Florida's Everglades. (Such scripts might be written for television or movie production.)

Often a documentary writer must research the subject of the script. This means talking with people, going to libraries and museums, and visiting certain places -- historical or otherwise. If Danny is writing a script about the workings of the U.S. Supreme Court, he would find it useful to see the Supreme Court in action in Washington. Danny might collaborate with a filmmaker or photographer when he writes his script.

- Business Films

Industries often need films to promote products or to instruct employees in various tasks. Usually these films are made by independent film companies. Danny would be hired by a film company rather than an industry to write scripts for such films.

- News/News Reports

Often broadcast journalists do their own writing. But other writers, who do not appear on the air, are needed to write some of the daily news and special news reports.

- Variety Programs

Variety shows such as the "Carol Burnett Show" have a large staff of writers who must come up with different skits and jokes each week.

- Children's Programs

Danny might consider writing scripts for a show like "Sesame Street" or some other film or show which is designed to teach and/or entertain children.

- Commercials

Sometimes the continuity writer (see below) writes commercials, but more frequently advertising firm staff writers prepare scripts for commercials. Free-lance commercial scriptwriting is possible.

- Talk Programs

Writers for shows like the "Mike Douglas Show" do not actually script everything that will be said on the air. Rather, they write outlines about topics the host might cover with each guest. To do that, talk show writers do extensive research on the lives of the famous people who appear on these shows.

- Radio Music Programs

Disc jockeys often do their own writing and "ad-libbing" (see "Announcers" in Chapter Two), but a writer may be needed to add continuity -- the transitions used by the person on the air between records. For example, with the current trend toward thematic or "oldie" radio programs, writers are needed to research and write interesting pieces of information about various songs and records.

---o---

There are many other specialties within the field of scriptwriting. An aspiring writer should be aware of such jobs as:

Continuity Writer -- In many of the situations mentioned above, a continuity writer is needed. As a continuity writer for a movie, Danny would extract an "outline" from a screenplay. Danny's outline would provide the director with a logical sequence of scenes to "shoot." In other words, Danny would organize the script and eliminate anything irrelevant to the filming process. (For example, if the screenplay writer wrote several paragraphs describing the weather, the continuity writer might simplify it on the shooting script by saying "rainy day.")

Gag Writer -- A gag writer can be anyone who writes humorous dialogue or jokes. Johnny Carson's monologues for the "Tonight Show" are written by gag writers.

Title Writer -- The title writer is responsible for any captions, titles, or narrative added on to a film after completion. All the printed words on the movie or television screen are usually written by the title writer. Some title writers translate foreign films into English, or the other way around, and decide where the translated captions will appear on the film.

The Scenario Writer for a motion picture supervises and coordinates all the writers on the set.

The Reader reviews various screenplays and writes synopses of them for the producer. A reader may also translate foreign language material.

Script Assistants and Script Clerks are important helpers on a television or movie set. The script assistant reads the scripts and prepares a list of all the props needed for the show. Script clerks jot down the director's comments regarding scene details. They might also write short articles describing the film or tv show for publicity purposes. Script clerks write notes to the actors concerning entrances and exits or costumes and hairstyles. Finally, they keep track of each scene that is shot, the number of times each scene is photographed, and the number of the scene that the director finally selects for printing.

What Background Should A Scriptwriter Have?

I guess I always thought I was going to be a writer. I wrote my first short story at age six.

The scriptwriter who made that statement is typical of most screenwriters; most writers begin writing at an early age. Perhaps Danny was not writing best-sellers during recess in the first grade, but his high school writing is certainly a good beginning. A summer job with a television station or a newspaper would be a very helpful background, particularly if he were interested in writing news or news programs.

Aside from actual writing experience, an important qualification for an aspiring scriptwriter is a college degree. He/she should find a college which offers good writing courses and has an active television and/or radio station where he may do some writing.

A screenwriter, like a playwright, should become involved with people in order to capture realistic dialogue. This experience is particularly important for writers who specialize in drama scripts.

Writers of documentary films and special television features often need some specialized academic background in addition to writing. For example, a writer should know something about botany in order to write a script about the Everglades.

Gag writers and variety show/skit writers ideally have some improvisational experience. In other words, it could help a young gag writer to take a drama class where students have to invent clever ideas on the spot. Many scriptwriters also have been actors.

If Danny wanted to write children's shows, some teaching background would be helpful. Experience in working with children creatively, such as in a children's theater, is a useful background.

How Does a Screenwriter Find a Job?

As in the case with the playwright, an aspiring screenwriter might use an agent to find employment; however, agents are rarely eager to take on young screenwriters who have not yet been published. Connections -- knowing people in the business -- can be important for a screenwriter. One screenplay writer said: "I met everybody through one connection. He indirectly or directly arranged for every writing assignment I had at the beginning." Talent alone may not be enough to land anyone a screenwriting job.

The other way Danny might help himself to find a writing job in films is by working in a <u>setting</u> for which he would ultimately like to write. If he were interested in children's programming he might apply to the local educational television station—for any available job. If he is living in Los Angeles or New York City he might try the same approach at a motion picture or television studio. In places other than New York City or California, about the only settings in which he might find some non-professional job are local television and radio news, talk, and educational shows. Of course, there is one catch to the approach of taking any available job just to work in the right setting: Danny would have to keep writing in his spare time. No matter how demanding his non-writing job might be, he must not let his writing skills slip.

What Advice Do Scriptwriters Give to Interested Students?

The best thing an aspiring writer can do, of course, is write. Some professionals in the field do offer other advice:

- Meet people and get to know those who can help you to find jobs.
- Be careful not to think that you will become a "famous writer" immediately. The Writers' Guild of America has over 3,000 members and very few of their names are household words. It can take a long time simply to have your work read by a potential producer, let alone used.
- Write from your own experiences, about the things which really excite you. That way your work will be more satisfying and your writing will be enhanced by your interest and knowledge. Robert Towne wrote "Chinatown" because he wanted to write about Los Angeles, the city where he was born. He wanted to make a statement about the changes which have occurred in the city over the years. His excellent screenplay reflected his enthusiasm and interest in its subject.
- Be versed in some field other than writing. There is a trend today toward specialization: writing exclusively about some special subject area, such as economic news for a news show. Thus many writing jobs require a specialized background in a field other than writing. However, this background in another field can also prove valuable if you are unable to find a writing job.
- Learn to be a good researcher. For example, even though you are a whiz at astronomy you probably cannot write an educational film for high school students about Saturn's rings without doing some special research about those celestial bodies.
- You must work well under pressure. Writers are expected to come up with scripts in very little time. Be sure that you can handle this kind of pressure and that you won't become too nervous to work.
- Be knowledgeable about the whole filming process. Make it your business to gain entry into a studio when any kind of program is being filmed. You will gain a good perspective of

the film industry by seeing what happens to a script after it is written and before it is shown to the public.

• "If you are a news writer, be careful of biases," advised an East Coast news writer regarding fairness in reporting. He added, "Honesty is something all writers should strive for." For example:

> A man walks down a street, minding his own business, whistling a tune. A woman walking up the street toward him thinks he is making a pass at her, and slaps him on the face. When the man yells in surprise, the woman starts to kick him. He puts out his arm to defend himself, and the women twists her ankle. She runs off shouting, 'I'll get you for this.' She then crashes through a group of Boy Scouts collecting money for charity, knocks several of them over, and steals their money boxes, screaming, 'Get lost, you little creeps!' The dumbfounded man stands watching for a moment and then continues his walk.

A biased writer who favored the above woman was interested in creating a sensational story -- which exaggerated an incident just to excite the public. He wrote that incident up for the evening news program like this:

> Today on Smutty Street a man was seen making wild and obscene gestures at a young woman passerby. As she politely rebuffed his advances, he became violent, beat her to the pavement and ran off. The helpless woman was left there immobilized until a group of Boy Scouts helped her up and took her to the hospital. The Boy Scouts donated some of their own money to help pay her medical bills.

Young news writers must learn to avoid this kind of biased writing. Biased writing will make others lose respect for your work, and you will find it difficult to gain subsequent employment.

What is the Outlook for Scriptwriters?

Danny must expect stiff competition and few job openings if he plans to become a professional scriptwriter. He would find more opportunities in film and television than the playwright does in theater: the audiences for television are much larger than the audience for theater and more material needs to be written for television and films than for theater. Educational television is a growing field. Radio networds are beginning to revive "radio plays" for which original scripts may be needed, and if this trend continues, radio might prove to be a good source of employment for dramatic writers. A growth of cable television could greatly increase job opportunities for media writers.

It is difficult to predict the numbers and kinds of screenwriters who will be needed in the future. The professionals have two words to say to students interested in scriptwriting: KEEP WRITING!

4. PRODUCTION CAREERS

DO I PREFER WORKING BACKSTAGE IN BEHIND-THE-SCENE JOBS OR DESIGNING FOR THEATER AND/OR FILM AND TELEVISION?

If you answered "yes" to the title question, then answer the following questions.

- Would I like to design and can I express my ideas in sketches, drawings, or models?

  Possible jobs are:

  Scene Designer
  Costume Designer
  Lighting Designer
  Sound Designer
  Art Director (set designer for motion picture)

- Would I like to assist backstage during a theatrical performance?

  Possible jobs are:

  Technical Director
  Stage Manager
  Assistant Stage Manager

  Master Stage Carpenter
  Stage Settings Painter
  Grip (Stagehand)
  Flyer
  Curtain Operator
  Rigger
  Circus Supervisor

  Property Supervisor
  Property Handler
  Prop Maker

  Costumer
  Wardrobe Supervisor
  Costumer Assistant

  Master Electrician
  Lights Operator

  Master Sound Technician
  Sound Controller

  Makeup Person
  Hair Stylist

- Would I like to assist during the making of a movie, television or radio show?

  Possible jobs are:

  Technical Director
  Stage Manager

  Camera Specialists (various specific titles)
  Motion-picture Equipment Supervisor
  Motion-picture Projectionist

  Film Editor
  Film Technician (various specific titles)
  Vault Custodian
  Film Clerk
  Film Assistants
  Special Effects Specialist

  Carpenter Supervisor
  Set Decorator

Painter
Greens Planter
Grip
Rigger
Stage/Production Assistant

Property Supervisor
Property Handler
Prop Maker
Shopper
Property Custodian

Costumes Supervisor
Wardrobe Supervisor
Costumer Assistant

Gaffer
Studio Electrician
Lights Technician

Sound Effects Specialist
Recordist
Mixer
Re-recording Mixer
Cutter
Engineer
Playback Equipment Operator
Mike Operator
Microphone Boom Operator
Audio Operator

Makeup Supervisor
Hair Stylist

DESIGNERS

Lorraine, whose favorite classes are art and mechanical drawing, is a student at Sandy Beach High School. Her drawings have won various prizes in city art shows, and her three-dimensional models are excellent and imaginative. For example, her social studies project of Egyptian pyramids was built entirely of colored sugar cubes.

By working backstage for the school plays, Lorraine knows most of the mechanical workings of the stage such as how to operate drops, lights, and flies. She is highly organized, particularly when it comes to doing one of her drafting projects.

Lorraine is industrious and is ingenious in solving problems. For instance, in the last Sandy Beach High production, the director asked Lorraine to find a juke box to use in a rock and roll number. Lorraine went to every pizza and ice cream parlor in Sandy Beach and neighboring towns, but without luck -- no one would loan her a juke for the play.

She decided to look among the odds and ends at her grandmother's house for something which might even vaguely resemble a juke box, something that she could decorate and change. She found an old television set with no picture tube, painted it, and put blue cellophane where the picture tube would have been. The director was highly impressed and used it for the show. Does Lorraine possess the necessary talents or skills to be a designer for theater or motion pictures?

Not entirely. Lorranie would need other skills in addition to artistic abilities. If she wants to be a costume designer, for instance, Lorraine must have a working knowledge of drafting and sewing; a knowledge of history would be a helpful addition. Lorraine would also find it helpful to know how clothes from every historical period were made, in terms of cut, fastening, placement of seams, etc. Costume designers usually need to be able to picture instantly what fabric will look like under the lights. If Lorraine were to design Scarlet O'Hara's party gown for "Gone with the Wind," for example, she would have to make sure that the fluffy magenta material she picked out would not look stiff and faded under the bright lights in a movie studio. A knowledge of stage lighting is important to all designers in the theater.

Lorraine needs to know all the mechanical skills of the specific discipline in which she is interested (costume, sets, lights, sound) in order to realize her unique ideas about designing. But it is possible for her to be a super carpenter, sewer, electrician, scene painter, and/or sound engineer, and still not have the ability to be a successful designer.

In addition to some sort of unique creativity, Lorraine must understand that she is working as a part of an ensemble: a group where no single achievement is important if it does not complement the work of everybody else. Lorraine needs to know why that juke box is important to the play. Merely knowing how to construct it expertly is not enough. A knowledge of all aspects of theater or motion pictures -- including acting and directing -- will help her as a designer. When Lorraine cooperates with the members of the production team at all times, her work will be excellent, because everyone will be working to achieve the same goal.

What Does a Designer Do?

There are four types of designing Lorraine might want to do:

- Scene/set (art director's job in a motion picture)
- Costume
- Light
- Sound.

Each of these designers has to follow instructions from the script. For example, if the script says, "Leroy places his mother in the birdbath in his backyard," a set designer would probably have to design a birdbath somewhere on the stage or set.

The scene designer's model helps the director and actors visualize the final set.

Designers' Concerns

Designers working on a production on "The Wizard of Oz" would be concerned with several elements which have nothing to do with "showing off" talent. For example:

- Style -- as it relates to acting style. The play is a fantasy and crazy things happen; trees talk, witches melt, etc. The scenery, costumes, and lighting for the Emerald City therefore must have the feeling of a fantasy.
- Mood -- as it relates to the mood expressed in the script. Designers would capture certain moods in "The Wizard of Oz" through use of color. When Dorothy is captured in the witch's castle, dark, foreboding backgrounds might be used by the lighting designer.
- Geographic Location -- as it relates to the actual characteristics of a real place. The set designer must be careful not to put a cactus on Aunty Em's farm in the opening scene if cactus plants are not usually found on farms in Kansas.
- Scenery Changes -- in the stage version of "The Wizard of Oz," a designer has to make sure that the scenery change from "Dorothy in the storm in Kansas" to "Dorothy landing in Munchkin Land" can be made quickly and without distractions to the audience, who, if given too much time during the change, will lose interest in the story. Quick scene changes are not, of course, a problem for designers who work in films.
- Movement -- as it relates to expanding the actors' possibilities. The designer controls much of the action in the script. For example: if the yellow brick road traveled through the audience, over their seats, and then up the walls of the stage, Dorothy and her friends would have trouble dancing off to the Emerald City. Many designers consider that the responsibility to determine actors' movements and positions is their most important function.

A designer must satisfy the requirements of the director. If the director wants Leroy's mother to wear an astronaut's suit when she is plunked into the birdbath, then the costume designer must design the suit whether or not the script specifically calls for it. Each designer has to remain flexible for any inspirations the director might have.

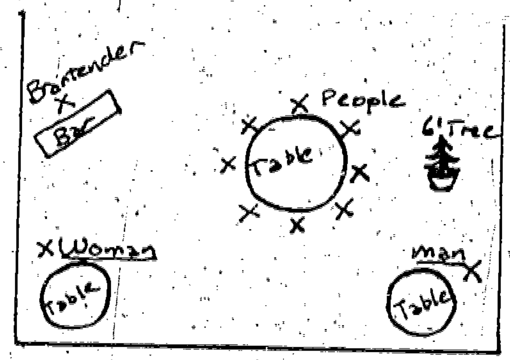
However, a designer is much more than a tool to satisfy the author and director's requests. He or she has the opportunity to expand the meaning of the production in a way that the author and director might never have imagined. A birdbath with an electric wire fence around it would suggest a little bit more about Leroy and his background. The designs could add a whole new dimension to his character that the actor, director, and even the playwright or scriptwriter had not considered.

Scene/Set Designers

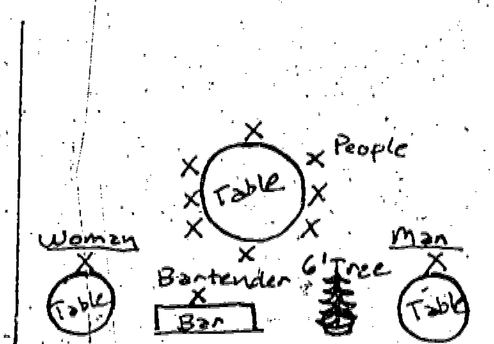
Unlike designers in the nineteenth century who used theater as a showcase for their artistic ability, today's designer is not just a creator of scenic effects, but rather an artist who is involved in all the problems of performance.

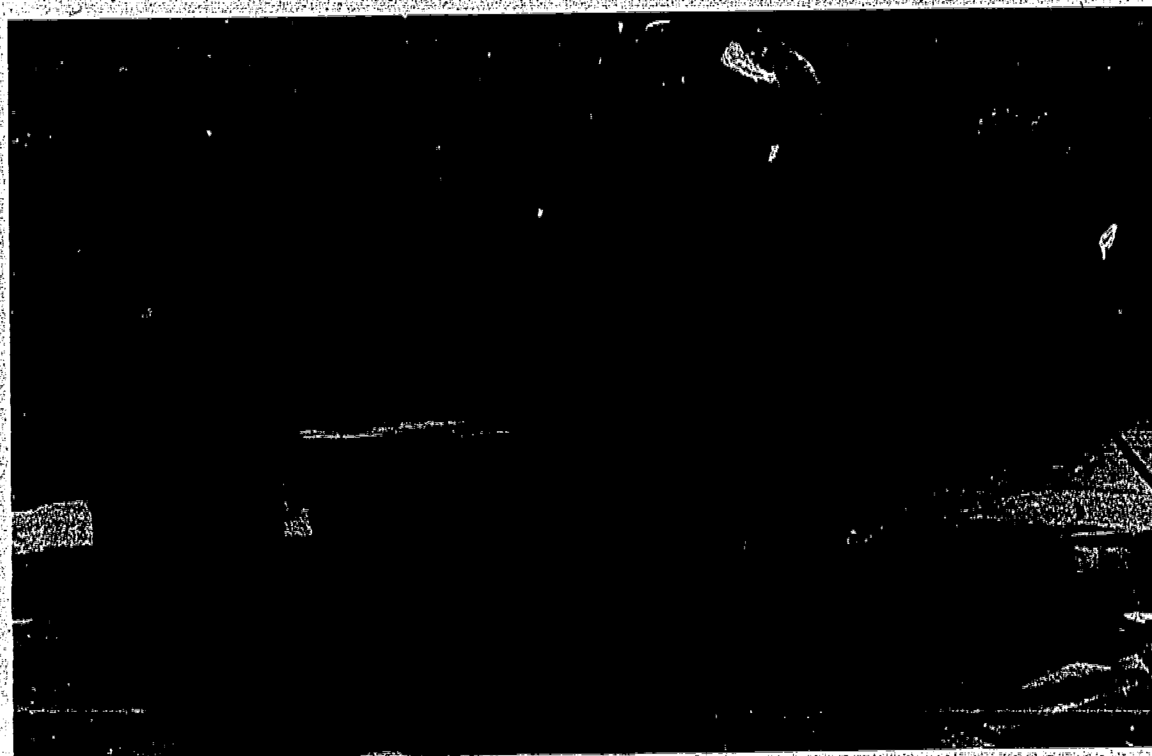
For example, the script of a popular musical calls for a scene in a restaurant where a man and woman sneak romantic glances at each other from their individual tables. The man finally catches the eye of the woman, and decides to move over to her table and join her. A romantic involvement follows the first meeting, and the couple eventually gets married.

An interior decorator could design the restaurant comfortably and attractively. The set designer could, too, but not without first thinking of the romantic episode which must occur in that room. A set designer might design the restaurant like this:



The above floor plan would allow the exchange of romantic glances and the eventual meeting that later leads to marriage. A designer who is only interested in an interior decorator's approach to the room could easily destroy the marriage. With no concern for what must happen on stage, an interior decorator might design it this way:





The designer and assistants use abstract-looking materials like styrofoam....

Such a floor plan would make it impossible for the man and woman ever to see one another unless the man climbed the tree or the woman stood on the bar. The designer's plan can thus drastically influence the way the director blocks (or stages) the scene.

The director and the designer must work closely together. The designer needs to be the "paint brush of the director's mind." In certain instances it should be impossible to separate the influences the director and the designer have made on the production. Designers help the director visualize the script by making models, plans, and sketches. Such designs should be clear, but not rigid. Like the playwright, the designer must remain open to the suggestions of the director and the problems of the actors. Designers cooperate with directors while at the same time making their own artistic statements.

Designers not only strive to please the director who wants a functional set for the actors, but also try to satisfy the needs of the producer and author. The producer wants designs with artistic value which are to some degree attractive and unique. Writers want an honest setting for their characters.

Some directors, producers, and/or authors will want to approve everything the designer does down to the pattern of the rugs on the

... to make a finished, life-like set for the actors.

floor. A director might easily decide to replace a door the designer has arranged with a hat rack. Like a playwright, a designer must remain flexible to make these changes.

Usually the director and designers will meet together before the movie, television show, or play has even been cast. The first reading of the script by the set designer and director is highly influential in the whole process of designing, and it is at their first meeting that the director and designer discuss their first impressions of the script. The two then will work independently but talk with one another regularly about problems and changes.

Some playwrights are extremely precise about design requirements. A playwright might describe the set-up of a room in such detail that the designer has no choice but to follow the playwright's instructions exactly. Most writers, however, prefer not to give the designer a strict plan, partly because the design of a play when it is first produced may become dated and uninteresting several years later. The way Shakespeare's Macbeth was first designed, or designed even 100 years ago, would probably not appeal to an audience today. Playwrights today are usually anxious for designers to add their creative touches to the play.

The Tasks of a Scene Designer

The scene designer has complete responsibility for all the visual elements of the production. Usually costumes and lights are the responsibility of other designers (who will be discussed later in this section). The specific tasks of a scene designer are:

- To become familiar with the background material upon which scenery will be based. In other words, the scene designer must fulfill the desires of the author and director as much as possible, within any given limitations of space, money, and equipment. Scene designers study the script and then share their views with the director.
- To make sketches, floor plans, and models of each setting. From these, the actors, the director, and others working on the production can determine the nature of the scenery. More detailed drawings may be needed for the stage carpenters who are actually going to build and install the scenery.
- To figure out a method of moving the scenery in as little time as possible during live performances.
- To know specifically the theater, place, or studio in which the scenery will be used. When designing for theaters designers must check the sightlines -- the lines of vision from points in the audience to points on the stage. For instance, the designer should not design a totem pole and put it way downstage if it is going to obscure the audience's view of the stage from the first three rows.
- To select or design all the smaller stage properties and small pieces of scenery which the actors use more directly. Props and scenery can include anything from an elegant sofa to the toothpick used by a gangster on his teeth.
- To supervise all aspects of the building, painting, and working of the scenery from start to finish.

Finally, it is the responsibility of the scene designer to be aware of the uses of various materials and their limitations. Designers are always introducing new materials and innovative methods into their designs. Some mountains are actually constructed of styrofoam!

Costume Designers

Sometimes the scene designer also designs the costumes for a production. But in films and often in theater, a separate individual called the costume designer is responsible for everything the actors wear including hats, wigs, gloves, and shoes. Costume designers must be familiar with the workings of backstage as well as resourceful, and must have the ability to execute their ideas in sketches and color drawings. Like the scene designer, the costume designer has to satisfy director, producer, and author.

As with the set designer, the costume designer must study the script for style, mood, geographic location, changes, and facility of movement. The costume designer for the production of "The Wizard of Oz" would make sure that:

Dorothy wears traditional young girl's outfits to contrast with the eccentric costumes in the Land of Oz.

The Munchkins costumes are in cheery, bright colors to reflect the mood in Munchkin land.

Aunty Em does not wear a hula skirt in the opening scene as that is very unusual clothing for Kansas.

In a stage play, the actress playing Miss Gulch and the Wicked Witch of the West can change into the witch costume quickly and easily.

The Tin Man's metal suit is not so stiff that he could not walk or dance.

A costume designer is not simply a dressmaker, but an imaginative and individual artist. The job consists of much more than just cutting, sewing, and fitting. Costume designers experiment continually while creating costumes.

Often, it is more practical to choose and gather costumes rather than design and build them. Costume designers with small budgets spend a great deal of time at local thrift shops digging through piles of second-hand clothes, trying to find just the right dress, just the right jacket, or just the right piece of junk that can be turned into something spectacular.

The Costume Designer's Tasks

The tasks of a costume designer include:

- Reading and re-reading the script. Much of the work will be done before the first rehearsal. First readings of the script give certain images and ideas of what the costumes should look like.
- Consulting with the director. Like the scene designer, the costume designer has a consulting session with the director to exchange ideas before the play is cast. The director might suggest to the costume designer, for instance, outstanding costumes for characters who belong in the background.
- Making sketches and drawings of each costume. If the script were an historical one, the costume designer will study paintings of the period in order to have some idea of how

people dressed. For any script, each character's costume is individually created so that personality is revealed as much by costume as by spoken lines and actions. After the director has approved the sketches, the costume designer prepares final color illustrations.

- Buying fabric. After designs and fabric choices are approved, the costume designer shops for fabric. It is important for the designer to shop rather than send assistants, because only the designer knows the exact textures and colors required. It may be necessary to bring the material under stage lights because the lights in stores are often deceiving when trying to determine an exact color. The costume designer must keep in mind the size of the budget.

- Constructing the costume. In some situations, designers supervise others making the costume, although the designer may cut out and sew costumes. When designing for a play which could possibly run a long time, the costume designer must be sure that the costumes can withstand the rough schedule.

- Fitting the costumes. The costume designer makes appointments with the actors to make sure the costumes fit accurately. (Measurements are generally taken shortly after casting.)

- Arranging a "dress parade." Designers usually arrange a "dress parade" at least a week before the first dress rehearsal. At this time, the actors put on their costumes and walk under the stage lights. The costume designer for a film arranges a similar demonstration under the lights in a studio. The costumer and director make sure that the actors can move the way they have to in the production without difficulty from the costume. Directors appreciate these "parades" because at this time they can see whether or not the designer's final interpretation is similar to their own.

- Attending a dress rehearsal. At this time, designers learn whether costumes cause difficulties for the actors as they perform special movements. If the leading lady's dress is too long to dance the polka in the last scene, her dress has to be shortened. The director might also suggest minor alterations at this time.

Sometimes costume designers have special tasks such as ageing a new costume to make it appear old for a certain effect in the production. They might also comment on hair styles and makeup -- particularly in the theater, where hair stylists and makeup specialists are usually quite open to suggestions.

Lighting Designers

Lighting for a theatrical event can be expressive and exciting. Lights can suggest an explosion, a fire, or even a dense fog. The various members of the production are usually extremely concerned about the lights: actors worry about how their makeup will look "under the lights"; scene designers wonder how the curtains, wallpaper, and upholstery will look as a result of lighting; costume designers are anxious that their fabrics and colors will appear as desired when lit. The lighting designer is an important part of the production ensemble.

Sometimes the responsibility for designing the lights for a production belongs to the scene designer, who does the light design or gives the task to an assistant designer (who is exactly that -- an assistant to the designer in all the tasks of the job), or hires a lighting engineer. Producers sometimes hire their own lighting designers. Some lighting designers develop associations with certain producers which almost guarantees them employment as lighting designers for future shows with the same producers.

In a few instances, the lighting for a show is "designed" by an employee of the company which supplies the lighting equipment. But usually the lighting of a show is a much more artistic endeavor. A lighting designer can accentuate the action of the play, and by the use of colors and timely use of darkness and brightness can even make a philosophical statement.

Lighting designers must understand the total design in terms of scenery and costumes. The lighting designer will look at the scene designer's plans in order to picture the size and shape of the scenery, its position both onstage and when in the fly position (ceiling above the stage), and the areas of stage action which need to be lighted. After finding out the openings through which light can be directed onto the stage, the lighting designer may even suggest that the scene designer move certain scenery in order to receive a better lighting effect.

The lighting designer should have the scene designer's list of requirements before designing the lighting. The stage manager provides the list of acting areas to be lighted, a plan of lighting effects needed in the action of the production, and a cue sheet which tells where in the script each effect occurs.

The lighting designer then has to specify what instruments are needed (and an estimate of the cost) to light the production and submit this information to the producer. Lighting designers must always stay within the given budget. The lighting designer hires the chief electrician, who then hires other necessary people to set up and operate the lights.

Lighting designers work creatively, although they must have a working knowledge of electricity and know how to handle and focus instruments. For example, a scene about a woman's pocketbook being stolen on her way to her apartment can be made a lot scarier by the use of shadows and effective lighting.

Sound Designers

Occasionally a production requires a sound designer. The sound designer receives a list of sound requirements from the director or writer. Consulting the designer's plan concerning the location of microphones and loud-speakers, the sound designer might suggest that the scene designer provide places to mount equipment and special openings or coverings in the scenery. Interference tests help the sound designer solve the acoustical and electrical problems. Working with the stage manager, the sound designer indicates where in the script sound cues must be recorded. (See later in this chapter about sound technicians.)

—o—

If two, three, or four separate individuals are designing, they should meet together in the early stages of the production so that they can best complement one another's design work. Sometimes the designers have to make changes immediately after the play is cast. For example, if the director of "The Wizard of Oz" cast a fat man as the Scarecrow, the costume designer may alter original plans. If the same actor cannot fit through the gate to Emerald City, the scene designer would enlarge the entrance.

All designers must consider the budget of the production. The sound designer could not request 43 microphones in one scene for a play which has a $50 budget for all expenses. All designers must consider the time available for executing their work properly. A set designer cannot design a 15-room apartment and have it constructed in time for a show which is opening in two weeks.

All designers must work within the physical limitations they are given. If the theater where the production is going to be presented has sufficient power for only six lighting instruments, the lighting designer cannot arrange a play that requires 60.

For live productions, designers are required to attend rehearsals. During the technical rehearsals (which occur just prior to the dress rehearsals) all the effects, scene changes, light cues, and sound cues are coordinated. All the designers, except perhaps the costume designer, must attend the technical rehearsals to supervise their work. The costume designer's important time is during dress rehearsals.

Of designers' responsibilities and tasks, the most important is to make an individual artistic contribution that is relevant and acceptable to the rest of the show. What the designer creates has a real bearing on the actors and the director, and most important, the play itself.

Where, How, and with What Background Can Theater Designers Find Jobs?

There are five basic settings where a prospective designer could look for work, and in each one, the responsibilities would be a little different:

- Commercial Theater -- Designers on and off-Broadway work free-lance and associate themselves with each production separately. Designers for commercial theater often work in their own studios.

- Resident Company -- Designers may be residents in the company or be employed for a single production.
- Community Theater -- Scene designers in community theater often double as technicians, supervising the hanging of lights and all scenery-related activities, and participating in set construction. The costumes are rarely designed or even bought -- they are usually rented or made by volunteers in the community from patterns and whatever material is available.
- Summer Theater -- The designer often paints the scenery and finds the props. Of primary concern to the scene designer in summer theater is economy of money, space, and labor. A few wealthier summer theaters have their scenery built and painted in professional shops. A costume designer may be hired, depending upon the size and financial strength of the company.
- School Theater -- The designing for a school or university theater is usually done by art department students, faculty members, or the theater's director. In professional schools and universities with strong theater departments, there is a stage design section with faculty and/or student designers. A faculty or student designer makes sketches, color layouts, working drawings, costume plates and patterns, either alone or with one or two others. The costume departments build and design the costumes. Although the organization is different at each school, the goal is to follow as closely as possible the procedure of professional theater.

In order to be hired in any of these places, a designer needs a diverse designing background. Required knowledge for designers includes the mechanics of the modern stage, such as theatrical technicalities involved in moving scenery, methods of constructing scenery, and the use of theatrical materials and techniques.

Somewhere in a designer's background should be a familiarity with theater history and the development of drama. Art history courses are valuable for better understanding of periods and styles of architecture, furniture, painting, sculpture, and costumes. Costume designers have to know about different patterns and such period costume terminology as wimples, godets, porures, etc.

---o---

Lorraine, backstage at Sandy Beach High School, is considering design work in the theater as a possible career. Just what should she be doing now and in the near future?

Because designers often start with jobs which deal with two-dimensional design, Lorraine would do well to sharpen up her painting skills. Lorraine could acquire these background skills as a high school student designing and working in technical capacities for her high school theater group. Of course, she should take any theatrical design course as well as theater and art history courses available in her community.

Upon graduation from high school, Lorraine should attend another school which offers a more intense theatrical design program. A liberal arts college with scene design courses would give Lorraine the opportunity to broaden her scope through learning about many aspects of the world around her; the information and philosophies learned at a liberal arts school might be useful at a later date when designing a certain production. If Lorraine's designs were used in a college production, she could develop a portfolio (a collection of her work) and try to secure an apprenticeship to a designer, or to obtain summer theater work.

When it comes to looking for a job in professional theater, Lorraine will probably have difficulty. Producers and directors like to hire people with whom they have already worked, or whose designs are familiar from previous productions. It is less risky for producers and directors to work with known designers because the union for designers requires that contracts with designers be signed before they submit sketches or even ideas for the scenery to be used.

To be accepted into the designers' union, the United Scenic Artists of America, Lorraine must submit a list of her education and experience to a union examining committee. She then must pass an extensive exam on her design ability with a special emphasis on her specialized area -- scenery, costumes, or lights. The exam tests for imagination, painting and sketching skills, and knowledge of architecture. After passing the test, she can join the union upon payment of an initial fee which is approximately $1,000 (1976 figures). Designers interested only in costumes pay around $300 and those qualifying for lighting only belong to a special section, the fee for which is $200.

In order to pass the difficult test administered by the union, Lorraine needs not only "natural talent," but some actual experience gained by working on university productions, community theaters, and in summer stock theater where non-union designers are hired. She should keep an attractive and up-to-date portfolio of all her work to show in any interviews with prospective employers. Lorraine will have to make opportunities for herself in low or non-paying design positions if she ever hopes to be hired as a professional designer.

Advice for Interested Students

Several professional designers, including an art director for films, offer the following advice:

First, while preparing for a job,

Gather a solid background in all the basic stagecraft skills and techniques, but keep yourself well-rounded. Have a good understanding and appreciation of literature, music, and dance. Be totally educated in all the arts, not just those of the theater.

Give yourself an office to work in that you can keep and expand upon as you gain work. Include a place to think and make rough sketches and a place to make finished sketches with a water supply nearby in case you are using water colors, a storage area, a drafting table, a model-making area, an area where you can show slides from a projector, and a little place for amusements such as a radio or small refrigerator (that will help you to feel more comfortable).

Begin thinking right away of every single possible way of moving scenery or lighting a set or costuming a production. You will be able to solve future problems in a clever fashion if you are aware of various methods available to you.

Once a student has a designing job, designers give these suggestions:

Remember that a designer's tasks cannot be done all in one place at the same time. Like a painter or sculptor, you might have your own 'studio,' but unlike the painter or sculptor, you cannot expect to stay there for long hours 'creating.' You will probably find that you will do your job in small bits in many different places -- scenery building shops, theaters, paint studios, libraries, museums, etc.

Always keep in mind that your work is not just a craft. Do not become so involved making your models and drawings that you forget your work is part of a whole which is dependent upon you and upon which you are dependent. Do not try so hard to make an individual impression upon the audience that you are not working for the good of the production.

No matter how wonderful your designs are, you will only be judged successful if your work is servicing the playwright, director, and actors.

Do not take the easy way out by only designing a window, for instance, because 'the script says so.' Most playwrights actually count on the designer to come up with ideas to make the script better. If you are going to put in a window, put it in because you feel it will help the production.

Be sure you take into consideration the people who are working under you. You are only as good as the people who work with and for you.

Make sure the director, producer, and writer understand all the limitations at the beginning of the show. If you have a $200 budget and the script calls for 30 dancing girls wearing mink tutus and diamond earrings, let the group know that you will be using fake diamonds and minks. If you remain silent, the director and producer will assume that you can provide the real thing for $200. Speak up at the first meeting!

Specifically for costume designers, a professional in the field said:

Visit museums regularly. Keep a collection of any pictures, photographs, postcards, advertisements, etc., which might be interesting or useful. Make a filing system to store this information. Make sketches. Buy a camera and take pictures of anything which might seem like a good addition to your collection.

A lighting designer warns:

Be ready for directors and scene designers who do not understand your technical terminology. Have patience and be ready to translate your work into simple, everyday terms.

Outlook for Design Jobs

Like most theater and media jobs, the competition for design jobs is intense. Jobs are not easy to find. Also, trends toward simple sets and simple costumes will reduce the amount of work available for designers.

However, the rise of dinner theaters does help designers, for many dinner theater productions are either commercial comedies or musicals, both of which generally require designers.

For those who are interested in designing as a hobby, community theaters always welcome someone eager to volunteer their design work.

BACKSTAGE THEATER WORK

Steven works backstage with Lorraine as stage manager for Sandy Beach High School productions. His main job is to cue the actors during rehearsals and help the director set-up the stage and props.

On opening night of a production, Steven is waiting offstage to help with scene changes, but also just to be there in case anything goes wrong. Of course, something does go wrong. The clasp on the back of the leading lady's dress has broken; the dress is gradually falling off. She realizes the problem, but cannot do much about it since she is onstage for the entire play.

Steven luckily had brought an emergency kit, including masking tape, bandaids, "Twinkies," and safety pins. He crawls behind the bar which is upstage right and whispers to the leading lady to come back there. Because the play calls for her to mix a drink for a guest, she crosses behind the bar grasping the back of her dress. She intentionally drops a stirrer, saying, "Oh, how clumsy of me," and stoops beneath the bar to pick it up. During the short time it takes to pick the stirrer up, Steven fastens a safety pin on the back of her dress and crawls back offstage. The audience never notices the problem or the solution.

Steven's resourcefulness and calmness in that situation are not enough to say that he would be a good professional stage manager or even backstage person. But the ability to keep a clear head without showing panic in emergency situations is essential for those who work backstage in the theater.

Steven must be able to reason out problems logically and quickly.

If he were a professional stage manager, Steven would have understood the needs of the designers, actors, producer, director, stage hands and electricians. A stage manager must deal with people on a business level and also a personal one.

For instance, if the mother of Donna, the lighting technician, were rushed to the hospital right before Donna came to the theater, the lighting technician might be tense and upset. Steven would need to treat her in a gentle and understanding way, yet at the same time make sure that Donna does her job correctly for the show.

In another situation, it might be necessary for Steven to yell and scream, to get along with the people in the show. As a stage manager he has to make demands of people, and he can do it by emotional force or by being nice. As one stage manager said,

> I am one of the few people in the show who must communicate with everyone. I either have to be a politician or a whip-cracker. In any case, I must get along.

Every person on a backstage crew knows how certain machinery works: for example, the lighting person is skilled at running the lighting board. The production works more smoothly if every backstage person is familiar with the theatrical machinery others run, but the stage manager <u>must know how to run everything</u>.

Who are the Backstage People and What Do They Do?

A crew head for an off-Broadway theater in New York summed up what backstage people do when he commented on what he found the most satisfying aspect of his job:

> To see a show that's nearly perfect, that runs smoothly, that has been organized well, been rehearsed smoothly -- and to know I had a part in making it that way.

Backstage people must work systematically and smoothly. The following chart demonstrates the way various jobs in the world of theater production are organized.

After the designers have made their specific plans (working drawings, costume sketches and notes, light plots, property and set plots) and the director is rehearsing the play (in the floor plan made by the designer) the people represented on the bottom level of the chart begin their work -- supervised by the people on the first levels.

<u>Scenery</u> is constructed, set up and hung. The settings are painted.

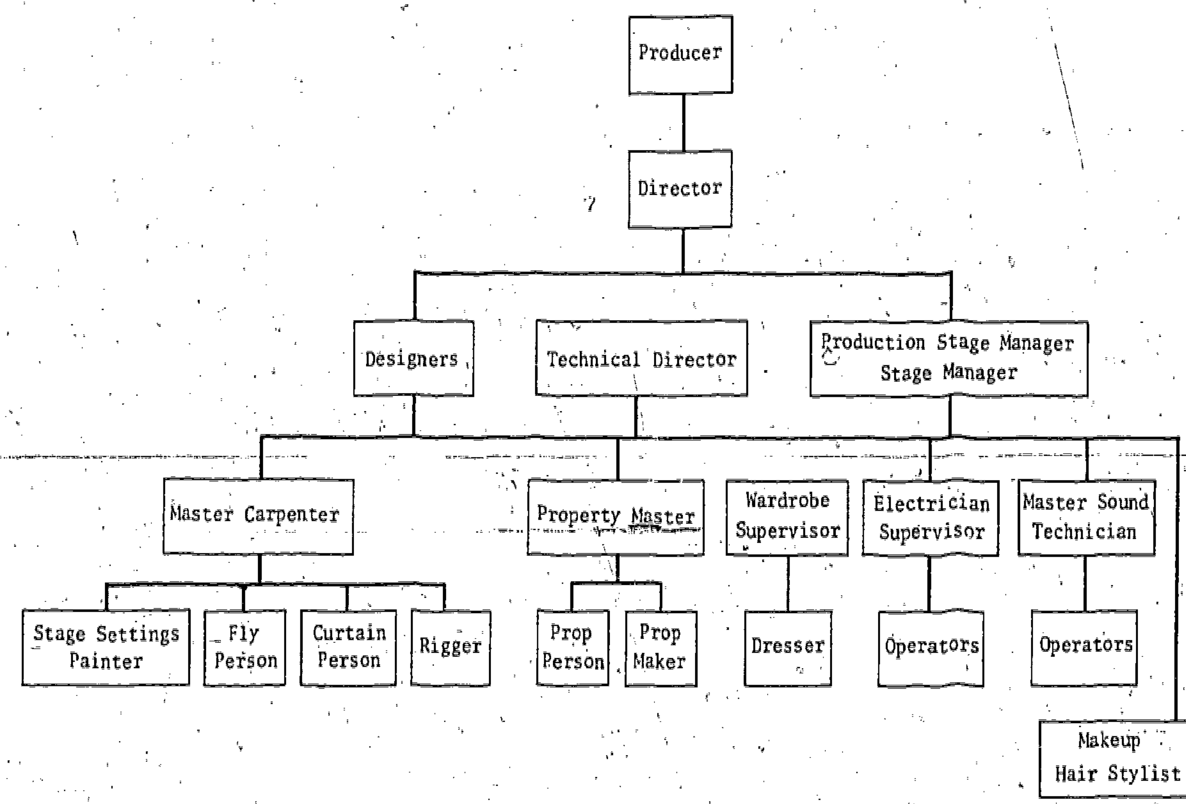
<u>Properties</u> are built, purchased, or found.

<u>Costumes</u> are built, fitted to the actor, and appropriate accessories are obtained.

<u>Lighting</u> instruments are bought (or rented or already exist in the theater), hung, focused, and gelled.

<u>Sound instruments</u> and recordings are procured. Any necessary tapes are made.

BACKSTAGE ORGANIZATION



The people responsible for these jobs work as a production team. The stage manager brings together the technical and the acting aspects of the production.

Technical Director

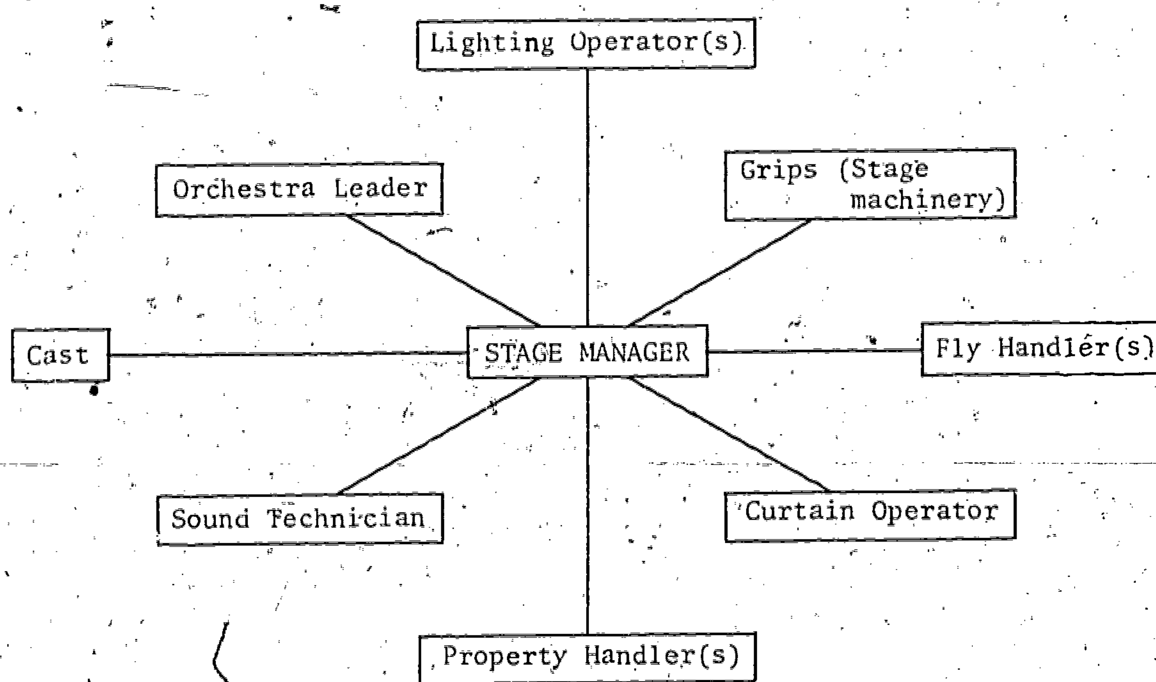
A technical director is the person who establishes from the designer's plans and models how well the scenery will work for the intended theater. A technical director learns from the plans what is necessary to build the scenery and to light the production, any special provisions for sound and effects; he/she then makes a tentative cost estimate of all the technical elements of the production. After supervising the execution of all these technical elements, the job is over when everything works as planned. He/she is responsible to the producer of the show. The technical director of a resident or community company plans and supervises the building and running of all settings and may even light the show. He figures out all the scene changes and any necessary additions needed in technical equipment.

Stage Manager

The stage manager's duties are divided into two categories: what is done before production, and what is done during and after production. The production stage manager (often called the production associate) takes over many of the stage manager's responsibilities during the rehearsal period of the show. There are also assistant stage managers who have various responsibilities in different theaters and shows. (Note: each job in this section could easily have an assistant. For instance, master carpenters have assistant master carpenters; the wardrobe supervisor might have an assistant wardrobe supervisor, etc. The "assistant's" job will not be listed or described in each case. The assistants merely share the responsibilities of the people whom they are assisting. The training is the same as for the "master" job.)

The stage manager is responsible to the producer or the business manager, but actually works for the director. The crew heads of all the various technical departments report to the stage manager. Stage managers are responsible for everybody during the performance of a show.

Stage managers vary on how much they talk to actors during a show, depending upon how many other cues have to be called. A stage manager might announce over the "head set" (the public address system which is channeled into the dressing rooms, green room, and all the important crew locations where technicians are also wearing head sets) each time an actor will be needed shortly on stage; or might only call actors when it appears that they will be late for or miss an entrance.



The Stage Manager's Responsibilities

The stage manager is responsible for much of what happens in a show -- both during rehearsal and during performance. The stage manager:

Before Production

Assists at early tryouts and rehearsals. Does all the organizing and scheduling of above, as well as subsequent rehearsal times and places

Makes sure that all the technical work is done correctly and on time. Checks on designers' work and reminds them of deadlines

During Production

Runs the show. Once it is into performance, stage manager is commander. Starts all performances. Gives cues. Calls actors. Posts calls.

Checks the set-ups of all the technical departments every performance

Before Production

Keeps a "prompt book" (includes blocking, dialogue, certain directorial notes)

Marks floor with tape according to the designer's plans and until the set and furniture arrive

Makes sure the actors carry out director's wishes, know their lines, etc.

Runs rehearsal when director is not there

Is a center of information for all

Acts as representative of the show, conducting certain union business. Is first person union deputy comes to when checking on a show

Organizes assignment of dressing rooms, parade, and picture call (photographs of actors in costume).

During Production

Brings in necessary replacements for actors (director leaves when show opens)

Organizes the technical crews

Makes sure the actors and crews are always punctual

Keeps the director's standards for the show. Makes sure everyone is working to best of ability. Makes sure no error is repeated and, if necessary, rehearses whole show over again

Runs rehearsals once a week where understudies play the roles

Prepares the script for publication with notes if the show is a success.

Backstage Theater Jobs

The backstage theater jobs under the stage manager and their various departments include:

Set

In the theater there are two basic kinds of scenery: two-dimensional flat scenery (drops -- canvas "drawings" dropped from the ceiling often at an upstage position to create background scenery -- wings, flats) and three-dimensional scenery (real or real-looking solid forms such as a desk, a couch, a doghouse, etc.).

There are several methods to move scenery. One way is to move or run the scenery directly on the floor or on coasters, wagons, or revolving stage floors. Another method is to "fly" the scenery from the stage ceiling. In some theaters scenery can even be brought through the stage floor by the use of an elevator.

Scenery is often changed at an intermission or within the play. A change taking place in-between scenes within the play usually cannot last more than one-and-a-half minutes ~~at most~~ -- otherwise the flow of the production is disturbed. Thus people who change scenery are essential to the audience's enjoyment of the show. There might be a black-out or a curtain drawn to hide the scene change; in some productions actors participate in a scene change which is visible to the audience. Visible changes fit only certain types of plays, although in the nineteenth century elaborate visible changes were a usual part of the production.

(Master) Stage Carpenter

The stage carpenter (often the head stage carpenter is called "master" whether the job is held by a man or woman) supervises the shifting, rigging, and general condition of the scenery. First, he/she receives blueprints from the technical director (or the stage manager or director) made from the designer's working drawings and a work schedule for construction. He then supervises a crew in constructing the scenery every step of the way. He is also responsible for assembling the scenery on stage.

The stage carpenter might need to prepare the stage before a show by removing any standing stage equipment which is not necessary for the particular show. He prepares the stage floor for trap doors or any other special effects which the production requires.

Working for the master carpenter is a crew consisting of:

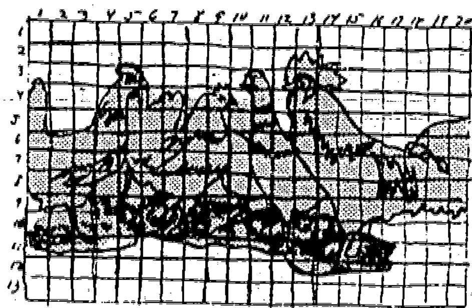
- An assistant carpenter
- Grips (stagehands)
- Flyers.

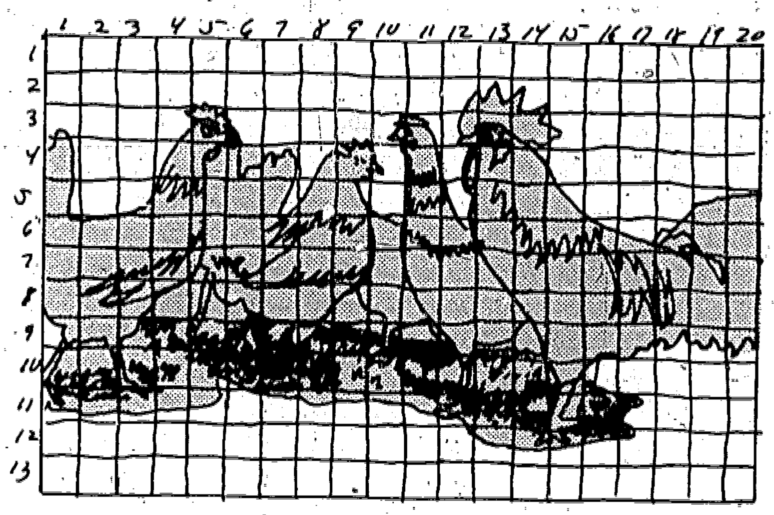
(Grips and flyers might have a person in charge among them called "head grip" or "master-flyer.")

Stage Set Painters

The painter is responsible for all set painting and particularly any detailed paint-mixing. He might paint anything from a lavish design to simple lettering. Interpreting the designer's elevation proportionately, the painter enlarges the drawing to full scale (see illustration). Painters allow for the effect of distance (will the soft black lines being used for the chicken's feathers show from the balcony?) and colored lighting (will the yellow chicken look like a white abominable snowman under the lights?). They must also consider durability due to traveling (will the paint scrape off in the moving van?), a long run (will the chicken begin to fade during the second month?), and outdoor use (will a surprise rainstorm turn the chicken into giblet gravy?). In some more sophisticated backstage organizations, a whole crew may paint scenery under the supervision of a master. Layout people perform any cartooning involved in the painting. The lay-in people (sometimes called fillers) are usually less experienced and do the priming and the larger-scale painting. (If a flat had to be painted partly chartreuse and partly avocado with absolutely no detail, lay-in people would do the painting.)

The more experienced detail painters do all the intricate brushwork. People holding the lowest level job, called "paint boys/girls," take care of the equipment, clean the floor, and do routine work in paint-mixing, although the skilled painters described above may exchange responsibilities. All of these people fall under the heading "stage settings painter."





The set design drawings are marked in grids, to enable the scene painter to enlarge the drawing accurately on the flat.

Grips

"Grip" is simply another word for stagehand. Working under the stage carpenter, a grip moves scenery by one of the several methods on and off the stage, sometimes by using machinery above and below the stage floor. Grips also assist in the building of the set and in the rigging of the machinery.

Riggers

Riggers build equipment for aerial and acrobatic shows, or variety shows which employ acrobats. They also raise and lower trapezes as well as protective nets during the performance. Riggers install the theater equipment used to lower, raise, or support scenery, crystal chandeliers, etc.

Flyers (formerly called "Flyman")

The flyer lowers and raises scenery and curtains by pulling ropes from a place generally above or to the side of the stage. From this position, these crew members "fly" all sorts of large, flat scenery, which is attached to machinery and elevated into the fly loft above the stage for storage and then lowered for production. Flyers attach the scenery to the rigging; they also prepare the stage during the show's rehearsal by installing any special lines needed in the flies and repositioning flying equipment according to the hanging plan of the show. During the performance, the flyer works from a cue sheet and is cued by the stage manager when scenery needs to be raised or lowered.

Curtain Operators

The responsibility of these backstage workers is simply to operate the curtains at intermission or whenever a scene change or a special scene requires that curtains be opened or closed.

Circus Supervisors

Circus supervisors take charge of all the technical rigging, moving of scenery, and use of lights within the circus setting.

Props

Stage properties (props) are often extremely important to the meaning of the play. For example, a play called "An Italian Straw Hat" centers around the search for one particular prop -- the hat. Because the way an actor relates to a prop can tell the audience an infinite amount about the character, stage properties are important.

Props are broken into two groups: costume props (such as fans, daggers, and swords) and scenic props (such as a roast turkey, a pogo stick, or a rolling pin).

Property Supervisors

Property supervisors take care of all the scenic props as well as specific costume props which the actors or costumers do not obtain. They are responsible for rugs and ground cloths, and all the non-recorded sound effects in the show. They have to sneeze, ring doorbells, drop dishes, shoot guns, and blow whistles as frequently as the script and director require. A property supervisor also supervises the handling of props during

A Sample Prop List

Stage right table:

a fishbowl with water and two goldfish
a chocolate candy bar without nuts
shaving equipment
sandpaper
a wrapped Christmas present with pink bow

Stage left table:

a rubber chicken
a cactus plant as unprickly as possible
a guitar with broken strings
an idigbo ashtray
a set of barbells

All of these items would either be carried on stage by one of the actors during the play or a scene change, or set on stage by one of the members of the prop crew during a scene change.

scene change with the assistance of clearers and grips.

Each night of the performance, the property supervisor takes out of storage all the props needed for the show. The stage manager provides a list of props which indicates the side of the stage where each prop belongs. The property supervisor sees that each prop is located properly before performance and is put away safely at the end of the performance.

Property Handlers ("Clearers")

Property handlers assist the property supervisor with setting props and handing them to the actors as well as with the manual sound effects. (The sound of two people screaming offstage might be needed in Act II, Scene 3). They also help to "strike" the props (remove them from the stage) and store them until the next performance.

Prop Makers

Although props in many productions are items bought in stores, some shows require prop makers who could be asked to make absolutely anything. Props fall into these categories:

- Exaggerated props (for being seen clearly from far away)
- "Lighter than reality" props (weighing much less than the item they represent)
- "Cheap" props (costing less to make than the item they represent would cost to purchase).

For instance, to make some of the props in a prop list, a prop maker might construct the plunger as an exaggerated prop (the play might be a comedy in which a crazy plumber walks on stage with an enormous plunger; a baby's swimming pool attached to the end of a hoe might exaggerate the notion of a plunger). The stage barbells might need to be lighter in weight than real barbells. (The actor might have to act the part of a muscleman who could lift the barbells with his baby finger. The weights might need to be made of styrofoam or papier mache.) And what about the idigbo ashtray? It will need to be cheaper than reality. If idigbo is very expensive wood to import from Africa, it would be cheaper to make the ashtray out of pussy willow branches or whatever wood looks like idigbo to the audience. (Diamond rings are a good example of props which must be made cheaper than life.)

Costumes

For many productions, the costume designer takes care of all aspects of the costumes, perhaps with the assistance of volunteers. But in most cases, the designer has assistants.

Costumers

A costumer often takes the place of costume designer and selects costumes out of a stock or from thrift shops and fits them to the actors. A costumer for a designer will also fit the costumes to the actors.

Wardrobe Supervisor

The wardrobe supervisor cleans, presses, and repairs all costumes with the help of assistants. This person assists actors during quick costume changes made offstage in the wings or in the dressing rooms. In community and university theaters, the wardrobe supervisor often also acts as makeup supervisor.

Dresser (Costumer Assistant)

In addition to packing and unpacking the costumes and assisting the wardrobe supervisor with other tasks, the dresser helps actors put on costumes in their dressing rooms before going on stage; dressers may also assist during an emergency change.

Lights

The lighting designer, if there is one, supervises the lighting crew. If there is no designer, then the stage manager is in charge of the crew.

Electrician Supervisor

An electrician supervisor arranges and focuses the lighting instruments, takes care of all the electrical equipment, operates the switchboard or the console for lighting cues, moves lighting equipment when necessary in the show, and prepares the stage before the show by clearing excess lighting equipment and running additional cables as needed. The electrician supervisor creates stage explosions, flashes, lighting, fog, smoke, the moon and the stars through special lighting effects. Any of these activities might be performed by any assistants or operators on the electrical crew.

Lights Operators

The lights operator assists the electrician supervisor in all tasks, but especially in the installation and controlling of lighting equipment. (Note: an on-stage lamp which has to plug in and actually function would be the dual responsibility of the property crew and the lighting crew.)

Sound

The two basic tasks in the sound department are considered the same job -- sound technician and sound operator -- because when both jobs actually do exist in a theater situation, equal responsibilities are shared. The technician is merely the supervisor of the operator and might do all the difficult technical work him/herself. In some situations, the sound people are considered part of the electrical department.

The sound people are responsible for any hi-fi recordings and incidental music used in the play. For instance, if the director of "Flower Drum Stick" decided that "I'm a Yankee Doodle Chicken" should be heard in the distance during the last scene, the sound department would find, record, and then play the music on cue. If the director wants the sound of 50 chickens clucking in the last scene as the leading lady is dying of chicken pox, the sound department might record this sound on a chicken farm. However, for a simple sound effect like a police siren, a record could easily be purchased.

In a permanent theater group, the sound technician organizes and services a sound recording library. For each show, the sound technician records all the music/sound cues of the show and edits them; the recorded cues are then spliced together by using recording machine equipment. The sound technician supervises the installation of speakers and microphones, and the stage manager's sound communication system. The sound technician is concerned with scenery to know where to position sound equipment on stage or have microphones flown from above. He/she is responsible for all acoustical problems and solutions.

In a show with both a sound operator and a sound technician, the operator usually runs the sound control system (including tape recorded) during a performance. A headset provides him with direct communication to the stage manager. The technician always follows a cue sheet or script.

Makeup and Hair Stylist

Many theater companies do not have makeup specialists or hair stylists because the work is done by the costume department or by the actors themselves. When there are makeup people and hair stylists for a production, they study the show's requirements (character, period, situation) and make up the actors and style their hair -- or wigs -- according to roles. Both jobs require occasional research for historical or period plays and characters.

Where, How, and with What Background Do Backstage People Find Jobs?

Back to Steven, as he graduates from Sandy Beach High School! It would not be easy for him to find a backstage theater job upon graduation. First of all, few jobs are available. The operating budget of a professional show is tied in with the length of its run. Producers of a Broadway show with a long run try to reduce the number of backstage people needed by spending money on mechanical methods of moving scenery, etc. University and community theaters buy machinery if the staff feels that the equipment can be used in many shows to cut down the number of workers needed backstage.

Steven would very likely need much more training than his high school experience before even geing considered for a paid backstage job. While his interest in theater and his activities are a good beginning, he would need extensive experience whether at a liberal arts school with a theater, a professional school, or a technical school.

Of course, any experience Steven could gain in places like community theater would also be valuable. Summer stock is probably the most valuable, especially if Steven returned to the same company year after year. Steven could perform a variety of technical crew work, advancing each year in responsibility. If he were interested in stage managing, summer stock might be a good place for him to find an assistant stage manager job with which to start. In whatever capacity he worked in summer stock, Steven would have the opportunity to watch how professionals work and to grow familiar with the structure of professional theater.

Unfortunately, Steven would find employment difficult to obtain even with an extensive and diverse background. Most backstage people when asked how they got their job said, "Through a connection," -- a person they knew who helped them to be hired. Often, the connection was a relative.

Unlike actors and announcers, backstage people do not audition for jobs. This can be an advantage for some. The important factor for Steven in finding backstage work -- besides the people he knows -- is his credits, his experience. If, for example, in the last show Steven worked on, the producer may have hated him or he may have really done an inferior job, the experience would still be there—on his resume.

Then, if Steven could tack to his resume a few letters of recommendation from respected producers and directors, he would be in good shape to be hired. But, without the experience <u>and</u> the contacts, Steven has little chance of ever getting backstage work. Producers and directors are not interested in young candidates with little experience. An unemployed property master from Chicago explained:

> I am discriminated against constantly because of my age (23). Old age never seems to bother anyone, but youth is not something in your favor when trying

to be hired for a production job in a theater.

According to a technical director in New York, the places where the most backstage people are hired are New York, Los Angeles, Boston, Chicago, and Minneapolis. Steven, however, might be able to find work in one of the many regional theaters located throughout the country. Because he would have a long-term contract with the theater, there would be little chance for Steven to advance to a job on Broadway if he were working in a regional theater. However, his employment would be more secure than on Broadway.

If Steven were interested in working on off-Broadway in New York, he could try to become involved with a "showcase" -- a play in which the actors and backstage crew work for no salary to have their work exposed to producers and directors in the city. This arrangement would be particularly useful if Steven were interested in stage managing. Because the showcase rehearsals and performances occur in the evening, Steven would have time during the day to look for other employment or to work at another job for earning money to live on.

In New York City Steven should see shows and talk to as many theater people as possible. He should seize every possible opportunity to do backstage production work, and also read all the technical magazines published in the New York area.

For the person who chooses technical directing as a career, a source of work is schools. Universities with strong theater departments and professional schools have a person who does all duties which a technical director in a resident company would perform, and teaches at the same time; the position may be that of "designer/technical director." High schools which have more than one drama teacher are apt to hire a designer/technical director as the second full-time salaried position on the staff.

The student interested in becoming a stage manager should obtain directing ability and experience, since stage managers are in charge of the understudies' rehearsals as well as brush-up rehearsals during the run of the show and rehearsals when a new cast member is added. By directing a show or two in high school or college, Steven would be better suited to deal with this responsibility.

If Steven wants to be a stage manager, he will most likely join Actor's Equity Association, although there is some work available on off-Broadway for non-union members. Participation in summer stock is a channel for joining Equity. Many stage managers hope to become actors; as stage managers they become acquainted with producers and directors. Assistant stage managers are sometimes actors or dancers in the show. Many assistants go on to become directors, producers, or business managers. Of course many stage managers like the career and follow it all of their adult lives.

If Steven is interested in painting scenery, he must join the United Scenic Artists Union, after taking a test which measures his painting ability. For people interested in making props as a career, resident companies are the best source of employment because

A Stage Manager's Background

Bob, a stage manager from Boston, described his background:

> I went to a four-year liberal arts college with a strong theater department. I wanted my education to coincide with a chance to do both stage managing and designing. I wanted to go to a school whose theater was professional enough that I could stage manage shows for salary as well as doing work for no pay. I had my Equity card by the time I was a sophomore in college, because I had worked as an apprentice in a summer stock theater. From there on, I stage managed. I have taught myself a great deal, even though I learned the basics from working with professionals. You cannot always go to a book for answers. Instincts are very important.

these companies often employ specialists to build properties. Carpenters or set crew members have limited employment opportunities in school or community theaters because usually only one carpenter is hired to build, rig, and shift scenery with the help of students/volunteers. (Steven could volunteer if he were interested in doing backstage work as a hobby rather than a full-time job.)

In resident theater, some community theaters, professional schools, and universities with strong theater departments, experts in stage lighting are staff members of the faculty. The lighting and control equipment for resident companies is owned by the theater and is rigged, operated, and cared for by the house electrician.

The contradiction is clear. Steven should have some education beyond high school if he wants a career in backstage theater. However, the way many people seem to find work is if their father and grandfather were also backstage workers, in which case only a high school diploma is necessary.

Although Steven might not be able to land a job backstage on Broadway, he still could prepare himself for a job in a resident company or community theater. If Broadway is his only desire, he could go to New York and keep trying with the hope that he is that one successful person out of the many who seek backstage work.

The Feller Scenery Studio

For big Broadway shows, sets are built in studios like the Feller Scenery Studio in New York. The studio is run by Peter Feller, who has been a master carpenter most of his life, and figures that he has participated in about 4,000 shows in his lifetime. His studio receives about 50 percent of Broadway's set-building business. At the studio, sets for shows are built from the designer's plans and the producer's specifications concerning budget.

Usually, about 60 men work for Feller in the studio. If the studio is building the sets for a large number of shows, as many as 150 people could be employed.

Feller feels that his workers are highly creative. He feels that scene building is more a craft than it is engineering. For most of the shows, he builds sets from foam, fiberglass, or any other new material which comes along. His carpenters can sew as well as any tailor or seamstress.

However, many of the technicians were hired for their job for reasons other than creativity and craftsmanship. Most of his workers have been with him since they were children. Others are from minority groups whom Feller was able to hire once union rules became less restrictive.

Feller himself, even though he is "in love with show business," was forced into the business during the Depression. His father, a scenery builder, could not afford to send Feller to college. Instead, he got him an apprentice job at a scenic studio, where Feller did everything including sweeping floors. He then worked his way up to master carpenter. He lives with his wife above the studio, because he works "24 hours a day," and needs to be close to the studio.

Advice for Students
from Professional Backstage People

Professionals around the country offer the following advice to students about backstage careers in the theater:

Start as an apprentice in summer stock -- that will help you to make contacts. Commit yourself only to looking for work in your field. If you want to be a wardrobe supervisor, don't accept a job at Montgomery Ward in the dress department and consider it related. Find an organization you can register with that will send you out on trial shows such as showcases.

Go to parties and meetings which theater people attend. Many people have found jobs from a contact they met at an opening night party.

It's a difficult business. It takes extreme personal commitment and self-confidence. Since there are so many people who want your job, you have to feel and know you have something special to offer; and, more importantly, you have to communicate that to the proper people.

Don't consider backstage jobs! We don't need the competition.

If you do not have the qualifications to do the specific job, don't try for it. It is not a creative thing like acting where people have different views of you. If you can't do it, don't -- because you're hurting the production. Those who can't do the work properly eventually are weeded out anyway, because they can't take the strain.

Prepare yourself to be turned down for jobs. If you can't take that rejection, quit right away.

Television is the big place for crew people to be hired. In theater, there are few openings.

Don't make enemies. You never know when that enemy could be in a hiring position. It will be hard not to, though, because there are a lot of temperamental people in the business. Those who yell and scream are remembered more than those who do good work.

When you are in a supervisory position, there will always be people underneath you who do not do their job. The work will then fall on you, as you will have to cover for them. It happened to me once (as a stage manager). I did their jobs and couldn't get my own work done. The crew head or stage manager always takes the responsibility. You cannot say, 'No, that's not my job.'

There will be times when you are offered a good sum of money to do a non-Equity show and you are Equity (which means you can only do Equity shows). You have to make the decision for yourself whether or not you'll do them, but remember that Equity is a hassle to get into. All the really big jobs will be union jobs. If you are caught doing a non-Equity show, you'll be dismissed from the union.

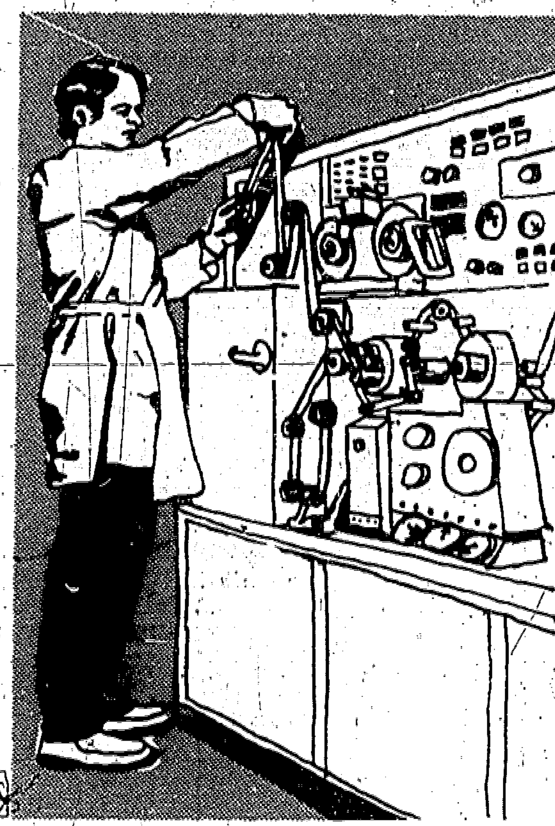
You never get to the point where you can relax. Even some of the big names in theater production are unemployed a lot.

MEDIA PRODUCTION WORK

Janet, like Steven, is a high school student who likes to help put productions together and prefers not to be "on display" herself. Because Janet enjoys working with the audiovisual department, she is one of the students who runs the projectors for the teachers when they show films. She also has worked with closed-circuit television as part of an after-school club. Would she be suited to a career in media production?

Perhaps. But, similar to backstage personnel, she must possess certain skills and mechanical ability needed for media work. In addition, she must be resourceful, patient, and able to work under intense pressure most of the time. Optimism and a willingness to fail are valuable characteristics for someone with a special interest in cinematography or film editing.

It would also be helpful if Janet knew a little bit about the other areas outside her specific discipline. If she were interested in lighting, for instance, knowing something about how cameras work is useful.



Television stations employ film specialists who are skilled in operating complex equipment.

Most of all, she must be able to work cooperatively with others in order to make a production run smoothly.

Who are the Media Production People and What Do They Do?

Film, like theater, is a collective art involving many people who all give some sort of creative assistance to a production. Major films and larger television stations have most of the same jobs as backstage theater. There are the same departments -- set, props, costumes, lights, sound, makeup and hairstyles -- plus some additional ones: camera and film. (Radio of course only deals with the sound element, audio.) In media there are also the two supervisory positions: technical director and stage manager. Many of the jobs have assistants who share the same responsibilities and tasks.

Technical Director

A technical director coordinates all the technical facilities and operations of a production such as lighting, sound, and cameras -- including "remote" productions. (A "remote" is a broadcast which occurs away from the studio such as at a church service, political convention, or athletic event.)

The technical director assigns workers to the job they do best. During a television production, the technical director carries out the director's commands by operating a video switcher that determines which camera shots and special effects will be broadcast. On a television set, the technical director wears a headset to communicate with the crew.

Floor (Stage) Manager

The stage manager is the link between the director and the people who appear on the air or on film (just as a stage manager in theater is the link between the director and the actors). In small television stations, the director takes on the responsibilities of the stage manager. In larger stations the stage manager, as in theater, wears headphones and communicates with all involved in the production.

Other duties of the stage manager are to:

- Cue the actors or persons appearing on the air
- Relay time cues
- Relay lighting directions
- Assist in property and scenery changes and lighting corrections
- Adjust monitors for television performers to view
- Make performers comfortable by answering their needs
- Change the title cards on a television show.

Camera

There are several different kinds of camera specialists in television and films: tv, motion picture, head, news (screen reporter), animation, special effects, assistant, etc. This book will discuss in general terms the job "camera operator" for both television and films.

The camera specialist (director of photography, cinematographer) must understand and follow cues from the director having to do with camera operation. The cinematographer for an interview show hears the director through the headphones saying, "Follow the doctor as he walks onto the stage," "Let's have a close-up on the mike," etc. The camera operator must master the camera in terms of its movement following the actors or performers on a movie or television set. He or she has the opportunity to become creative with the use of camera angles, particularly when working on a dramatic film. The following procedures for both television and films are important parts of the camera operator's job:

- Uncoiling cables and not running over them
- Holding hands on the camera
- Keeping eyes on the viewfinder
- Avoiding sudden moves of the camera
- Adjusting controls and checking the monitor screen in back of the camera so that the whole subject is in the picture
- Being aware of obstacles when moving so as not to bump into them
- Composing pictures with background and foreground in mind
- Trying to keep eye level with the people being "shot"
- Knowing the kind of shot possible from any distance and from any angle
- Knowing camera lenses and the kind of picture each produces.

Some camera operators for small television stations have the additional tasks of processing, editing, and cutting their own film since there are no film specialists hired. They might assume other film responsibilities such as mixing chemicals for film-processing machines and maintaining the darkroom and other specialized equipment.

If Janet were more interested in fixing cameras than in running them, she should consider the jobs of motion-picture equipment supervisor and machinist (sometimes called "maintenance engineer").

Janet might also consider the job of motion picture projectionist. Aside from the person who runs the projector at the neighborhood movie house, a projectionist is the operator of the film projector which directors, producers, and editors use to view the unfinished and finished film on a movie or tv set. The projectionist threads, runs, stops, and rewinds the projector as well as inspects and stores film.

Film

Somewhere between the categories of "Camera" and "Film" belong the video engineer and the video-tape recording engineer. Like camera specialists, they deal with "film" (video-tape) while it is being shot, but they do not operate a camera.

The <u>video engineer</u> sits in the control booth during the filming of a television show and balances the picture composition by operating the controls which regulate the quality, brightness, and contrast of the tv picture. Wearing a headset, the engineer works closely with the camera operator either in the studio or at a "remote." Video engineers take part in the production while it is on the air, and the quality of their work definitely and immediately affects the show.

The video-tape recording engineer records live programs on video tape and plays previously taped programs, commercials, and announcements.

Also concerned with film itself are the vault custodian and film clerk. Both of these jobs deal with storing and organizing film for future use.

The special effects person is responsible for any unusual gimmick like the earth cracking open or an ocean parting in the middle.

The most important job concerning film itself is that of film editor. There are two kinds of film editors: theaterical and non-theatrical. Theatrical film editors work on feature movies and television shows. Non-theatrical editors work on industrial and educational films, or at television stations. Three-quarters of the more than 7,000 film editors in this country work in television. (See "Scriptwriters" in the previous chapter for the kinds of scripts in film and television. These same scripts will usually need film editors.)

A film editor, with the help of assistants, edits movie film and sound tracks. The editor is as important as the director, designers, and actors in molding the assorted pieces of film into one cohesive product, and in making a creative statement on film.

Films are rarely shot in the sequence of scenes that are finally shown to an audience. Often there is as much as ten times more film shot than can be used in the final version. The film editor must be an artist, writer, critic, and director while selecting the scenes that will be used and arranging them in an orderly pattern for the audience.

A film editor for a dramatic motion picture has the greatest opportunity for creative decision-making. On a motion picture the editor works on the film as it is being produced: the editor views each day's shots with the producer and the director and listens to their suggestions.

A film-viewing machine enables the editor to run film backwards and forwards at varying speeds. The editor uses a wax pencil to mark the sections of the film to be cut and later cuts them with scissors. (This task is often performed by assistants.) The editor also synchronizes the sound track to the actors' lips or the narration to the appropriate action in the film.

After being edited the film is viewed by the producer, director, and other interested people who discuss revisions and suggest further changes. Another showing to the director and producers brings more suggestions. This process continues for some time until the film is ready for release.

While the director is viewing the film, the film editor makes the atmosphere of the cutting room as pleasant as possible for the director who can be more creative in an atmosphere where there is no fear of expressing feelings. During the editing process, the editor tries to grasp the feeling of the completed film by trying to understand the director's concept. Each change of emphasis ("Shall we go from a close-up of the boy to a close-up of the statue in the park?") could radically change the meaning of the film. Editing

Film Editors Make Many Decisions

Film editors decide whether there is sufficient film coverage to tell the "story" in the most effective way.

Example: The editor might suggest additional footage for a documentary about the various breeds of dogs which had neglected to mention or show German shepherds, collies, or poodles.

Editors time scenes to give the film a pace which would hold the audience's attention.

Example: Shortening long, photographic landscape shots in a murder mystery thriller for television is part of the editing process.

Editors must understand the feeling and meaning of each scene in order to fit the individual scenes together to develop the plot effectively.

Example: The news photographer may have shot the incidents of racial unrest over the last few weeks leading up to an all night negotiation session. The film editor needs to understand the substance of each episode to show how each led logically to the other.

Film editors decide where to make cuts in the film since the first version always runs longer than the length desirable for an audience.

Example: Editing "How to Cook an Omelet" film for television, an editor might delete the part when the cook goes out to the hen house to gather the eggs.

Film editors decide where special visual effects like dissolves or trick photography are needed.

Example: The editor might decide that in a dramatic film when the two central characters are having a violent argument, it is effective to dissolve to two lions roaring at each other in a zoo scene which had been shot separately.

is basically a matter of communicating: the film editor interprets what the director is trying to put on the screen. The final product is in a style which is an expression of both the director and the film editor.

Just as the editor communicates with the director, so it is advisable to communicate with the scriptwriter. The film editor must know how to relate to the characters in the film. It is not just a matter of technique when a film editor asks: "To whom do I cut now? When, why, and how?" Technical skills, however, make the film "play." It is a demanding and precise job to assort, discard, and assemble the pieces of film which make the finished product a personal interpretation, particularly for a dramatic film.

Depending on the size of the television station or the importance of the film, assistant editors assume many responsibilities. Possible titles for these assistants are: assistant film editor, film inspector, film viewer, film technician, film splicer, sorter, and film loader.

Set

As in theater, film and television production requires carpenters, painters, stagehands, and sometimes riggers. Their duties are basically the same as those of their counterparts in the theater. (See previous section on backstage theater.) One addition to the list is the greens planter who sets up any greenery or landscaping on a movie or television set.

Props

Added to the backstage theater list is the shopper, who goes to stores to buy any props needed. The shopper technically belongs in the "costume" section because he/she could also be assigned to buy costumes and accessories for the cast members.

Costumes

The costumer in television will design if there is no designer on a specific show. But the costumer's usual tasks are to:

- Plan specific costumes with the director
- Measure actors for size of costumes
- Locate, order, or make costumes (being aware of different shades for color or black-and-white)
- Return rented costumes to owners or store them in appropriate wardrobe room.

Lights

"Gaffers" run the lights for a film or television show. They adjust the lights on the performers and on the set. Gaffers help to create character or the desired mood. Setting all the lights prior to a show, they operate the dimmer during the telecast (actually controlling the lights during the performance), supervise the lighting board, and store cables and floor-mounted lamps when the production is completed. Gaffers have assistants who share these responsibilities.

Sound

Sound in media takes on far greater importance than in theater. In radio, for instance, sound is the only dimension.

Audio engineers control the sound portion of a telecast or film. For example, the audio engineer ~~of a tel~~evision show which starts each program with a lady screaming followed by mysterious music would wear a headset to hear cues from the director such as, "Open boom mike, stand by with the music, hit the screaming lady, sneak in the music." These production workers operate the controls inside the studio which regulate sound pick-up and transmission for live studio work, recorded work, and network or "remote" pick-up. They also check and control the microphones used for special effects and music, tape recorders, and turntables. The music may be live, taped, or on a record.

Assisting the audio engineer are microphone boom operators. Through earphones, they listen to the instructions of the audio engineer in one ear and the program in the other in order to control and adjust microphones as needed. They are also responsible for suspended as well as boom mikes.

The sound effects specialist works on a film or television show, accumulating the sound specified by the script or director. Possible sources for sound cues are the sound-effects library or recordings made by the sound crew itself. The sound effects specialist synchronizes the sounds so that they are heard at the right times during the film.

Sound duties are also assumed by other personnel, such as recordist, mixer, re-recording mixer, cutter, and playback equipment operator.

Makeup

Makeup artists in media have more to do than those in theater because they apply make-up several times during the production. They make up the performers keeping in mind the qualities of cosmetics under lights in color and black-and-white. Other tasks include:

- Making the makeup appear "neutral" with the lights
- Creating characterization (particularly in dramatic movies or television shows)
- Touching up the performers' makeup during the production
- Keeping makeup neat and stored properly
- Taking inventory and ordering stock periodically.

Hair Styling

Hair stylists are used more frequently in motion pictures than in theater or television. They style the actors' hair or wigs according to the historical period of the film or the kind of characters being portrayed.

How and with What Background Do Media Production People Find Jobs?

Preparation for a media broadcasting job begins in high school. Janet's participation in theater and audiovisual groups at Sandy Beach High is a good start. She should complement her extra-curricular activities with film, communications, or audiovisual classes. Math, science, and vocational courses are helpful too. If Janet's particular interest is in film editing, she should take high school courses in English, art, and photography. Building and operating an amateur radio station right at Sandy Beach High School would be useful preparation for media production jobs.

Further education beyond high school would be desirable for Janet in planning a career in media production. Technical training in electronics is a helpful avenue; a college degree might be even better, especially if Janet wants to advance to supervisory positions. While in college, she should join any radio station, film club, or closed-circuit operation available to her.

The student considering becoming a director of photography for a film needs at least a three-year course at a technical institute -- a course which includes instruction in mechanical and artistic aspects of camera work. A more advantageous course of study might include a bachelor's degree from a liberal arts college followed by a Master of Fine Arts in film, a degree which many top cinematographers have obtained.

Most film editors have a liberal arts education because there are only a few schools which offer special training in film editing. While in college Janet, as an aspiring film editor, would take courses related to the kinds of films she might like to edit: arts and humanities courses for an interest in theatrical films, and education courses if her interest were in educational films, as examples.

Most professional media production people agree, however, that the most valuable experience is gained out of school. Photography should definitely be a hobby for those interested in camera and film jobs. Janet should learn how to:

- Use a camera
- Make a sequence of shots which tell a "story"
- Cut and splice film
- Run the school projector.

A part-time job in a film-processing lab of a photo supply business is helpful preparation.

Professional media production people must possess a Federal Communications Commission license (see "Announcers" in Chapter Two). Anyone adjusting or operating broadcast transmitters in radio and television stations must have an FCC license. Janet could begin studying in high school to pass the necessary exam for her license; courses are available to help students prepare for the test.

When looking for her first job, Janet should have some awareness of al! [illegible] goes on in film, television, [illegible] radio with a reasonable

Doris' Career

Doris, a successful film editor from the West Coast, started her career as a messenger in a film studio. She eventually worked her way up to an apprentice's job. She advanced to become a script clerk, an assistant editor, and then sound effects editor. She left the security of stable studio employment to work on a free-lance basis. For a while she edited commercials and industrial shows and now is editing major dramatic motion pictures.

---

proficiency in more than one area. She should also demonstrate the potential for being a skilled craftsperson in a specific production area. A good place for Janet to start might be a film-processing lab where she would get the strong technical background needed to compete for jobs. Because the best media production jobs require union membership and it is difficult to procure a union apprenticeship, Janet's next step might be to try non-theatrical,non-union jobs. Manufacturing companies, religious, medical, government,and educational organizations may have their own film-units. After gathering some experience working on non-theatrical films, Janet could apply for union membership if she desired. Unions require experience for admission. To obtain experience in editing industrial (non-theatrical) films, Janet will have to seek work in the big cities, particularly Los Angeles, New York, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis, Houston, and Denver. The placement bureau of the college she attended might be able to help her locate possible jobs with industrial films.

If Janet were fortunate enough to be hired as a film apprentice, her duties would be to splice, rewind, number, and deliver film. After no less than three years Janet could be considered an assistant to the film editor if her work were good and a job opening available. As an assistant she would help the editor synchronize the sound with the picture, break the film down into scenes, take notes during the screening, and file film.

After no less than eight years, Janet would be <u>eligible</u> for a film editing position, but could easily not be hired for one due to lack of openings. Non-union jobs have the same process, but take about half the time for advancement. The step after being a film editor is producing and/or directing.

For many of the media production positions career advancement means moving from a job at a small station to the same job at a larger station. A production person at a small station in a rural area would perform many tasks at the same time. (See "Announcers.") A cinematographer from Detroit started as a production assistant in a small station in Indiana. He then worked his way up to assistant cameraman and did simple news and quiz shows. He now has a job as camera operator for a large station and does more complicated, interesting shows.

Ed, an Academy Award winning cinematographer from New York, suggests that an aspiring production person do anything related to the skills of the job for which he/she hopes. The aspiring technician should then

> gradually suggest, offer, push, and prod people into letting you do what you want to do. Then, you get a sample of your work and can sell it from 'film' door to 'film' door. After some years, friends and reputation substitute for sales effort. Advancement comes as you have more freedom to do your own work.

A cinematographer might advance to directing, producing, editing, or writing. Many cinematographers possess the skills to be still photographers, sound technicians, gaffers, and electricians. Some are teachers and consultants at the same time.

According to professionals, Janet must be aggressive and self-confident to convince people to be interested in her work. Any friends she can make along the way may prove helpful. Filling jobs with friends is still a popular tradition in media.

Advice for Students from Media Production People

Many of the pieces of advice listed in the backstage theater section apply to Janet as she aspires for a media production job. Some additional advice given by professionals exclusive to media jobs is:

> Be ready to face the problems of 'not enough' on a film or at a television station: not enough budget, time, personnel, space or freedom. You might have to make artistic sacrifices. You may often work in cramped quarters. Sometimes, you'll feel that there is a set way of doing everything which leaves no room for originality.

> If you are interested in commercial success -- in making money and establishing a reputation -- train to be a sensitive tool for the 'vision' of the director, or the intention of the film. If you are interested in artistic success, train to be an artist with a basic technical acquaintance with the craft.

> You may have to work on commercials, which will be artistically humiliating. Do it for a while if you must, but don't get stuck at it.

> Be prepared to be asked to follow a life-style which you do not like. Think about how you might want to deal with that.

More specifically, cinematographers had the following advice:

> Get ready to be asked to shoot things which are not true, or will contribute to a statement that is false or misleading. You may have to film a commercial showing mosquitos lighting on an arm not sprayed by the terrific insect repellent and avoiding an arm sprayed with the great stuff. What the public doesn't know is that the first arm was coated with ice cream -- wouldn't you light on it if you were a mosquito? This example may be made-up but it happens all the time. Commercials aren't the only films that lie. Dramatic films and even children's films lie, too.

Job Outlook

Media production people have irregular hours, firm deadlines, and pressures which constantly build up. Yet more and more talented people are seeking media production jobs. The competition is intense.

Both industry and governmental agencies are making greater use than in the past of film and videotape; there is also an increase of film use in education. The popularity of movies made specifically for television and of television commercials for advertising is another factor in assuring that media production workers will continue to be in demand -- despite the competition for jobs. Finally, women are gradually finding more opportunities than in previous years in media production.

5. BUSINESS CAREERS

~~AM I INTERESTED~~
IN THE BUSINESS AND MONEY ASPECTS OF PRODUCTION?
CAN I ORGANIZE WELL?

If you answered "yes" then answer the following questions.

- Would I like to be in complete charge of and pay for all elements of a production?

  Some possible jobs are:

  Producer
  Executive Producer
  Associate Producer
  Assistant Producer

- Do I like working with people and coordinating activities, and do I have some leadership qualities?

  Some possible jobs are:

  General (Business) Manager
  Production (Company) Manager
  Publicity Director
  (Public Relations Manager)
  Press Agent (Assistant)
  Theater Manager
  House Manager
  Box Office Treasurer
  (Head) Usher
  Ticket Taker

- Would I like to supervise activities at a television or radio station?

  Some possible jobs are:

  Program Department Director
  Production Manager
  News Director
  Program (Production) Assistant
  Public Affairs Director
  General (Station) Manager
  Business Manager
  Copyright Expert

- Am I good at persuasion? Do I like to sell?

  Possible jobs are:

  Literary Agent
  Script Rental Agent
  Personal Manager
  (Business Agent)
  Booking Agent
  Ticket Broker
  Tv-Radio Time Salesperson
  Sales Manager
  Traffic Manager

PRODUCERS

Gail is on the South Cubby High School Committee to plan an evening of theater to celebrate this year's graduation ceremonies. The committee must:

- Select a play for the event
- Choose the cast and director
- Decide where and when the production will take place.

The other members of Gail's committee are in favor of a new play written by an elderly woman from the neighboring community of Tukitown. It is a satire based on the life of a chicken farmer in a place much like South Cubby which the writer has carefully disguised as "North Guppy."

Gail is opposed to the selection for many reasons. She feels that if the committee selects an original play, it should be one written by a resident of South Cubby. The parents of the graduating students would probably prefer to see a play written by a student. The South Cubby parents are proud and competitive and have not forgotten that Tukitown beat South Cubby on Thanksgiving Day's football game this year - final score 77 to six. Also, there are many chicken farmers in South Cubby and Gail feels that parts of the play may be offensive to them. After hearing Gail's argument, the rest of the committee decides to wait another day before voting on the play selection.

Next, the committee must select the cast and the director. They all agree that the director will choose cast members from among those students who have an average of C or better, but they cannot agree upon a director. One person suggests Miss Dullton, a social studies teacher whose only directing experience was last year's South Cubby "Egyptian Revue." The audience loved the show. Actually, the show wasn't much, but they loved the pyramids Miss Dullton built as scenery.

Gail was on the publicity committee for the "Egyptian Revue" and recalls how Miss Dullton spent the entire budget on those pyramids and had no money left to print publicity posters or advertise the play in the newspapers. Consequently, half the seats were empty.

Gail feels that Mr. Bell, the music teacher, would be a better choice for director since he would spend the money more carefully. Gail also mentions that selecting Mr. Bell would save additional money on musical accompaniment for the show, since he plays the piano quite well himself. The rest of the committee considers Gail's ideas and decides to wait another day before voting on the directorship.

Next they discuss the times and place of the production. Members of the committee felt that the old swamp a half-mile down the road from the school would be an exciting place for the production. The swamp had been filled in by sand several years ago and all of the high grass had been cut away. It was suggested that seats could be arranged around all four sides of the swamp. The audience could walk to the swamp right after commencement and the production could begin around 10 p.m. and end around midnight.

Agreeing that the swamp idea was innovative and exciting, Gail questioned its practicality. Too much time and effort would go into setting up the chairs and the stage area. Platforms would have to be built. Furniture and other scenery would have to be carried all the way to the swamp. She mentioned that the audience might not care to walk the half-mile. Also it might rain and there would be no convenient indoor alternative site. The high school auditorium would be a much more convenient location, Gail thought.

Gail also felt that the production should not be scheduled on commencement night. People might be tired and elderly people might not want to stay out until midnight. Besides, the students would prefer to celebrate their graduation by having parties that night.

She suggested that the performance take place the night before graduation when the students of South Cubby were still students of South Cubby. It could be the final and biggest event of the year. The rest of the committee, after listening to Gail, decided to wait another day before voting on the time and place.

Gail left that meeting determined to convince the committee. She fell asleep that night thinking about what could happen if the committee didn't go along with her ideas. She dreamed that it was commencement night and the diplomas had just been awarded. Everyone marched up the street to the old swamp to see the play. One man, who had a little too much punch to drink, fell down and ripped his new trousers. Many people grew tired half-way there and decided to skip the play and instead went out for coffee and donuts.

Those who did arrive at the swamp came much later than expected. One actor was missing because his parents made him come right home to see his Aunt Virginia who had flown in unexpectedly from Europe to see the graduation. Miss Dullton was still putting finishing touches on the three-story-high chicken she was building for scenery.

When the play finally started in Gail's dream, 12 chicken farmers got angry and stormed out in protest, throwing eggs at the actors and Miss Dullton. Suddenly, it began to rain and what was left of the audience quickly ran away.

The actors continued until they felt the stage platform sinking below the sand. They jumped off the stage just as it sank into the earth. All that could be seen of Miss Dullton's giant chicken was its beak and head. Miss Dullton was about to stand up and give a social studies lesson when....

Gail's alarm went off. It was morning. She went to school and prepared herself for the committee meeting. The meeting turned out to be brief. The other members agreed that Gail was right about all she had said. They decided on a student-written play which Mr. Bell cheerfully agreed to direct.

The skills which Gail showed in estimating and planning South Cubby's production are certainly skills which a professional producer would need: producers must understand how to plan all the elements of time and work involved in a production. For example, Gail's skill in understanding what the audience will or will not like is an asset to a producer, who must always be conscious of the audience's needs, preferences, and culture. A good producer would know that a play about chicken farming was not right for the South Cubby audience. One producer described the instinct for judging a good show as having a "gut feeling about the people you're serving." Another skill needed by the producer is the knack for using limited facilities to their maximum advantages. Producers have done wonderful work in inferior theaters and with inexperienced actors and/or very little money. Producers must be aware of the hidden traps in production and the chances for failure.

Gail has always liked theater and movies. Although she never tried out for any school plays, she always worked on publicity committees and often ushered during performances. She has had many part-time jobs in businesses and she hopes to work her way up to a managerial position when she is in college. This is a useful background if Gail ever hopes to become a producer. But she will need certain other skills and talents. Gail should know about all various production techniques within the art of theater and/or media. A theatrical producer, for example, should be familiar with lighting and stage design; a film producer should know about film techniques such as video-tape.

Producers must also have a good command of the English language. Gail should be able to speak articulately and to write well. She should be creative insofar as having good ideas, having them often, and being able to express them.

Gail would also need organizational ability in order to coordinate the many activities which contribute to one production. She must be able to keep things in logical order.

Producers also feel that Gail should have certain personality characteristics to be successful as a producer. She should be serious about herself, committed to her job, have a sense of humor, and the desire to work hard. Most important, however, would be Gail's behavior when working with creative people. She needs aggressiveness, even arrogance, when dealing with ideas and patience, even kindness, when dealing with people.

What Do Producers Do?

A producer for radio, tv, films, and theater has many more complicated tasks than Gail encountered in her committee work at South Cubby High School. In order to help students find out more about what producers do, Jorge, Michael, Sheldon, and Polly described the job of producing. Polly and Sheldon are professional producers in theater and commercial movies; Jorge and Michael produce radio and tv shows and educational films.

Gail, like many other people, may not understand the difference between a producer and a director. The producer is the "higher" of the two positions in that the producer arranges all the details and finances. As producer, Gail would decide dates, times, and places for rehearsals and would also arrange to finance the show and how to spend money. The producer is the director's "boss."

Tasks and Activities

Question: What tasks and activities do you do during your working time?

Jorge and Michael
(Radio, tv, educational films)

I gather all the necessary factors in putting together a show such as researchers, writers, performers, crew, artists, etc.

I supervise, plan, or conceive individual programs (or a series of programs).

I arrange a performance date and establish rehearsal dates and times.

I raise funds and look for sources that will enhance the production.

I travel to other nations when dealing with joint productions.

Polly and Sheldon
(Theater and movies)

I assemble the cast, writers, directors, technicians, designers, composers, and -- if a film -- the film editors.

I am responsible for the final product so I supervise at every step of the way. I accept or reject everybody's work down to the clean-up crew. I make sure everything is done on time.

I decide where the film or play will take place. I rent the facilities of a theater or studio that has the necessary equipment.

I arrange all financing and approve expenses. I raise money from other people (who invest a lot and expect a large amount of return). If the movie or play fails, it hurts my reputation.

I must decide whether or not to use a top star who will draw the audience but will cost more and need a fancy wardrobe and a special dressing room.

Particularly in a movie, I may take insurance out on a star so that the show does not suffer because of illness.

I am baby-sitter, lawyer, doctor, and mother to the people who work for me.

---o---

Producers' jobs can vary a great deal. A news show producer, for example, would have the security of working in the same place all the time, while a movie producer might have the problem of having to rent a facility for each new project. In commercial movies, producers who "live" at or are affiliated with one studio are now almost completely unheard of. Independent producers (producers who work for themselves and make individual films for many different sources) are dominant. Film producers usually make anywhere from zero to three films in a given year, perhaps more if the films are short documentaries.

Theater and movie producers also take big financial risks. Often they work for a percentage of the amount made; if the show is a failure, the producer loses rather than makes money. Income results from box office receipts and sales of refreshments and souvenirs. Occasionally a producer will own the "rights" of a show. This means that if a record, book, or tv show is made from a movie or play -- or a movie from a play -- the producer will earn a share of the profits from the sale.

Sometimes producers are under contract to their financial backers for a specific amount of money which they will get whether the show succeeds or not. Television and radio producers are paid weekly, so there is less risk involved. In a field with many unstable occupations, the radio and television producer's job is one of the few relatively stable positions.

Career Enhancements

Producers, like actors, directors, and writers, don't necessarily work from nine to five. They are involved with their work all the time.

Question: What do you do outside of your working day that enhances your career as a producer?

Jorge: There is no "outside" of my working day. Almost everything I do enhances my job. I keep up with what's happening locally and nationally -- politically or otherwise. That helps to keep my work relevant.

You can never tell when something you do could relate to your job. I went to see a band last night. I might want to use them as part of my television show.

Michael: Read, read, read. I observe the world, satisfy my curiosity, and meet people.

Polly: A play I see at the theater could be related to a play I want to produce. Going to community meetings, giving guest lectures, and keeping up with the arts all enhance my work. Also, I sew costumes, design posters, hammer nails, or do whatever has to be done to get a show up on time.

Sheldon: Since I do not work in New York, I find it helpful to visit the city and see plays. I also meet with other producers and with playwrights and script-writers who are looking for someone to produce their work. If I'm producing a show which has stars, I go with them to their interviews. There is really little separation between my working time and my "spare" time.

How and Why Do Producers Become Producers?

There is no one, two, three, or 23 ways to become a producer. All producers advance to their jobs via some unique pathway. Many became producers by sheer accident. Michael described his first step in becoming a television producer:

> I revisited my college campus to share a beer with my former roommates and found out that they'd begun a graduate teaching program in television. I enrolled. A long and varied career began with a bottle of ale!

Most producers, however, did participate in some related extracurricular activity when they were in high school or college. Others claim they were independent, did a lot of reading, and stayed away from group activities.

A student might participate in drama, newspaper, yearbook, or musical activities -- even science labs help to steer him/her toward a good background in performance and communications. A knowledge of film processes is helpful to students who want to produce films or television shows.

Most producers would agree that a young producer should have a college degree, or even a master's degree. For example, four possible educational pathways are:

Jorge: B.A. in Psychology and Education, M.S. in Human Development in Television

Michael: B.S. in Drama, M.S. in Television

Polly: B.A. in English, M.A. in Theater

Sheldon: B.S. in Business Accounting, M.F.A. in Acting (Directing)

A combined arts and business background seems to be the best possible preparation for a producer. Producers agree, however, that although their educational experiences may have been helpful to them, they learned much of their "trade" after they entered the field and learned from what other people had to offer.

Although some producers have been "overnight successes," most producers reach their jobs via many years of experience in the theater, films, or television.

A young producer might find many aspects of the job very satisfying. In the theater a producer might have the joy of seeing a full house and the realization that his/her efforts were partially responsible for attracting people. If a play is a big critical and financial success, the producer's rewards would be even greater. The chance to do bigger and better productions can be gratifying, too. Finally, producers enjoy the interplay of ideas which occurs when creative people work together.

As was mentioned earlier, there are no clear cut patterns to becoming a producer. A few suggestions of "career ladders" -- jobs or "steps" one takes in order to reach a certain job -- given by producers were:

Television/Radio

Volunteer for tv show led to Production Assistant led to Associate Producer led to Producer.

Why Did You Become a Producer?

Jorge: My love of children. My first interest was in children's tv because I have great concern for the early years of life. Television has a tremendous impact on the community. I have things to say to the people. If you want to go about changing things, tv is the one source which reaches all.

I did teach at first, but that was a dead end for me. I like the producer's schedule and, most of all, I like meeting people -- which I did not get to do much as a teacher.

I need the type of job which is high energy, keeps me running and on my toes all the time, and gives me exposure to people who are doing things.

It may be a cliche, but there is no business like show business!

Michael: The producer is the focus of all ideas and decision-making and is the creative beginner. Because the producer is the seat of power and the judge of what is tasteful or not, I naturally gravitated toward the job.

Polly: Even though my parents advised me against the theater for economic reasons, I realized that I had the natural talents and abilities to be a leader in that business and I went after it. The atmosphere of excitement and creativity which surrounds a producer led me to the career.

Sheldon: The affluence influenced me. I wanted to be a big producer and make a lot of money. I also love the publicity I get. I am attracted to the glitter of being in show business. As a producer I go to New York and see plays, have meals, stay in suites, etc., for free. The fringe benefits appeal to me. The power to control the whole fabric of a play or movie was a great attraction.

Theater

Assistant Stage Manager led to
Stage Manager led to
Director led to
Producer.

Another step on the theater career ladder might be "motion picture producer," as there are producers in theater who go on to produce motion pictures. Many television producers started with lesser jobs at small television stations, and gradually advanced to larger stations. A news or talk show producer might also become a station manager or program manager of a large network.

Advancement can also mean working on larger projects, with bigger budgets.

One producer said,

> Advancing depends upon developing a wide array of talents more or less simultaneously. If some are missing, a large rut appears.

A young producer looking for advancement within the television industry would have to prove him/herself first by producing the "best show for the least money."

Other Work

Question: What other work could you be doing with your background and experience?

Jorge

Teaching

Administrative work with community agencies

Developing curriculum

Educational research and evaluation

Polly

Teaching

Directing

Writing

Michael

Tv reporting (news, public affairs)

Magazine editing

Consulting for the government

Managing a supermarket

Sheldon

Acting

Directing

Accounting

Any type of business work

Advice for Interested Students from Professional Producers

The professionals would warn students about having unrealistic notions about the glamour and simplicity of a producer's job. Theater and media business is not "fun and games." Neither is it as financially lucrative as people tend to think -- at least not right away.

The four producers each had advice for students considering general fields of theater, television, and broadcasting.

Jorge (broadcasting): The field of broadcasting is diverse -- there are researchers, writers, technicians, business people, administrators, financiers, artists. Get a formal educational background. As the job market grows more competitive, educational qualifications in the field will become more important.

Do not commit yourself only to one field. Use each experience as a step in the learning process and draw from your experiences for what you are doing at the moment. Be an interdisciplinary person.

Michael (television): Read, write, see plays. Act if possible. Paint at least one still life in oil. Participate in the world and play with ideas and your curiosity. Be committed to exploring the world and know that tv is a good vehicle for doing it.

Polly (theater): Don't! But if you must, consider it very carefully and be fully aware of the responsibility. Don't undertake a career in theater unless you have complete dedication.

Sheldon (theater): It's not all glitter. It's a very rough business. Most actors are unemployed most of the time. Get involved with smaller companies and repertory companies. Be well-informed of what the "real world" is like. Nobody cares about what you did in high school and college.

The following advice from producers shows that people have differences in the way they view their jobs:

Jorge: Experience the community while you're getting your education in the field of communication. Have patience and perseverance. Be aware of what's happening. Read the newspaper.

Michael: Look for an opportunity to work for challenging people.

Polly: Be aware of the studies you must undertake, the long grind without recognition, and the long hours of work. In ancient Greece to be in theater meant to be dedicated to the god Apollo. The feeling of commitment has not changed even today, particularly for producers.

Sheldon: Do not become a producer for the artistic part of it. You have to start off commercial. Don't try to appeal to just a small audience. Appeal to everybody. Hire 'names' if you can. Do not expect everything with which you deal to be a work of art. Money and the box office are important. Get people to come see your productions. Do not go for personal satisfaction in arts.

Producers face endless details in their day to day routine, and the constant pressures of their jobs can be exhausting. Many producers also find that the endless searching for funds can be an unpleasant task. There are always petty problems centered around people's attitudes and personalities which can make the producer's job less pleasant.

Producers sometimes have to make difficult decisions about ethical issues. Professional producers in theater, film television, and radio mentioned such issues as:

- There is always the conflict of producing a show you feel is immoral or unethical. It is not impossible to say 'no.'
- As a producer you try to make the best contracts you can. Inevitably, you end up hurting people along the way. The low percentage of working actors has something to do with it: everybody is trying to make it to the top and you are in a position to shatter people's dreams. You hire the people who can best fulfill their jobs, and fire the ones who cannot meet deadlines or cannot work to your satisfaction.
- The major conflict is that of compromise. You want to insist upon your personal standards of quality while others are trying to "cut corners." There are always disagreements on matters of artistic interpretation.

What is the Outlook for Those Planning to Become Producers?

Producers interested in the "big time" theater, or in commercial films or television, are better off in New York, Los Angeles, and London, where large numbers of producers are employed. However, more and more small theaters are appearing all over the country. Boston, Massachusetts, for example, has several within the city. The population growth of cities such as Denver and Houston has brought with it a percentage of the population who want and need theater, and theater groups are appearing. There are now repertory companies in nearly every state because people demand live theater. Broadway theaters are often filled to capacity. The more theaters there are, the more producers will be needed. Many small theaters are being opened because they cost less to operate than the larger ones. But they still require producers. There will always be an audience who insist upon seeing real theater with real people in front of them.

Television production depends on the amount of advertising money available. New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, Houston, Boston, and San Francisco have major tv markets along with other big cities. As radio stations become more and more responsive to social issues, there may be better chances for producers who work to meet community needs to find employment. Minority members and women are finding increasing opportunities in television, and radio to a lesser extent. There seems to be a trend toward more free-lance creative activity in tv and radio. A producer can sell his/her property to a television station, but, of course, if it proves to have no audience appeal, it will be replaced by the work of another free-lance producer.

The biggest demand for producers is in documentaries, training films for industries, and educational films -- rather than in commercial television or movie endeavors. Producing is competitive. Only those who are highly dedicated and talented will be likely to find opportunities.

THEATER BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT

Gail's best friend Joe was also on the South Cubby committee to choose a production for commencement. In fact, he handled all the publicity arrangements himself, sold tickets in the cafeteria during lunches, and kept track of all the expenditures and profits of the production. Joe even ushered the night of the production. Everyone remarked how charming he was as he showed people to their seats and pointed children to the nearest rest room, as was frequently necessary.

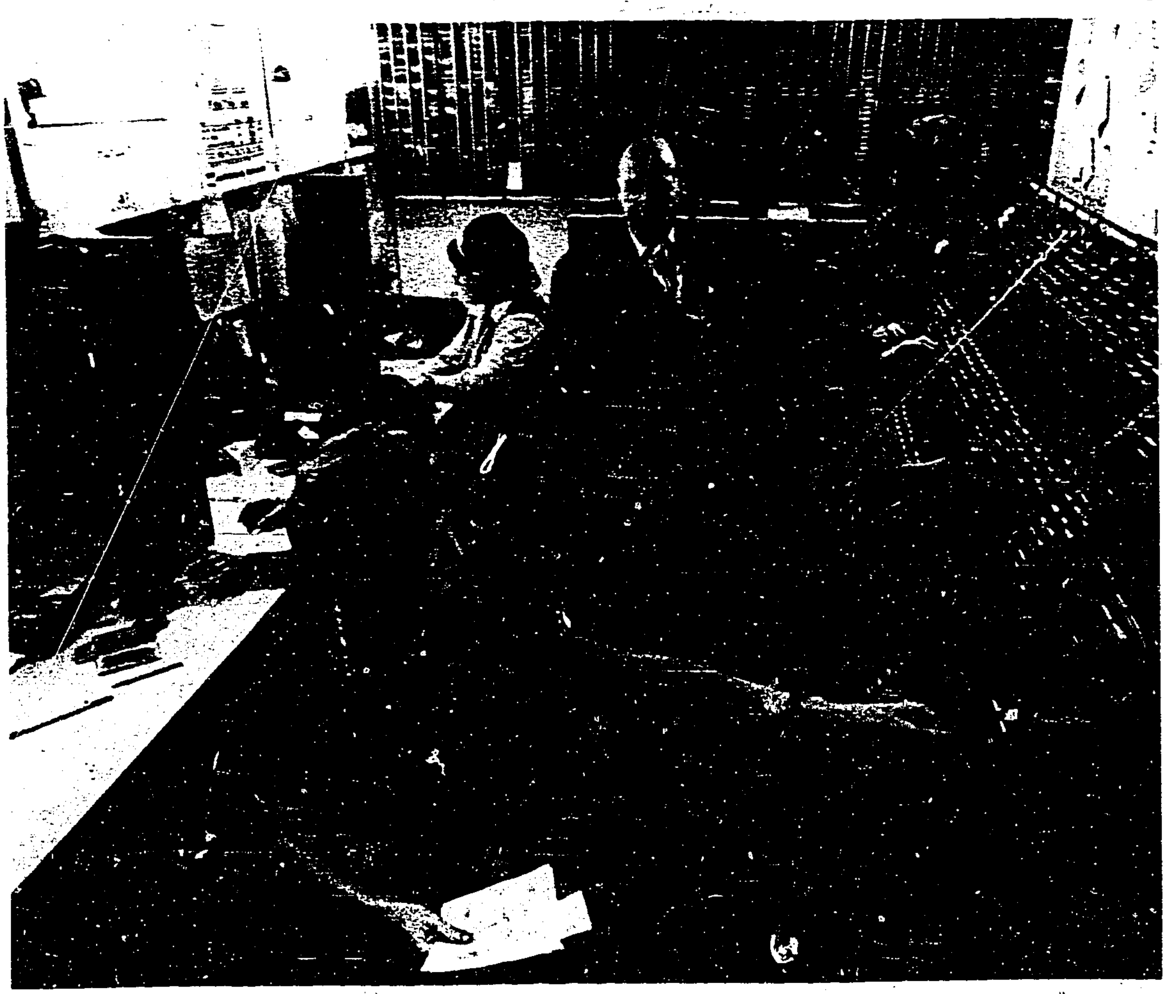
Joe is a good peace-maker. He stopped a food fight in the cafeteria last week. But although he is pleasant, he also has what his parents call "good business sense." He earned his spending money last spring by collecting old test tubes which Mrs. Tougho had thrown away in the science lab and selling them as bud vases. He particularly likes the theater and all the business which is involved with it. Is a job in theater management a good idea for Joe?

Possibly, but Joe needs a lot more experience planning theatrical occasions and working with large groups of people. Like the producer, he would be responsible for handling many aspects of a particular production, and he would need organizational ability to execute his responsibilities smoothly.

Who are the Theater Business People and Managers and What Do They Do?

There are several steps involved in putting together a dramatic production. The first step is to form an organization. An "organiation" could be anything from the South Cubby Drama Club to a group of professionals working together and pooling their funds for a single idea.

The organization selects a play or a series of plays. The producer may do this with the assistance of a general manager. For a professional endeavor, a theater has to be rented from a theater manager.



The box office of any large theater employs many workers to respond quickly to audience demand for tickets.

Then the production is designed and cast, and various parts of the production are prepared by their respective departments (see Chapter Four).

Next, the press representative (or publicity director) and the press assistants and agents get together to promote an audience.

Once the production is assembled and the technical and dress rehearsals are held, the play runs, perhaps tours, and then ends. The receipts and expenditures are totaled by the box office treasurer. The final balance is then determined.

If Joe were to visit a theater in New York or some other major city to see a production he would receive a program or "Playbill" which lists the business staff involved for the production.

A Sample Program Listing

Staff for

"Shakespeare Tames the Animals" in Three Acts

General Manager.	Mousie Macduff
Press Representative	Othello Associates
Company Manager.	Portia Piggson
Production Stage Manager	.Hermia Haress
Press Assistants	.Romeo Rodente, Henny Hamlet
Attorney.	Cleopatra Clamm

The people listed above all have something to do with the specific production, whether it be "Shakespeare Tames the Animals, or "The Wizard of Oz."

The general manager manages all the business affairs of a theatrical company when it is in a particular city. He/she is the supervisor of the people listed above in the sample program excerpt and is in charge of the overall production schedule. The general manager makes sure that the "house" is managed well, (that is, that the fire exits are marked, seats are clean, and there are sufficient ushers for the anticipated crowd, etc.)

The company manager and/or the production stage manager acts as a coordinator -- once again -- of the many elements of the production. For example, this manager has to solve any problems which might occur between the lighting person and the sound person. The company manager also works with the general manager is planning a season or a specific production, and then supervises the fulfillment of all plans. For instance, if a company wanted to have a summer season with the theme of "Great American Plays," the company manager participates in the selection of specific plays.

The press representative is hired to do the publicity for a show. Press assistants may be hired to help with publicity. The responsibilities of the publicity or press department are varied, but they include writing the biographies of the cast, director, and producers which appear in the "Playbill." The press assistants make sure that the information is correct and meets the actors', director's, and/or producer's approval. The publicity department also writes news releases, submits photographs to newspapers, and writes announcements.

An advance press agent makes all the necessary arrangements for a play to go on tour. The advance press agent for the road company of "Shakespeare Tames the Animals" would have to check in at the local theater and provide the managers with information about the arrival of the scenery. He/she would also be responsible for making sure that the scenery arrived at all.

The advance press agent checks with the theater's publicity director to make sure that the program is being correctly used. He also makes sure that the advance billing outside the theater is correct, and that the sign does not read "Shakespear Times the Animals."

While on the road, the advance press agent makes hotel reservations for the actors. He visits the drama editors of local newspapers to arrange for them to review the show and requests that feature stories about the cast appear in the papers. He might also deliver an advertisement at this time. The agent's job includes going to any nearby radio or television stations to set up interviews for the stars of the show. Even local organizations such as Women's Clubs would be contacted in order to drum up business.

Another group of jobs is concerned with the theater building itself rather than a specific production. This group includes the theater manager, house manager, box office treasurer and assistants, and head usher and ushers.

A theater manager should understand the tastes of the audiences in the area where the theater is located. He/she might, for example, think twice about scheduling a Shakespearean play if 90 percent of the community are high-school drop-outs. The same would apply to the manager of a movie theater: if 90 percent of the community were over 25, he would hesitate before scheduling a children's movie. The profit, after all, from showing a movie to an empty house would be small.

The theater manager's first concern is the comfort, entertainment, and safety of the people who come to the theater. Often a house manager, head usher, and ushers are hired to help in this responsibility. The manager sees that the lighting, heating, and air conditioning all are working properly. Managers also have to make sure that the theater and rest rooms are clean and that the refreshment stands are stocked with enough food and drink.

A theater manager is involved with business matters such as the hiring and paying of employees, advertising, and the upkeep of the building and its contents. The box-office treasurer, who collects and records money made from ticket sales, assists the manager in this responsibility. The box-office treasurer might also help the general manager with financial planning. The ticket-taker checks and collects tickets from people coming into the theater, and might also deny admittance to anyone who behaves in a disorderly manner.

The manager of a "legitimate" theater tries to convince producers to use that theater building. He informs them about the theater's excellent seating capacity, flexible stage area, precision backstage equipment, convenient location in town, etc.

The manager of a motion picture theater selects the films shown in the theater, and buys the soda pop machine or the popcorn self-butterer for the refreshment stand. The manager of a drive-in has to make sure that the grounds are clean, the speakers for automobiles work, the playground section is safe, and that the traffic coming and going is kept under control.

Theater managers, house managers, head ushers, etc., must work evenings and weekends when theater attendance is at its peak.

How and Why do People Become Theater Business People and Managers?

Most people who hold highly responsible jobs such as business manager chose their specific occupations in order to combine their interests in theater and management. Many people who are ushers and ticket takers take jobs in order to support themselves while they look for employment of a more artistic nature in the theater. An usher, for example, in a Broadway theater working evenings and two matinees per week would have time to attend several auditions during the weekdays.

Generally there is no set way to get involved in theater business and management. Some rules, however, do apply: press agents, for example, must belong to the Association of Theatrical Press Agents and Managers. People can only join that Association after working as an apprentice with an agent for at least 60 weeks. Apprentice work might consist of typing, writing, or general secretarial and clerical duties. Most press agents are college graduates who start as office assistants or secretaries to producers or press agents.

Theater managers usually start by working as ushers in a theater. It is typical for theater managers to advance to their positions by working within the industry, rather than by acquiring related experience in some other field. The best preparation for a career as a theater manager would be experience in handling publicity and finance.

What is the Outlook?

The number of business positions available depends, of course, on the number of theaters in operation. There does not seem to be any growth in the number of professional, legitimate theaters. Therefore, finding managerial positions in the top-notch professional theaters will never be easy.

Dinner theaters and small professional and semi-professional theaters are becoming increasingly popular and present a need for managers and business people. Managers of smaller theaters will have to handle many responsibilities. One person may be both box office treasurer and business manager. The ticket taker may also be the usher, and the business manager and the house manager might be the same person.

The outlook for a student interested in managing movie theaters or drive-ins could be good if he/she is particularly ambitious and willing to start in a lesser capacity if necessary. It is generally easy to find work as an usher in a movie theater.

Movies have become increasingly popular. Americans love the movies. In 1946 there were only about 100 drive-ins in the United States; now there are about 5,000. More movie theaters have been opening the the form of "group cinemas" -- that is, more than one theater in one building. In particular the large shopping malls generally have at least one movie theater [illegible] es.

For [illegible] business-minded [illegible] outlook for a career [illegible] management could be good.

TELEVISION AND RADIO DIRECTORS

Yolanda never had much to do with drama at school because she was too busy working with the audiovisual club and the school newspaper. With the audiovisual club, she helped film special class projects and was permitted to use the equipment to film her own script for a social studies assignment. Yolanda was also editor-in-chief of the newspaper and wrote several special news articles herself.

As editor-in-chief Yolanda displayed a good sense of news. She and/or one of her reporters were always at the scene when something newsworthy happened. For example, she just happened to be at the school baseball game when a freshman pinch-hitter hit four home runs and stole home plate.

Yolanda's "nose for news" would help her if she were interested in a career as news director for a radio or television station. Her ability to write interesting, factual, and occasionally entertaining articles are also an asset.

All radio and television directing and managing careers require organizational and administrative abilities. Yolanda's newspaper experience is a good way for her to practice and develop her organizational talents. As a news director for a tv or radio station she would have to understand the problems of reporting, and coordinate the many aspects of a news program.

Managers at radio or television stations have to know all facets of the broadcasting business. An understanding of film (including video-tape) and film processes is essential to them. A student would learn a great deal by participating in an audiovisual club to see how a video-tape is made.

It would also be advantageous for a student to have some experience with public relations work. For a student, that could mean writing advertisements to be broadcast over the public address system at school for the school newspaper.

People in managerial jobs should be able to stay calm. One manager of a television station said that his job is "like flying a plane. You must get everybody to move in panic situations." Particularly in live broadcasts, such as news programs, calm level-headedness is invaluable for a tv manager or director. For example: when it is 5:58 p.m. and there are two more stories left to be prepared for the 6:00 news program, a news director must be able to work without going into a panic.

What are the Managerial Jobs Available in Radio and Tv?

Chapter Two has a whole section devoted to directors. The directors being discussed now in business and management are a different sort of directors. The difference between the two groups is like the difference between being director of a hospital and that of a symphony orchestra. The concept of being in charge is the same, but creative skill for the directors in this section is not as important as managerial ability.

Most radio and television stations have four basic departments:

- Program
- Sales
- Engineering (see Chapter Four)
- Administration.

These four departments work together to broadcast programs which will appeal to the sponsors and the audience.

The program department selects and develops programs to go on the air. Programs are selected from three sources: 1) some are produced locally -- such as a news program; 2) some are supplied by independent producers and syndicated companies such as "The Merv Griffin Show" and other talk shows, and 3) some are affiliated with the three major networks -- ABC, CBS, or NBC. The latter group includes "Rhoda" and most of the programs seen on television between 7:30 and 11:00 p.m.

The radio stations in the United States are either independent or affiliated with a major network. Most television stations are connected with one of the three national television networks. The others are independent or connected with other stations in a group broadcasting system.

If a radio or television station is affiliated with a national network, that does not mean the station is "owned" by the network. The national network supplies some of the station's programs and in turn, receives a share of the revenues.

Announcers (see Chapter Two) are members of the program department. But an aspiring director would be most interested in the positions of program department director, production manager, news director, program assistant, and public affairs director.

Television or radio program directors make the final decisions about the selection and scheduling of programs the station will broadcast. They also administer the station's programming policy by choosing programs for the station which offer not only a balanced package of entertainment, but also to uphold the station's programming policy. (A station's policy might include not showing

Large vs. Small

The nature of management jobs at a radio or television station varies according to the size of the station. In a large station, jobs are highly specialized and people are hired to perform in one specific capacity. In a smaller station one employee may have production, administrative, and sales responsibilities all at the same time. Small stations simply do not offer many of the jobs mentioned in this section (such as public affairs directors). At a small station the news director also has to be a reporter in many cases.

Often the job titles are somewhat different. In a radio station there usually is no production manager, but rather an assistant program director who performs the same responsibilities.

pornographic programs, or programs which make religious, ethnic, or racial slurs, etc.)

A production manager deals with the details involved in programming: choosing personnel to be hired, alloting space, and deciding on what kinds of equipment are needed, etc. The production manager supervises all the studio activities.

A news director guides the overall news policy for the station, and is responsible for every newscast going on the air. Every facet of the news program -- including the broadcast journalists -- is the responsibility of the news director.

A program or production assistant helps to assemble and coordinate the various elements of a program. These assistants do such jobs as helping to transmit cues from the director to the announcers, and assisting with props and visual aids used in the production.

A public affairs director supervises and edits certain public service productions and serves as a means of communication between the station and the community.

The administrative department is represented by the general (station) manager and the business manager. As the head of the television or radio station, the general manager deals with all the daily problems of running the station and determining the station's general policies. The general manager also handles the station's relationship with the Federal Communications Commission and other government agencies.

Accountants, public relations people, lawyers, researchers, and clerical people all work under the general manager. The business manager also works under the general manager in handling the financial end of the station's operation.

How Does a Person Become a Radio or Television Director?

Qualified people usually find jobs by knowing somebody in a prominent position in the broadcasting industry. The general manager of a station knows people who are qualified for jobs at his station by having met them at functions, me... s, conventions, an... ings. One station manager said of his colleagues, "They have to know you to want you." Friends call friends to offer jobs when there is an opening.

In general, people advance in broadcasting management by moving from a smaller station to a larger one. Many people enter the broadcasting industry on a part-time basis, and gradually work their way toward a full-time position. Change of setting, greater responsibility, increased independence, and higher salary are the factors broadcasting managers use to measure advancement.

Why Do People Become Television or Radio Directors and Managers?

A news director, a general manager, and a program department director explained why they chose their careers:

News Director: "I wanted to be involved with history: to serve people by telling them what was going on in the world. I was reading the New York Times at the age of five. It became very important to me to absorb as much news as possible. I remember the bell chimes when Franklin Roosevelt died. I always went places with my parents. I loved to read.

General Manager: It is simply a matter of metamorphosis. You enter the field, and then find out what you want to do in it. Some people are happy working in any managerial position at a station. I ...nted a job where I could shape all the other jobs in the station.

Program Department Director: It is nice to have good programs on the air each day or night and know that you are the one who is primarily responsible for them. That sense of satisfaction possible from the work is why I think I became a program director.

Advice from Broadcasting Managers

There are many prob... and decisions an aspiring bro...casting director would face. Professionals in the field of... these bits of advice:

If you want to explore the world, and have a great desire to communicate what is happening in the world to as many people as possible, a career in broadcasting management may be suitable for you.

Get some writing and film experience. 'Writers' and those experienced with their craft are the ones who can find jobs.

Broadcasting directors can come from all walks of life: the city, the country, suburbia. The school you went to is a key factor when trying to find a job. It doesn't really matter what town you came from.

Be very realistic. Don't expect to graduate from college and suddenly become a director at a major station. Start with small stations. If you have a top position at a station before you are 40 years old, you are exceptionally lucky.

You must be gregarious; be outgoing. You must be able to show others that you are capable of being a good leader.

Make sure that you have 'journalistic integrity.' Be interested in quality, not promotion. Unfortunately, you will find that you work with many people who are not interested in quality. You have to operate within the system. In other words, if you're a news director, you'll find that the promotion and sales departments care only about the ratings -- not the news. If you're in the sales department you'll find that there are many people who will not worry at all about the financial end of the station and this will disturb you. You have to learn to live with one another.

You're only as good as your last show. The day before you may have been considered a disaster. Today, you broadcast a smash and you are considered great. Prepare yourself for the ups and downs of the business.

What is the Outlook?

This is a highly competitive field. That important first job can be very hard to find. However, every station needs at the very least one manager and larger stations require many more. Some managerial jobs will always be there.

Society is more visually oriented than it used to be. More people prefer to watch television than to read. This trend, whether it is good or bad, is likely to continue. The increased number of viewers should increase the need for employees at the studios. At the same time it will increase the responsibility of those in charge of broadcasting. Directors and managers will need an awareness of many fields to appeal to and accurately inform the viewers.

The job outlook is improving for minority groups. Women now hold many executive positions. There are female public relations directors, production assistants, etc. Managerial openings will always be scarce, but for those who are highly dedicated and willing to start with low-level jobs, broadcasting management is a field with a future.

AGENTS AND SALESPEOPLE

Four of the more successful graduates from South Cubby High School have gone on to become agents and salespeople. The school's newspaper ran a mini-biography of outstanding graduates in its last issue. The features editor also found the old biographies of this year's four commencement guests. The editor then wrote a description of each of the visiting graduates' present jobs and ran the descriptions with the original biographies. Below are extracts of this special issue of the South Cubby High News.

Andre Hamburger - at High School Graduation

Favorite classes: English, typing, Greek, Italian

Activities: Writer for The News, actor in Drama Club

Favorite hobbies: Reading, talking

Part-time job: Clerk at the "Absent-minded Professor" bookstore

Educational plans: will attend a liberal arts college and major in business administration

Ambition: "to be able to work with people all my life"

Teacher's comments: "Andre has a lot of what could be called 'charisma.' The other students like and respect him. He is quite clever and is always aggressive and competitive. He is not easily discouraged and sometimes makes his teachers angry by not taking 'no' for an answer.

"I would, however, trust him with almost anything. If I had to describe him in one word, I'd say 'charming.'"

Andre Hamburger - Today, a literary agent for playwrights

While in college: Andre did a lot of writing. He did some field work at a publishing house where he learned publishers' requirements. He also met many people whom he could use as contacts.

Andre took courses in selling and accounting in the business school of his liberal arts university. He did publicity for the university plays and was chairman of the multiple sclerosis drive for the entire state.

Upon graduation: Andre used his contacts -- and his talents -- to earn a job as an assistant editor at a small theater arts magazine. The magazine bought a lot of material from free-lance scripwriters and printed their work in the magazine. Andre helped to choose the scripts.

He still kept contact with the publishing house and with play brokers. He began to make friends and professional acquaintances with playwrights and scriptwriters. He gradually decided to represent a few little-known playwrights. A couple of them were quite talented and their plays sold. Andre was a success as a literary agent for playwrights.

Most recently: Andre has moved to New York where he can be in closer touch with the big play producers. He is affiliated with another agent in Hollywood and with one in London.

He is an agent and his primary responsibility is to find the best market for his writer's works and to sell them at the best possible prices.

Andre represents many playwrights and scriptwriters -- some famous and some not. He makes sure his clients receive a fair advance and that the royalty scale is suitable.

Andre finds that he reads many more scripts than he actually accepts. He knows the kinds of scripts producers are apt to buy and will only accept those kinds of scripts. Sometimes he advises prospective clients to make certain changes in their scripts in order to make them more attractive to producers.

Amy Cissel - at High School Graduation

Favorite classes: Drama, business education

Activities: Student Director for the Drama Club, Secretary and Special Activities Committee Chairman of Student Council

Favorite hobbies: Reading about people in show business, making money

Part-time job: Clerk typist in the personnel department of "Messy's" - the downtown department store

Educational plans: None specifically, would like to go to college eventually

Ambition: To be a lawyer or to go into show business

Teacher's comments: "Amy is talkative, persuasive and businesslike. She has leadership qualities and likes to use them. She has made a name for herself as chairperson of the Special Activities Committee and as Secretary of the Student Council. She has been responsible for the hiring of big-name bands for our school dances. The kids really flipped when she persuaded Dickie D.J. and the Doodads to come and play for half their usual fee. Amy could handle any business situation. She can talk her way out of any problem and I think that is why she did so well in my class!

Amy Cissel - Today, an agent for entertainers

After high school graduation: Amy worked full-time in the personnel department of "Messy's." In no time she was promoted to interviewer, and assisted the director in hiring employees.

Amy worked for about a year and then decided to go to a two-year liberal arts college where she took business and drama courses. While in college, she directed some plays for a community theater. She also worked part-time as a file clerk for an advertising agency.

Upon college graduation: She accepted a full-time job as a receptionist for a theatrical agent whom she had met at the advertising agency. As a receptionist she learned a lot about what it is to be an agent for aspiring actors and entertainers. After several years the actors and entertainers who came to the agency grew to trust and respect Amy's abilities and her knowledge of the business.

Most recently: Amy has become the personal manager for actors, entertainers, and circus acts in a large Midwestern city. She plans tours for the performers registered with her and, in general, does anything she can to promote their careers. She advises actors what to wear when they make tv appearances. She helps them to receive fair terms in whatever contracts they sign. She arranges for interviews by newspaper reporters with her performers. She consults advertisers to find out if they would like one of her performers to promote their products.

Amy negotiates with union officials, television studios, producers, or night clubs in order to secure contracts for her clients. She receives a percentage of whatever money her clients earn. Therefore, her income is determined by how much money she can persuade employers to pay for her clients' work.

Amy is always looking for new talent to promote. She travels all over the country visiting smaller theaters, night clubs, and even circuses looking for talented people who do not yet have an agent to represent them.

During her working day Amy writes letters and keeps appointments with prospective employers and her clients. She is responsible for making hotel and travel reservations for her clients' engagements. She sometimes even answers their fan mail. She is in and out of her office all day and often works overtime [illegible] work at home.

Amy will fly from South Cubby Thursday morning to attend the performance of a magician in a new Atlanta coffee house. She has heard that he is terrific and may want to sign him.

———o———

<u>Bea Nornie</u> - at High School Graduation

No information available because she did not graduate with her class.

<u>Bea Nornie - Today, a theater booking agent and ticket broker</u>

After dropping out of high school: She went to work for her father in a large theater downtown where he was a booking agent. She took night courses and finally earned enough credits to receive her high school diploma. She then went to a business school where she learned the skills necessary to be her father's secretary. She learned the "business" of being a booking agent from him.

Later Bea took her father's place at the theater when he retired. She became responsible for booking theater companies to play in the theater. She also became the booking agent for an established downtown night club. Bea scheduled entertainers who brought unprecedented crowds to the club. A keen awareness of what the downtown night-club goers enjoyed helped her to choose the right people to "book."

As booking agent she was responsible for negotiating contracts with the performers' agents and making sure that the proper billing was always used for the performers. Buying advertising space in the local newspapers was also her responsibility.

Most recently: Bea is living in New York City from September through June and lives on Cape Cod in the summer. On the Cape she is the booking agent for an outdoor summer stock theater. She presents a balanced season of theater groups and entertainers which delights both the tourists and the residents alike. During the year she is a ticket broker for a firm in Times Square. She buys tickets for every show on and off-Broadway in blocks -- at regular box-office prices -- often before the show opens. She then sells the tickets to people who are unable to buy them at the box office or for whom it is more convenient to go to a broker. She charges more than she paid, and thus makes a neat profit.

———o———

<u>Reuben Strauss</u> - at High School Graduation

Favorite classes: History, English

Activities: Drama Club (publicity), Debating Club

Hobbies: Writing, fishing

Part-time job: Magazine subscription salesman, sales clerk at "Mr. Dashimg's" men's store

Educational plans: Will attend a liberal arts university and major in journalism and/or psychology

Ambition: To write at a television station or movie studio

Teacher's comments: "Reuben is one of the friendliest and most personable students I have ever taught. He always had his hand raised to contribute something to the class even if it did not directly relate to what we were discussing. He livens up even the driest subjects! His work on the debating club has been outstanding. He demonstrates unusual initiative and persuasiveness. He often wins people over to his side by being tactful and patient rather than rude and belligerent. Reuben is competitive and hard-working. He usually knows what he wants and will try his hardest to do almost anything to achieve his goals. Sometimes he can be stubborn in his persistence, but always his stubbornness is a result of his doing what he believes to be 'right.'"

Reuben Strauss - Toda ,
time salesperson

While in college: Reuben worked at various summer jobs -- he was an editor's assistant at an advertising firm for a while and then worked as a page at a television station. He also helped his uncle selling life insurance. His course load included, as part of his English major, journalism, communications, and drama. He took several psychology courses as well as a course in marketing and business administration.

Reuben was also a disc jockey for the college radio station, and wrote and sold advertisements for the newspaper.

Upon graduation: Reuben began working full time at the television station -- still as a page, and still sold life insurance for his uncle several nights a week -- partly because he liked selling and partly because he needed the money.

At the station he became fascinated by the job of tv time salesperson. These people promote and sell advertising time to various sponsors. He found out that many of these salespeople obtained their jobs by having a strong sales background in another industry. Others were experienced journalists.

Reuben was gradually permitted to assist a few salespeople. The interest and knowledge Reuben demonstrated gradually landed him a production assistant's job and eventually he became a part-time salesman for the television station. By this time he knew the people in the community and what their interests and income were. He also was familiar with all the station's programs so that he could match an advertiser's needs to the right program.

Now: Reuben has become a full-time salesperson. He is always active and spends time in his office only to prepare sales presentations. Otherwise, he is out in the community trying to convince people that a commercial on tv would draw lots of customers to their stores.

Reuben is being considered for the jobs of sales manager and traffic manager. As sales manager he would coordinate the salespeople and make sure they went out on calls each day. He would also watch to make sure no two salespeople approached the same sponsor. At the start of each day, Reuben would furnish the salespeople with occasional leads. He would also make sure that communication was maintained with old sponsors. He might also check with competitive stations to see what their salespeople had to offer. He or his salespeople may even write commercials for the customers if they so desire. Large stations have fairly large sales departments headed by managers. In smaller stations announcers might do their own selling when not on the air.

Another job Reuben is being considered for at his station is traffic manager. If he is promoted to traffic manager, Reuben will prepare a daily log of the station's activities, showing any unsold time periods. He would keep a record of all broadcasting time available to advertisers. The preparation of the daily schedule of programs would also be Reuben's responsibility.

Reuben is sure he will receive one of these advancements because his work as a time salesperson has been recognized as excellent.

Advice for Interested Students

Andre, Amy, Bea, and Reuben were asked to speak to this year's graduating class of South Cubby High. In general, they advised students to continue their education and to exercise their talents as often as they could. More specifically they said:

- As in all theater and media jobs, the competition is intense for prospective agents and salespeople. You need every possible advantage you can get, and a good education is only one of these advantages. On-the-job training is a distinct advantage. An employer is much more apt to hire you if you have some experience dealing in the type of job for which you are being considered.

  In order to acquire on-the-job training, however, it is usually necessary to start at the bottom. Don't be too proud to consider a clerical position for an agent or salesperson. That clerical job may give you the exposure to and the knowledge of the job you really want. Use that job as an opportunity to make contacts with people in the field.

- The size of your income will depend on your own initiative, talents, personality, and ambition. You may not be able to make ends meet financially at the beginning. Be prepared to work hard -- including lunch hours, evenings, holidays, and weekends.

- An agent's or salesperson's job can be very satisfying. The salesperson knows that his/her work helps the station to exist financially. Agents and personal managers have the satisfaction of knowing that their efforts are helping playwrights and performers towards success in their careers.

They cannot, however, depend on future successes. Agents in particular experience a feeling of uncertainty about the future. A client's popularity and marketability may be short-lived.

Andre, Bea, Amy, and Reuben all said they were happy at their jobs. They all said that they were devoted to their work and it was that devotion which helped to make them successful.

What is the Outlook For Agents or Salespeople?

Agents perform a valuable service to performers, playwrights, and audiences by handling many of the business details of the entertainment business. Performers and playwrights prefer not to handle these details. Since there are many "creators" in this country, agents are in demand.

Producers are more apt to favor talent which is represented by an agent. Often producers will refer to agents when a certain type of talent is needed. Thus, because agents enhance their marketability, performers use agents. Good ones are certainly in demand.

Television and radio time salespeople are also in demand. Unlike most foreign television and radio stations, American stations are not supported by government funds.

Large stations generally have many salespeople and managers to handle the responsibility of soliciting sponsors. As long as American stations are not government funded, salespeople will continue to be necessary.

6. EDUCATION/CRITICISM CAREERS

DO I LIKE SHARING WHAT I KNOW WITH PEOPLE?

If you answered "yes" to the title question, then answer the following questions.

- Would I like to work in a school or library all day?

  Some possible jobs are:

  College or University Faculty Member

  Secondary School Teacher

  Elementary School Teacher

  Adult/Community Education Teacher

  Private Acting Teacher

  Film Librarian

- Do I like to write?

  Some possible jobs are:

  Critic

  Instructional Writer

  Theatrical Biography Writer

  Research Director (Motion Picture Technical Advisor)

  Historian

121

TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS

The audience was applauding enthusiastically as the young actress who played Nancy came out to take her bow. The whole cast was on stage now except for Kenneth. His turn was last, since he played the lead role of Fagin in South Side High School's production of "Oliver."

Kenneth came running on stage and took a deep bow. The audience applauded wildly. Some rose to their feet. Before long the whole auditorium was on its feet and shouting "bravo" for Kenneth's brilliant performance.

For a while Kenneth could not move because he was too excited. "This is ecstacy," he said to himself. No other job or activity could be as satisfying as being an actor and hearing the enthusiastic response of an audience. If Kenneth found his experience in the school musical such a rewarding experience, is a career as an actor the ideal choice for Kenneth?

Not at all. Kenneth might enjoy actinc and audience response, but he is also fairly realistic about th drawbacks of an acting career. Kenneth enjoys security -- knowing where he is going to be tomorrow and that when he wakes up in the morning he will be able to go to school. Kenneth does not like to take risks.

Nor does he like living uncomfortably. Kenneth's parents are middle-class, small town people who have always provided him with a clean home and delicious food. He would be uncomfortable living under conditions inferior to those to which he was accustomed.

Kenneth also has lots of friends whom he does not want to give up for an acting career in a city. He is also rather attached to his family. He would find it lonesome living by himself.

Because of all the questions and risks, because he indeed might have to live humbly and by himself, Kenneth does not want to be an actor. He has a great deal of musical, dancing, acting, and even directing ability. He has had roles in church and school productions since he was six years old. His parents always took him to plays and movies. He has always been a "tv kid." If there were going to be anybody in Kenneth's town who would become a professional actor, it would be Kenneth. But although Kenneth is enthusiastic and even aggressive, he is not willing to lead the life-style of an actor.

Kenneth was always a good listener and has remarkable patience. He enjoys talking to people and sharing his ideas with them. He sincerely likes children. Is teaching then the best career for Kenneth?

Maybe. But Kenneth should know that there are other skills and talents that he should possess. For instance, most theater/media teachers feel that in order to be a good teacher one has to be "self-driven and have a compulsive dedication." A good teacher rarely pays attention to the line between work and life. Kenneth would find that he would rarely be done with his job, and his work would carry over into his private life.

Kenneth would also need teaching ability which could best be gained by some sort of experience. He should seize any opportunity to teach a class or to coach drama.

Necessary Talents

Ed (a university professor), Joanne (a drama teacher), and Kit (a film teacher) all cited the talents they felt were necessary to teach theater and/or media.

Ed: A good theater or film professor should have as much background as possible in all departments of all the performing arts. Mental and physical durability is also necessary.

Joanne: A drama teacher should be someone interested in children and someone who is more concerned with kids than using the classroom as a place to showcase his/her own talents. Drama teachers in secondary schools need also to be good disciplinarians because the subject matter requires an unconventional, flexible classroom. Given new freedom, kids sometimes react in a volatile way. You must develop the skill of being firm and yet fostering an atmosphere of free expression at the same time.

Kit: You must be able to write, for you will constantly be writing your own curriculum. You must be capable of learning new ideas to put into your curriculum. I had the talent of being a self-starter and being able to initiate activities easily. These are invaluable assets to a teacher. Finally, a good film teacher needs to know how to make good films. A knowledge of film processes and technical expertise is mandatory.

What Do Theater/Media Teachers Do at Their Jobs?

There are several kinds of teachers in the field of theater and media. People teach drama and film in universities, junior colleges, high schools, junior high schools, elementary schools, adult and community education centers, and in private studios. There are also film librarians (sometimes called film-rental clerks) who maintain a library of films and other audiovisual material for use by schools or other organizations.

The activities performed by each of these teachers varies somewhat according to where they teach. All of them work longer than the hours actually spent in the school. They must read books, write and revise curricula, attend meetings, see plays and movies, and attend certain social functions. Kenneth could best receive an idea of what they do by sneaking into their offices and reading a copy of their daily journals -- which many teachers do keep.

Ed, College Professor

Today I made appointments with three students to talk about possible careers in theater and film. I had to cut the third one short because I was due at the rehearsal of "The Glass Menagerie." It would be relaxing if I were only involved with the classroom or only involved with production, but having to balance both can really be hectic.

I stayed at the rehearsal long enough to make sure the lighting cues were se[illegible] that the acting was flowing smoothly. I then ran over to the agricultural school to give a lecture on themes of farming in American twentieth century drama.

From there I dashed off to teach my last class of the day. Tonight I am continuing Chapter Three of my new book entitled Acting as a Psychological Release.

Joanne, Junior High Drama Teacher

First period was my only free period of the day today. I went through that new drama activities book I bought and made up a mimeographed sheet of a characterization exercise for my fourth period class. I also used first period to begin reading a new play I had ordered for possible consideration for the spring musical. I have already read five or six -- all of which seem either too childish or too sophisticated for junior high school use.

I taught for the rest of the day and had to deal with only a bloody nose from a rather physical drama game, a shy girl bursting into tears because she was nervous about playing "duck, duck, goose," and an angry French teacher complaining that he simply could not conjugate the verb "jouer" with so much noise coming from my drama class.

After school I had a meeting to attend but was delayed because my star student Ned was having a problem with his girl friend and the problem was [illegible]ting [illegible]erformance both [illegible]la[illegible] in production.

Drama teachers often t... unconventional ways. This photograph shows a the... class at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts.

We talked together and s... resolved it.

Then Dotty, the scienc... er, decided she wanted ... to me because she felt r... room attire was inapprop... my style of teaching was ...ing students to be defian..., ...d why wasn't I teaching English like a normal person anyway ? I talked with her, patiently trying to defend myself and explaining the purpose of classroom drama as I do almost 50 times a day.

I arrived at my meeting late and had to leave early to go to play rehearsal. After rehearsal my cast and I went out to dinner and then out to a play the junior high school in the neighboring community was doing.

At the end of the day I dropped -- but not without making sure my lesson plans were ready and that my dill pickles were carefully packed for tomorrow's taste exercise with my seventh graders.

Kit, Adult Educator

Today I am finishing writing a book I started over a year ago about 'how to teach film in the classroom.' After all, that is what I do everyday, so I might as well put it in print to share with other teachers.

I have ... conferences wi... tudents today ...ncernin... p...ogress in ...e course.

After clas...s ... I am going into ... attend the showing ... education-al film an... it with other film ...her... and the filmmakers who ... I also be in atten... ight I am conduct... hop for teache... ...ional subjects ... learn how they can more crea...vely and effectively use film ... of the...r clas...room.

So... teachers, of co..., do no...ing beyond the barest minimum of what they have to ... in the c...ssroom. Rarely ar... these film or theater teachers. ...neth wants to be a good teacher, ... he should know that the tasks an... activities of Ed, Joanne, and Ki... are very common among good teachers.

Educational Backgrounds

...e educ...tional backgrounds of Ed, Joanne, and Kit ... some...hat typical among drama/film teachers:

Ed	Joanne	Kit
B.A. Eng...sh M.F.A. Drama	B.A. Theater Arts	B.A. English M.A. Motion Pictures/ Theater Arts

...three held jobs totally unrelated to teaching and film and drama prior to becoming teachers. Cashier, meat cutter, waitress were among their previous jobs.

All three also held jobs which were more professionally oriented in theater and media before teaching. Actor, production assistant, filmmaker were some of the jobs held prior to their present teaching jobs.

Background and Preparation

Most drama/media teachers agree that a background which includes the study of teaching skills and teaching experience combined with actual experience in production is ideal. Participation in extra-curricular activities related to drama and media is also essential.

How Does a Drama/Film Teacher Get Hired?

Question: How do you and others with your job obtain work?

Answer:

- Pester the school administration
- Keep showing yourself and thrusting yourself under their noses, be visible
- Attend functions and meetings
- Find out what people are doing, keep on top of things
- Have personal contacts.

Kenneth has always been aggressive in his stage work. If he plans on finding a teaching job when he graduates from college, he must continue to be aggressive.

Having a good education and an impressive resume, enrolling for placement services, joining professional associations, and having his writing published would all be helpful to Kenneth in finding a job. But the way most drama/film teachers find their jobs is by knowing someone first and then showing off their impressive backgrounds.

If Kenneth is interested in teaching in the public school setting, he should involve himself with any activity he can within the school system(s) where he would like to teach. He might tutor, substitute, or volunteer to assist the drama or film organization. He could become friendly with the administrators of the system.

After working as a drama or film teacher, Kenneth's opportunities for future jobs could include:

Department Chairman

Administrator

Teacher in a better school system

Writer

Specialized Teaching (example: drama teacher could teach stage design)

Teaching at a higher grade level (high school to junior college, junior college to university)

Actor

Producer

Director

Government Worker (researcher, etc.)

How Kenneth would go about being hired for any of the above jobs would depend on the number of diverse experiences he could gather for his resume and personal contacts. Many drama/film teachers are content in being drama/film teachers all of their lives.

Why Teachers Choose Their Careers

Ed, Joanne, and Kit gave their impressions about [illegible] they chose their careers.

Ed: Participating in and seeing plays frequently led me to a career in theater. I was also attr[illegible]ted to the life-style of theater -- its excitement and expressiveness. Theater was an activity tha[illegible] I liked and felt good doing. There was the [illegible] of variety instead of sameness. This has bee[illegible] fulfilled!

Joanne: Having a large university with an excelle[illegible] theater department in my hometown influenced me. I wanted a job where I could deal with child[illegible] and direct plays at the same time. Therefor[illegible] teaching drama was the ideal job for me. I love [illegible] response I receive from parents and kids let[illegible] know that I am needed and appreciated.

Kit: I always had an interest in images, stor[illegible], [illegible] writing. They all come together in film. I [illegible] the feeling of creating, contributing and wo[illegible] with students toward their improvement. It [illegible] to have the knowledge that there are people [illegible]er the country whom I have helped and who know [illegible] respect me.

Kenneth wants to be a drama teacher because he loves theater and wants sincerely to share his knowledge and enthusiasm with as many other people as possible. He is certainly in the majority as far as motivation for teaching is concerned.

However, there are some drama/film teachers who are teaching mainly because they could not be successful as an actor, filmmaker, or some other theater or film non-teaching job. These people are usually not the best teachers. People who say that they can "fall back" on teaching if another career fails often do a disservice to their students and themselves. Their students are not receiving the best possible and the teachers are never really happy.

Some theater/media teachers were influenced at an early age by theater and/or film as a result of exposure their parents gave them. Others were strongly influenced by teachers they had in junior high, high school, or college. Some had such terrible teachers in school, who did nothing with drama and film, that they wanted to become teachers in order to give more exposure to the performing arts in the classroom.

Advice from Drama/Film Teachers to Interested Students

There is little recognition by the 'established' disciplines. Math, social studies, science, and even English teachers often think you are either weird or superfluous.

Sometimes you cannot be as creative as you would like. Much of your job will be administrative and will involve a lot of paperwork.

Be in love with your field and your work. Your obligation is to discover new knowledge and share it with others. Anything less is a cop-out. If you are 'falling back' on teaching because another job is unavailable to you, more than likely you will not be the type of teacher you should be.

Know that your social live will be cut down. Teaching (and doing extra-curricular production) demands a great amount of understanding and sacrificing from your loved ones.

Become a leader in your field. Be a pusher. Don't rely on old ideas. Innovate.

You should be able to present material to others clearly and intelligibly. You should inspire students to want to do likewise.

as sympathetic and as s[illegible] th students as you wish [illegible]rs had been with you.

Be careful of the obvious [illegible]licts involved in teaching, particularly in leading extracurricular productions: having favorites, becoming too close with your students, and compromising on teaching duties late the rehearsal period of a show.

In particular, teachers had the following advice to give students about how to prepare for the career:

Do all you can in theater/tv while you are in school; learn all you can about the whole world and about people. Know all the arts. Read about them.

Prepare broadly; narrow down at the latest possible time and then only as necessary. Avoid learning more and more about less and less. Many basic humanities, arts, and even science courses have applications in theater, film and television areas.

Try to find a summer job that is somehow related to the arts.

Make friends with creative people and keep them.

Finally, ______ and other students interested in teaching theater or media should be aware of various conflicts facing teachers:

- Encouraging untalented students -- Ms. A., the private acting teacher, tells her students how talented they are and how they have chances for a professional career. Many of her students have little chance for professional success, but she encourages them because she wants them to re-enroll in her advanced class which costs twice as much.

- Collecting students, depending too much on the "following" -- Mr. F., junior high film teacher, has his four or five little "pets" with him in his office every day after school. They tell him what they like about his class, and so he designs his curriculum primarily to meet their needs. He forgets about the students who are too shy to talk with him.

- Misrepresenting qualifications -- Miss G., high school drama teacher, was hired for her job due to the large amount of acting and directing experience listed on her resume. Actually, the only experience she has ever had was to play the second tree from the left in the apple tree scene of "The Wizard of Oz."

- Continual compromising on output into class -- Dr. C. teaches film at the local university. On days when he is tired or has work to do, he turns on the projector and tells his students to watch a film and then write comments about it. He can easily do something else while they do the viewing and writing.

- Namedropping (false advertising) -- Ms. P. teaches theater arts at a private college. The students are awed by her as she tells tales of her relationships with Marlon Brando, Katherine Hepburn, Dustin Hoffman, and Liza Minnelli. Actually, the closest she came to any of them was to empty a waste basket in Marlon Brando's hotel room when she worked part-time while she was in high school in New York City.

What is the Outlook?

The market for teachers of theater and media changes every few years. Several years ago, schools were adding drama and film courses at a fairly rapid rate. At present, there is a trend toward returning to the "basics" in certain sections of the country; students' inability to read and write is cited as the reason to augment traditional courses and de-emphasize the arts.

Drama and film teachers themselves are idealistic and optimistic about the growth of their field. Many of them feel that if a person is qualified and aggressive, he/she will eventually find work. There are several related fields -- such as curriculum development -- which also offer opportunities for those trained to be teachers.

Idealistic drama teachers feel that drama will eventually be in every junior high, high school, and liberal arts college curriculum. Those schools which already have programs, they feel, will have increased specialization within the department; a school that only teaches acting may add a stage design course, for instance.

An increased education for administrators, making them aware of the merits of drama and film, will also enhance the outlook for prospective teachers in the field.

At any rate, teaching -- any subject -- is still a competitive field. The present popularity of teaching drama and film probably will cause increased competition for the available jobs. (For further information, see "Educators" in Exploring Careers in the Humanities: A Student Guidebook.)

WRITERS ABOUT THEATER AND MEDIA

Josephine was busy typing the last story to go in the West Tavertown High School literary magazine The Torn Rose. As editor-in-chief of the magazine, Josephine not only managed activities but also did writing, typing, and layout herself. Her staff was not very good at meeting deadlines and this month's edition was due at the printer in an hour. By remaining patient and persisting in her work, Josephine made the deadline almost single-handedly.

Right after Josephine arrived home for a quick supper, she was out the door again to attend drama rehearsal. She was playing the small role of a gorgeous cowgirl in a western presented by the drama club. When she was not on stage, Jo wrote notes in a journal she tried to keep daily.

After rehearsal Josephine and a few of her friends gave in to temptation by attending the late showing of the new movie playing at the Tavertown Cinema. Writing and going to the movies were the two things Josephine enjoyed doing most. Is a career as a writer about theater and media a good idea for Jo?

Perhaps. But aside from writing well and often, people who are critics, writers, and researchers feel that "a broad knowledge of sociology and the humanities" is also important. Josephine's patience and persistence will be helpful to her. But she must be fairly aggressive in order to earn money in the competitive field of writing about theater and media.

Being a "good" writer does not always mean using correct punctuation and being able to spell. (Critics and writers often say they cannot spell and do not have

the need. "The copy editor takes care of that.") In order to be hired as a writer, Josephine needs to have a unique flair or a special or entertaining style. Even if her "flair" is to write simply and intelligently -- if she is consistent and does it well -- she will stand out over other writers.

Jobs in Writing about Theater and Media and the Responsibilities of Each

Josephine might consider the job of film, television, or theater critic. Critics view plays, movies, or television shows — often before they are shown to the public -- and then write about them for a newspaper or magazine or speak about them on television. As a critic, Josephine would often have freedom to choose what she would write about from month to month, week to week, or day to day. She would generally see three to five plays, movies, or television shows each week.

Another part of the critic's job is to interview personalities in the field. Not only would Josephine conduct her own interviews, but she would also arrange them, and, of course, write them up afterwards. This process gives the critic access to many performers in theater and media.

Josephine would also have to spend her time reading what and how other critics write, occasionally observing the early stages of production of a show, reading as many articles as possible about theater and media, and occasionally writing articles other than reviews or interviews.

Other writing jobs about theater and media include the researchers and writers of such topics as scientific and technical developments in the field, or the applications of the social sciences to the theater and film industry. There are also instructional writers who write textbooks, manuals, and "how to" books.

A major industry in itself is that of theatrical biography writers. Many performers and others in the entertainment business will tell their life story to another who then writes it as a biography. Some theater and media people even write autobiographies with the assistance of another writer.

Finally, there are research directors and historians. These people conduct research to make sure manners of speech, kinds of transportation, etc., in a production are historically authentic. They may visit another part of the world to observe and investigate it for use in a production. A director might be directing a film in Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts, with one scene taking place in Bogota, Colombia. The director and the cast might never have been to Bogota, and if the film has a large budget, it would be worthwhile to send an historian to South America to view the Bogota life-style.

Preparation and Background

Most writers about theater and media have at least a Bachelor of Arts degree from a college or university. While studying at a university Josephine should write film, theater, or television criticism for the school newspaper or do some other sort of writing where she would have the opportunity to see her work published. She should probably be active in the theater or film department of the university as an actress, director, or in a public relations capacity. She might even write some scripts herself.

A course in "reviewing" or "biography writing" is not a necessity, and these courses are not often available. Some courses in writing would be helpful. If Josephine could attend a school where a prominent critic, biography writer or historian teaches, she would probably find the experience of working with him/her helpful. Concentrating her studies in English, theater, or film, and taking courses in writing would give Josephine a good beginning preparation.

Where, How, and Why Do Writers Find Jobs?

Where? Those who write biographies might have to work and research wherever their subject lived and lives. Historians and researchers have to work with their production wherever it might be (usually New York or Los Angeles). Textbook writers could live and work almost anywhere, but would probably have to negotiate with someone in a big city in order to have their work published.

Most critics find jobs in New York, Los Angeles, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, and Washington. Even though some small newspapers have critics, big cities offer the greatest number of opportunities.

Josephine might review movies for a suburban or small city paper, but she would probably be viewing the movies at the same time as her public -- generally months after they open in the big cities. Working away from a large city, she might lose the feeling of freshness and immediacy that comes from being one of the first people to review a play or movie. She probably would have little chance to meet and interview performers either.

On the other hand, as a critic for a small newspaper, Josephine would feel close to her readers and use their responses and inspirations in her writing. Sometimes the smaller papers give their critics more space in each issue, so Josephine could write longer and more detailed reviews than for a big city paper.

Critics can work at newspapers, magazines, television and radio stations -- large and small. Where Josephine would work as a critic is often considered the factor for how successful she is in the field. She would have more prestige and be making more money if she went from a small newspaper to the New York Times, for instance. This change of settings is the way most critics "advance" in their field.

How do writers about theater and media find jobs? If Josephine wants to be hired as a critic or writer, she will have to be highly persistent. She should have her best college materials (reviews, research papers, etc.) reproduced and mail them to newspapers, magazines, or publishing houses and agents. She should then make follow-up phone calls, visits, and write letters to those who express even the slightest interest.

Josephine might be commissioned to review one specific play for a magazine and that may be the extent of the publisher's interest in her. But if the review is good, the magazine might ask Josephine to review another play or review plays on a general basis. Or another magazine or newspaper, television or radio show might read her review, like it, and commission her to do more work.

If Josephine is successful at reviewing, her job could lead to more reviewing with a larger and/or more prestigious organization. Her job could also lead to writing books or longer articles, public relations work, teaching, or even script writing. (See Chapter Three.)

It is only through persistence, continual writing, and -- as in most theater and media jobs -- good contacts that Josephine will be able to find work as a writer about theater and media.

Why do these writers want to write about theater or media? Josephine wants to be a critic or other sort of writer because she feels that her natural talents lean toward writing and she is interested in theater and media. Professionals mentioned their motivation for choosing a career in writing about theater and media.

- I read the works of many great critics and writers and decided that was what I wanted to do. Their works made me proud of my choice.
- I always had a life-long love of movies, so being a film critic was sort of a natural choice for me.
- Growing up in New York was a tremendous influence for my choosing a career in theater. I had the opportunity to see many plays and 'live' in a theater atmosphere.
- I was really excited by the idea that I would have the opportunity to see movies as soon as they were made and write about them for a large national audience.

Advice from Working Writers

One notion professionals would want to warn Josephine about is the idea that a career reviewing plays or movies is always glamorous and exciting. Josephine might be hired as the film critic of a magazine. She might, during her first month's work, view nothing but terrible movies. (Many critics do feel that most movies are bad.) She would have to be patient and have a real love of movies. Otherwise, the bad movies might dampen her feelings so much that she would fail to respond to something good, new, and original.

Other advice professionals would give Josephine might be:

- Build up a portfolio of good published material. Get published any way you can. You cannot be hired unless you have something published to show for yourself.
- Read everything you can get your hands on -- everything. See a lot of plays, movies, or television shows, but remember: a theater buff is not the same thing as a theater critic. Learn about all the arts and experience life, too. All the arts are derived from life, and criticism is derived from and dependent on the arts and the society which creates it.
- There can be a lot of pressure from press agents and advertisers, who all have their share in seeing that a movie makes money. A lot of subtle coercion takes place in the theater and film industries -- people might try to pressure you to criticize favorably when you did not really like a production. It takes great commitment to the ideals of honest criticism to keep one's integrity. It is very hard, especially for young writers, to keep one's head above the water.

What is the Outlook?

There are a limited number of major reviewing jobs in this country: metropolitan newspapers, national magazines, and television syndicates. These positions are often frozen by people who have been affiliated with the organization for ten or 20 years.

The situation is likely to remain the same in the near future. New magazines are formed, but old ones die. The competition will probably not change except that it might be even keener -- particularly in the area of film criticism. Many schools and colleges are teaching accredited film courses, preparing more students to compete for the few professional positions available.

One development which may increase job availability is that some magazines and newspapers are becoming involved with specialization. Whereas previously one person wrote about all the entertainments -- books, movies, plays, television shows, opera, concerts, night clubs, restaurants, fire-eating acts, etc., -- the categories of music, books, and film (and sometimes other categories) are handled individually now with greater space allotted for each critic.

People like reading criticism and many depend upon reviews to determine which entertainments they will attend. Criticism, interpretations, and biographies in book form are still considered exciting reading, and students still use books as a great resource for writing their own dissertations.

The audience is there. The positions, although few, are there for the talented and the persistent.

Appendix A

GLOSSARY

Billing - the relative prominence given a name (as of an actor) in publicizing, advertising, or other promotional programs (Example: The marquee of every theater gave him top billing.)

Block, blocking - to determine where which actors will move when, usually done by the director (Example: The actor's blocking was to move center stage and stand near the fireplace while saying, "What a glorious night!")

Broadway - a group of theaters in New York located in and around the street called Broadway in Times Square, New York City, considered to offer the highest prestige and money to actors and others involved in legitimate theater.

Cinematography - the making of films, the camerawork involved in shooting a film

Commission - the money a writer, director, actor, etc., receives from the proceeds of the money a play or film makes, often in addition to regular salary

Community theater - theaters located usually outside of a city where pay is small or usually non-existent; participants are usually non-professionals and work at some other job, aside from what is done at the theater. May do anywhere from one ot six productions each year.

Control board - the area in a radio or television station which has all the switches and audio and video controls

Documentary - a film or television show which is a factual presentation, usually with a narrator, designed more to inform than to entertain

Dress parade - during the final stages of rehearsal, actors "parade" on stage in their costumes in order for the director and costume designer to see how costumes look on stage and if they need any adjustments

Equity - shortened term for Actor's Equity Association which is the major union controlling the work of professional actors, directors, and stage managers. Members of Equity are only allowed to work in non-Equity shows with special permission. As a member of Equity, a performer is guaranteed a certain minimum salary from employers.

Flats - wood nailed together usually with canvas and/or painted over for use as the walls in a room in a play

Floor plan - drawing used by the set designer indicating dimensions and shape of the stage as well as the placement of certain set pieces and furniture

Flyer - runs the "flies" of a stage show, scenery and curtains which need to be lowered and/or raised during a performance

Free-lance - working for one's self as opposed to working for a company or a studio

Gaffer - person who does the lighting for a film or television show

Grip - another name for a backstage person who assists in moving scenery during scene changes

Legitimate theater - term used to refer to plays as opposed to media or other forms of entertainment

Mannerism - habit, movement, or repeated action, either intentionally for a role or unintentionally out of nervousness, done by an actor on stage or on camera. (Example: That actor has the mannerism of constantly stroking his beard.)

Marketability - the appeal and/or usefulness a performer's work has to prospective directors and/or producers

Off-Broadway - New York theaters where the pay scale is smaller and the prestige not as great as on Broadway, where new plays and serious works are often presented and are sometimes moved to Broadway for longer runs

Play broker - person who controls use of an author's script and subsequent payment of royalties on a large scale

Portfolio - a collection under one cover of all of a designer's or writer's important works. Like a resume, it is used to help secure jobs as it makes the prospective employer totally aware of the applicant's capabilities.

Public Relations - the promotion of a performer, show, or station to the public, by stressing all positive aspects (Public relations people for "Jaws" play up in their ads that the movie has broken all box office records.)

Resume - a list of previous jobs, training, education, past performances and other pertinent information written by a person looking for a job and presented to prospective employers

Royalty - money a playwright is paid each time his/her work is produced

Sensationalism - publicizing a false story or exaggerating a true one in order to excite the public

Set - furniture and other items placed on the stage for a performance; in media, where the performers and crew people work

"Shooting" a scene - filming a scene with a camera for television or motion pictures

<u>Summer stock</u> - plays done in the summer for a seasonal company, generally rehearsed for only two or three weeks, are performed and are then replaced by other plays performed by the same company. Summer stock actors might very well rehearse one play while performing in another.

<u>Technical rehearsal</u> - the rehearsal late in the whole rehearsal process just prior to dress rehearsal. Light, sound, and set cues are tested.

Appendix B
PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Actor's Equity Association
165 West 46th Street
New York, New York 10036

Affiliate Artists, Inc.
155 West 68th Street
New York, New York 10023

American Educational Theater Association
726 Jackson Place, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 2056

American Guild of Variety Artists
1540 Broadway
New York, New York 10036

The American Mime Theatre
192 Third Avenue
New York, New York 10003

American Puppet Arts Council
59 Barrow Street
New York, New York 10014

American Theater Association
1317 F Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004

American Women in Radio and Tv, Inc.
1321 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Association for Professional Broadcasting Education
1771 N Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Center for Understanding Media
75 Horatio Street
New York, New York 10014

The Dramatists Guild, Inc.
234 West 44th Street
New York, N.Y. 10036

Educational Film Library Association
17 West 60th Street
New York, New York 10023

Information Film Producers of America, Inc.
1771 N Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees and Moving Picture Machine Operators of United States and Canada
1270 Avenue of the Americas
New York, New York 10020

International Thespian Society
College Hill Station, Box E
Cincinnati, Ohio 45224

National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians
1601 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Suite 420
Washington, D.C. 20009

or

80 East Jackson Boulevard
Chicago, Illinois 60604

140

National Association of Broadcasters
1771 N Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

National Association of Theater Owners, Inc.
1501 Broadway
New York, New York 10036

National Education Association
1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

New Dramatists Committee, Inc.
424 West 44th Street
New York, New York 10036

Screen Actors Guild
7750 Sunset Boulevard
Hollywood, California 90046

Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers
862 Scarsdale Avenue
Scarsdale, New York 10583

Appendix C
SOURCES OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Acting Professionally. Robert Cohen. Palo Alto, California: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1972.

Acting in the Sixties. Hal Burton. New York: International Publications Service, 1970.

American Cinematographer
1782 North Orange Drive
Hollywood, California 90028

American Film Institute Guide to College Courses in Film and Television, The. Washington, D.C.: Acropolis Books, Ltd., 1973.

Basic Drama Projects. Fran Averett Tanner. Pocatello, Idaho: Clark, 1972.

Behind the Camera. William Kuhns and Thomas F. Giardino. Dayton, Ohio: Pflaum/Standard, 1970.

Careers for You. Scarsdale, New York: Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers.

Careers and Opportunities in the Theatre. Jean Dalrymple. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1969.

Design for the Stage. Darwin Reid Payne. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1974.

Designing and Making Stage Costumes. Motley. New York: Watson-Guptill Publications, 1974.

Electric Journalist. Chuck Anderson. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974.

Electric Media: Television. Les Brown. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1974.

Film and Television Makeup. Herman Buchman. New York: Watson Guptill Publications, 1973.

Film-Making Techniques - Camera. Hollywood: Aims Instructional Media Service. (a film)

Film-Making Techniques - Acting. Hollywood: Aims Instructional Media Service. (a film)

Film Study in Higher Education. Washington, D.C.: American Council of Education, 1966.

Great Playwrights. Eric Bentley. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1970.

How You Can Appear in Tv Commercials. Ron Millkie and Ray Carlson. New York: Pilot Books, 1973.

How to Survive in Your Native Land. James Herndon. New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1971.

Improvisation for the Theater. Viola Spolin. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1963.

Is a Career in the Performing Arts for You? Philadelphia: Counselor Films, Inc. (a film)

Is a Career in Radio or Television for You? Philadelphia: Counselor Films, Inc. (a film)

Jobs in Communications and Media. Chicago: Science Research Associates, Inc., 1974.

Literary Market Place. New York: R.R. Bowker Co.

Nobody in the Cast. Robert Barton, David Booth, Agnes Buckles, William Moore. Don Mills, Canada: Longmans Canada Ltd., 1969.

Occupational Outlook Handbook. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Opportunities in Acting Careers. Dick Moore. Louisville, Kentucky: Vocational Guidance Manuals, Inc., 1975.

Preliminary Exploration of Occupations in the Arts and Humanities, A. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Technical Education Research Centers, 1975.

Radio, Television, and Film in the Secondary School. Skokie, Illinois: National Textbook Company, 1974.

Scene Design and Stage Lighting. W. Owen Parker and Harvey K. Smith. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1974.

Scenery for the Theatre. Harold Burris-Meyer and Edward C. Cole. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1971.

Stage Makeup. Herman Buchman. New York: Watson Guptill Publications, 1974.

Television Program, The. Edward Stasheff and Rudy Bretz. New York: Hill and Wang, 1968.

Television Quarterly
50 West 40th Street
New York, New York 10018

Theatre Crafts
1501 Broadway
New York, New York 10036

Variety
154 West 46th Street
New York, New York 10036

☆U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1976—A-0703/62

Companion Documents in this Career Exploration Series:

Student Guidebooks

EXPLORING DANCE CAREERS
EXPLORING MUSIC CAREERS
EXPLORING VISUAL ARTS AND CRAFTS CAREERS
EXPLORING WRITING CAREERS
EXPLORING CAREERS IN THE HUMANITIES

Materials for Teachers and Counselors

391 WAYS TO EXPLORE ARTS AND HUMANITIES CAREERS: CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES IN DANCE, MUSIC, THEATER AND MEDIA, VISUAL ARTS AND CRAFTS, WRITING, AND HUMANITIES

CAREER GUIDANCE IN THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES: ACTIVITIES, INFORMATION AND RESOURCES FOR GRADES 7-12

EXPLORING ARTS AND HUMANITIES CAREERS IN THE COMMUNITY: A PROGRAM PLANNING GUIDE

AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SELECTED CURRICULUM MATERIALS IN THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES

A PRELIMINARY EXPLORATION OF OCCUPATIONS IN THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES