

A Career Guide for Dance Majors

From ancient times to the present, dancers have expressed ideas, stories, rhythm and sound with their bodies. They use a variety of dance forms that allow free movement and self-expression, including classical ballet, modern dance and culturally specific dance styles. Many dancers combine performance work with teaching or choreography.

Many dancers work with choreographers who create original dances and develop new interpretations of existing dances. Because few dance routines are written down, choreographers instruct performers

at rehearsals to achieve the desired effect. In addition, choreographers are often involved in auditioning performers.

It takes hard work and staying power to survive and build a career in dance. Do not assume that when you graduate your training is finished and all you need to do is maintain your physical fitness. Classes and workshops can provide a regular opportunity for you to develop your craft by refining and adding to your skills as a dancer, as well as through building your professional relationships.

Skills

The study of dance equips a student with a broad range of communication and organizational skills applicable to many careers. The dance major's presentation skills, ability to perform in public and control of the body provide a solid basis for working effectively with others. Dance also develops the ability to concentrate intensely, listen introspectively, observe keenly, solve problems creatively, think critically, collaboratively develop a project, work independently and under pressure, meet deadlines and maintain composure when faced with the unexpected.

Because of the rigorous practice schedules of most dancers, self-discipline, patience, perseverance and a devotion to dance are essential for success in the field. Good health and physical stamina are

also necessary attributes. Above all, dancers must have flexibility, agility, coordination, grace, a sense of rhythm, a feeling for music and a creative ability to express themselves through movement.

Dancers seldom perform unaccompanied, so they must be able to function as part of a team. This collaborative relationship requires an ability to give and receive constructive criticism. Dancers should also be highly motivated and prepared to face the anxiety of intermittent employment and rejections when auditioning for work. For dancers, advancement takes the form of a growing reputation, more frequent work, bigger and better roles and higher pay. A sample of representative skills and abilities follows:

Problem Solving	Communication	Artistic/Technical	Organization
Attention to detail	Explaining concepts	Creating and performing dances	Self-discipline
Critical thinking	Control of body	Working independently	Time management
Adapting techniques	Listening critically	Program planning	Creativity
Analyzing and interpreting the emotions and motives of others	Awareness of body language	Sensitivity to and appreciation of diverse music and dance styles	Interacting with colleagues in a team setting
Taking multiple approaches to problems	Making keen observations	Doing detailed and accurate work	Utilizing available resources
Integrating diverse elements from others' ideas	Ability to give and receive criticism	Moving efficiently and effectively	Spatial memory
Forming perceptions and seeing connections	Relating to people of varying backgrounds	Collaboratively developing a project	Working under pressure and meeting deadlines

Career Opportunities

A career as a performer or choreographer is not the only option available to you. Opportunities also exist in education, community and participatory dance work and associated areas such as dance management, administration and production. Do not underestimate the skills, knowledge and experience you have gained as a dancer or company member. Determination, openness and practical experience are crucial ingredients in gaining employment. Be aware that you will need additional support and training to work in some contexts. Examples of some professions that dance majors may undertake are listed below.

Professional Dance

Dancers perform in a variety of settings, such as musical productions, and may present folk, ethnic, tap, jazz and other popular kinds of dance. They also perform in opera, musical theater, television, movies, music videos and commercials, in which they may also sing and act. Dancers most often perform as part of a group, although a few top artists perform solo.

Dance Therapy

Dance therapists, sometimes referred to as movement therapists, work with individuals of all ages, groups and families in a wide variety of settings. They focus on helping their clients improve self-esteem and body image, develop effective communication skills and relationships, expand their movement vocabulary and gain insight into patterns of behavior, as well as create new options for coping with problems. Physical mobility is the primary medium dance therapists use for observation, assessment, research, therapeutic interaction and interventions. Dance therapists work in settings that include psychiatric and rehabilitation facilities, schools, nursing homes, drug treatment centers, counseling centers, medical facilities, crisis centers and wellness and alternative health care centers. Dance therapy can be a powerful tool for stress management and the prevention of physical and mental health problems.

Dance Education

A career as a dance teacher offers an increasing range of opportunities within private dance schools,

the community or in independent and state schools and colleges. Dance teachers can work with people of all ages and teach many different dance styles: tap, modern, ballroom, folk, African, Asian, ballet or contemporary. They also need to be able to choreograph dances for their pupils. In some jobs, such as in schools, dancers must also know about anatomy, physiology, dance history and notation. Dance teachers should have good communication skills, be interested in their pupils and enjoy helping people learn about dance.

Most teachers working in private dance schools have qualifications to teach in specific dance styles such as ballet or modern dance. For a number of years, dance has been recognized as an important part of children's education. However, in secondary schools there are many opportunities to teach dance as an individual subject or combined with other subjects such as physical education, drama or performing arts. Teaching in a private school would not require certification and may provide a smoother introduction into education for candidates without extensive student-teaching experience.

Choreography

Many dancers are also choreographers who create dances. You do not have to be a dancer to choreograph professionally, but it is often the main route into getting your first choreography job. Choreographing dances is a satisfying occupation, as you have the opportunity to be creative and make something completely new. Choreographers work within all the major dance styles, however, it is very competitive and few choreographers earn their living just from creating dances for theatre, video or television. Most dance degree programs offer choreography as part of their training, but it is also essential to develop your skills through experience. Many professional choreographers started when they were at school or college by choreographing dances for their friends at end-of-term shows.

Arts Administration

Arts organizations, like most for profit companies, have a number of administrative, business or management functions. These roles require people with creativity and an understanding and passion

for the arts, as well as skills in a range of areas from finance and marketing to education.

The specific positions available at an arts organization will depend on what the organization does and how large its budget and staff are. Since arts managers are needed in virtually every arts organization, from theatre companies to museums, many opportunities exist in this field. For example, a museum is likely to have staff members in education that work with school groups to introduce children to the exhibits. An opera company, concert hall, or theatre needs box-office and front of the house workers to manage ticket sales, write press releases, market the productions in the community, and create visibility. Some theatre companies need general managers to schedule tours, monitor union agreements, and run the business side of performances.

Over the last decade, arts management has become a growing field with increasing specialization and training. A number of new graduate training and certification programs have emerged. These programs may be useful, depending on your interests and goals. Some arts managers, for example, suggest eventually pursuing a business degree with a specialization in nonprofit management. Almost without exception, however, arts managers advise getting work-related experience first and considering graduate study later on. If you decide to investigate graduate study, begin by asking professionals what programs they think are valuable and respected in the field.

Community Dance

Working in the community dance sector generally involves working in a particular geographical area. Community dance workers often work as part of regional arts and community agencies teaching, choreographing and organizing dance programs and projects. Community dance workers generally work with a range of groups, which may include people with disabilities, young people, the elderly and schools. Sometimes these individuals are freelance and employed for specific projects or periods of time. Some of the larger dance companies employ dance teachers or community workers to undertake projects that link with the performance program of the company. Most community dance workers have had full-time dance training or recognized dance teaching certification.

Dance Notation

Dance notation is the method of recording movement by using symbols in order to analyze and understand dance as well as preserve dances for the future. There are two main systems of notation in common use: Benesh and Laban. Major dance companies employ dance notators to record their repertoire and to re-construct and rehearse previously choreographed dances or ballets. Many dance degree programs include the basics of one of these systems, but in order to have a career in notating, you need to attend a school or program specializing in notation.

Job Titles

These job titles are examples of some of the ways in which dance majors have applied their skills and abilities. In general, an advanced degree is required for those occupations marked with an asterisk (*) on the following list:

Artist-In-Residence	Leisure and Recreation	Sound Person
*General Manager	Instructor	Pilates/Body Conditioning
Company Dancer	*Business Manager	Instructor
*Dance Therapist	Technician	Booking Agent
Public Relations Manager	Dance Company Rehearsal	Ballet Mistress/Master
Choreographer	Director	*Public School Teacher
Private Teacher	Consultant	*Grants Specialist
Press Agent	*College Professor	Education Coordinator
Dance Designer:	Personnel Manager:	*Benesh, Laban Notator
Costumes Or Lighting	Dance Company	*Arts Council Director

Employers of Dance Majors

University Theatre/Dance Groups
Advertising Agencies
Theatres
Touring Companies
Tv/Film Studios
Magazines
Amusement and Theme Parks
Newspapers

Arts Councils
Industrial Shows
Performing Arts Centers
Government
Colleges and Universities
Cruise Lines
Television Networks
Schools

First Jobs Held by Recent UT Graduates

Dancer
Journalist
Choreographer
Nonprofit Manager
Dance Teacher
Computer Trainer

Production Assistant
Nonprofit Administrator
Marketing Segment Specialist
Web Design Coordinator
Company Member

A Few Words About Agents

Although having an agent is not necessary for a dancer/choreographer to find work, it may be important for you to understand how agents work. Agents find jobs for performers. In return, they receive a commission for each job they find, usually

paid out of the performer's salary, which the agent has negotiated on behalf of the performer. It is the agent's business to seek out talented artists and help them develop their careers.

Earnings

Dancers and choreographers held about 25,600 jobs in 2010. About 10 percent were self-employed. About 40 percent of dancers work in performing arts companies, and about 78 percent of choreographers work in other schools and instruction, which include dance and fine arts schools.

The median hourly wage of dancers was \$13.16 in May 2010. The median wage is the wage at which half the workers in an occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$7.79, and the top 10 percent earned more than \$30.43.

The median hourly wage of choreographers was \$18.11 in May 2010. The lowest 10 percent earned

less than \$8.93, and the top 10 percent earned more than \$34.22.

Dancers' schedules vary, depending on where they work. Some spend most of the day in rehearsals and have performances at night, giving them long workdays. Although choreographers who work in dance schools may have a standard workweek when they are instructing students, they spend many hours on their own coming up with new dance routines.

From: **Occupational Outlook Handbook** at <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/Entertainment-and-Sports/Dancers-and-choreographers.htm>

Graduate School Options

Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.): The M.F.A. is studio based and is focused on the “making and doing” of the art itself. It is an appropriate terminal degree. The most common areas of study include: choreography, performance and arts management. The M.F.A usually takes two to three years to complete, typically culminating in a thesis or performance project. If you have the drive, the time and the resources to invest in it, then you are ready to go.

Master of Arts (M.A.): The M.A. in Dance is focused on scholarly and research-based activities related to issues concerning dance aesthetics, theory, history or cultural studies. A master’s degree usually takes

one to two years of study and typically requires a thesis. Some areas of concentration include choreography, dance history and criticism.

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.): Less than five institutions in the United States offer the Doctor of Philosophy in Dance. Some institutions may offer a Doctor of Education degree with Dance as the cognate or minor field. As the terminal research-oriented degree, Ph.D. programs emphasize scholarship and its applications to various aspects, issues, and problems in dance. Major fields include dance history, performance studies, pedagogy and dance education, cultural studies, and interdisciplinary programs.

FACS Resources for Dance Majors

Fine Arts Career Services keeps a small library of arts career and job search related books, many of which are not available at other University of Texas libraries. Students may come by the office (DFA 1.103) to browse books during our regular hours.

100 Careers in Film and Television
 Career Opportunities in the Film Industry
 Dance Magazine: Stern’s Directory
 Essentials of Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management
 How to Get Into the Entertainment Business

How to Get the Part Without Falling Apart
 The Backstage Handbook for Performing Artists
 The Biz Interviews
 The Entertainment Sourcebook 2003
 Theatre and Dance: Resumes and Curriculum Vitae

* For a complete list of FACS Resources visit <http://www.utexas.edu/finearts/careers/career-information>
 * Visit http://www.lib.utexas.edu/fal/collections/current_periodicals/index.php for a complete listing of dance journals available in the Fine Arts Library

Online Resources for Dance Majors

Fine Arts Career Services

HireUTexas

<http://recruit.utexas.edu/hireutexas/>
 UT’s online job and internship database which posts professional opportunities for all majors.

Fine Arts Works

<https://finearts-utexas-csm.symplicity.com/students/>
 Fine Arts Career Services’ database of art-related opportunities. Fine Arts students can post a

resume and view job postings and upcoming career events.

Job Listings

Alliance of Artist Communities

<http://www.artistcommunities.org/>
 The Alliance of Artists Communities is the service organization for the field of artists’ communities and residencies. They maintain artist residency listings, advocate for artist residency programs and

communities, and offer professional development for artists. Their website includes job postings.

Americans for the Arts

<http://jobbank.artsusa.org>

This advocacy organization supports the arts in many ways. Their job bank is the premier electronic recruitment resource for the industry and includes national job listings for all of the fine arts. It includes postings in academia, arts administration and management. Check out the rest of their site for other helpful arts resources.

Art Job

<https://www.artjob.org/>

Comprehensive, up-to-date national listings of jobs, internships, fellowships and other employment opportunities in the arts. Contact Fine Arts Career Services for the username and password.

ArtSearch

<http://www.tcg.org/artsearch/>

The publication from the Theatre Communication Group for full-time, part-time, seasonal, year-round and internship opportunities in the performing arts. Contact FACS for the username and password.

Current Jobs in Performing Arts

<http://www.graduatejobs.com/>

A national employment bulletin for jobs in the performing arts professions. Available by individual paid subscription.

Greenlights

www.greenlights.org

Greenlights is a provider of nonprofit strengthening and support services including professional development events, workshops, and a job board containing hundreds of postings by member organizations.

Idealist

<http://www.idealists.org/>

Idealist.org connects people with job, volunteer and action opportunities posted by 90,000 organizations around the world.

New York Foundation for the Arts

<http://www.nyfa.org/>

This website provides a number of services for artists including job and internship postings, funding opportunities, arts advocacy and services for artists. They also maintain an online newsletter covering current issues affecting artists.

USA Jobs

<https://www.usajobs.gov/>

USAJOBS is the U.S. Government's official system/program for Federal jobs and employment information. They offer an excellent page dedicated to students and recent graduates seeking Federal jobs.

Overseas Job Opportunities

Dance Europe's Job List

<http://www.danceeurope.net/content/auditions-and-jobs>

Provides good resources for auditions and teaching jobs, competitions and training opportunities in Europe. The list also includes links to other dance resources.

Going Global

<http://www.goingglobal.com/>

Search for job openings and internship opportunities in countries around the world. Listings are updated daily! Additionally, Going Global career and employment resources include more than 10,000 pages of constantly-updated content on topics such as: job search sources, work permit/visa regulations, resume writing guidelines and examples, employment trends, salary ranges, networking groups and cultural/interviewing advice.

Regional Organizations

Austin Creative Alliance

<http://www.austincreativealliance.org/>

As a nonprofit arts service organization, ACA focuses on sponsoring projects and programs that both strengthen Austin's performing arts community and bring new audiences to the arts. Find links to some of the Austin-area arts organizations.

Texas Commission on the Arts

<http://www.arts.texas.gov>

Includes links to numerous visual and performing arts sites, opportunities, and assistance for artists. View their employment links by going to New Opportunities.

Texas State Agencies List

<https://www.tsl.texas.gov/app/lrs/agencies/index.html>

The list contains an entry for each current Texas state agency with links to contact and other information about the agency.

Professional Organizations

Actor's Fund

<http://www.actorsfund.org/>

This amazing resource offers a wealth of information for actors, dancers, musicians, producers, directors, carpenters, stagehands, singers and others in the spotlight and behind the scenes. They also have a terrific resource center for health insurance as well as human services for people with HIV+/AIDS and the elderly. Highly recommended.

The American Dance Guild

<http://americandanceguild.org/>

The American Dance Guild is a non-profit membership organization concerned with promoting the art of dance by serving the needs of performers, choreographers, teachers and students through all stages of their development and careers. Includes job listings.

American Dance Therapy Association

<http://www.adta.org>

This site provides answers to many questions students may have about dance therapy as a career.

Association of Performing Arts Presenters

<http://www.apap365.org>

Excellent site for those interested in arts administration positions in the performing arts. Includes a job bank.

Dance Educators of America

<http://www.usadance.dancedea.com>

DEA is dedicated to improving the quality and teaching abilities of its member teachers and to enhance their education of students. DEA also works to further the professional and ethical standards in dance in all its forms.

Dance USA

<http://www.danceusa.org/>

Dance/USA, the national service organization for professional dance, offers a variety of programs for its membership and the dance field. By providing services and leadership, Dance/USA enhances the infrastructure for dance creation, education and dissemination.

League of Resident Theatres

<http://www.lort.org/>

The largest professional theatre association of its kind in the United States. This site has links to 74 member theatres in every major market, as well as collective bargaining agreements for actors, directors, choreographers and designers.

Other

Answers 4 Dancers

<http://www.answers4dancers.com/>

Auditions, agency preferences, industry action, casting insights, headshots, resumes, specialized workshops and guidance from knowledgeable dance professionals to help you get on the inside track to dance employment. Some sections require site membership.

Dance Art

<http://danceart.com/>

Nice site for links, jobs, articles and other resources for dancers.

Gaynor Minden Online Dance Resources

<http://www.dancer.com/onlineresources.php>

A compendium of dance-related sites, from links to grant funding resources, to newsgroups to calendars of upcoming events at arts facilities around the globe.

The information in this guide was compiled from resources available online and in DFA 1.103.

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