

Stage Manager

Introduction

Stage managers assist the director, designer, cast and the rest of the artistic team by making sure that rehearsals and performances run smoothly. They also check that all the other elements, such as lighting, costumes and scenery are co-ordinated.

Also known as

- Theatre Stage Manager

Work Activities

Your career path into becoming a Stage Manager will usually begin with the role of Assistant Stage Manager, and then taking on more responsibility as you progress in your career.

As an Assistant Stage Manager (ASM), you will get hold of and prepare props, arrange costume fittings, deal with scene changes and remind Actors about rehearsal times. You may also be asked to operate sound and other technical equipment.

You can then progress to the more responsible position of Deputy Stage Manager (DSM). The DSM is present at the rehearsal room, when the director is working with the Actors, and notes any script changes and records the actions of Actors.

This information is used to co-ordinate sound effects and scene and lighting changes. In large theatres, this may involve working in a control box and using an intercom to communicate with Lighting and Sound Technicians.

As a DSM, you will call Actors/Actresses for rehearsals and costume fittings. During the performance, you will prompt Actors/Actresses and cue lighting, sound and technical stage effects.

Both the ASM and DSM are answerable to the Stage Manager (SM), who is ultimately responsible for the smooth co-ordination of the performance. The work of the SM is essentially people management. You will organise Actors and Actresses, pass on requests from the director and liaise with production managers.

In small touring theatre companies, you may also drive, load and unload trucks and set up equipment.

In some theatres, such as those in the West End, there is a Company Stage Manager who is senior to the Stage Manager.

Being able to read, write and speak Welsh may be an advantage when you're looking for work in Wales.

Personal Qualities and Skills

To become a Stage Manager, you need to be:

- a good communicator
- reliable and resilient
- able to handle pressure and deadlines
- capable of working as part of a team
- an effective motivator
- flexible, with the ability to react quickly
- good at organising your own work and the work of others
- able to use your initiative
- practically skilled, with artistic flair
- interested in theatre

Pay and Opportunities



Pay

The pay rates given below are approximate.

- Starting: £25,500 - £28,500
- With experience: £31,500 - £39,500
- Senior Stage Managers earn £42,500

Hours of work

Early starts, late finishes, weekend work and working on public holidays may all be required. While on tour, you may stay in temporary accommodation and may spend weeks away from home.

Where could I work?

Opportunities for Stage Managers occur in venues in towns and cities throughout the UK, and in major theatre production centres such as London, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and Edinburgh.

Employers include receiving houses (theatres where new shows are brought in each week); producing theatres; commercial touring production companies; small-scale productions and Theatre in Education (TIE) companies. Other employment is with production firms that arrange corporate events.

Opportunities occur for Stage Managers to work abroad in touring productions.

Self-employment

Many Stage Managers work on a self-employed, freelance basis.

Where are vacancies advertised?

Vacancies are advertised in local/national newspapers, on recruitment and employers' websites, and on Find a Job (www.gov.uk/jobsearch).

Social media websites, such as LinkedIn, Twitter or Facebook, are a great way to network, find vacancies and get in contact with possible employers. Make sure that your profile presents you in a professional manner that will appeal to potential employers.

Take a look at our General Information Article 'Finding Work Online'.

Theatre job vacancies are also advertised on the following websites:

- Get into Theatre
- Arts Jobs
- National Theatre
- The Guardian - Theatre Jobs
- StarNow

However, it is important to develop a wide network of contacts, as many jobs are found by personal recommendation.

Entry Routes and Training

Entry routes

Many Stage Managers train at drama school. Relevant courses often cover technical theatre as well as stage management and are available at different levels, such as National Diploma, HND, foundation degree and degree.

Applicants for technical theatre courses are often asked to take a portfolio of work to their interview. This could

include sketches, photos, prompt books, etc.

The Stage Management Association accepts students, graduates (of Confederation of Drama Schools courses) and professional Stage Managers as members.

A great way to get into this career is through an internship. Take a look at our information article 'Internships', for more details

Training

If you would like some training, then the Royal Central School of Speech & Drama offer a course in stage management. This course has a range of units, where you will develop basic stage management skills and undertake different roles within the industry.

Check the website for more details.

Other courses could be available in your area.

Work Experience

Relevant skills and abilities, gained as a Stage Assistant or Stagehand, are useful. Having a track record of managing productions, at an amateur or student level, can also be useful. Voluntary work in local theatre companies is often seen as relevant.

Progression

There is a clear progression route in stage management, from Assistant, to Deputy, to Stage Manager (sometimes known as Company Stage Manager). Some Stage Managers move into theatre administration or management roles.

Qualifications

Entry requirements for stage management courses vary considerably. Selection is competitive and many applicants have A levels (or equivalent) and practical backstage experience. Please check college/university websites very carefully.

Some universities accept the Welsh Baccalaureate as equivalent to 1 A level.

The following vocational qualifications could help you to stand out from the crowd:

- BTEC level 3 - production arts and technical theatre
- BTEC level 3 - technical theatre production

Adult Opportunities

Age limits

It is illegal for any organisation to set age limits for entry to employment, education or training, unless they can show there is a real need to have these limits.

Experience

Relevant skills and abilities, gained as a stage assistant or stagehand, are useful. Having a track record of managing productions, at an amateur or student level, can also be useful. Voluntary work in local theatre companies is often seen as relevant.

Courses

If you don't have the qualifications needed to enter your chosen degree or HND course, a college or university Access course (eg, Access to Media) could be the way in. No formal qualifications are usually required, but you should check individual course details.

Further Information

Contacts

- **ScreenSkills**
Skills for the creative industries
Email: info@creativeskillset.org
Website: www.creativeskillset.org
- **Creative Choices**
Publisher: Creative & Cultural Skills
Email: info@creative-choices.co.uk
Website: www.creative-choices.co.uk
- **Creative & Cultural Skills**
Skills for craft, cultural heritage, design, literature, music, performing arts and visual arts
Email: london@ccskills.org.uk
Website: ccskills.org.uk
- **Get into Theatre**
Email: info@getintothetheatre.org
Website: www.getintothetheatre.org
- **National Theatre**
Tel: 020 7452 3400
Email: info@nationaltheatre.org.uk
Website: www.nationaltheatre.org.uk
- **The Stage**
Entertainment and performing arts news
Website: www.thestage.co.uk
- **Equity**
Tel: 020 7379 6000
Email: info@equity.org.uk
Website: www.equity.org.uk
- **Equity (Scotland)**
Scottish enquiries
Tel: 0141 2482472
Email: scotland@equity.org.uk
Website: www.equity.org.uk
- **Federation of Drama Schools (FDS)**
Tel: 020 7529 8794
Email: info@dramauk.co.uk
Website: www.dramauk.co.uk
- **Stage Management Association (SMA)**
Address: 89 Borough High Street, London SE1 1NL
Tel: 020 7403 7999
Website: www.stagemanagementassociation.co.uk
- **National Theatre Wales (Welsh Enquiries)**
Tel: 029 2035 3070
Email: info@nationaltheatrewales.org
Website: nationaltheatrewales.org
- **Equity (Wales)**
Address: Third Floor, 1 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9SD
Tel: 029 2039 7971
Email: wales@equity.org.uk
Website: www.equity.org.uk

Related Careers

- Disc Jockey
- Music Manager
- Theatre Lighting Technician
- Make-up Artist
- Theatre Sound Technician
- Stage Crew
- Actor/Actress
- Dancer
- Musician
- Singer