

Disney HERCULES

SPOTLIGHT ON CAREERS



The production of *Hercules* at London's Theatre Royal Drury Lane involves over 250 people whose skill, expertise and experience combine to create the spectacular production onstage. In this guide, you'll find out more about some of the different roles and responsibilities that people fulfil, and find advice about how to access training and work experience to begin your own journey as a theatre maker.

You can find out more about the team who have brought *Hercules* to life in the West End by visiting Disney's *Hercules*

www.herculesthemusical.co.uk/cast-and-creatives

- 1. INTRODUCTION** (p2)
Careers in theatre
- 2. COMPANY PROFILES** (p3-7)
Meet some of the *Hercules* team and find out more about their routes into the theatre industry
- 3. JOB OPPORTUNITIES** (p9)
Find out more about the different jobs and skills required to create *Hercules* in the West End!
- 4. ADVICE FROM THE PROFESSIONALS** (p8)
- 5. WHAT NEXT?** (p11)
Sources of further information and research
- 6. INFORMATION FROM CAREERS ADVISORS** (p12)

1. INTRODUCTION: CAREERS IN THEATRE

Careers in the theatre are exciting, inspiring and full of opportunity. Not only will you be using your creative skills and interests, you're likely to be innovating, collaborating and developing new ways of telling stories. A theatre career can span from

performing on stage to interacting with the public, from creating illusions to building set and machinery. The theatre industry contributes significantly to the national economy so you'll be making a wider economic difference too!



For Disney's production of *Hercules*, the teams involved have:

- ✦ Designed social media campaigns
- ✦ Created the special effects and machinery for Hades' underworld vortex
- ✦ Collaborated with other brands to create the shoes worn by the ensemble
- ✦ Researched fashion trends to inform the costume design
- ✦ Installed lighting and sound equipment
- ✦ Provided personal training and physiotherapy
- ✦ Developed an education programme to support students, teachers and young theatre makers
- ✦ Arranged travel and accommodation for members of the creative and executive teams
- ✦ Co-ordinated a press and marketing campaign, organising interviews, press calls, and the creation of promotional videos.

... and that's before the audience watches our amazing cast and crew tell the story of *Hercules* on stage during each performance.

For some roles, you'll need specific qualifications and training. For others, hands-on experience is the most important element of preparing for a job. In this guide, you'll find advice, sources of further information, top tips from our cast and creative team and prompts to help you decide which theatre career is right for you.

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COMPANY PROFILES

SPECIAL EFFECTS ASSOCIATE AND PROGRAMMER:

I started my career as a Technical Theatre Apprentice at New Wimbledon Theatre where I was the first recipient of Merton's Best Young Person of the Year Award.

Assistant Lighting Designer and Lighting Programmer, *TINA: The Tina Turner Musical*

Eager to learn more about the roles of an Assistant Lighting Designer and Lighting Programmer, I took on a full-time position as Lighting Technician at the National Theatre and then decided to go as a freelancer (self-employed and hired to work for different companies and productions).

As a freelancer, I have worked on a variety of plays, musicals and dance productions around the UK including in London's West End. My work has also taken me to New York, Australia, Hong Kong, Germany and the Netherlands.

I am a member with The Association of Lighting Production and Design (ALPD), Stage. Sight, Backstage Niche, Freelancers Make Theatre Work (FMTW) and The Alliance of Associations & Professionals in Theatre & Live Events (AAPTLE).

Before taking on this role, I didn't realise that it existed!

Way before rehearsals, I started researching and drawing up plans. I have been collaborating with the creative teams who worked on previous versions of the production, in other countries. For this production, I have been bringing together expertise from the teams in New York, Germany, The Netherlands.

I was involved in the production for 10 months before the show opened and there was so much planning. My job as an associate is to make sure all of these different teams have the information they need; I am the main point of contact between all of the teams and I keep the schedule on track.

I have to be both creative and practical, and also have problem-solving skills and technical knowledge.

Tamykha, Special Effect Associate and Programmer



COMPANY PROFILES

COMPANY MANAGER

I trained as a dancer at Tring Park School for the Performing Arts (formally Arts Educational School, Tring), where I focused on ballet and jazz. In lower school, dance lessons would take place in the morning with all other subjects in the afternoon and homework in the evening. In upper school, academic subjects (GCSEs) took place in the morning, with dance in the afternoon, homework in the evening.

At 16, I went to Northern Ballet school, Manchester, and completed the three-year course in two years, focusing more on musical theatre. And started auditioning!

Then I worked at Leicester Haymarket Theatre, and performed roles including Disney's *The Lion King*. Administration roles have included Production Assistant, Event Assistant and Company Manager at *The Lion King*. **Patience, Company Manager**

TYPICAL DAY IN REHEARSALS (6 WEEKS)

- ✦ On call, in case anyone is sick or injured, or has transport issues, which might make them late to rehearsal.
- ✦ 9am: 1 hour before the company arrive in the rehearsal room, I set up and make sure the room is ready for rehearsals.
- ✦ 10am – 6pm: Monitoring rehearsals, my role involves ensuring that costume and puppet fittings and make up and wig checks are done. There are often five different schedules running at the same time throughout the rehearsal period.
- ✦ Checking in with the director and/or choreographer for any changes that are made to the schedule for the next day, then passing the status onto the relevant teams and distributing the list via email. This includes associates and members of the creative team (also known as 'creatives') as well as the cast. There are approximately 130 people involved.
- ✦ After hours – on call for the company in case of any problems or issues.

TYPICAL DAY IN THE THEATRE

- ✦ On call for company.
- ✦ 10am: Arrive at the theatre. Administration tasks include:
 - Covering** – The Company Manager (CM) has to be on call in case members of the company are unable to work that day. CMs will send this to the creative team who will decide who will cover which parts. The CM then tells everyone in the theatre so that they can get their costumes, puppets and wigs ready.
 - Press and marketing calls** – The CM arranges for company members to rehearse and take part in events such as concerts or photoshoots to promote the show.
 - Meeting with the heads of department – This can include discussing casting, HR issues, payroll.
- ✦ Company arrive, 1pm warm up, 1.55pm 'the half' (30 minutes before curtain up) the CM goes to dressing rooms, and catches up with their teams.
- ✦ 2:30 curtain up!
- ✦ Walk around the building to catch up with other teams, watch some of the show, admin tasks, and prepare schedules.
- ✦ In the interval, we have an open-door policy in the company office, so various departments pop in for snacks, drinks and treats, or just a chat.
- ✦ Repeat for evening show.



COMPANY PROFILES

GENERAL MANAGER

- ✦ Career journey involved roles such as: Production Assistant, Production Co-ordinator, Assistant General Manager, Acting Associate GM and General Manager.
- ✦ **Trained at the** University of Reading , BA film theatre and TV studies (2014), and an internship at Nimax Theatres which came about from a talk at university given by a former student, who was working at Nimax. I approached him and asked for work experience, which lead to spending time in the production office at Nimax Theatres during my breaks from University. After this, I was offered a role with Edinburgh Festival 'Fosters Edinburgh Comedy Awards', a role I did for 3 years. This was a paid role during the summer holidays.
- Tasks whilst interning and for the Comedy Awards included: supporting with opening night events, runner, awards and office administration, personal assistant support.
- ✦ After graduating I moved to London to take up a job with a small independent producer working on touring comedy production and a comedy play in the west. Then I worked as Production Assistant and Executive Assistant as well as in marketing. The benefit of working for a small and new company was that the role was broad and varied.
- ✦ Started with Disney Theatrical Group as a Production Assistant on *Aladdin* in the West End and has worked my way up over 10 years.

Gemma, General Manager

TYPICAL DAY IN REHEARSALS (6 WEEKS)

- ✦ On call.
- ✦ Managing all elements of the production – personnel, crew, company management, people management, liaising with creatives from New York, tracking budgets, organising the press night party, meetings, guest lists, marketing.
- ✦ Managing liaisons between all the different departments.
- ✦ Evening working and late nights.

ONCE THE SHOW OPENS

- ✦ Working pattern then revert back to office hours.
- ✦ Check-ins with show/company/Heads of Department (HODs), with regular visits to the theatre, including weekly check-ins.
- ✦ Marketing/Press events and covering.
- ✦ Show running has different needs. Skills needed – time management, communication, interpersonal skills, time-keeping, (not full stop). good understanding of office skills. The role is front-facing, therefore strong people skills are very valuable.

AUTOMATION ASSISTANT



I trained as Creative Venue Technician Apprenticeship with Access Creative College (employed by Disney Theatrical Group).

Automation is an incredible path to take in technical theatre. You get to create a lot of the magic of theatre by creating seamless scene changes and spectacles, but be prepared to put in a lot of time and effort in. We have such a fun job but we also have to be extremely serious when it comes to safety because if we don't do our jobs properly people can easily get hurt.

Louis, Automation assistant

TYPICAL DAY IN REHEARSALS (6 WEEKS)

Rig check – running every axis at show speed, and checking for any abnormalities. For example, on a show that has automated deck tracks, we would run it to its furthest show position and back to its reference position. We listen for strange noises and look for any signs of damage.

DURING FIT UP / TECH REHEARSALS

We have long days, working with the production team. Our job is to facilitate anything they need but, most importantly, really learn about the kit that's being used on the particular show. This is because it will be us, the show team, that will be operating and maintaining it on a daily basis.

ONCE THE SHOW OPENS

In an automated show you would have an operator plot which is the person clicking the buttons to make things move, and deck plot or plots spotting moving pieces and giving clears (telling cast and crew when it is safe to move or operate).

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

- ✦ I didn't know what I specifically wanted to do after school but I knew I wanted to work in theatre so I did Drama at A-Level.
- ✦ I then went to study Theatre Production (Stage and Arts Management) at Winchester University where I studied many things from Design to Marketing. After leaving university, I got a job as an usher, working front of house in a theatre. Then I worked in outreach and engagement, audience development, and production administration.
- ✦ Working full-time in Stage Management, I enjoy a varied career in theatre working in many different departments. It helps you understand and appreciate every different role needed to put on a show.
- ✦ I was Assistant Stage Manager on *Frozen*, which was my West End debut after working in the industry for six years.

TYPICAL DAY IN REHEARSALS (6 WEEKS)

- ✦ In the rehearsal, we are usually the first team in and the last team out.
- ✦ Being an ASM in the rehearsal room is all about being on hand to help and support the creatives and cast so the day runs smoothly and to time.
- ✦ To name a few responsibilities, we must make sure all the correct props and set pieces are ready to go and in the right places, creating and learning your own plot (which is a bit like your own choreography with all the cues you need to do when in the rehearsal room) and making sure we have all the cast we need in the room.
- ✦ Every day can be different as we are all learning and creating the show together in the rehearsal room.



TYPICAL DAY IN THE THEATRE

- ✦ We reset all the props and set pieces from the night before, making sure everything is in the right place and ready to go for the show. This could take between 30-60 minutes.
- ✦ The cast then have their warm-up on stage and so it gives us a chance to complete any admin or to work on props that might need any upkeep or maintenance. Once the cast have finished warm-up we have what is called 'Parish Notices' for the full company. This is when company management, resident creatives and dance captains let us know changes, offs (details of anyone who is away that day) or notices we need to know about for that performance. If we need to rehearse anything, go over any lift or fight calls, this would happen at this point and we would be around to support.
- ✦ After this, we can then relax for a bit and get ready for the show. Once the show starts each ASM has their own individual plot with their own specific cues (In *Hercules* there are three ASM plots that we will all cover). Each plot is really important in the smooth and safe running of the show.
- ✦ After this, with one of the other ASMs, we complete a 'Shout Check'. This is where we follow our setting list (which is a list of every prop and set piece needed for the show and their location) to ensure everything is in place ready for the show. We do this as a pair as one person reads the setting list, the other person checks, therefore making sure nothing gets missed.'

Bryony Relf, Assistant Stage Manager



SPOTLIGHT ON CAREERS

ADVICE FROM THE PROFESSIONALS

Kirk

Make-up Designer

'To create the best make-up designs, you'll need a very thorough understanding of colour theory. Taking an interest in photography and lighting is also helpful. As well as those skills, make sure that when you walk into a room to work with the cast and creative teams of a production, own your work: you'll need to inspire confidence and trust from the people you're working with. Being able to work flexibly is also crucial.'

Seeta

Head of Sound

'The job is very varied. It involves working in initial rehearsals, through the technical and dress rehearsals and then into the ongoing run of a show. You have to ensure you have good working relationships with all of the teams you liaise with, and be very organised. This is a job that involves strong people skills as well as expertise in sound design and equipment operation.'

Hannah

**Creative Venue
Technician Apprentice**

'Get as much theatre experience as you can, even if you're not yet sure which area you want to specialise in. Make contacts by seeing a show, looking up the names of the people who do the jobs you're interested in and get in touch! You could open your email with "I saw the show and I was particularly interested in..." so that you're demonstrating focus and the ability to think analytically about what you've seen. As long as you're respectful, people will be willing to talk to you and give you advice. You may also get the opportunity to shadow someone who's working on a show: again, approach people respectfully and be clear about your interests. These experiences are really valuable: university courses aren't for everyone so there are lots of different ways to gain valuable experience.'

Adam

Sound Designer

Adam's work requires a strong understanding of music. He says, "We always work extremely closely with the music supervisor and the music department. A huge part of my job is amplifying the orchestra and vocals to represent the natural performance as much as possible".

Bryony

Assistant Stage Manager

'Getting a job as an Usher (also called Front of House, or FOH) is a really good way to meet other theatre makers, to find work and to stay inspired. I got my first Stage Management job from working as an usher. You don't need to go to drama school to work in Stage Management. You can learn so much from working on a job and from those around you. Fringe or smaller shows are a good place to start!'

Louis

Automation Assistant

'Take in as much information as you can from the people you work with. Everyone has different skills and knowledge that you can benefit from. Always ask questions; there's no such thing as a stupid one! Finally, if you are able to go on tour, do it. Putting a show in and taking it out regularly will grow your knowledge so much! On tour, if something breaks there's not always a chance you can get a replacement quickly so you will learn ways to fix things and solve problems.'

Patience

Company Manager

'Skills and attributes that are required for the job include Human Resources skills, being passionate about theatre or performing, team work, being organised, care for people, punctuality, understanding, problem solving.'

Gemma

General Manager

'You can learn on the job. Be brave. Whatever your background, you can work hard and gain experience: there is no specific qualification that you need.'



SPOTLIGHT ON CAREERS

WHAT ROLE COULD YOU CHOOSE?

As well as the roles outlined in the career profiles above, you might also consider one or more of the following roles. You can find out more about these roles by visiting **Get Into Theatre** – a comprehensive guide to careers in the creative theatre industry.

If you have a copy of the *Hercules* programme, you'll also be able to find out more about the roles and responsibilities that are involved in the production, and the experience of the people fulfilling those roles. You can also find out more on the *Hercules* website.

AUTOMATION

AUTOMATION ASSISTANTS

BOOK KEEPER

CLEANER

CATERING
- FOOD AND BEVERAGES

COMPANY MANAGER

COMPOSER

COSTUME DESIGNER

COSTUME MAKER

DIRECTOR

DRESSER

EDUCATION MANAGER

ENGINEER

EVENTS ORGANISER

FIGHT DIRECTOR

FRONT OF HOUSE ASSISTANT

FRONT OF HOUSE MANAGER

GENERAL MANAGER

HEALTH AND SAFETY

HUMAN RESOURCES

HEAD OF WIGS, HAIR & MAKEUP

INCLUSION COORDINATOR

LIGHTING DESIGNER

LIGHTING OPERATOR

MARKETING

MUSICAL DIRECTOR

MUSICAL SUPERVISOR

ORCHESTRATOR

PRESS AND
PUBLICITY OFFICER

PUPPET DESIGNER

PUPPET MAKER

PUPPET DIRECTOR

PHYSIOTHERAPIST

PRODUCER

REHEARSAL PIANIST

SECURITY

SET BUILDER

SET DESIGNER

SINGING TEACHER

SOUND DESIGNER

SOUND ASSISTANTS

STAGE MANAGER

STAGE MANAGERS

STAGE DOOR KEEPER

TECHNICIAN

TRAINING MANAGER

VIDEO DESIGNER

VOCAL COACH

WARDROBE SUPERVISOR



SPOTLIGHT ON CAREERS

FOR INDUSTRY GUIDANCE ON SALARIES

Please note: these vary depending on whether they're UK Theatre or SOLT rates and, bear in mind, all the rates in the union books are agreed MINIMUMS and then, depending on the size of company (producer, GM company etc.) and the scale of their operation/production, determines what they pay.

Equity rates of pay also depend on the category of the theatre (based on seating capacity). The more seats, the greater the earning potential therefore the higher the minimums.

SOCIETY OF LONDON THEATRE RATES

✦ BECTU

<https://solt.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/M1724-SOLT-Bectu-rates-October-2023-January-2026.pdf>

✦ EQUITY

<https://solt.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/240523-SOLT-Equity-Performer-and-Stage-Manager-rates-2023-2026.pdf>

UKTHEATRE RATES

✦ BECTU

<https://uktheatre.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2025/03/250325-UK-Theatre-BECTU-rates-2025-2026.pdf>

*These rates are the minimums for the house staff employed by the theatre on the road.

✦ EQUITY

<https://uktheatre.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/08/070823-UK-Theatre-Equity-Subsidised-Theatre-rates-2023-2026.pdf>

DESIGNER MINIMUMS

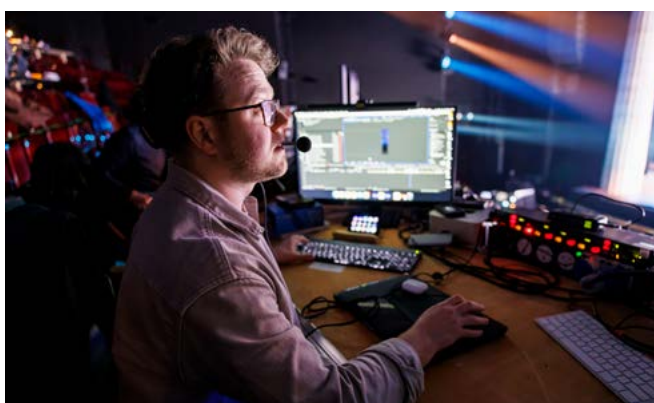
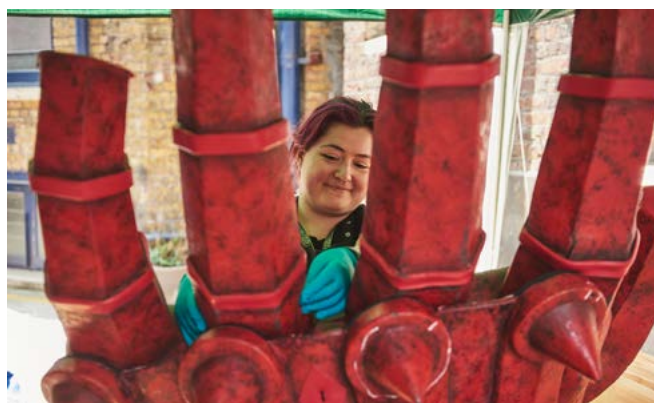
✦ <https://solt.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/M26-SOLT-Equity-Designers-rates-2023-2024-1.pdf>

WHAT NEXT?

SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

Now that you've seen the depth and breadth of the roles available in theatre, you can start to research your route into the industry. We've included helpful websites for you to explore as a starting point. Your drama teacher, local theatre and theatre groups are also excellent sources of information and opportunities to develop your skills and experience.

- ✦ **Access Creative College** – *Hercules* Automation Assistant Louis completed his training here, via an apprenticeship with Disney Theatrical Group.
- ✦ **www.ucas.com** allows you to search university courses and apprenticeship opportunities. Course names and opportunities can change from year to year, so this is an up to date source of information. Universities and colleges often offer open days and opportunities to participate in workshops and sample lectures so engage with these events as much as you can.
- ✦ **Get into Theatre** offers advice about training, gaining experience and accessing funding. There are blogs and videos to explore, too.
- ✦ **The National Theatre Skills Centre** provides workshops, short course, placement, and apprenticeship opportunities as well as T Levels.
- ✦ **The Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC)** offers apprenticeships, working with twelve regional theatres in the UK.
- ✦ **ATG Entertainment** also have apprenticeship opportunities. Their website includes information from previous apprentices and their apprenticeship has launched their theatre career.
- ✦ **The Making Theatre Podcast** by lighting designers James Farncombe and Bruno Poet interviews a wide range of theatre professionals – from producers to puppeteers, directors and designers. Each episode gives helpful insight into the different roles, and suggestions for how to develop your knowledge and experience.



NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND CAREERS ADVISERS



This Careers guide is informed by Gatsby Benchmarks and provides schools and careers teams with accurate and up to date information about careers in the creative industries. The Benchmarks are as follows:

The eight Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance are:

- ✦ A stable careers programme
- ✦ Learning from career and labour market information
- ✦ Addressing the needs of each young person
- ✦ Linking curriculum learning to careers
- ✦ Encounters with employers and employees
- ✦ Experiences of workplaces
- ✦ Encounters with further and higher education
- ✦ Personal guidance

Whilst the *Hercules* career guide is written for a student audience, you can use this guide to:

- ✦ Provide information at options events to broaden understanding of the breadth of opportunities for success
- ✦ Inform work experience provision
- ✦ Widen approaches to local businesses and institution for talks, mock-interviews and CV creation
- ✦ Support subject teachers during parents evenings and discussions with parents and carers
- ✦ Advise students, parents and carers during the UCAS application process
- ✦ Support teachers and academy trusts in developing their curriculum and Arts provision

You may also like to use these resources from the National Governance Association (NGA) to support your work in supporting creative careers:

- ✦ Arts, culture and creativity: improving your school or trust and its curriculum – a short course in developing arts provision.
- ✦ Cultural education | National Governance Association – guidance documents for creative education provision, including Drama, Dance, Music, Art and Design.