

Performing Arts

The performing arts industry is ideal for you if you enjoy expressing your creative personality, such as dancing, drama or singing, or playing a musical instrument. However, this sector is not only about performing in front of an audience; there are also great opportunities for those who have creative practical skills who are key to staging entertainment events, such as stagehands, lighting technicians, arts administrators or community artists.

A sum of £408 million to support the arts sector was announced in March 2021. This sum is intended to help museums, theatres and galleries to reopen. £77 million will go towards supporting culture groups in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

As part of a Scottish Government funding package of £59 million for Scottish Culture and Heritage, £15 million is set aside to support Culture Organisations and Venues such as art galleries, studio facilities, comedy venues, large music venues, commercial theatres, orchestras, dance companies and nightclubs. £6.2 million support for Grassroots Music Venues.

According to the latest figures (2019), there are around 315,000 people working in music, performing and visual arts in the UK.

What areas can I work in?

This career area includes working as a performer in dance, drama, music and other forms of entertainment, from stand-up comedy to circus acts. Jobs in arts administration, community arts, music technology and theatre technology are also included in this sector. You can also teach any of these subjects from secondary school through to university level.

To see the routes to getting into each of these sectors, take a look at our [Career Pathway](#).

What kind of companies can I work for?

Working within the performing arts encompasses a wide range of organisations including:

- local government
- theatre, dance and opera companies
- galleries, theatres and art centres
- concert halls, arts festivals and community arts projects
- schools, colleges and universities
- orchestras and professional bands
- TV or radio broadcasting and film companies.

What's the job market like?

In the Scottish Budget for 2021/22 the Culture and Events sector saw a decrease in spending from £180.4 million

in 2020/21 to £174.7 million in 2021/22.

Despite the glamour of this career area, the harsh reality for performers is usually years of hard work in the face of tough competition, rejections at auditions and frequent periods of unemployment or working in temporary unrelated jobs. 9.7% of performing arts graduates that are in employment, are freelance. This is high compared to 1.1% for the general graduate population being in self-employment.

It is not always easy to get into the music industry. There are some full time classical music jobs, but most popular musicians do individual gigs for which they charge a fee.

Most performers, famous or not, are usually highly trained or qualified. The majority of actors have had formal training, almost all classical musicians have qualifications and a large proportion of popular musicians are trained to a high level. Dancers usually start their training at a very young age.

Competition for non-performance jobs such as arts administration, stage management and theatre technology is also fierce.

Facts and figures

- In the academic year 2018/19, 46.9% of performing arts graduates were in full time employment 15 months after graduating, with 33% of those working as art, design and media professionals, 11.3% went on to further study.
- 21.6% of those going onto further study did a postgraduate teaching qualification.
- The UK music industry contributes £5.8 billion to the economy and supports 197,168 jobs.
- The total export revenue generated by the UK music business in 2019 was £2.9 billion.
- In 2019 there were 4,950 people working in the performing arts sector in Scotland.

Want to find out more?

The [Creative and Cultural Skills](#) website has information on getting into the arts – developing opportunities for young people to learn about careers in the sector.

Sources

- What do graduates do? Prospects in association with AGCAS (2020/21)
- DCMS Sectors Economic Estimates 2019: Employment (30th April 2020)
- Music By Numbers 2020 Report, UK Music
- Growth Sector Statistics Database: Table 2.5 - Employment, Scotland 2009-2019, Scottish Government (24th March 2021)
- Supporting Performing Arts, Scottish Government (17th January 2021)
- The Institute of Conservation (3rd March 2021)
- Scottish Budget 2021/22, Scottish Government (January 2021)