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.

There are around 286,000 people working in music, performing and visual arts in the UK.

What areas can I work in?

The Performing Arts 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.

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?

The Scottish Government is continuing to invest in the arts and culture through Creative Scotland and the five National Performing Companies. They are also investing £10 million in the TV and film sector, which in turn may create opportunities in the performance, technical and support roles in this area.

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.

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 2016, 70.6% of performing arts graduates were in employment 6 months after graduation, with the highest percentage of those working as art, design and media professionals.
- The UK core music industry grew by 6% in 2016, contributing $4.4 billion to the economy and supporting 142,208 jobs.
- Of the music, performing and visual arts workforce in the UK, 72.3% have a higher education qualification.
- Around 10,000 people are employed in the Scottish music industry, with over 30% working freelance.
- In 2016 there were 6,600 people working in the performing arts sector in Scotland.
- Around 2,000 people work in Scotland’s Dance industry.

**Want to find out more?**

The [Creative Choices](#) website has information on getting into the arts – and specifically dance, music, drama and theatre.

**Sources**

- Measuring Music 2017, UK Music
- Creative Industries: Focus on Employment, Department for Culture, Media and Sport (June 2016)
- Growth Sector Statistics Database: Table 2.5 - Employment, Scotland 2009 - 2016, Scottish Government (February 2018)
- Music Sector Review: Report – Creative Scotland website (March 2014)
- Scottish Budget: Draft Budget 2018 - 19, Scottish Government (December 2017)