

Publication for Students: *Exits and Entrances: Students' Stories*

Sheila Galloway and Susan Band

The July 2004 Interim Report included the pilot study of how recent dance and drama graduates were fairing in terms of employability, job search and establishing their professional lives. *New Performers' Voices* was the first in-depth analysis of how former students' training had fitted them for work and of the ways in which they are seeking to develop sustainable careers. Within the overall evaluation of the Dance and Drama Award Scheme, this study complemented the 2003 pilot survey of recent graduates and by its attention to individual experience, is a central element of our multi-level analysis of graduate destinations.

The DfES team decided that this study included much which could be of value to students about to graduate, those considering a dance or drama course, and indeed their parents. They proposed an illustrated user-friendly booklet with an introduction from the Minister and a print run of 5,000 to 10,000 copies. We therefore synthesised the existing material, focusing on certain key findings which would be useful to young people and presenting these in an appropriate style.

Initial responses to *Exits and Entrances: Students' Stories* confirmed its relevance to students and its potential as an output of the scheme at this point in its development. The text will also be accessible at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/financialhelp/dancedrama> (or an alternative site).

The decision of the DfES team to publish an illustrated booklet and circulate this widely to existing students and potential students offers the chance of greater impact. This will sit alongside the existing 2004 information booklet outlining the Dance and Drama Awards. The graphical design has given providers the chance to highlight through photos the work of their students.

The text of this publication follows. This material is at the final proof stage and the booklets will be available in March 2005.

Text only of illustrated publication for students

Exits and Entrances: Students' Stories

Our thanks go to the new performers and stage managers who contributed to the research which was the basis for this publication. Their thoughtful and candid comments led to the decision by the Department for Education and Skills to produce this booklet so that their experience can be shared with other students or potential students who are thinking about the exit from education and training and the entrance into professional work.

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New performers and a new stage: what comes after college?

You've qualified and celebrated - now comes the change in lifestyle. A few months after leaving college some new performers will be echoing the recent graduate who said of his first jobs:

"I was pleased with all of them, to be honest. I was smiling all year." (Fin)

Others, who were not smiling all year, still have valuable stories to tell. This booklet gives a glimpse of 'new performers' making their exits from their professional school or college and their entrances into the workplace and a performance career. Making the transition to this new stage can be exhilarating but is not always easy or clear cut.

Any student of dance or drama looks forward with great excitement - and perhaps some apprehension - to their professional future on leaving college. Here we report on the experiences and views of 18 performers who graduated in summer 2002. They shared their thoughts with us in telephone interviews during spring 2004. More details are on pages 39 to 41 but the names we use are pseudonyms to preserve anonymity.

These people had made the transition from school or college to the workplace and spoke about how their training had prepared them for professional life. They touched on the strategies they were using to look for work. Most dance and drama graduates envisage periods when the work which they trained for may be hard to find, and they told us about their coping strategies for those difficult times. They described to us some of the obstacles they had met and the rewards they had gained.

Opening doors

Who you know?

The first challenge being to open doors, people spoke repeatedly of the value of personal contacts. Nicole had benefited from formal and informal contacts made at college. She was seen for a new show because its choreographer had taught her. After an earlier college show, she had been approached about a new musical which was still in preparation. Looking back two years, a previous director recommended her for an audition: she had recently been contacted again by this company. Her experiences echo those of others, who stressed:

- the value of both formal and informal college connections
- the merit in a competitive world of being known as reliable

"There are so many people, if people have worked with you before and they like what you do and they like you as a person, they're more likely to want to work with you. It's that contact, really, I think that helps you". (Nicole)

This may seem both encouraging and daunting for those embarking on a professional career. It is heartening to hear of work opportunities on the strength of recommendations, but how to find that initial contract?

Getting your face seen

Most of these new performers spoke positively of their college's support in:

- putting their names forward for work
- helping them prepare a CV and photographs
- explaining how to market themselves

As recent graduates, they appreciated the work opportunities, practice auditions and the presence of agents/directors at shows they did whilst at college. Most also praised ongoing support after they had left:

“[They’ve] been fantastic...encouraging me and kicking me up the bum...also sending me stuff through the post, to say ‘oh, you might want to audition for this’” (Fin).

They were keen to continue links with members of staff with whom good relationships were formed during their course. Only one interviewee reported neither help in finding work nor follow up support from his college.

Performers spoke about informal networking as well as more formal marketing opportunities through:

- peer groups
- building up professional contacts
- professional publications and websites

Peer groups can be important for performers seeking work opportunities. Lisa’s core friendship group from college would meet and share information about casting directors and what they were looking for.

New contacts often come from doing different types of work and meeting new people, giving an ever increasing network of people who may be able to offer work, however short the contract:

“Whenever I’ve come back from a job and I’m, like, ‘Right, I’m out of work’, there’s a lot more people I can phone to see if they have got work than there would have been when I first left college” (Hannah)

Most interviewees subscribed, where appropriate, to *Spotlight* and several described successful results from this, though some students reported limited benefits:

“Yeah, I’m a member and that’s a kind of must in this business, just because I know for a fact that a few of my auditions I’ve got have been through Spotlight” (Oliver).

At auditions, Oliver had noticed a copy of *Spotlight* open on the table, showing his photo and CV: proof that his subscription was worthwhile. Others found Castnet, PCR (Production Casting Report) and *The Stage* useful. Beginning stage managers were also using websites for up-to-date job opportunities.

Alongside formal and informal means of opening doors, finding an agent had loomed large in the list of priorities for many final year students. Having made the transition into employment, securing an agent and making the most of the services offered lost none of its urgency.

How agents shape up

The new performers talked about

- the difficulties in securing an agent
- the merits of having one
- the quality of services received

Several commented on difficulties in engaging agents. While early professional work may be on a cruise ship or in a provincial theatre, the West End is likely to be a popular source of recruitment for agents. Engaging agents' interest during periods of professional unemployment can be even more problematic.

“Really it's a Catch 22 situation. Agents want to see you in something before they will represent you and working on a cruise ship didn't allow for this.” (Emily)

“If you are not working, how are you going to be seen, you know?” (Martin)

Martin suggested that to overcome this performers who are not working might consider taking perhaps poorly paid, semi-professional work where local agents might see the show. Having secured a basic agent, it may then be possible to raise his or her profile and change later.

Final year shows often provided links with agents. Tammy got her agent in this way; they arranged all her auditions and she was very happy with what they did on her behalf. Nicole too was positive. After her finalists' show, several agents expressed interest, and it was personal rapport which guided her choice. She trusted her agent to work hard on her behalf, and appreciated the fact that she was approachable, as she had friends who were hesitant about phoning their agents.

“I wouldn't be scared to ring her up if I needed help or I needed her just to get on the case with an audition or whatever. I can ring her up at any time and I trust her.” (Nicole)

Tim was very pleased with his college agent who put him forward for the right kind of job. However the agent tended to regard Tim solely as a dancer, neglecting the fact that he could also sing and act. Tim hoped to change his agent and break away from this labelling. Another dancer intended to change agent soon, feeling that the current one had too few contacts and had not proved particularly effective.

On a negative note, Christie reported rarely receiving replies to the 30 CVs she sent out every two months to agents, and had found it impossible without an agent to get auditions for musical theatre.

Some new performers had found work without an agent's help. One felt that his college had overemphasized the necessity of securing an agent and he had noticed a discouraging effect on those students who left without. Such despondency was, judging by his own experience, misplaced.

“After the showcase some people didn't get agents. They kind of went ‘Oh, I'm gonna give up acting' straight away” (Fin).

Michael had felt this sense of despondency, admitting spending the whole of his last year feeling *‘very panicked'* because no agent had picked up his photo or CV from any of his college shows. Eventually, however, Michael received offers from three agents.

These and other comments from the new performers hint at the complexity of relationships with agents, casting directors and other key figures. They were coming to terms with these relationships and following a variety of paths to seize audition opportunities.

Grasping auditions

The new performers we spoke to were keen to grasp the opportunities which auditions offer to “*put themselves about*”. At the same time, every audition could be viewed as a learning experience and they had been learning the ropes. They described the benefits from:

- attending auditions for experience
- preparing appropriately
- learning from feedback
- distinguishing between audition requirements

“Every audition I’ve improved my audition technique, and the way that I present myself as a person, as a business, which you don’t really think of when you first leave college ... it’s all about upholding your career.” (Nicole)

“You’ve been once, you’re more confident and more aware of yourself and you’re more aware of what’s expected of you, which I wasn’t when I left [college]. I just feel I’m learning more and more.” (Sarah)

“Just going to auditions can prepare you for what people are wearing and what the standard is and how to get the right mentality for auditions.” (Christie)

With a successful first year behind her, Nicole had then attended 12-15 auditions in the next 6 months, with recalls for about 7, and second recalls for 3 or 4. She felt some improvement in her performance with each audition attended.

As well as offering experience, feedback from the audition panel, or via the agent could be particularly helpful. In addition, it gave exposure to the standards and values in vogue, as well as promotional advantages. Stage managers described a similar learning curve, and were positive about attending interviews for jobs.

“Yeah, I really enjoy interviews. Even if you don’t get the job you’ve been up there and you’ve seen another theatre and you’ve met some other people.” (Suzanne)

The new performers were working through the differing requirements for dance or singing auditions. Oliver described this distinction: for a dance audition “*you just turn up in your dance gear and off you go*” and requirements become clear on the day of the audition, whereas for a singing audition a song suitable for the show would have to be taken along. Later in the selection process, the performer would receive scripts and songs from the show to prepare for a second audition. For musical theatre auditions, performers may be asked to prepare two songs, and the choice of song could be problematic.

“They say ‘Oh, can we have a pop song?’ or whatever, and I think ‘God, I really haven’t got anything appropriate’.” (Christie)

Overall, performers’ approach to the audition process centred on

- realism
- persistence
- having faith in oneself

How many auditions did they have behind them? This varied greatly. For an individual person, it could vary month to month, depending on what was casting. There might be 2 or 3

auditions in a couple of weeks, then none at all for a month. A singer and dancer in musical theatre told us that she could be recalled 5 times for one show, and still not be offered the job. Sarah estimated attending 25, including recalls, since summer 2003. Daniel had attended “quite a few” auditions: about 150, but including recalls his tally was more like 200. Some people judged themselves successful simply by being auditioned, while others told of their anxiety and disappointment at having attended so many auditions without success.

“You’re going to be disappointed, but you’ve just got to keep looking forward and keep thinking, you know ‘maybe next time’.” (Hannah)

The ability to keep positive is an essential characteristic.

“Not to worry, just stick at it, I suppose...it is tough out there, but not as tough as they [the schools and colleges] make out” (Suzanne, ASM)

Most urged against becoming disheartened by rejection at audition, though Suzanne’s appraisal of more favourable labour market conditions for stage managers suggests that for her, the opportunity to make a good start in her professional life had come more easily than for some of the new performers.

A chance to prove oneself

Making a good start

‘Good starts’ come in many guises. Three performers spoke positively about working on cruise ships. Some factors which they highlighted were:

- the company’s reputation
- the security of a contract which runs for some months
- travel opportunities
- good salaries
- pleasure in working in a state of the art theatre
- the chance to perform each night and improve one’s skills

*“The other team members were wonderful, the company was good, the shows were quite good, and the places we visited were **really** good. And, I made a lot of money tax free.” (Emily)*

For those who went straight into commercial touring or London shows, being able to perform to a live audience and being paid for doing it can be a reward in itself.

“Just the fact of being on a West End stage every night of the week is enough.” (Oliver)

*“It was the money. It was actually getting paid for something that you’ve always wanted to do and you pinch yourself and you think ‘I’m getting paid for this. Not only am I on stage, but actually the **bonus** is that I get paid’ – and I got paid quite a lot for doing it and that was very good.” (Nicole)*

The down side for someone like this who earns very well at the start may of course come later. Taking office jobs the following year, this performer found it hard to adjust to a big drop in earnings:

“I don’t think I ever will be able to earn as much money as I would do if I were performing in a musical... Commercial musicals pay really well. I’ve really noticed the difference, just temping and working in an office, which I used to be able to deal with.” (Nicole)

After a good starting salary with a cruise ship company, Tammy too saw this as a benchmark for any future earnings, and was reluctant to take a professional job for lower pay.

Martin went straight from drama school into a film with high profile names. He talked about the excitement of doing *“something bigger than you expect”*, but also about his enjoyment in working in a medium which called for a more natural and subtle acting style. For some students, very different kinds of contracts added up to a good start. Fin’s early jobs included nine months with a Theatre in Education company and a few days in a low budget film, and he valued all his experience equally.

Building a professional profile

Building a professional profile is a prime concern during this time. But the ‘success stories’ are only part of the picture. Performers who made less spectacular beginnings could still see progress in the opportunities which each new job offered. They spoke to us of:

- working progressively to a higher standard
- accepting responsibility and new challenges
- learning quickly in new situations

A modest opening with a fringe company gave Lisa contacts and the chance to help produce. Martin’s first job in a film led to a recommendation from a casting director for a part in a prime time TV series. Tim’s second contract offered greater job satisfaction than the first:

“There is a lot more money in this company, so the dance crew are a lot higher standard... People in this company are a lot more professional and the acting is to a higher standard, definitely, which encourages you as well to work to a higher standard.” (Tim)

A touring contract with a hotel chain in the Mediterranean had tested Christie’s ability to sing to a live audience, though she found the dancing unchallenging. Overall, she felt that this had helped her to grow as a performer.

“I really wanted to dance, but I think the singing was really useful, because you were singing live every night, and solos and things. And it really got my confidence up.” (Christie)

For others, it was a gradual broadening of experience which mattered. Michael said that working on TV commercials just after drama school had taught him a ‘massive amount’, giving him confidence for recent work on a TV series:

“We went straight into one of the later scenes of the episode, you know, you’re straight in there, and then you move on, don’t kind of have time to mess about... warming up into the character or getting used to the camera angles, or the blocking that you’ve just been given by the director, so the absolute pressure that I felt with the commercials... I kind of overcame that pressure so I felt that I could overcome this one.” (Michael)

Two interviewees who had trained in Stage Management had exciting experiences in their first months after college, and one spoke of some pressure in handling a series of new responsibilities in a short time. Her lengthy period of work experience as a student led to a

first job as a runner for a television company which she saw as 'a way into the industry'. She was then offered a promotion to work on a new documentary series which proved both challenging and rewarding:

*"That was really hard work. We had a very small team and I was given a lot of responsibility, setting up filming and things and I absolutely loved it. Just the degree of work that was involved really, and how much I was able to get involved... expanding my knowledge of television in such a short time. I just **learned** so much."* (Alex)

During the summer work as stage manager for touring concerts offered very different experience and extended her repertoire. Suzanne too thought her experience as ASM for a major summer festival would stand her in good stead:

"Experience of outdoor theatre is a definite bonus... It's looked upon as a pretty massive responsibility, a tough job. So I think to have that on your CV is quite strong... It's definitely a topic of conversation with people who you meet and work with and if they interview you they want to know how it all works and how different it is from normal theatre work. So in that sense it's another notch on your belt, to say that you've done that." (Suzanne)

Her best experience had come 18 months after college, taking a classical production with a renowned company on an overseas tour. Working with a crew whose English was limited had been demanding, but this was *"the highlight of my year so far... fantastic, a really, really great job"*.

These performers and stage managers had discovered the importance of being able to learn quickly and improve one's skills or develop them beyond those gained at college.

New skills and abilities

These interviewees were largely well satisfied with their college training. Nevertheless they were still translating their technical skills into professional practice and could describe a growing professionalism:

"You learn how people work, how companies work, the necessity of going through warming-up exercises, taking care of your body, pleasing people. The job has given me a lot more confidence. I have grown as a person." (Emily)

Fin too thought that despite a good training at drama school, *"I didn't learn the self-confidence until I was up performing on the stage"*. Specific skills which performers said they gained in their early work included:

- Circus skills
- Martial arts
- Camera experience for television
- Microphone technique
- Technical terms in photographic work
- A 'fixed smile'
- Relating to children
- Learning to live on board ship

Beyond their technical skills, several had found it demanding to start managing their own finances, given the often sporadic, freelance pattern of their work:

“Being self-employed is a lot more difficult than you think it’s going to be and trying to manage your own taxes and become your own financial manager is hard.” (Tammy)

“I nearly got stung, you know, the first time I had to pay tax. I mean, the second time round, which is now, I’m totally with it, you know, I’m saving all my receipts and making sure when April comes I’m gonna be on the ball.” (Martin)

One had registered as self-employed but later had to un-register. Sarah was “*not very clued up*” and Lisa had problems with “*balancing figures and things like that*”. One took help from an accountant friend and some went to accountants to avoid falling foul of the system through ignorance. Several were anxious to avoid receiving a sudden and unexpected tax bill, particularly if this should arrive at a time when they were not employed.

Keeping positive

Eighteen months on, some recent graduates had already been through lean times. They stressed the need to stay motivated when professional engagements were not forthcoming. Aware as students that talent itself would not guarantee employment, they had still had to come to terms with what that meant in practice. Some were making personal adjustments to this while trying to sustain a sense of purpose and keep positive, despite lacking engagements which would give them the chance to perform. After a structured life at college, it can be hard to find a balance between the need for a non-professional job which pays enough to survive but also allows for attending auditions. For several new performers, an alternative job provides a means of survival. Some spoke of this as a short-term measure; for others it was part of a longer term strategy. We look now at some of these alternative jobs.

A question of balance

A safety net: teaching

Those thinking of ways to maintain a balance in the longer term included people who were developing teaching opportunities or acquiring new skills for instance in working with young people. Teaching is an obvious option to underwrite a performance career, including:

- taking a ten week course as a dance teacher for a country-wide performing arts organisation offering weekend sessions for children and young people
- taking weekend classes in dance at several local venues
- teaching on a regular basis for one’s former dance or drama college

Trained as performers, few interviewees expressed enthusiasm for teaching. Tammy saw it as “*just an in-between thing*”: the money was good and it was easy, but she did not enjoy it enough to see it as a career, and did not feel that it enhanced her professional skills. Nicole thought that teaching tended to remind you that you’re not performing “*so it’s a little bit second best*”. Annie was pragmatic: she had gained confidence from teaching and even if she shortly got a performance contract, she intended to take a teaching qualification and in the future become an examiner. Managing their own school was an explicit aim of four of our interviewees, so for some people, teaching was certainly better than “*second-best*”.

“I don’t actually see it as a compromise and I hope people wouldn’t see it as a compromise either, because you either enjoy teaching, and it’s in you, or there is no point in teaching because you just get resentful and you transfer that resentment to

the children. But I enjoy teaching and while I was at college I got teaching diplomas, one in modern and one on ballet. So I am actually going to make use of them.” (Tim)

A safety net: alternative jobs

Alternative jobs taken for short-term reasons included:

- Secretary for a holiday company
- Working for a high street bank
- Work in shops and restaurants
- Work for a major cosmetic company
- Canvasser for an IT company
- Fund-raiser for a charity
- Croupier
- Work for an event management firm
- Reception work
- Temping with a medical/legal agency

The ability to earn in this way depends of course on individual prior qualifications, experience, and skills. Some sought a flexible situation, making it clear to employers or agencies that their priority was to pursue auditions and other opportunities. Others took only part-time work or jobs where it was acceptable to have time off to audition.

Other new performers, like the person training as a social worker, chose to work quite outside their professional area with a view to developing alternative longer-term employment possibilities. None of those interviewed would have taken ‘non-performance’ work from choice, but when they did, some did provide useful experience. The ability – and the energy - to make the most of alternative opportunities is clearly a valuable characteristic in a new performer.

Pacing yourself

The rewards of working full-time to live audiences can be set against the challenges of adjusting to a regime of continuous performance pressure and long hours:

“ I was learning how to deal with things. If my throat wasn’t feeling too good and I had another four shows that week to do ...I’d calm things down a bit.. You’re constantly, constantly looking at yourself and you know that you’ve got to go out and perform to people... At college you’ve got four days to prove yourself... you show off and you do it, but you can’t do that all the time when you’re performing eight shows a week because you’d be on the floor and you’d die of exhaustion, so you have to really... pace yourself.” (Nicole)

In our postal survey, assistant stage managers reported very long hours of work, one averaging about 65 hours weekly. The interviews too revealed a demanding regime.

“You sort of start roughly about eight in the morning and then you sometimes finish about two o’clock the next morning... you’re doing that and then travelling on to the next venue.” (Alex)

“Nine-thirty till seven for a few weeks and then it was getting on for all day, all evening, and then once the shows were up, it was afternoon and evenings and that was six days a week.” (Suzanne)

Such intensity means that the notion of 'resting' applies in a particular way to stage managers who operate in a very different labour market from performers:

"I try to take a few weeks off in between jobs because I do need to touch base and I do need to, you know, have a bit of relaxation, so I suppose it's that as well, to manage your time and manage your personal time as well" (Suzanne)

The survey data which follows complements these personal accounts of exits and entrances.

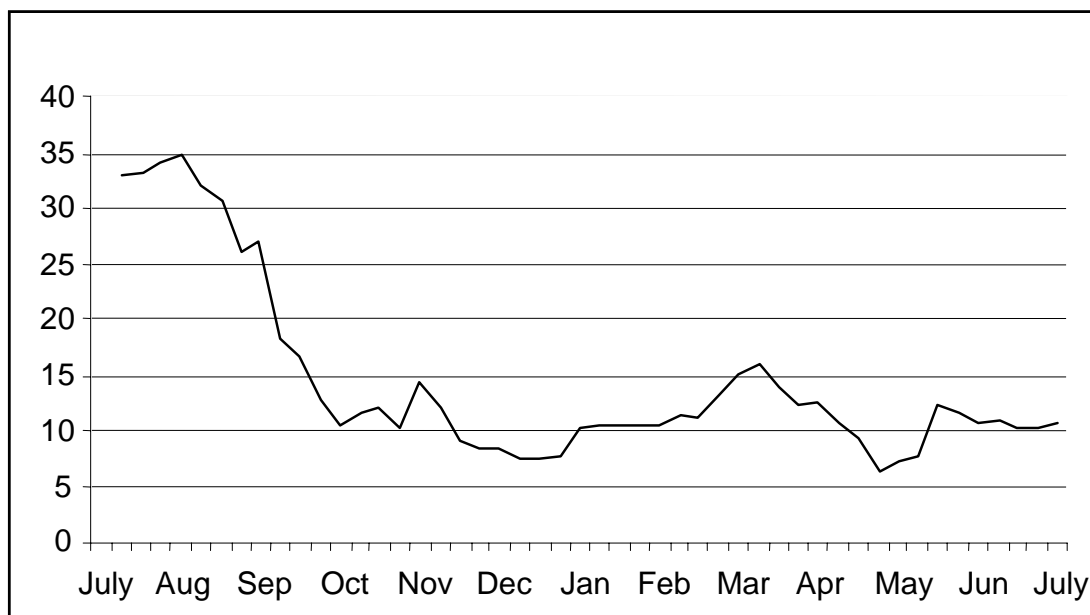
Figuring it out

What are they doing now?

Postal surveys of recent graduates one year after leaving college in 2002 and 2003 give a statistical glimpse of their employment.

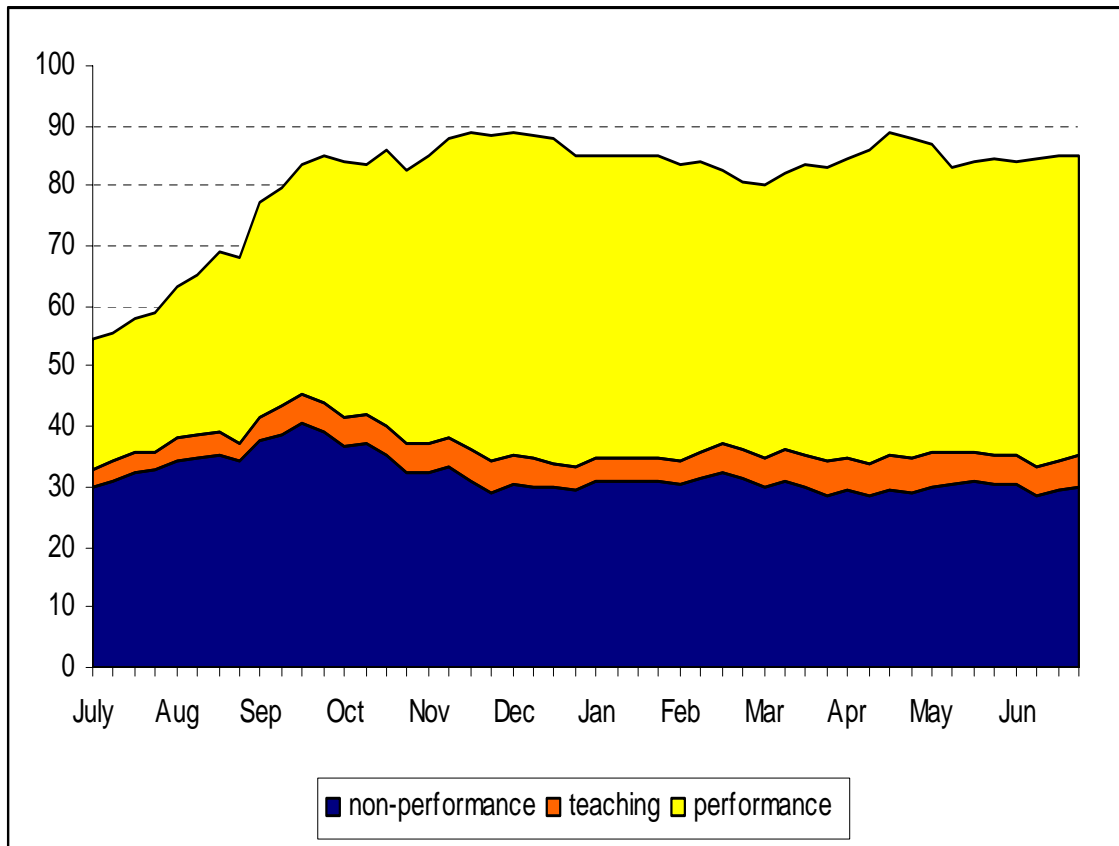
Information was provided by 220 people about the type of work they had done since graduating and about its duration.

Unemployment Following Graduation (%)



- About a third of graduates had some weeks of unemployment just after college.
- From August to October the unemployment rate fell as people moved into jobs.
- From October on, about 1 in 10 recent graduates was unemployed.

Employment Following Graduation (%)



- In the months after leaving dance and drama school most of these students moved quickly into paid employment.
- Just after college about 1 in 5 went straight into performance-related work.
- By the winter, about half were in performance-related work at any one time.
- Other forms of work were still important: about a third of graduates were in non-performance work at any one time.
- One in five did not gain employment involving performance in this period.
- During the first year, on average these graduates were employed in performance-related work (including teaching) for 23 weeks.
- This research is on-going: 2004 graduates are to be surveyed in summer 2005.

This is a whole lifestyle

The lifestyle

Returning to the interview data, the performers and assistant stage managers who spoke to us gave us very varied details of their background, training and aspirations as well as their work experience so far. A student lifestyle had been replaced by that of the professional young performer, for which they were equipped by their training. However, as we have seen, this transition to working life entails a multitude of things, for after leaving college those who spoke to us were encountering a variety of barriers as well as opportunities in taking their first steps as professionals in a very competitive job market. We have seen how some people will secure a contract for several months work straight after leaving drama school. However this does not guarantee a job immediately after that. Other people who are still seeking professional work may have to be quite flexible about the hours they work and the type of work they do when seeking roles, and also in securing professional employment.

Our interviewees were adapting to new patterns of living and working. Two young stage managers were very positive about the transition to professional work:

“It’s been brilliant you know. I thought my student years would be the best years of my life really, and as brilliant as they were, I’ve found that working is actually... just as good and just as fun and rewarding.” (Suzanne)

Meanwhile, actors and dancers faced a different world from beginning stage managers and one which could require major adjustments from recent graduates:

“It’s a lifestyle rather than a career or a job. People that are in normal jobs, they go to interviews and things like that, but this is a whole lifestyle that you have to get used to and nothing prepares you for that until you’re there, until you’re actually doing it” (Nicole).

How can we learn more?

How do we hope to learn more about how people establish their careers? Reliable information about graduates when they leave college and afterwards will help us discover more about this critical phase and the ways in which people develop and sustain a professional career. Over time, for instance, such data can help in comparing the experiences of actors, dancers and stage managers.

The research team is continuing to contact recent graduates through postal questionnaires and a programme of telephone interviews, and hopes to hear more from these people as they develop professionally. This will help us to:

- understand better how early work experience leads to further career development
- understand how well the strategies used by new performers and stage managers serve them over time

Such information can inform policy-makers as well as those working in the industry and in the professional schools. Most of all, the research gives the chance to share with current and potential students the messages from those who have recently entered the workplace as professional performers.

PROFILES OF THE INTERVIEWEES

| Name | Age | Qualification | D&D Award | Employment 2002 – 2003 |
|----------|-----|---|-----------|---|
| Tammy | 20 | Diploma in Musical Theatre | ✓ | Singer/dancer cruise ship company Aug 02 – Oct 03. |
| Nicole | 25 | National Diploma in Musical Theatre | ✓ | 2 nd lead musical UK tour, West End 2 contracts Aug 02 – Sept 03. |
| Lisa | 25 | National Diploma in Acting | ✓ | Canvasser, software company. Actor/producer fringe company, pantomime. |
| Suzanne | 22 | BA in Professional Stage Management | ✓ | ASM - 4 contracts: regional theatres and summer festival. |
| Alex | 21 | BA in Professional Stage Management | ✓ | Runner, location assistant, TV company. SM concert tour Sept 02 – Aug 03. |
| Sarah | 20 | National Diploma in Musical Theatre | ✓ | Sales advisor. Teacher, Saturday classes, dance and drama school. |
| Hannah | 20 | National Diploma in Musical Theatre and Performing Arts | ✓ | Dancer, summer seaside production and pantomime. Dancer, cruise ship 8 months. |
| Emily | 20 | National Diploma in Dance (Musical Theatre) | ✓ | Singer/dancer, cruise ship 9 months. |
| Stuart | 26 | National Diploma in Professional Acting | ✓ | Croupier and senior demonstrator 'magic' in store. |
| Oliver | 28 | National Diploma in Musical Theatre | X | Swing dancer and understudy, major West End musical. |
| Annie | 20 | National Diploma in Dance and Teacher Training | ✓ | Dance teacher and shop assistant. |
| Stephen | 22 | National Diploma in Dance (Musical Theatre) | X | Fixed term contracts overseas July – Nov 02 theme park, Jan-Aug 03 cruise ship. |
| Fin | 25 | National Diploma in Professional Acting | ✓ | Fixed term acting contract, Theatre in Education. |
| Christie | 22 | National Diploma in Musical Theatre (Dance) | X | Dancer, variety show. Singer, dancer, entertainer, Mediterranean Hotel April 03 on. |
| Tim | 24 | National Diploma in Dance: Musical Theatre | ✓ | Fixed term contract ensemble dancer, major West End musical. |
| Martin | 24 | BA in Professional Acting | ✓ | Drama teaching assistant. Community theatre. 2 TV roles. |
| Daniel | 24 | National Diploma in Professional Acting | ✓ | One week theatre show overseas. |
| Michael | 23 | BA Course in Performance (Acting Option) | ✓ | Promotional work. Front of house. Lead role, pantomime. |

Note: Age as at summer 2003, one year after leaving college.

Want to know more?

Why?

The pilot interviews, as part of our evaluation of the Dance and Drama Award Scheme, were designed to collect information about how former students fared with regard to employability, searching for jobs and starting professional life. This award scheme aims to select the most talented students for high quality training to prepare them for productive careers in the industry. Further information is available at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/financialhelp/dancedrama> (or alternative). Overall, the wider evaluation seeks to assess the impact of the scheme on the development of the dance and drama sectors.

When?

The telephone interviews took place in the period January to April, 2004. With interviewees' permission, most were tape-recorded for accuracy and transcribed.

Who?

The actors, dancers and stage managers had graduated from 9 different schools or colleges in 2002. The names used are not their real names. Though they shared many characteristics, as individuals they proved quite different in their ambitions, motivation, and persistence.

How selected?

These 18 performers were among those who had said on the 2003 questionnaire survey that they were willing to be interviewed at some future time. They were chosen to reflect a gender and age balance, a range of experience, and to include minority ethnic performers in the proportion that they are represented as students in the colleges. 15 of the 18 had given their ethnic background as white in the survey. In 2004, most interviewees were living in Greater London or the Home Counties. 10 were female, 8 male and a year after leaving college, 6 were 20-21 years of age, 10 were 22-25, and 2 aged 26 or more. 15 had support as students from the Dance and Drama Award Scheme.

The full report:

Exits and Entrances: Students' Stories is written for students. It is based on a full research report: *New Performers' Voices*, by Sheila Galloway and Susan Band of the Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research (CEDAR), at the University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL Tel: 024 7652 3638. You can access this at: <http://www> (to be inserted). We welcome observations from you, whatever your perspective.

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