

Technical Paper 040

DANCE AND DRAMA AWARDS SCHEME EVALUATION PROJECT PHASE 2

NEW PERFORMERS' VOICES

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May 2004

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New Performers' Voices: Summary

Sheila Galloway and Susan Band

The Pilot Interview Programme

1. This report presents findings from a pilot programme of interviews with performers who graduated in 2002. After the 2003 pilot questionnaire, we had details of 34 people living in the UK who were prepared to be interviewed.
2. 15 of the 18 interviewed had had DADA support as students, having trained at 9 of the schools receiving awards. Aged between 20 and 28 in 2003, all but three were white and most were based in Greater London or the Home Counties. Appendix 1 gives brief profiles of these recent graduates. They were diverse in their attitudes, aspirations and motivation as well as their professional and other experience, and several would not have been able to complete their course without the DADA award.
3. This group represents the 'survivors' of those to whom the colleges issued learners' questionnaires in their last term in 2002. Because of that distribution process, followed by the 2003 pilot graduate questionnaire survey, we do not know how typical this group is; these people should not therefore be seen as representative of the 2002 cohort, nor of DADA holders.
4. Names of schools, productions or individuals are not given, and to maintain anonymity, pseudonyms are used. The telephone interviews were tape-recorded for accuracy, transcribed and analysed. Lasting between 20 and 70 minutes, they took place in January - April 2004.
5. Three broad areas were addressed. Performers first reflected on their experience of seeking employment and working during the first year after graduation. Secondly they focused on the job since summer 2003 with which they had been most pleased. Finally they commented on a range of issues; these were drawn from the 2003 questionnaire, previous work with employers and providers, and the DADA evaluation steering group. Appendix 2 gives the pilot interview schedule.

Reflections on the First Year after Graduation

6. The evidence shows how several recent graduates found it exhilarating to be performing professionally. They gained great pleasure from working and being paid to do so. Audience response was rewarding and they relished the challenges and opportunities offered in these early jobs.
7. Alongside those with successful first year experiences working in popular West End shows and a film, there were those who had a slower start and some performers who had minimal professional work.
8. Cruise ship work was seen in positive terms by the three former DADA students who had done this. They focused on the security of a long contract, good salary,

good living and working conditions, the chance to travel and have fun. The reputation of the cruise line company was an important consideration.

9. Novice stage managers had more structured beginnings and they could chart their progress in terms of growing professional expertise.
10. Transition to full-time work brought its own pressures. Stage management meant long working hours; the intensity of the work made breaks between contracts advisable. New performers, on stage for eight shows weekly, and sometimes touring, had to build up stamina and learn to pace themselves. After a college regime, adjusting to constant performance took time; but audience response lifted them and with experience, their confidence grew.
11. Some commented negatively on the long run's unvarying repetition. Not every early job challenged the graduate as much as s/he would have liked, though the experience offered valuable training and a first entry on the CV.
12. Teaching was a common short-term safety-net in providing income for DADA graduates, but was not the preferred priority. Some saw it as a possible later career option.
13. Alternative jobs to earn money were sometimes part-time, so that it was still possible to attend auditions. Some jobs had no connection with a performance career. Others did provide experience or develop skills which related in some way to their professional aims, particularly communication, interpersonal and presentational skills.
14. These performers were realistic about the discontinuity of employment they were likely to meet and they made efforts to keep positive in the face of unpredictable work patterns and lifestyles.
15. Auditions, 'being seen' and proving oneself in a job could lead to possible future work. Proving oneself meant learning to work with others and consolidating or extending skills by working in different contexts.
16. While early experiences can lead to further employment, those who secured little or no professional work in year one and had no showing so far lacked a basis on which to promote themselves in year two.

Experience since Summer 2003

17. Many recent pleasing experiences were reported. Comments showed how performance experience generates enthusiasm and fosters confidence.
18. Year two after graduation brought mixed experience. Some who had been supported by the DADA scheme reached turning points or crises. Some faced their first difficult period at the end of a long contract straight after graduating. Some moved more easily into new jobs which they saw as a progression.
19. For graduates with heavy debts, level of pay was critical. For others, it was just one aspect of an offer. It was hard to balance the need for income against

promising but poorly paid work, especially for those performers who needed to pay off student debt but wanted to get valuable professional experience in work for which they had been trained. Those who had already earned a high salary did not readily adjust to less pay, and were reluctant to take a lower-paid job.

Preparation at College for Working Life

20. The new performers identified attitudes instilled at college which had served them well, including self-discipline, a 'thick skin', a professional approach, and the need to 'push oneself', as well as a rigorous technical foundation.
21. Contacts made at college with staff, directors or choreographers, agents and other students continued to be a factor in their lives.
22. They spoke positively of the preparation which colleges had given for a performance career and mentioned very few shortcomings in initial training: specifically, more solo singing, more preparation for auditions and more preparation for working with TV cameras. Now experience at work was increasing their confidence and they were developing a better understanding of how companies operate.
23. Several new performers voiced their concern about dealing with tax matters and financial management, and said that they would have welcomed more input on this at an earlier stage.
24. Some performers spoke of the need while at college, to work in front of live audiences, rather than an audience comprised solely of other students.

Support from Different Sources

25. After graduation the colleges involved in the DADA scheme commonly continued to make recommendations and suggestions to recent graduates and this was warmly appreciated.
26. The evidence was mixed on the merits of having an agent, the difficulties in securing one, and the quality of their services. The relationship depended on trust, rapport and confidence that an agent was really working on one's behalf.
27. A few performers spoke of union representation, mainly as on-the-ground support in checking conditions in events and productions.
28. New performers had limited scope to re-negotiate terms and conditions, though one agent was praised for this. Some were unwilling to try for better terms in case it jeopardised their position. In such areas of managing a freelance career, some would have benefited from being more fully prepared before graduation. ASMs negotiated on their own behalf; one had felt a need for practical guidance. Conscious that bad practice existed, interviewees were aware of the need to guard against exploitation.

29. Spotlight, *The Stage*, various web sites, Equity and the Stage Management Association were other channels finding out about job opportunities and getting known professionally.
30. Personal contacts were already an important part of job search strategies for DADA graduates.

Auditions and Professional Profiles

31. Early professional work was essential to establish professional standing.
32. Just occasionally auditions required prior preparation and scripts were provided. For musical theatre, performers commonly prepared songs; two of them said that this justified having a singing lesson.
33. A few spoke about getting auditions as a success in itself. The number attended varied widely and was difficult to quantify. Attending numerous auditions without getting work was clearly dispiriting. Audition technique was an area in which some performers said they had learned a lot and improved since leaving college.
34. Auditions were unpredictable and could amount to substantial time away from work, so limiting the non-performance jobs which were practicable.
35. Three performers who had held DADA awards as students spoke about the changing climate regarding casting black and minority ethnic actors. A well-spoken young female actor regretted a dearth of suitable jobs, while two male actors were confident about future opportunities.

Continuing Professional Learning

36. Much of the professional learning taking place at work was informal, in extending and polishing technical skills and developing the ability to manage professional situations.
37. Those not working as performers were doubly disadvantaged. They knew that they should independently be taking classes to maintain their skills, quite apart from developing them further. This was hard to fit in after working all day in an office and several had found the cost of classes to be beyond their means.

Employment Aspirations and Outcomes

38. In some cases, their professional experience had already exceeded their hopes on graduation. Others had so far had less work as a performer than they had hoped for but remained cautiously optimistic about the future. There were also some who had little or no professional opportunities to date.
39. Strategies effective in finding work included having 'the right' agent, attending auditions, nurturing personal contacts and keeping in touch with those who knew one's work, following up suggestions from college, and proving oneself in practice to a reliable and professional performer.

40. Advice to those about to graduate centred on attitude and auditions, and having the ability to avoid getting disheartened and remain pro-active.

Good Starts and Good Employers

41. Most spoke about a 'good start' to a career in terms of having the right attitude and operating in a professional way, rather than in terms of securing contracts.
42. Six people explained the characteristics of 'good employers' they had encountered. They paid fairly, treated employees with respect, taking account of their concerns and giving attention to their working (and where appropriate living) conditions. New performers valued these features highly.

Career Building and Medium-Term Hopes

43. Future career development was subject to much uncertainty and some were uneasy with the notion of 'building' a career. Without linear progression patterns, most expressed their medium-term hopes in terms of the types of job, employer or working environment they would like.
44. Both young stage managers had a track record by year two and though their work was project-based or event-based, they could identify progression and foresee ways in which they hoped to shape their careers.
45. Some performers had to weigh up whether to aim for breadth, taking several different kinds of work related to their performance speciality, or whether to aim for depth, focussing more directly on their preferred area.
46. The evidence implies that aspirations were partly conditioned by professional experience so far. These new performers did not seem over-ambitious. Their training and their experience gave them a realistic assessment of the world in which they have chosen to work, while remaining optimistic about their futures in this precarious professional environment.

Additional Comments

47. Some performers described themselves as very lucky. They were all talented and trained; we cannot know whether they were being unduly modest nor speculate on how exactly 'luck' might interact with their professional skills and personal characteristics.
48. They focused on 'proving yourself', working hard, getting on with others, learning as much as possible, being reliable and doing a professional job. They talked about creating a reputation for such qualities rather than making their mark through good reviews. Critical acclaim was rarely mentioned.
49. Some features of new performers' working lives highlighted in this pilot study merit further exploration. Among these are:

- how performers balance work to cover living costs with work to take them forward professionally
- the role of agents
- issues focussing on auditions
- casting and non-white actors
- the particular experience of stage managers
- examples of good employment practice.

Access to a wider range of new graduates would enable further analysis to sample and compare particular groups, among them, holders of DADA awards as distinct from those who did not have that support.

It would be revealing to track this core group as they continue to establish themselves professionally. A continuation study like this would show ways in which initial experience relates to later career development, and help us assess how new performers' early strategies serve them in securing work and developing a professional reputation. The data from this pilot study point to the value of such a longitudinal analysis.

This evaluation has reported elsewhere providers' and employers' views on the skills which DADA students need and the employment landscape they will encounter. This paper is the first in-depth analysis giving the views of those who benefited from the scheme about their training, their employability and their professional experience as they start to establish sustainable careers. Their personal assessment of these matters is central to the overall assessment of the DADA scheme.

New Performers' Voices

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1 Introduction

The research design adopted for Phase Two of this evaluation envisaged the collection of primary data from recently qualified performers in complementary ways. The pilot questionnaire survey (Davies, 2003) provided initial statistical information and pointers towards particular issues. 'New Performers: Qualitative Study Groundwork' (Galloway, 2003) set out the method used to gain access to individuals, certain issues which could be taken up in the interview programme, and outlined ways in which we hoped to gain qualitative accounts of individual experience at the outset of these performers' careers. This paper details the pilot interview programme, and provides initial findings. It should be read alongside papers on the 2003 New Performers' Survey, and on interviews with employers and providers.

Of the new performers who were interviewed, 15 had received support from the DADA scheme as students. Though they had made the transition to the workplace, they spoke to us about ways in which their training had prepared them for professional life. They touched on the strategies which they were adopting in seeking work and described the rewards gained and obstacles faced in their first jobs as performers. Their accounts encapsulate key aspects of the professional lives which await students whose initial training is supported by the DADA scheme.

2 The Interview Programme

2.1 The Approach Taken

From the questionnaire survey of 2003, 72 former students returned forms of which 49 said that they were willing to be interviewed at some future time and gave contact details. 41 were then living in the UK and we initially prioritised these people. 34 of these had been supported by the DADA Scheme. In practice, of the 41, only 34 actually gave full contact details. This comprised our target group and the aim was to interview 15 people. In the event, we conducted 18 interviews with 2002 graduates, including three performers who had not held DADA awards as students. The group represents the 'survivors' of those to whom the colleges had issued leavers' questionnaires in their last term in 2002. This distribution procedure varied from place to place and the 2003 pilot questionnaire further filtered out potential interviewees. Those DADA graduates whom we were able to approach were therefore very much self selected.

'New Performers: Qualitative Study Groundwork' (First Interim Report January 2004) advocated caution because we cannot say that this pool of contacts is representative of all new performers. Nor does it enable comparisons to be made between those who gained DADA awards and those who did not. However this exercise does allow us to tap into the particular experience of some of those who graduated in 2002 and to use this pilot interview programme to identify key themes which might be further pursued either at a later stage or with a larger number of recent graduates. One obvious channel

would be through more comprehensive lists of former students which could be provided by the schools and colleges.

One strength of the approach taken lay in the information already available from the 2003 questionnaire returns. This enabled us to rank potential interviewees in order to access some of those who clearly had some interesting experience to discuss, whether positive or negative, as well as people who had made a less distinctive start to their professional careers. Other criteria which we had in mind in ranking contacts were a range of characteristics such as degree of satisfaction with career to date, location, schools attended, type, variety and length of employment, gender, ethnic background, indication of disability. The aim was to access a range of people with a variety of stories to tell about their experience so far.

Usually the first approach was by email or telephone to agree a time when it would be convenient to do the interview. In some cases, the predicted difficulties were confirmed. Telephone numbers and email addresses changed. People working unsocial and unpredictable hours were difficult to reach: in one case it took eleven phone calls to secure the interview. Some who worked long hours could only be reached on certain evenings or at weekends. Some used only mobile phones, which can make interviews more problematic. Six of those approached did not respond at all, despite follow-up attempts. After the interviews thanks were expressed by email, telephone or letter.

Three broad areas were addressed with interviewees. First, reflections were invited on their experience of seeking employment and working during the first year after graduation. Then they were asked to talk about one of the jobs which they had done since summer 2003, focusing on one with which they had been pleased. Thirdly they were asked to comment on a number of issues which we had previously identified as being of interest, as a result of analysis of information from providers and employers, the 2003 questionnaire survey, and comments from the DADA evaluation steering group.

Appendix 2 gives the interview agenda used in the pilot programme. The experience of these interviews also alerts us to changes which might be made in any further interview programme.

2.2 New Performers: An Infinite Variety

This was a very diverse group of people. However it is not a simple sort of diversity. In fact, in some ways the group presented a relatively limited selection of people of whom 15 had held a DADA award. We interviewed 10 female and 8 male performers. 15 of these had in the postal survey indicated their ethnic background as being white. Most of the new performers who were interviewed were based in Greater London or the Home Counties. In Summer 2003, 6 were aged 20 or 21, 10 aged 22-25, and two aged 26 or more. These features suggest quite a high degree of shared characteristics. They had studied at 9 different schools or colleges.

The diversity was more evident firstly in rather nebulous features like motivation, aspiration, tenacity and other attitudinal factors. The interview agenda focused on experience and reflections on that; it could not adequately address such psychological factors in depth. Secondly, while most spoke about financial matters in some way, some seemed much better placed than others, for instance in whether they had the option of

living with parents, whether they could cover the cost of a running a car, whether they had student debt, and if so, how they coped with it. Thirdly, to this diversity of attitude and financial support, we must add the varied professional and non-professional opportunities and experience which they reported. We would therefore stress the need to focus in what follows on individual accounts and observations. These enable us to pinpoint issues highlighted in this pilot phase, which might be more widely explored in greater depth in further interviews or more widely in future surveys.

Appendix 1 gives brief profiles of those who were interviewed, based entirely on the information given in the 2003 questionnaire returns. They do not include any of the interview data. In these profiles, as in this paper itself, the names used are pseudonyms. Those referred to as Alex and Suzanne trained in stage management, not as performers. Oliver, Stephen and Christie were the three who did not as students have DADA support. Of these three, Oliver has been very successful in gaining high profile work, though it is noteworthy that he already held a BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts before attending college and at 28 was the oldest of the group.

Table 1 summarises the information in the profiles. When asked whether the DADA award had been an advantage in seeking work, eleven performers either responded positively or remarked that the award had enabled them to train (in one case to take unpaid work placements) and two mentioned having less debt on graduation. Two said that in seeking work, their qualification helped, and in order to qualify, five indicated that DADA support had been essential because they could not have afforded to do so without the award. Only 3 of the 15 former award holders found no direct advantage from the award when seeking work.

The interviews provide persuasive evidence that new performers recognise DADA funding as a principal element in the training they have received as a basis for their early years as professionals.

These insights into the perceptions and experiences of new performers support the views expressed by dance providers at an earlier stage of this evaluation (Freakley T.P. 035), and by drama providers, discussed in technical paper 041 elsewhere in this Interim Report. Given the unpredictability of early career development, and the imperative to balance financial security with professional standing new performers joined providers in emphasising opportunities to learn and develop, to establish and build upon reputation and support networks as characteristics they seek in first jobs, with good working conditions.

Such evidence serves as a basis for a set of indicators of ways in which “successful” employment of beneficiaries of DADA funding might be measured.

TABLE 1 NEW PERFORMERS PROFILES: SUMMARY

| Name | Age | Qualification | DADA | 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. |

Information here and in Appendix 1 is based on returns to the New Performers' Working Lives Survey, August 2003.

3 Reflections on the First Year after Graduation

When conducting interviews we had before us the 2003 questionnaire returns giving details of employment during the first year after graduation. These gave us some prior information, and alerted us to particular experiences. Interviewees did not have those to hand, but we could remind them when necessary about what work they had been doing during their first year after college. The interview data indicate some ways in which, as might be expected, the experience of those who qualified in stage management differs noticeably from those seeking performance openings.

3.1 First Steps

For some new performers, work with a cruise ship company offers a predictable contract with the chance to travel and subsistence costs covered. Three former DADA students had done this. Tammy had auditioned for such a post with a company which she knew to be very good to work for. Its reputation was important to her and she discussed the offer with her agent. The travel and the salary were positive features but one aspect was not welcome. This was the weekly check that dancers met their designated 'show weight', a practice in the US which she had not encountered in the UK. All board and lodgings costs were met by the employer. The terms of this contract were not negotiable, but it gave her a fifteen month period of employment straight after leaving college.

Emily liked the fairly long contract offered, also the feeling of camaraderie with fellow crew members:

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.

In a similar vein, Stephen found the cruise shows fun to do, commenting upon the state of the art condition of the theatre. He appreciated the chance to earn a sufficiently large amount of money to enable him to pay off some debts.

Although Stephen found the dancing not overly challenging, he felt the experience would enhance his CV because of the cruise company's high reputation.

For Christie too, the environment was important in naming her four month long job in musical theatre at a large seaside resort as the one she had been most pleased with during the period in question:

It's a really nice place and there was, like, ten girls in a house...it was like an old B&B. And I made some really good friends there.

While Christie had found the work itself more or less as she had expected, she would have welcomed something more challenging. The comments from Emily, Stephen and Christie indicate that while they found the work itself reasonably satisfying, other factors were more important for them at this stage of their career.

For Michael this other factor had been the need for well paid work to pay off some student debt, which he had found in TV commercials, judging his work to be enjoyable, useful material for a CV and a sound basis for a future in TV and film work.

Lisa's main job in terms of hours worked and salary was for an IT company, but, asked to identify the job which had pleased her during this period, she highlighted working with a fringe company. She had auditioned for this at a time when she did not have an agent and was ready to take everything she was offered. This opportunity gave her the chance to help produce which was one of the best aspects of this work. Another was the contacts which she made.

Daniel had enjoyed only limited periods of employment after his graduation, working firstly on a commercial show for one week in the West Indies. He liked the travelling involved, but was disappointed that the contract was so short. Following this job he had been unemployed for two months, describing this as the worst period since leaving school. More recently, Daniel had found a job which had not altogether matched his hopes. The long audition process had raised his expectations that this would be a challenging job giving him the opportunity 'to shine'. In the event, however, he found the job failed to extend his abilities, leaving him inactive for long periods.

This performer described professional life since leaving college as 'like a roller coaster', for though his second job had proved disappointing in some ways, his success in attaining it had assuaged the depression of his two months without a job.

By contrast, Nicole had a good start as second lead in a popular musical which offered the 'triple threat' of acting, some dance numbers and solo singing. It gave her experience of touring and a West End debut, with reviews which were favourable and indeed singled out her performance. Asked about how she secured this role, she spoke of two factors: first attending auditions and second, knowing people. She had gone to 'batches and batches' of auditions at the point of leaving college:

Everyone tends to put you up for everything so you can get *seen* straight away.
... I didn't really choose to audition; I just got put up for it I suppose.

She had known the producers prior to her DADA-supported course, so she had 'a kind of private audition'. In April 2002 Nicole had already been offered a job in repertory but decided to complete her course. We should note that she had previously gained a degree in English and Theatre Studies which had honed her acting skills before doing the national diploma and was older than most of the 2002 leavers. Asked about the best aspect of her first professional job, she replied:

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.

Touring with a company of just under thirty people for a week at each venue meant a good social life with people of similar mind.

Oliver, who had not had DADA support, had begun his professional career in a similarly impressive way, with two end-on contracts, each for one year, in West End musicals.

He left his school a few weeks early to accept the first job. He had very much enjoyed performing in both shows, finding contrasting merits in each. While one show had proved much more rewarding as a dancer, he had played the lead part in the second, and reported finding scope in both shows for his equally strong skills in singing, acting and dancing. Oliver had obtained both jobs through his agent. He described the best aspect of these jobs as follows:

Just the fact of being on a West End stage every night of the week is enough, really. I mean, the best thing about [the first show] is definitely the choreography... a very unique style and really, really rewarding to do. And with [the second show] it's definitely the music... and the band are just absolutely fantastic, everything's played live every night, and it's the audience reaction to the show.....

Tim had auditioned and found his first job before graduating, though he finished his course before beginning the year's contract for a West End musical. He too found the audience reaction stimulating, inspiring him to give his all in performances. Nevertheless, this high level of engagement was stressful to maintain, particularly on a daily basis. Tim was 'put up' for the job through the agency attached to his college. His CV was sent off to the casting agent, he was then called for an audition, followed by several recalls.

Fin had been employed non-stop as an actor since his graduation from drama school, and declined to highlight any one job:

I was pleased with all of them, to be honest, I was smiling all year.

He explained that a nine month Theatre in Education tour had provided very good professional experience as well as the opportunity to travel. However, he valued equally a much shorter contract of four days working on a film, enjoying the opportunity to use his existing martial arts skills in something more akin to what he wanted to do:

I didn't learn new skills in a physical sense, I just learned a lot about being on a film set and in a low budget movie... it was the action aspect of it... and the fact that I would be able to meet and work with people of the same kind of professional angle, who wanted to do the same things.

Martin found a job in a film straight from drama school. The director and some other members of the cast were high profile names, and he hoped these contacts would prove useful in 'setting the ball rolling for the future'. But for Martin the main thrill lay elsewhere:

It was also just the fact that when you first leave drama school you just would not expect to land in a film, so when you actually do something bigger than you expect, you know, obviously it's going to be a heightened thing.

He explained that he had always wanted to be in a film, but had set this as a goal for five years after leaving college. He experienced film acting as something completely different from acting on stage, preferring a form of acting which he found more natural and more subtle, because of the close proximity of the camera.

Three stage management students were interviewed. Of these, two were enthusiastic about their work, while one had worked only very briefly in this role, for one week, counting this work as very much secondary to his two month lead role in a Christmas show.

First steps to a career in stage management for Suzanne came from an advertisement in *The Stage* in April 2002. Knowing that she had an appointment as an ASM on a major outdoor summer festival meant that before taking up this post she could absorb with equanimity a period without work:

I was finishing my job at [the festival] and I applied for it and went up for the interview and got it so – I think I was out of work for about four weeks, but it was good because I knew I had work at the end of it.

Her reasons for describing this as the best job in the first twelve months, were that it was entirely different from anything she had done before, it took place outdoors during the summer in a public place, was on a very large scale, and gave many opportunities to learn new skills.

For Alex, a lengthy period of work experience with a major television company towards the end of a Stage Management degree course resulted in being offered a job as a runner, which she saw as 'a way into the industry'. This led to being 'singled out' for a new production and offered a promotion to work for the same employer as a location assistant on a documentary series for six months, followed by a period as stage manager for touring concerts during the summer. Part of the reward from the concert tour work had been the responsibility it entailed: 'I was the stage manager and I just had everyone reporting to me...'

She had been happy with all her jobs since graduating, but highlighted work on the television documentary series:

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 just such a short time. I just *learned* so much and experienced things I'd never ... The thing about TV is that you get to do things that you'd never, ever normally get to do unless you'd gone through so many years of training.

Working closely with people who were expert professionals in their field and their clients put her in a privileged position which she relished, despite very long hours such as 15 hour working days, giving up weekends and filming away from home, all of which adversely affected time with family and friends. She had not foreseen how engrossing it would be to have access to the professional worlds of other people.

The experience of these young stage managers is very much in line with the comments of DADA Stage Management providers in Freakley, (2004) TP 041.

Many positive features emerge from these accounts of early professional work and these former students clearly relished the new challenges and opportunities open to them.

3.2 Transition to Work: Coping with Pressure and Long Hours

Alongside the rewards, some recent graduates had to adjust to the realities of full-time work. The particular pressures of a long-running show were described as new performers made the transition from performance at college for perhaps a four-day show to performing professionally for eight shows weekly. This called for stamina which recently qualified actors would still have to build up. Nicole captured this:

As I was working 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. You're just constantly looking after yourself, really looking after yourself health-wise...

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.

Assistant stage managers reported long hours of work in the questionnaire survey. In interview Alex described working on a summer concert tour, averaging about sixty-five hours weekly:

You sort of start roughly about eight in the morning and then you sometimes you finish about two o'clock the next morning... you're doing that and then travelling on to the next venue.

This was continuing: in 2004 her work schedule meant that weekends could not be guaranteed and, looking ahead, she predicted that she would have one day off in the coming four months.

Suzanne, also working in stage management, recalled one of her first jobs which had proved very rewarding, but meant long hours:

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.

She spoke also of the need to make space between jobs:

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 to manage your personal time as well
To get home and grab my things... just to catch up and I always feel a lot better... even if it's just for a day to, you know, see my mum...

When assessing periods out of work as a freelancer, the intensity of such periods of employment should be borne in mind.

3.3 Teaching: *It reminds you that you're not performing*

Straight after graduation, some of those interviewed had worked primarily in jobs which did not require performance skills, such as teaching, arts administration or working front of house. Some posts were at a professional level or called for high level skills. Teaching and taking workshops was a way for several people of keeping close to their preferred field in the short- and medium-term. It was sometimes also a longer-term option, to be considered after a career as a performer. There were various models including:

- A ten week post as a dance teacher for a performing arts organisation providing weekend sessions for children and young people country-wide.
- Taking weekend classes in dance at several different locations in the locality.
- Teaching on a regular basis for one's former dance or drama college.

Few of those interviewed expressed great enthusiasm for teaching; they had of course trained as performers. 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 make it a career, and did not feel that it helped her develop any additional professional skills.

For Nicole, teaching was not inspiring especially if it involved youngsters for whom performing was just a hobby. With children who were motivated to go into the profession, things might be different, but by and large 'if you're teaching it reminds you that you're not performing... so it's a little bit second best'. She thought that teaching might develop useful professional skills for someone who wanted to become a dance captain, but that was not her aim.

While Annie enjoyed her teaching jobs, there was a degree of pragmatism in her choice. She was still trying to find employment as a dancer, but had gained confidence from her teaching role, through dealing with the students and learning from other teachers. However, even if successful in finding a performing contract, she was conscious of the short term nature of a career as a dancer and would be happy to return to teaching at a later date. Annie intended to take a teaching qualification, improve her status as a teacher, and eventually become an examiner.

Four of those interviewed said that they would like at some later time to set up and/or manage a school of their own. Tim certainly saw teaching as 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.

Teaching was a real pleasure for Sarah too, and she had been doing it since she was a student, but she would rather be performing:

I love teaching and ... I feel that I can teach, I feel that I've got the ability to teach. I don't think everyone has that....

It means I get better money than most young people my age get from doing a Saturday job. I love doing it and I love putting together the shows with the children and I love the children I teach. But I just feel that I want to perform at the moment and then I can always go and do that later on.

Whether teaching is a short-term 'safety-net' or a long-term possibility, teaching and taking workshops clearly serves a useful purpose for many recent graduates as a source of income. For a few, it remains a serious (if not the preferred) career option.

3.4 Other non-performance jobs: *I'm working now on normal jobs.*

Some new performers were fortunate in being offered several months' work on very good salaries soon after leaving college. However, in these first months it is already evident that professional work is often short-term or sporadic, and survival strategies often meant taking other jobs to cover living costs. The performers who talked to us seemed to have adopted their own flexible approaches. It was an ASM who stressed the need for a flexible attitude:

You're not going to be working all the time and you have to be prepared to do waitressing or bar work and things like that. And some people aren't. They just – like some people I know, they just refuse to do ... things like that – but you have to, to survive.

I hated some of the jobs I was doing, but you just have to think 'OK I'm not going to be here forever. I will get something else'.

Non-professional jobs feature in the experience of almost all these recent DADA graduates. One distinguished between working straight from college as a dancer and working in 2004 on non-professional jobs: 'I'm working now on normal jobs'. Besides those outlined above, these 'normal jobs' included:

- secretary for a holiday company
- working for a high-street bank
- working in shops and restaurants
- working for a major cosmetic firm
- canvasser for an IT company
- fund-raiser for a charity
- work for an event management firm
- reception work
- temping with a medical/legal agency

We should also mention the college administrator who paid a former student who was at the time out of work for a day's office work.

Some of these situations outside the profession developed broad skills which were transferable. Temping had improved one interviewee's keyboard skills and an employment agency had sent her on a computing course, extending her IT skills.

Some performers made it clear to employers that their priority was to pursue auditions and other opportunities regardless of their current job. One actor working through a temping agency noted that 'they know about my situation', another said she 'worked around' auditions, in part-time jobs where it was acceptable for her to take time off for this purpose.

A positive picture of a 'non-professional' job emerged in Sarah's account of working for a cosmetic company which employed other aspiring actors. The firm was flexible about time off for auditions. It trained employees in make-up and skin care and sometimes arranged events where individuals could perform. There was a definite input to Sarah's professional interests partly because of the opportunity to learn about make-up. The job involved travelling to different locations to work with a variety of people and she felt that she had developed better communication skills. She did not choose this as the job which had most pleased her in the first year after graduating, but it was clearly more than a 'fill-in'.

The necessity to pay off debt prompted Stuart, who had undertaken a three year degree course prior to drama school, to look for a full time position, rather than looking for acting work immediately. He took the first well-paid opportunity: work as a croupier. Following this, he found a position as a senior demonstrator of magic in a shop, enabling him to pursue a longstanding hobby. While this may be strictly regarded as non-professional work, Stuart finds a number of links with his training as an actor.

There is a very close link between magic and acting... it's a question of learning your lines and knowing where you move and how you move and seemingly make everything look natural even though it's an artificial creation...I think it's the theatre in the job that I enjoy... I do want to get back into acting, *but* it's been a very good stepping stone for me because magic is quite a lucrative business if you're actually performing er, doing private parties or corporate functions.

If Stuart finds his way back into acting, he regards his prowess in magic as something he will be able to fall back on, at times when acting work is elusive.

The DADA drama providers cited in Freakley (2004) T.P.041 demonstrate their awareness that it may be in the new graduate's interest to develop alternative skills to ensure a sustainable career.

None of those interviewed would have taken non-performance work from choice, but when they did, it proved possible in some situations to gain useful experience. The ability to make the most of alternative opportunities was clearly a characteristic of value to a new performer.

3.5 Keeping positive

Some new performers are good at maintaining their spirits during bad patches. They need this ability from the start of their working lives: some of those interviewed had already been through very lean times professionally. They sought to remain positive even when it was not easy.

As regards retaining a positive attitude, Michael admitted that for him motivation was hard to maintain in periods of non-professional employment, with worries about rent or car repayments, contrasting sharply with the structured life at college. At these times it could be extremely difficult to find a balance between the need for a non-professional job which paid sufficient money and the need for time to attend auditions. Michael felt that to some extent, the idealism of college years, with its emphasis upon working as an actor is all important, was under threat (and this conflict was echoed by other performers who were paying off debts and because of their financial situation felt they were simply not in a position to think about taking on a job unless financially worthwhile)

You leave drama school and suddenly, you know, you've got a lifestyle decision to make... I still want all those things as an actor and integrity and want to be doing exciting work that really satisfies me creatively, but I also want to have a nice lifestyle where I can go out for a meal with my friends without worrying about how much it's costing.

Understandably, financial constraints and lifestyle choices, but also a sense of realism regarding the feasibility of securing unbroken performance work have their impact on the expectations and satisfaction ratings of the interviewees. Martin was training to be a social worker:

Because I know that there will be times when I'm not working and it would be silly of me to expect to be working full on as an actor, because that rarely happens, you know.

After a fortunate start in a musical which ran for a year, Nicole was both rueful and realistic about her second year as being her time for finding this harder, and was resolute in nurturing early contacts in the hope of future opportunities. Lisa took a wider view:

I don't think we have the power as an actor, unfortunately, is what I'm learning, to actually have that much control over our careers. I think that other people do that for us. We've just got to keep our own integrity and keep truthful I suppose to what we're doing.

Though aware before graduation that talent would not itself ensure employment and lifestyle, these new performers were coming to terms with what that meant in practice. They were making their personal adjustments to this while trying to sustain a sense of purpose and to keep positive.

4 Experience since Summer 2003

4.1 Opening Doors for Career Development

Early experiences could lead to openings for further work. When asked about this, people tended to speak about audition opportunities, 'being seen' and proving oneself in whatever professional opportunities there were. For Sarah, performing a short run in a play had led to being cast later in a video. Martin saw his success with his first job as opening the way for his appointment on a second contract:

The casting director obviously knew me from the film, because she must have seen it at one of the festivals. And she put me forward for [names TV series]. I was incredibly happy with that part of it, because I thought 'well obviously I did a good job on the film'.

Martin highlighted his parting the TV series as most likely to lead to future opportunities, because of its transmission on prime time television to a wide audience.

For Fin too, experiences gained during his first job led seamlessly to other work with the same TIE company:

...because of all the things that I learnt.... I think it was such efficient training [at drama school] that the company have found me very useful, have found me to be a really useful asset.

The magic shop had, perhaps surprisingly, produced wider opportunities for Stuart. He had developed friendships with professional performers (magicians) who have a show on satellite television and provided coaching for them.

Stephen reported more separation between his early experiences after leaving college and work secured later on. His work on a cruise liner had led directly from work with the same company in a theme park, but subsequently he found no link. Nevertheless, he had learnt from every job, especially skills in dealing with people in the different shows.

Oliver (who was considerably older than most recent graduates and had not had DADA support in college) thought the main basis for the future was the fact of having shows on his CV, which he felt confident would impress at audition. Potential employers might contact a previous choreographer with the questions: 'what's he been like in your show? Has he behaved, is he dedicated? Is he professionally on his game, or is he a bit lax?' Oliver's experiences gained during his first year had enabled him to foster attitudes which he was confident would serve him well.

Michael felt that his initial work straight in TV commercial schools immediately out of drama school taught him 'a massive amount', particularly with regard to becoming accustomed to close range engagement with cameras, enabling him to work confidently in a similar environment more recently with a part in a TV soap. On this,

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.

Less positively, one performer, who had worked in a supermarket since completing an eight month contract in the Mediterranean, unsurprisingly answered negatively when asked about experiences in her first year after college opening up new opportunities, and her comments were echoed by another performer who was between jobs.

On the other hand, Daniel, who had enjoyed only mixed fortunes in finding work, remained nonetheless positive about his first year after college:

...because of having an agent, having my face in Spotlight, being seen, people knowing you. The first year set me up as an actor.

Hannah, too, reported higher confidence levels during her second year out of college. The experience of securing work, particularly in pantomime, in the past increased her faith at auditions that she had a good chance this time. In addition, she echoed the thoughts of other performers about experiences gained as a basis for the future:

When you have worked you know how to handle yourself around important people and different people, you learn how you must present yourself and how you've got to, you know, talk and react to the people who matter.

Actors who had not secured much professional work in the eighteen months since leaving college had little experience to build on. Asked about her experience to date, Emily commented that it would be hard for her to find the drive to continue, without the support of her friends and family. Some did however have thoughts about moving on positively, like this actor:

It's being realistic about it and being positive and passionate and *trying* not to let any bitter or twisted thoughts come into your head. You know, you've just got to keep as positive as you can, and as realistic as you can, and not give up.

As a future stage manager, Alex gained valuable experience in her first job as a runner for a large TV company:

I got to go out on one-day shoots, so you learn a lot of things one day and then the next day you might be sorting out post-production... so it's just very varied... You were the only runner in the whole building.. I got to see such a variety of different things.

This had stood her in good stead on her next job as she knew about post production, setting up filming, finding camera men and so on.

Suzanne had secured her first stage management job after being interviewed in response to an advertisement in *The Stage*, but emphasised how that job itself provided other possible openings:

I learned a lot and I met some great people who do different types of work within the theatre so that was interesting.

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.

This recent graduate thought that the jobs which she had done she could in future take on 'at a slightly higher role within the company' Moreover, touring and outdoor work would be valuable experience in seeking further posts. She sketched out a picture of working for different companies whilst going back to those with whom she had already worked, with the aim of becoming a Stage Manager. At present she was prepared 'just to keep moving really: I'm quite happy to live out of my car'.

For those who had not yet had chances to perform professionally, it was difficult to envisage the next steps. Both performers and stage managers valued their early jobs for the possibility of opening doors to future work.

4.2 Most Pleasing Recent Experience

Professional activities could continue seamlessly from opportunities established during the first year following college. Oliver was clearly thrilled when offered first cover for a lead part in a second West End musical, building on his experience during the first year with responsibility for understudying every ensemble part. At the end of this second contract for one year, ending in April 2004, he had already secured a three month contract for a part in a third show. While these three contracts represented progress from swing, to ensemble and first cover, on to playing a part in a show, Oliver was cautious about sustaining this impetus, emphasizing that the ideal work is not always available at the right time:

You always hope and you always look to furthering yourself, which I've done for the last three years, but I'm always prepared to walk out of [current West End show] from playing a part, to go back to being ensemble again, or whatever.

Oliver had looked to his agent to secure employment, while Tim had received help from his college agency which had put his CV forward for a job in a new musical. He preferred this to his first year's employment:

What's better, I would say, is there is a lot more money in this company, so the dance crew are a lot higher standard....I think 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.

Having had almost continuous professional employment since leaving college (apart from two days working in a shop), Stephen had enjoyed all his performing work, emphasizing that the variety of experiences all made their individual contribution to his current expertise: the stability of a six month long contract for the same show, followed by singing in pantomime, then performing a different style of dancing in a light

entertainment show all occurred from August 2003, and all offered working environments widely different from the cruise line and theme park of the previous year.

By contrast with Oliver, Stephen felt that he had gained breadth of experience, rather than necessarily a progression with his work since August 2003, though his comments echo the observation that performers cannot rely on the opportune availability of preferred work.

I took them [the contracts] on because they were offered to me! I needed work. The ship was definitely a step up from working in [theme park name]. The tour I did because it looked quite fun. Panto I did to fill in time and because the money was quite good.

These performers have found pleasure in different aspects of their jobs. Michael felt satisfaction in progressing from his TV commercial work to working with *text* in his TV soap contract. However, in a different way he had been very pleased with the opportunity, immediately prior to the TV soap job, to do a commercial for a European TV company:

I was flown out to [major European city] and so that experience, I think, so far, has just been the most crazy and enjoyable; just, you know, being flown out to another country to work, it was incredibly exciting.

For Hannah, dancing with a cruise line had been a thoroughly enjoyable job, following her first year's contract at a British seaside resort. The contract involved evening performances, plus a few meeting and greeting duties with passengers:

We got a lot of time off during the day, which was brilliant...it was a fabulous seven or eight months.

Free time to explore was clearly an attraction for Hannah at that stage, but she was keen not to stay with the same cruise line despite her enjoyment of summer 2003. During 2004 she was considering working with another line, or a season on a holiday island to give her different professional experience with new employers.

Christie had responded to an advertisement in *The Stage* for the one job as a performer she had secured since August 2003. This touring contract at various hotels in the Balearics involved singing and dancing, and though she found the dancing unchallenging, she was pleased to be able to put this new experience on her CV.

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, and singing is part of being a dancer, if you're going to be in musicals and things.

Martin, too, was able to refer only to the one professional job he had held during the period in question. Like Christie, his confidence had been boosted by this job, partly by the fact that it had been gained through recommendation from his first year's employment.

Since summer 2003 Lisa had done very little professional work, but this included a Showcase in London and she was about to follow that with another out of London. This was a progression to a better venue than earlier work, which had involved workshops with an excellent director (though she had to pay for this). It amounted to three days in all, but with much additional preparation time.

Having had only occasional professional jobs, Sarah faced a turning point in the autumn of 2003. Her strategy then was to continue her education by embarking on a dance degree course, where she could join year two because of credit given for her previous training. She had three reasons for doing this: she said that she knew she was capable of getting a degree, she wanted to give time to contemporary dance, and further study gave her access to a student loan and accommodation which allowed her to live in London. She could continue to do occasional work to strengthen her professional record while completing her degree.

The new stage managers we interviewed had interesting opportunities in 2004. The best experience for Suzanne had been a short tour with an established company taking a Shakespeare production overseas. This had been 'the highlight of my year so far... fantastic, a really, really great job'. She stood in at short notice for a member of staff who was unable to go abroad with the company. The company asked her because they knew her from previous work just after she graduated. Suzanne reflected on what this had meant in terms of professional status and other considerations:

Last autumn I'd been Deputy Stage Manager so I suppose you could say that being an ASM again was a step down, but I don't really see it as that because [the company] being a really very high-quality company and that kind of work out there – it was difficult, because I didn't know the show and we had... a crew who didn't speak very good English ... so it was much more of a demanding job. But it followed on nicely I suppose to go back to a company that I'd already worked for.

I'm happier to be an ASM for a really good company than I'd say a Stage Manager for a smaller company that doesn't quite have the reputation and the *money*.

She had always wanted the chance to travel with work so this was 'definitely a step in the right direction'. Indeed the transition to professional work had gone well for Suzanne:

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. So.

For Alex, 2004 brought an ASM job with an independent company making a new TV reality show. It involved a 'massive team' and crammed working days: 'It's fantastic. I've never done anything this big before. It's going to be good'. In interview she spoke with enthusiasm of this opportunity where the logistical requirements of the show were intense:

I'm really enjoying what I'm doing now and it's really challenging because there is just a *volume* of stuff to do and a volume of people we've got to deal with.

In March 2004 Alex was booked for the coming six months, with a contract to July, then another job to mid-August. She would have to find something else for after August, and was hoping to have a holiday in October.

As these examples demonstrate, the second year after graduation brought very mixed experiences. Some new performers reached turning points or faced particular crises. Some emerged from good contracts after college and began to engage with the vagaries of the labour market in the same way as others had been doing since graduation. Some consolidated early experience and extended their professional profiles: their comments about their recent work demonstrate how performance experience generates enthusiasm and growing confidence.

4.3 Attitudes to Pay

We asked these new performers whether pay was the prime consideration for them in seeking work. Attitudes varied. Daniel held a range of attitudes to pay, depending on the job content and salary offered.

I won't just do any job, just because I would be getting paid for it. I will do a job if I am not getting paid for it too, if I think it offers good experience. But getting the balance right between doing work for valuable experiences and concern with getting enough pay is difficult.

While Hannah was prepared for periods of being without work, most new performers had some type of alternative (non-performance) employment and Martin emphasized the importance to an actor of a second job (in his case social work) which would enable him to be more selective about his acting work.

Lisa, whose professional engagements had to date been sporadic, did not focus entirely on pay:

It's always of consideration, but it's the job – whether I think it will open any doors for me or whether it's something that I think would... improve my skill base.

For Emily, pay was important only in that it should be sufficient to support her reasonably well, without exploitation, and she was unconcerned whether or not other people would consider her income “good” or not.

As a dance teacher, Annie had encountered attempts by some dance schools to exploit her with poor pay, putting this down to ignorance of her high standard of training and the high calibre of the college she had attended.

Financial reward was a prime consideration for some, notably for Stuart who was still paying off a loan following six years in education and training after leaving school. He had made the decision to take non-professional work (as a magician) to put himself on a secure footing financially before making any serious attempt to look for work as an actor.

Michael, too, had prioritised financial reward, having accrued ‘crippling’ debts as a student. He received DADA funding only from the second year of his course, taking on a

student loan. His agent had emphasized the merits of TV commercials as 'good bread and butter money for actors'.

Stephen had been one of the few people in his year not to receive DADA support and had found himself preoccupied with debts. As a result he was 'totally' concerned with the level of pay, and had to weigh up carefully whether he could afford to do take an interesting but less well paid job in view of the need to repay money.

Fin explained that his attitude to money had changed, originally concentrating on his work rather than the level of pay, but finding that his rent arrears built up under a lenient landlord. Now living in London, money had become 'the dominant issue'.

Criticism of Equity pay came from Oliver, for while non-equity contracts could be extremely badly paid, he judged the current Equity minimum insufficient to support a West End ensemble member, noting that this level has remained constant over some years, while the cost of living in London has risen substantially.

Suzanne's comments on pay as an ASM indicated her awareness of the less than satisfactory conditions offered by some companies:

I've always wanted to be on Equity contracts, so I'm not that keen on buy-outs. Having said that, I have been on a buy-out, but that was on my terms and conditions, so that was easier for me to work around... I'm not that keen to work for buy-outs who pay you very small amounts and no subsistence. I want to try and keep to Equity.

Some of those who earned a good salary in the early months took this as a benchmark for future jobs. So Tammy regarded as a baseline the salary she had previously earned with a cruise ship company in the first year after leaving college. Allowing for the fact that all accommodation costs had also been met, she was now reluctant to take a professional job which would pay below that level.

Hannah too was prepared to reject very low paid jobs, and wait for something else, even though this might mean being out of work for a few more weeks or months. She conceded, however, that she might have been prepared to take poorly paid work immediately upon leaving school when she had been unsure whether or not she would be successful at all in securing work.

Adapting to a substantial drop in pay had exercised Nicole. At the time of the interview she was glad simply to be earning:

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 – more than enough money – and now it's just a huge big drop... I'd probably have to have three jobs on the go at the same time to match the amount of money that I was earning last year.... Three kind of small jobs: working in a bar, temping and teaching.

Such personal experience confirms the observations of DADA drama providers in Freakley (2004) T.P. 041.

'Stop-go' employment is common in the sector, where periods of good earning and rewarding professional work are interspersed with periods without employment or in alternative jobs. Those who, like Nicole, have a sparkling start to their career may still have to readjust at a later stage.

The data show that there are some recent graduates who prioritise – or are obliged to prioritise- salary levels, but most of those who spoke to us saw pay as one factor among many in assessing the potential of a job. Those who had already been earning well could not readily consider, or found it hard to adjust to, a lower income.

5 Preparation at College for Working Life

5.1 *I remember learning that*

Several performers spoke very positively about the preparation which they had while at college, as did Nicole:

They drummed it into you that this comes very easy because we're giving you the classes, we're giving you the singing lessons, it's all included in your training. But when you *leave* you have to keep it up, you *have* to keep it up, you have to keep up singing lessons. OK you're not going to have one every week because you can't afford to, but have one every two months, keep it going. Keep going to dance lessons. And they used to *drum* it into us because they said, 'When you leave, you know, if you're not working, it's just completely going to go. And you need to keep it up, so you need to be self-disciplined'. So, self-discipline was a *huge* thing that they taught us. And that's stood me in really good stead.

Sarah reflected on how certain attitudes fostered during her course had remained with her:

You have to be quite thick-skinned. They're not *easy* on people, so that's helped because obviously the industry is very much like that

The training that I had completely and utterly prepared me for work and was probably the best training I ever could have had.

Sarah's views were supported by Hannah, who had found the strong competitive element hard to deal with at college, but it had taught her to be tough, to be decisive in selecting goals and strong enough to take disappointments.

Alongside the merits of a thick skin, several students emphasized the need to overcome nervousness, particularly at auditions. Good training was seen as the cornerstone for this skill, expressed here by Tim:

[Tutor's name]at the college really instilled me with a professional attitude. I mean, from the moment you step into the audition room: how to present yourself, your grooming, your general presence, what you choose to sing, she really instils a professional attitude with everyone, and that definitely carries you in good stead. I mean, you walk in there and you're comfortable, you're not terribly nervous, because you have all these helpful skills behind you, and I am sure I will carry it with me for many years to come.

Oliver, who had not held a DADA award at college, felt that he had been prepared as well as was possible in three years for his life in musical theatre. He highlighted the importance of a professional attitude, with an ability to relate well to others and fit in as a company member. However, he felt that this could not be taught and suggested that this is something which every performer must develop for him/herself with experience, where this is lacking as a natural gift.

For a number of students, however happy with the years spent at school, and no matter how high the standard of training, this could simply not fully prepare them for the reality of employment in the 'real' world. As Stuart put it:

Really the one thing that we needed was just more experience and of course that's the only thing that you can get by going out there and doing it.

Fin, meanwhile, said that the performance skills learned while on tour were 'utterly different to what I learnt in drama school'. Firstly, he had discovered that the three weeks rehearsal time allowed at drama school no longer applied: he needed to adapt the techniques learned there to a very short period of time; secondly he contrasted the experience of playing to a live audience professionally with that of playing to drama school audiences, preferring the paying audience as an environment in which to relax and unfold as a performer.

In the context of musical theatre, Emily too described the evident enjoyment of live audiences as a great encouragement, and also as an incentive for persevering with her career.

Clearly, no training course can prepare students for every working environment which they will encounter. Stephen observed that working with Americans and working with children had demanded different styles of working for which he had not been completely prepared in college. Crucially, however, his training had provided the necessary grounding to enable him to adapt well. Moreover, as he gained more practical experience he was finding himself able to make links with the material he had first encountered during training:

What I've found is, a lot of the stuff I learned in college, I've grown to understand from leaving and actually working in real jobs. And in technique as well, I find I get a lot of things that throw back. I suddenly go 'Oh, I remember learning that', and suddenly I have to use it in a job.

For several performers, other students whom they met at college were an important and enduring factor. They referred also to singing teachers, choreographers, tutors, principals and indeed an administrator as people who had influenced their development in apposite way and continued to give them support on occasion.

Young stage managers spoke of rather different preparation for working life. Suzanne said that work had required her to develop 'people skills', while her course had been

More about your personality rather than precisely what you can *do*. Definitely... being able to fit in with different theatres and what they expect of you and have the right personality is definitely what I've found useful. And teaching – I mean, you can't teach patience, but being at college definitely made me realise how to deal with certain situations.

Alex's stage management course had included sessions geared to preparing for work, including practical skills such as first aid and fire safety. It ended with additional more targeted input from the college including mock interviews with practitioners whose feedback to tutors helped them advise students. CVs had been meticulously assessed. A media accountant had come in to advise on working as a freelancer, and she felt that

the support of the college was still there. Reflecting on her original choice of college, Alex commented:

I don't think that we could have been prepared any more, really. I mean they were very frank with us, and we were always told that it's going to be hard; you've got to really push yourself.... I made the best choice... I got offered other places but, there, you work hard while you're there. They don't suffer fools lightly and they get rid of people if they're not up to it, and you have to prove yourself. And it's just constantly *proving* yourself and you learn to carry that into your career, really. I mean, I have and I'm always trying to prove that I'm up to the job.

We return in Section 6 to ways in which colleges support students in their job search. Reflecting on their college experience, these former students recognised that some skills could only be acquired by doing the job, but focused on how professional attitudes had been instilled during their training.

5.1 Skills lacking on graduation

The above section suggests that overall the performers we spoke to were well satisfied with their school or college training, though understandably lacking experience in translating their technical skills into professional practice in front of a live audience. There were few references to short-comings in initial training. A few performers did mention areas where they would have like more input. In one case, the school was said to have offered insufficient coaching for solo singing, making it hard for its graduates to compete with others who had developed strong voices because they had been training much more throughout their course. Another performer felt that she was well prepared by the college in terms of dance technique, but insufficiently prepared for auditions in both singing and acting.

TV commercial work had provided Michael with experience working with cameras, and he noted that at drama school only a couple of weeks had been devoted to television technique.

Some mentioned skills which are essentially a matter of maturity and experience gained in professional work. Emily had learned from every experience of being on stage, emphasizing how this is quite different from being at college:

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.

If some new performers lacked the confidence for performance as a professional on leaving college because of their limited performance experience, their confidence grew quickly where they were successful in finding work and gained experience. Fin conveyed this as follows:

They gave me the best that they could at drama school, but I didn't learn the self-confidence until I was up performing on the stage... and for remedying that situation I would say the best thing you could do to help students... is to get them

on stage in front of a real audience, and not just be criticised and analysed at school.

Christie (who had not had DADA support in her initial training) spoke of her inexperience on leaving college. She had found the environment of college protective, and subsequently felt she had been too relaxed in her approach to finding employment, not taking sufficiently seriously the need to be proactive, to hone her CV carefully and circulate this widely. Another performer stressed the need to be strongly self-reliant after leaving college:

Making your own contacts and trying to keep up the ones you had and trying to find your way without having someone to say 'Oh, so and so might be looking for someone'. So, trying to make it on your own.

When asked what skills they had lacked on leaving college and had acquired since starting work, six of those interviewed voluntarily referred to dealing with tax matters. Self-assessment for the tax return was a task for which they had felt quite unprepared. But they were involved in more than just completing a form, and Tammy indicated why new performers needed more preparation:

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.

Tim found that dealing with tax and national insurance had been very rushed and came at the end of the year. The approach had been simply to present students with several sheets of paper, with no adequate explanation.

Nicole had enlisted help from an accountant family friend but wanted in future to take control herself, while Martin was receiving help from his agent with 'the technical side of things'. He too was keen to gain a better understanding of his tax affairs, picking up books on the subject:

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.

Another performer had registered as self-employed on advice from college but was not earning enough and got into difficulties so had un-registered. In this area Sarah was 'not very clued up' and she voiced the concern that evidently troubled others: that it was possible to get oneself into trouble through ignorance about the system. Lisa too had problems with 'balancing figures and tax and things like that. That was something I hadn't a clue about.... I've got an accountant now because I'm rubbish at it.'

One might ask whether/how far it is the role of the school to develop such skills and we could question whether young people emerging from other courses in further and higher education are likely to be any better prepared. Nevertheless, the sector has a very high incidence of freelance work, and new performers face variable contractual arrangements, irregular patterns of work, complicated travel and subsistence allowances and so on (see also Galloway *et al.*, 2002). Some of these performers were working both as an employee and on a self-employed basis in two different contexts. In dealing

with their tax returns, they are contending with situations more complex than those of most new entrants to the labour market.

We should note that, overall, the 15 DADA holders (and the 18 new performers) who contributed to this pilot interview programme mentioned few gaps in technical skills.

6 Support from the College, the Agent, the Union

6.1 College Support in Seeking Work: *They still support you when you've left*

Most of these new performers spoke of strong support from their colleges. They put students forward for work in pantomime and, in their final year, helped them to prepare a CV and photographs and generally explained how to market themselves. ASMs Suzanne and Alex were similarly very positive about college support in seeking work and about the fact that it was on-going, putting former students in touch with companies looking for staff, and alerting them to possible auditions or jobs.

This much appreciated continued support attracted comment from several people: in Nicole's words, 'The good thing is they still help you when you've left'.

Fin had had good support from a number of members of staff, one specialist teacher helping him to find work, while a movement teacher kept him in touch with various projects and potential jobs. Additionally, Fin's college principal received high praise for his advice and ongoing interest:

He's been fantastic *mainly* from the point of view of encouraging me and kicking me up the bum..., but he also sends me stuff through the post... to say 'Oh you might want to audition for this', and you know, that he's made time to do that is really touching, so he was ace.

Oliver (who did not as a student have DADA backing) had also remained in close touch with his college, very much appreciating its ongoing support, the fact that staff would be happy to give advice if needed, and the visit of the college principal to see him perform in a musical.

By contrast, Michael reported receiving no help from his college in finding work, nor did he feel that he had received any support or follow-up, despite his occasional visits to say 'hello'.

The school may help students by inviting casting directors in so that pupils could practise auditions in front of them. Martin explained how this had benefited him as an actor:

It would just be with our own pieces and on a one-to-one basis. And because we did it for a whole term, by the time we left we were obviously, kind of oiled into it. So when we had to go for auditions as a professional artist you were used to it.

This comment supports findings from group interviews of students still at college carried out during an earlier stage of this research. They valued very highly opportunities given by colleges for work opportunities, practice auditions, and the presence of agents/directors at shows put on by students (Freakley and Band, Final Report of the DADA Phase 1 Evaluation, February 2003, pp. 47-48).

The new performers who spoke to us had tended to consult their agents rather than staff at their school or college about the terms and conditions of the jobs they were offered, though a number felt that the former would be prepared to help if asked.

At the end of a stage management course, Suzanne had some advice on terms and conditions as part of the curriculum at her college:

We didn't have a huge amount about it because – not until really when you're working do you fully understand what it all means. But we did have...lessons towards the end of our time there talking about - you know - the hours that you should work and what will be expected of you and what shouldn't be expected of you.

Hannah's college had organised her first dancing contract for her, but when she secured her second job with the same company, she felt confident enough to go through the details herself.

While there are examples of students who have found work through their own efforts alone, the role of both agents and school are crucial to the majority in securing offers of work. At the point of graduation, for many students, agents appear to be second to the school in this. In some cases the roles are blurred, in that employment is obtained through the school's own agent.

There was only one report of dissatisfaction with the role of a school in finding work (a contract was reportedly accepted on the understanding that more work would be in the pipeline, with indifference on the part of the school when this failed to materialise). These performers' reflections point to the importance during their course of connections which the school already has, and of the suggestions and recommendations originating from the school which continue after the student has left.

6.2 Agents and Seeking Work

There were disparate views about the merits of having an agent and the difficulties in securing one. There were comments too about the very varied quality of their services.

Links with agents had often resulted from shows during the final year of a course. Tammy got her agent in this way; they arranged all her auditions and she was very happy with what they did on her behalf. In Nicole's case, after the finalists' showcase, with some interest expressed by two or three agents, it was a personal rapport which decided her in favour of one in particular. She knew that someone was working hard on her behalf; she also appreciated the fact that the agent was approachable, because some of her friends who were unwilling to phone 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.

Some of these new performers had acquired an agent after leaving college. In Lisa's case, this happened about a year after, when she was advised by an actor she knew that his agent was looking for actresses with her characteristics.

Stephen (who as a student was not supported by the DADA scheme) had stayed in touch with his college agency, and had been put up for many auditions through them,

but he had secured work through his own efforts, finding the orientation of the agent too much towards musical theatre, whereas he was keen to work as an actor. He was grateful not to have had to pay the agent fees.

Tim had been very pleased with his college agent's success in putting him forward for the right kind of job – as the college agent he knew Tim well. However, the negative side of this arrangement was the agent's tendency to regard Tim solely as a dancer, neglecting the fact that Tim could also sing and act. Tim was looking to change his agent, to break away from his perceived labelling as a dancer.

Martin acknowledged the difficulty in finding an agent when not working: 'because – how are you going to be seen, you know?'. He suggested that performers could look at going into perhaps poorly paid semi-professional work where local agents may see the show. Having secured a 'basic' agent, it may then be possible for the performer to raise his/her profile, and change later.

Christie (one of the performers who had not had DADA support at college) reported poor service from each of her two agents. One had offered only one audition for musical theatre in four months. The second had provided no auditions since Christie had joined one month previously, and had yet to send out an agent's contract for signature, despite her reminders. Christie questioned whether this agent would be diligent in circulating her details to casting directors, bearing in mind the delay in 'putting a bit of paper in the post'. Another dancer was intending to change agent in due course, feeling that he had too few contacts and had not handled a particular situation effectively.

There were several comments about difficulties in engaging agents, explained by Emily as follows:

I would like to have an agent, but really it's a Catch 22 situation. Agents want to see you in something before they will represent you, and working on the cruise ship didn't allow for this. Mostly the stuff they will be looking at is in the West End. But I am working on it.

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

However, Fin, who had been very successful in finding work as an actor without an agent's services, felt that his college had overemphasized the necessity of finding one, and suggested that this had had a discouraging effect on students who had left without.

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

The point is supported by Michael, who admitted 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, though he eventually received offers from three agents.

Alongside these students' views, we should note that the five dance providers interviewed in Freakley (2004b) pointed to the uncertain benefits to be gained from agents' services, placing higher value on the smaller agencies who would act as personal managers (Technical Paper 035, p.68, Interim Report January 2003). The

complexity of relationships between agents, casting directors and others is illustrated in Freakley (2004a) T.P. 042 and these recent DADA graduates were reaching their own understanding of this complexity.

Young stage managers, without agents, use other job search routes which are discussed elsewhere.

6.3 Union support

Once out of college, some of these new performers had come into contact with Equity. The union had, for instance, looked over a contract for Tim, although he was not a member. Equity representation was very much part of Nicole's experience of touring a musical and also playing in the West End.

Newly qualified ASM Suzanne, working on a major UK festival with an international reputation recalled how, when accepting the offer of the job, she had not entered into any negotiation about terms or conditions:

I suppose I'm never really that picky. I'm always quite happy to be you know offered something and that was the first job I'd ever actually been interviewed for.... You had to do a lot of driving and a lot of late nights and things and I suppose you could have said 'Well actually I'm not that keen on doing this. I'm not that keen on climbing walls and things like that....'

In practice, once preparations for the festival were under way, Equity's regional representative had played a role in checking and resolving some practical issues concerning the 'mammoth' workload and particular outdoor conditions:

That was the first time I really experienced Equity. We had a representative who came and spoke to us and made sure everyone was happy in what they were doing and made sure the work was safe and all that kind of thing... They did look after us very well.

We should note that a number of performers reported feeling so elated at securing their first contract that its terms and conditions largely passed them by. They observed that in any case, if they were to find fault with the contract offered, they would be in a poor position to negotiate: the job would simply go to someone else. Daniel pointed out: 'After all, I am not at the level of a star, who can say 'I do care about this, or I don't care about that'. It seems likely that it is at this very early stage of their career that performers have the most need of advice, at a fairly vulnerable transitional stage in their lives. They are thinking beyond the world of college but may not yet be fully au fait with possible union support.

6.4 Scope for Negotiating Terms and Conditions

Overall, in the early stages of their career, these performers had found, as we heard above, little scope for negotiation of their terms and conditions, which clearly varied greatly with each job and in different sub-sectors. For some, the details of negotiation were obscured by an agent's close involvement with securing a contract, as for Michael:

Ultimately I'm kind of shielded from those terms and conditions by having an agent. And I've got confidence in my agent, that she'll do what's best for me.

For a musical which toured nationally before playing in the West End, Nicole had two separate contracts. Her agent had negotiated a higher salary for her, and had succeeded in doing this for shorter-term engagements as well. Of the performers we interviewed, Nicole was one of those who were very happy with the way in which her agent worked on her behalf, both in getting auditions and in enhancing the terms of her contract.

Stephen explained that he was always careful to clarify the issue of travel and accommodation, whether or not these expenses were included as part of his wage. Another issue as regards accommodation was whether or not he would be expected to share a room: this was particularly important in the case of, say, a cruise where room share could last for several months. When on tour, would he be provided with breakfast? Would cooking facilities be provided? If not, eating out would prove expensive. He pointed out the disparate cost of living abroad, high, for example in Scandinavia, much lower in certain other countries. It was also important to verify the currency in which payment would be made, bearing in mind the fluctuation in rate of exchange which could occur between signing of the contract and the payment date.

Working in stage management, Alex and Suzanne were in the position of handling their own negotiations. On a six-month contract in television, Alex had been happy to be an employed member of staff rather than working freelance, even though, on a freelance basis, overtime would have been paid. Employees here were represented by BECTU. Her contract had no pension provision but the company did have a number of benefits for employees. There was holiday leave and she felt that the contract had been 'pretty fair' and the job had also paid well. (Another contract with an independent TV company differed in allowing only unpaid leave, meaning a loss of income for those who took holiday.) She distinguished between situations where negotiation was possible or not:

Assistant Stage Manager jobs, most of them go by Equity, so you know before you go what the rate is. But TV pays quite well and you can negotiate if you don't think it's proper for the job you're going to be doing.

Pay had been an issue when she worked on a self-employed basis for a touring concert company. After a week or so she decided that the very long days (her questionnaire had recorded 65 hours weekly) merited a higher salary, and successfully made the case for more pay.

These experiences led her to suggest the need for guidance on freelance rates outside theatre and television. In taking work with the musical concert company, she had asked acquaintances already in the business about the level at which to pitch herself, and used comparators which she devised for herself. In the event, this underestimated the nature of the work and hours on the job, so that she had to renegotiate as described above.

Some performers clearly felt that they had to be alert to possible bad practice and occasionally one referred to a case of exploitation. Two mentioned friends or acquaintances who had had bad experiences, and one reported being paid £40 for a 5 day week, with eight hours acting work per day. He described the company as a

'shoddy, terrible organisation to work for'. A fourth performer described work which had been done (through an agent) for which no payment had been made some months afterwards, despite the fact that the film had been shown on television. Another complained of agents who ask for payment in advance, before securing a job for their client. We cannot comment on these cases where they were reports of the experience of other people, and we do not have all the details about the two cases involving interviewees. But we raise the issue in general terms, because it relates to the type of support which new performers need, and it affects their level of trust as well as the awareness which they have to develop to guard against such practices.

6.5 Other Agencies and Individuals: *It really helps if people know you*

Most of those interviewed subscribed, where appropriate, to Spotlight and several highlighted successful results from doing so, for example Oliver:

Yeah, I'm a member of Spotlight, that's kind of a must in this business, just because I know for a fact that a few of my auditions that I've got have been through Spotlight.

He had noticed that at the auditions he had attended a copy of Spotlight was open on the table, revealing his photograph and CV: proof, he felt, that the subscription was well worthwhile.

Fin had defaulted on his last payment to Spotlight, and as a consequence had been omitted from its last edition. However, having received two job offers through the publication, he had found it 'really useful', and hoped to re-apply. Default on payment to BT resulted too in Fin being removed from internet connection.

In contrast to this, Tammy was a member of Spotlight as well as various web-sites but thought that these had not yet helped her; her agent was the main channel to auditions for her. Two other performers also said that they were not aware of having had an audition through Spotlight but one pointed out that 'I suppose they might see us and then go to a casting director, so you might not know'.

Several performers regarded website marketing as too expensive, and Daniel was hoping to create his own web page. He saw this as a long-term project, drawing on his gradually increasing experience in marketing jobs. Other performers mentioned Castnet, PCR (Production Casting Report) and *The Stage*.

Freakley (2004) T.P. 042 illustrates the variety of channels through which dance employers seek dancers and confirms the wisdom of the strategy which most former DADA students adopt of pursuing difference routes in seeking work.

Time and again people spoke of the value of personal contacts. Nicole gave three examples. She had been seen for a new show because its choreographer had taught her at college. Following an earlier college show, she had been approached about a new musical which was still in preparation. Looking back two years, a previous show director had recommended her for an audition, and she had recently been contacted again by this company. Her examples demonstrate how a student may benefit from the connections made at college, both formal and informal. They also point to the long lead

time for some productions and the fact that 'it's good to keep all the contacts going and there's only so much your agent can do'. Nicole stressed the value in a very competitive world of being known to others as a reliable partner:

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.

For some new performers peer groups play an important role. Lisa found a core friendship group from college very supportive; they would meet and share information about casting directors and what they were looking for.

Hannah suggested that new employment opportunities could arise simply by doing different types of work, meeting people and making new contacts. This gave hope for the future, even as a contract came to an end:

Whenever I've come back from a job now and I'm, like, 'Right, I'm out of work', there's obviously a lot more chances, a lot more people I can phone, a lot more people I can contact to see if they have got work than there would have been when I first left college.

Those in stage management mentioned using web sites for up to date information of job opportunities: Production Base, a subscription site for TV work which circulates potential applicants' CVs and Mandy.com, a US based site listing jobs internationally with on-line application. One ASM used a site giving regional film opportunities.

For Suzanne, the Stage Management Association had led to being contacted and getting a job. The Equity web site and *The Stage* were other sources of information. Equally, she too mentioned 'word of mouth, other people' as routes to employment opportunities.

When it came to seeking advice about jobs in the future, ASM Alex had already been recommended by a production manager within a major TV company for a subsequent job and now knew enough people in the company to feel that 'if I'm stuck, there's someone there to sort of guide me in some way. It put me in good hope for the future.'

7 Auditions and Professional Profiles

7.1 Developing a Professional Profile

Several actors and dancers made the point that, whatever one's skill or talent, decisions about casting were often determined by how closely one's appearance or other features met the requirements. In Tammy's view, a long contract with a respected cruise ship company gave her useful contacts, especially abroad and looked good on her CV, but that would not improve her position in auditions where 'it comes down to whether you're right for that particular job on that particular day'.

Work with a fringe company contributed to Lisa's professional profile because it added to her CV and she had had some good reviews. For Nicole, playing second lead in a West End show had carried more weight than the pre-London tour. Because the show and her performance were well received, her profile was enhanced:

I get quite a lot of auditions now where I probably wouldn't have done if I hadn't done the job and a lot of people, important people: choreographers, casting directors, directors saw me in that show... People know who I am, now, in the business.

Sarah's job as dance teacher for Saturday classes was not what she really wanted, but it had been seen as positive when she went for a job in children's television.

While Fin's work in a British film had not led to other work in the same area, he noted that it had helped him to form contacts with other people in that business and to make new friends. In addition he had learnt some new skills and identified a new teacher in martial arts, one of his key interests.

Work in TV commercials had taught Michael 'a massive amount' and he acknowledged that his growing confidence in responding quickly under the focus of cameras had put him in a good position for subsequent acting work in a TV soap. The experience had enabled him to overcome the pressure of going 'straight into' filming, with minimal warm-up and preparation time.

On the other hand, Tim was confident that his first role in a musical had directly helped him to find a second job, supporting him to 'progress up the ladder' this time as understudy for the main part in a musical.

For Daniel, improved professional standing was 'all about confidence. The job gave me lift and energy', and he felt that success in securing his first job had given him the drive to carry on to the next search for work.

Oliver's view was that he had developed a lot professionally over the previous two years, bearing out the advice given at college that students really begin to learn when they leave because paying audiences expect a lot more from the performer, every night of the week, than is the case at college: a theme supported by other performers and discussed elsewhere in this paper.

It is interesting to note that when asked about the effect of contracts upon their professional standing, performers interpreted the phrase “professional standing” in rather different ways. For Martin this meant simply being in the work he felt comfortable with, in his case film or TV and securing parts on a continuous basis.

7.2 Preparation for Auditions

We asked whether auditions and preparing for them triggered any particular learning processes. For Tammy, auditions did not mean any special preparation or learning. For work in TV commercials, Michael had sometimes been asked to attend an audition dressed as a footballer, or as an office worker, and for his work on TV soaps had occasionally been sent a script in advance by the BBC.

Daniel’s agent would send him the script for a play in advance. However, Daniel remained unconvinced of the advantage of this, suggesting that the most important thing is for an actor to be relaxed on the day ‘so that the way you are shines through’.

On one occasion Fin had been asked to prepare a speech from a classical Greek text, but found it ‘really heavy and very wordy and I fouled it up horribly’, and was rather relieved not to have been offered the job.

Oliver drew a distinction between dance and singing auditions. For the former, ‘you just turn up in your dance gear and off you go’: everything would be taught on the day of audition, whereas for an initial singing audition he would take along a song suitable for the show. Preparation would be needed later in the selection process, when the performer would receive scripts and songs from the show to prepare for a second audition.

Sarah had occasionally been asked to prepare a script or been given a script to prepare, but this was not the norm. For musical theatre however, she would normally have to prepare two songs. Christie found choice of song difficult ‘especially when they say ‘oh, can we have a pop song?’ or whatever, and I think ‘God, I really haven’t got anything appropriate’.

Some prepared in a quite focused way. When Lisa had to prepare songs she would have a couple of lessons. Auditions were also proving a major stimulus for Nicole, because preparing a song, whether familiar or new, would trigger a singing lesson. She wanted to make the best showing possible:

A lot of the stuff that I am being put up for, there’s quite a chance that I will get. So I just want to kind of try my best to get it and if I don’t it’s nothing to do with the fact that I haven’t prepared. ‘Cos I know I’d walk away, if I hadn’t prepared... and really kick myself for it.

Before her interview for a stage management post, Suzanne recalled finding out about the company and what kind of work it did. She also makes props and had checked that her portfolio of work was in good shape.

There seem to be varied approaches to auditions and interviews, and it might be productive to explore further the processes of selection for professional work.

7.3 Audition Experience

These performers highlighted different aspects of auditions. Particularly at the early stages of building a career, auditions could be seen as very much part of the learning process for the performer, one aspect of occupational socialisation, as well as hopefully opening the door to future opportunities if a casting director could be impressed favourably. Martin expressed this as follows:

I think it's just a case... of getting yourself known and just getting auditions: not necessarily getting work, because it's obviously incredibly hard to get work when you first leave drama school.

By this account, new performers could judge themselves successful simply by being auditioned. On the other hand, some performers gave indications of their anxiety and disappointment at having attended so many auditions without success. Rueful laughter accompanied Emily's admission that she had attended 30 before succeeding at her cruise ship audition, while Annie replied in a resigned tone that she had attended 'loads and loads' of auditions as a dancer, declining to give a definite number. Christie reacted to the question about the number of auditions with a long silence, then a guess of about 30, sounding deflated when probed about the number of recalls.

There was great variation in the number of auditions attended. Even for an individual performer, this could vary month to month, depending on what was casting. A singer and dancer who attends musical theatre auditions pointed out she could be recalled five times for one show, and still not be offered a job. Sarah estimated attending 25, including recalls, since summer 2003. Lisa had been to about six. Daniel had attended 'quite a few' auditions, about 150, but this figure would be more like 200 including recalls. Others were more vague. Stephen guessed about 20, amending this to about 15 as a rough guide. Annie might attend two or three auditions in a couple of weeks, then none at all for a month. She had no idea of the total attended, since she 'didn't really keep a record of it'.

For Nicole, a performer with a successful first year behind her, having made her mark professionally meant, she thought, that people tended to see her, and she got auditions more readily. In the six months prior to the interview she had been to 12-15 auditions. With recalls for about half of these and second recalls for about a quarter, one might roughly estimate that this represented perhaps 25 sessions. However we translate this into hours (even disregarding preparation and travel), this requires significant time away from her current job.

She valued auditions despite the tension attached to knowing that four or five people would determine whether or not she would be earning money:

Every audition I've improved my technique, 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.

Sarah too found that her confidence had grown with more experience of auditions:

Because 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.

Hannah found one frustration of the audition process was the tendency for cruise lines to give priority to those already working on the ship. This meant a long wait for confirmation, or otherwise, of employment and consequent uncertainty about whether to spend time and money in the meantime applying for other jobs.

In stage management, it was a question of interviews. Over 18 months after leaving college Suzanne, who had qualified in stage management, had had only had two interviews, both with successful outcomes. She had a positive approach to interviews:

So far, so good, touch wood. Yeah, I really enjoy them. 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. So, yeah, I enjoy them.

Alex meanwhile said she had been 'really lucky', having been offered jobs through people whom she knew, so had only attended one interview by the spring of 2004, at which she had been offered a job.

7.4 Casting to Type and Stereotypes

Few black and minority ethnic performers returned questionnaire forms; the three who spoke to us had all held a DADA award, raised issues which should be logged here. Sarah thought that casting directors tended to categorise her in particular ways and found it hard to place her partly because she was well spoken and did not easily fit stereotypes like 'rude girl or whatever'.

They find that difficult to take - *extremely* - that someone of colour can speak the way I speak, which I find amazing in 2004. So casting-wise, it tends to be difficult to place me.

Sarah recalled a tutor's comment at college: 'I don't believe you're black and you speak like that'. She thought that television casting had got easier for men but not yet for women:

There's very little as a black actress. They always seem to be either working class and loud or they're sort of a side-kick friend who isn't very glamorous, doesn't wear much make-up, but dowdy....

In her view, 'the Americans have... managed to have that sort of black middle class on television which they haven't done here yet'. However, Sarah looked forward to wider representation in the future and a time when her age would open up more mature roles like that of a doctor.

The matter of an actor's castable age is an issue discussed by one of the DADA providers cited in Freakley (2004) T.P. 041.

More positively, Daniel suggested that 'it is fashionable at the moment to be black. People write scripts especially for black people'. While such roles are as yet not of the best, his experience was that there is an improvement underway, hopefully set to continue. Nevertheless, Daniel spoke about both advantages and disadvantages to being black and over 6 feet tall. He was aware that others sometimes find his appearance intimidating, and of the need to make an effort to make people feel comfortable in his presence. An important barrier to Daniel's progress is currently his poor command of English and heavy accent, problems which he is addressing by taking weekly lessons.

A second actor, Martin, also very tall, was confident about the future. While finding plenty of work currently in rather stereotypical roles as a gangster or thug, he agreed with Daniel that the position is changing. He commented that American films now almost always include a black main part, as an indicator of positive change, and named several high profile black actors who have taken such roles. Martin had ambitions to take Shakespearean roles, but dyslexia had brought problems with his acting career, and he was still finding sight reading difficult, despite some success in mastering techniques to make this easier.

In their comments on auditions and casting, other (white) performers made almost no reference to their personal appearance or physical characteristics; they mentioned rather the skills or experience which they considered strengths in casting situations. The BBC's proactivity in casting black and ethnic minority actors was discussed in Freakley's (2004a) up-date on employment landscape and cultural diversity: this suggests that the confidence expressed by Daniel and Martin may be well founded (Technical Paper 032, p.35, First Interim Report, January 2004).

8 Continuing Professional Learning

8.1 Opportunities to learn at work: *It's been a complete learning curve*

One dancer took issue with the question about opportunities to learn in the workplace, finding it strange that we should ask about this:

We train for three years to be able to do singing, dancing and acting to a really high standard and there's nothing, really, that you're going to learn that you haven't learned at college, so no, not really, that wouldn't apply to me.

However, some examples of particular skills or knowledge gained by performers in their early work were:

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

Some of these constituted informal learning but where a cost was incurred for a particular professional development activity, it was met by the employer.

As well as the dancers and actors who were interviewed, the stage managers spoke at some length about their learning in the workplace. For young ASM Suzanne, working on a production for a summer festival with an established reputation, the professional skills acquired were not just those of being able to work long hours away from one's home base; they concerned the scale of the production which required numerous different sets and costumes: it had been 'a massive undertaking'. Later, an overseas tour developed her skills in communication with and management of crew members:

Teaching them the show. I suppose it was having a higher level of responsibility – was something very new because you don't really get that in Theatre School and you don't really get that in Rep. theatre. You're very much, you know, you just – you're there and you do that job. So, that's probably the biggest thing, was learning to *deal* with that responsibility and learning to you know deal with people as well.

Practical experience gained while working for a TV company proved invaluable to ASM Alex, who stressed the need for rapid solutions to meet the pace of work in a series or major production: 'someone saying you quickly had to do it and then trusting you to get on with it'. Much of these tasks concerned matters with which she had not then been at all familiar, such as sorting out insurance, health and safety courses, meetings about insurance and compliance with music copyright, branding. She had also had in-house

camera training and described her time since leaving college as 'a complete learning curve':

I've learned so much in the past year. It's just been – and you think back to when I started and I didn't know what half the terms meant and what I needed to do and what this meant – and it's just *amazing* how much you take in, really. You don't even think about it when you just have to do it.

8.2 Maintaining Professional Development Independently

Several performers described difficulties in maintaining their performance standard and also in developing their professional skills further when they were not working, or when they had a job outside the industry.

For Tammy, not currently employed professionally, keeping in shape and maintaining her professional skills meant going to the gym and taking classes, the cost of which she met personally. Lisa too paid for singing lessons, as did Sarah, in a similar position, though at £25 per hour she found this a strain. She had tried to take dance classes at a major London centre but, like some others we interviewed, found that even taking account of concessionary membership rates, that was currently beyond her means. The cost of travel to get to such a centre was a further burden. The need to continue with dance and singing lessons was echoed by Annie, who pointed out the high cost of lessons, and associated travel costs to London, which necessitated a part-time, non-performance related job, to be fitted in with audition commitments.

After an excellent first year in terms of professional employment, Nicole had not had an acting job for six months, and had a 'non-professional' job for the time being. She had substantial office work experience prior to studying at university for a degree and then doing the National Diploma course, so she was well placed to get office work but she found it hard to keep at performance level. Full-time office work made it difficult to find the energy to go into London for an evening dance class. When she had a month off after a long contract, she had managed to have two dance lessons a week, but when working nine to five this was not possible.

9 Employment Aspirations and Outcomes

9.1 Matching Hopes at Graduation

We have emphasised that there is no way of knowing how typical these performers are of the 2002 cohort as a whole. However their comments about their aspirations and progress so far merit attention. In Nicole's case, her professional experience had been 'more than I'd hoped for really when I graduated'. Fin's employment record too had exceeded his expectations, and he felt 'very, very lucky' to have worked non-stop since leaving his drama school. Oliver (not a DADA holder) was also very positive:

I've ended up working a lot more consistently than I thought I would and the kind of calibre of show that I've done has been ... way and above anything that I thought I would achieve in my first two years out of college.

Sarah's first response was that it had not at all matched her hopes, but she qualified this:

Maybe just a little, at least. I've had some things, but I wished for a lot more and I still know I will do better. I'm keeping positive, so I'm not worried.

Stephen, another who had no DADA support as a student, also hoped to build on his present position. He was 'thrilled to be working', but more negatively had not yet played a part in large musical theatre show: 'Once I've done a musical theatre tour or a West End musical theatre show, then I'll feel I've done it'.

Emily was cautiously optimistic, having found work on a cruise ship after 'only five or six months', rather than spending years out of work, and was awaiting replies from several auditions at the time of interview. Her view was similar to Hannah's appraisal of finding work so far, that she had done 'pretty well' to have been employed for the majority of her time since leaving college. Hannah attributed this largely to her luck in being in the right place at the right time, while a similarly qualified friend's desperate search for work had so far proved unsuccessful.

Realism underlay Lisa's reflections about how her experience matched her hopes on graduating:

I don't think it ever will really because you always think that you ought to be working more than you realistically will be.... I was quite realistic about it. I still am quite realistic about it... I think every actor is, you know, not satisfied when they're not working.

A note of realism had been sounded by Michael's college, whose staff had informed students that at any one time something like ninety-seven per cent of actors are unemployed. While accepting the veracity of this, Michael felt disappointed to have been confined so far to TV commercials and some work in TV soaps:

At times in the year when there's no, not even auditions coming through, you know, that is very frustrating, so in that sense I suppose I have been disappointed.

After two contracts in West End musicals, the second as first cover to a main part, it is difficult to see how Tim could have made a better start to his career. His response on being asked whether his employment so far matched expectations was:

I think I've kind of reached my expectations, constantly staying in work and slowly but surely progressing up the ladder.

Performers who had not yet been able to progress in this way were understandably more reticent, sometimes returning to the idea of 'keeping positive', and the need to be pro-active in seeking opportunities.

A flexible attitude could sometimes open unforeseen doors. Alex had hoped to start her stage management career in drama but theatres go dark in the summer when new graduates are first seeking work and there had been few opportunities in TV drama. Working on TV documentary and reality programmes had instead provided numerous different opportunities to establish herself. She hoped to move into TV drama in the coming year or so.

ASM Suzanne had been pleased to find that getting work had if anything been less difficult than expected:

It's been a lot easier getting work than I thought. I was very nervous about it, even though when I graduated I *had* work already to go to, which a lot of people didn't, so I was in a lucky position, but I always worry. Well, I still do. You know: where is my next job coming from? But I left the [summer] job without any work and I was quite happy to do that, to not actually know where I was going to work next, but within a week or two I 'd got a job to go to, so you know, I'm beginning to relax. I've found that a pleasant surprise – that it's not as hard as I thought it would be.

She did not feel she had compromised on her earlier hopes: 'It's all been exactly what I wanted to do'.

Some of those who spoke to us may be exceptionally talented and have the skills needed for a successful start to a career. It is possible that others, despite their training, may lack the particular talent, skills or other personal qualities required for the jobs which they would like. We are in no position to make value judgements about the career potential of those new performers who were prepared to be interviewed.

Clearly, however, the success of differently talented performers in obtaining employment will relate to job availability in the range of sectors targeted. Moreover, levels of satisfaction with employment record to date will be closely related to the aspiration level of individual performers, whatever the nature of employment achieved.

9.2 Strategies effective in getting work

The strategies most often mentioned by performers were having the right agent, attending auditions, developing personal contacts and keeping in touch with people with

whom one had worked, following up suggestions from college, and proving oneself to be capable of the job.

The 'right agent' could mean many things. One actor stressed the value of a good agent who is well linked to casting directors. Nicole's agent had been setting up at the time when Nicole was leaving college, and although this had made her choice a risky one, she thought that because of this her interests had been represented with energy and care.

So far in his successful West End career, Tim had not found the need for a strategy for finding work, but planned soon to change agent, with a view to changing direction towards directing and choreographing. Annie agreed that finding agents geared to different styles of work could be an effective strategy.

Suzanne thought that joining The Stage Management Association was effective but being on a list with perhaps another 500 names limited the chances of being contacted:

Just keeping in contact with people you have already worked with is the best strategy and to kind of make sure it's known when you're available to work.

For Alex, it was important as an ASM to build a professional reputation for good work and reliability:

keeping your head down, getting on with things and just doing everything that's asked of you and working as hard as you can and helping people out if they're in trouble.

There was very little reference to injury or ill-health, which can be disastrous for those employed on a freelance basis. A three month period of ill health with a stay in hospital meant that one ASM had done temping for a time before taking a post at a lower level as 'a way to get back into things after I'd been out of the loop for a while'. The experience had given an insight into the difficulties which can arise and the work needed to re-establish oneself after a gap of this sort. It had been good to have connections from previous jobs to draw on.

Martin too emphasized the need for self-presentation which will appeal to casting directors, avoiding arrogance or any assumption that the job is 'in the bag'.

Fin thought the best strategy was 'working hard for the people that you work for and making good contacts through them'. He expressed disdain for the idea of 'networking' at parties, wandering round and chatting to unknown people.

For Stephen persistence was the key to obtaining work. It was important, he felt, to attend auditions even if unsure of the suitability of the part. Fear was a powerful ingredient in his reticence, and he needed to be strict with himself in overcoming this.

These new performers emphasized the need to 'put themselves about' by attending auditions. This must be done through their own efforts and using other connections if not represented by an agent, and those who had been able to find a (good) agent had usually gained more frequent access to auditions. Performers had found a good

professional attitude conducive to securing work. Once started on a job, an enthusiastic, hard working approach to the work itself and a congenial, reliable personality recommended itself to key people interacting with, or observing, the performer, particularly other casting directors who may one day be in a position to offer new work. Having received advice about such matters at their colleges, and having had these ideas reinforced by their own professional experience, unsurprisingly our interviewees drew on these principles in offering advice to other new graduates at the start of their careers.

9.3 Advice for new graduates: *Do auditions and get your face seen*

Advice to newcomers focused mainly on auditions, agents and attitude. Tammy's advice to a new graduate encompassed both representation and attitude:

To make sure you get yourself a good agent; to make sure that it's somebody that you can talk to easily; to not beat yourself up if you don't get things, I mean there is just no explaining it.

Lisa focused on attitude:

They've got to really stick to their guns and remember why they went into it in the first place and keep as realistic as possible.

Another interviewee gave very practical advice:

If you go to a casting, for instance, and they ask for a particular character, give the appearance of that character.... If you're going for the role of a nurse, do your hair in a way that might look typically nurse-like and not too much make-up....

Also on a practical note, Tim emphasized the value of attending auditions for building experience. He saw every audition as a learning experience, and feedback from the audition panel, or via the agent, could be particularly helpful. Tim cautioned those with, perhaps two years professional experience, against becoming complacent and perhaps drifting into less proactive habits, for the benefit of experience as a performer must be weighed against the perhaps superior physical strength of a new set of graduates every year: 'you have to keep yourself up to date and strong'.

Christie agreed that just going to auditions could prepares you for 'what people are wearing and what the standard is and how to get the right mentality for auditions'. Emily recommended the promotional advantages to be gained:

If you haven't got an agent, go to an audition even if the job sounds rubbish. Go, because you don't know who you may see there. If all else fails, you have a free class out of it. Go and do auditions and get your face seen: promote yourself.

Nevertheless, for many performers the employment market is undeniably tough. As a safeguard against the vagaries of the market, Michael would recommend to a new graduate a portfolio career which included non-performance related work 'to keep your interest and keep you motivated and keep the bills paid. It's no good hiding behind the sofa waiting for the phone to ring with that acting job if all the bills are mounting up'.

A number of these new performers encouraged new graduates by urging against becoming disheartened by rejection, as expressed by the actor and dancer below:

Have faith in yourself and don't be afraid of rejections; (Fin)

There's a lot of people that will walk out of those rooms disappointed, but that's normal, you're going to be disappointed, but you've just got to keep looking forward and keep thinking, you know, 'maybe next time'. (Hannah)

In the rather different world of stage management, the advice was:

To be nice to everybody. Because you don't know when - who - you're going to need along the way... Not to worry, just stick at it, I suppose... it's a lot easier than... theatre schools do tend to scare you saying 'Oh it's really tough out there' and yes, it is tough, but it's not as tough as they make out.

Allowing for the distinction between the labour market for performers and that for stage managers, and the fact that both groups have been supported through the DADA Scheme, the advice which these recent graduates gave to entrants to the profession centred on fundamental qualities such as realism, persistence, and having faith in oneself.

10 Good Starts and Good Employers

10.1 What constitutes a 'Good Start'?

One young dancer defined 'making a good start' in fairly cautious terms: for Stephen it meant 'working as continuously as you can, and not being fired from any jobs'. Similarly, Michael saw making a good start as 'earning money doing what you love straight out of drama school'. This had given him faith that 'it is possible to earn money from this profession'.

Several performers spoke about a 'good start' in terms of their approach rather than being offered contracts; it was enough for one 'just to have the determination to stick with it and not to get too disappointed'.

Emily cautioned against taking a holiday straight from college or catching up on sleep. It was important, she stressed, to approach the task of finding work by beginning to attend auditions as quickly as possible after leaving college, for procrastination simply made life harder: 'Keep attacking the world!' she advised.

Meanwhile another actor and dancer listed a good training, the ability to perform, and in addition to show that you have 'something special about you':

As a dancer it's slightly different to acting, so as a dancer if you go to an audition, wear something that's going to get you noticed. Make sure your hair's a bit different, or your look's a bit different. You want to stand out as a dancer, and ... confidence is another thing, which comes with going to class, keeping positive.

For Hannah, this something special meant the ability, once successfully auditioned, to demonstrate not only the ability to do the work, but a professional attitude as a dancer who can work well with others: 'A good start is coming across as a professional'.

Fin also highlighted personal integrity as an essential ingredient to making a good start as a performer. It was important, he felt, to develop and retain stability, not to become carried away and lose touch with old friends, family and home.

Lisa had so far had limited opportunities to work professionally. She saw a 'good start' in terms of the chance to demonstrate one's craft; without that, the new performer had to rely on personal principles and beliefs:

A 'good start', I would say, I mean for me, it's the theatre. It always has been for me. But I know some people that wouldn't take a job in theatre: they want to do TV and commercials, which – you know, there's money in that- but it's not for me what the craft's about.

I guess it depends on your integrity and realism, but we all know that's not what the profession is based on.

Christie, not altogether satisfied with the standard of the seaside show she had joined, saw those who had gone straight from college into West End shows as making a 'very, very good start'. This would, she felt, be a 'dream' job, and although success at this

level at a very young age could lead to an over-inflated ego, more mature personalities should be able to handle this well. Fin, on the other hand, took the view that a UK tour would be preferable as a first step, avoiding the danger of being 'blitzed by the London lifestyle'.

Martin took a measured view:

Well, you obviously don't have to get into 'Fame' for that to be a good start, because it's simple: a good start is just getting an agent, and getting contacts with various casting directors; having auditions.

This would, he felt, be a good start in laying sound foundations for the future, for even though the audition may not be successful, the chances were that the individual would be remembered and recommended for the 'right' play, perhaps several months later.

Some performers explored whether it was better to hold out for the 'perfect job' or take whatever job that was available. A young stage manager tended to the former:

I would be inclined to say, 'Hold out for that job that you're after' 'cos once you – if you take jobs that aren't going to pay you very well and are going to take the mick out of you, and you know- your working hours... it's difficult to get out of that. I've seen people who've done that so I think... you have to make sacrifices and stick with what you really want to do, but what you think you should have too.

She was particularly concerned about people who had a bad experience early on:

It can leave people jaded, and if it's their first job, if it's the start of their career, you can think, 'Well, is this how it's gonna be?' ... I'm talking about things like [events] where you work stupid hours and get twenty pounds at the end of it. That's the kind of work I'm talking of.

The above comments resonate with the views of five dance providers documented in Freakley, (2004) who all agreed that the age, abilities and maturity of the graduate will affect whether the early employment experiences of any individual can be considered a 'good start' (Technical Paper 035, p.67, First Interim Report, January 2004). There is evidence from the new performers who were interviewed that they valued the generic characteristics of a good start highlighted by the dance employers, in particular the opportunity to learn, develop and grow, whatever the exact nature of their early employment.

10.2 Characteristics of a 'Good Employer'

Some characteristics of a 'good employer' were evident in the company for which worked Nicole for several months. He was supportive, always there at opening nights, around quite a lot, would come to watch the show and had a strong interest in all that went on. Performers could easily talk with him about any concerns because he was approachable and he paid fairly.

Fin recorded similar treatment from a Theatre Education touring company:

They've been a fantastic employer, absolutely marvellous the whole way through. They've paid me on time, they always paid me the amount they said they were gonna pay, they've always given me extra when they can, they gave me sick pay, they've always employed me as frequently as they can... they put on parties for us, they put us up in the best accommodation they can find. They are a *very, very* generous employer.

Tammy's two criteria for a good employer were someone who pays well and offers a 'fairly standard' contract, including injury time. For a young dancer, Hannah, the excellent level of pay was also an important measure of a good employer she had experienced, but in addition she valued the fact that all the other employees: stage managers, company managers, directors, producers, were experienced in the business: 'they know what they're doing and they're helpful'. For her part she respected their level of knowledge, and appreciated the fact that they showed respect and consideration for her, despite her novice status.

Emily, too, liked the kindness shown to staff by her cruise ship employers. She and her fellow dancers were given tangible benefits which included attractive cabins with 'fridges. In addition, 'they made sure we were happy. They looked after us'

For Martin, the notion of a good employer could be condensed simply as somebody who treats people with respect. He was pleased to have worked for one such film director, and contrasted this contract with a less happy experience with another company where the frequent drunkenness of the director had obliged him and his fellow actors to steer their own course.

ASM Suzanne recalled a good experience with a touring company:

They looked after you from the day I turned up and made sure I was very happy with my contract, I was very happy with where I was working... there was always someone to talk to if you needed help with anything really. Not *just* the job, but also living in London and things like that. Then when we went on tour, as a whole group, we felt very supported by the company. We had regular visits from somebody from the office, somebody would come every week, just to kind of say 'Hi' – check everything was OK, take us out for a meal, that sort of thing.

Unsurprisingly, most of the performers who spoke to us valued high pay, but no less important to them was that they should be treated with respect. Pastoral care: 'making sure we were happy' also counted for a lot with those interviewed. In any organisation, personnel issues matter, but attention to employee well-being may be particularly important when relatively young people like those we interviewed are touring and working demanding schedules with unsocial hours, sometimes at the limit of their physical capabilities.

11 Visions of Career Building and Medium-term Hopes

These performers spoke positively in terms of building a career, though some of them saw this in the form of a portfolio of jobs, rather than necessarily involving progression with every new job to a more important role, more pay, or higher status. In discussing future directions, respondents disclosed their idea of how things might be for them in two years' time.

For Nicole, who did see things in terms of building a career, it was proving hard to adapt from an extremely successful opening to the current period with no professional work because it seemed as if there was 'nowhere else to build to' until some other possibilities lay ahead. She could however foresee other openings perhaps in television or cabaret, which had not been part of the original plan.

Some others found it awkward to think in terms of building a career. Tammy saw it as 'furthering' rather than 'building'. For Lisa it was a matter of

Just trying to knock on those doors and hoping that one will open and it's more 'hope', really than 'building'...

And perseverance... Once you open certain doors sometimes things build themselves and you put all this work in and felt you've got nothing and then all of a sudden it can suddenly... grow out of anywhere.

Christie's plans centred on spending time going to auditions in order to secure an agent. This time she would wait for a good job, bearing in mind that she had already spent eight months doing a job she had not been keen on doing. She found it difficult to think in terms of building a career, however:

It's hard to really plan building your career. It is really, *very*. You don't have a lot of choice. You can't pick and choose, but I suppose you do have to just make a decision to be selective and to be out of work for six months, rather than doing a job that's not that helpful to your career for six months.

While she would *like* to be dancing in the West End in two years' time, more realistically Christie would be happy to be touring England with a musical theatre production, otherwise dancing on TV.

At the time of interview, Stephen had thoroughly enjoyed a variety of dancing and acting experience on a cruise ship and in a pantomime, and intended to further his career by gaining a part in a musical theatre show on a 'good' tour, or in the West End. He was as yet undecided where his long term future lay, however, indicating that were he to achieve such a part he may decide to change direction to a career in massage therapy. While Stephen was keen to build up his CV, he considered that a performing career, unlike others, was characterised by:

just going from job to job. Unless you are very famous, from having a film or TV career where you are known, then you are jobbing it along the way, really.

Like Stephen, Oliver recognised that 'this is not the type of business where once you've progressed you stay there'. Despite his progress so far from swing, to ensemble, then to

first cover to the lead, to playing a part, he was reconciled to the idea that 'this could all turn around and go back to normal again'. He was confident, however, that casting directors would recognise this, giving credit for the number of jobs on a CV, regardless of their content. While he would like in two years' time to be able to sustain his current level in the market, this would depend, at least in part, on the availability of shows at the time and their suitability for him and his ability.

Hannah had enjoyed only rather fragmented success in the employment market so far, but 'definitely' saw her future in terms of building a career, and would like to develop her singing. She was determined to persevere, even if it meant being out of work for a year. Progress would mean securing jobs 'with bigger companies: I'd like to do bigger ships'.

Two years on, Sarah hoped to have established herself as an 'all-rounder', as an actress as well as a dancer, and have done some television work, specifically some good dramas, as well as a West End musical show. Lisa wanted to have done a good deal more theatre work and a few television parts as the latter might pave the way for future theatre work. Tammy's hopes were two-fold: to have well-paid work in London and to own a house.

Providers' views on career progression are noteworthy, particularly with reference to dancers. Opinions among the five who were interviewed (Freakley, 2004b) were divided about the potential for less prestigious roles to damage reputation, and the limitations imposed on cross-over work into broader performance by the preferences of casting directors (Technical Paper 035 p.66, First Interim Report, January 2004).

Martin asserted that as soon as the performer leaves drama school he or she is definitely building a career, but the process really begins before this at the stage of seeing agents and casting directors during the final year. This actor had devised a five year plan while still at college. He aimed at the end of this period 'to be comfortable and to be in films or TV where you're going to be recognised'. At the time of interview, Martin was well on the way to achieving his objectives.

In stage management even recently qualified people can chart their progression. Motivation plays a part: Alex recalled that when she was thirteen years old she had decided she wanted to be a stage manager and 'I went all out to do what I had to do to get there'. Her current aims were to make steps towards setting up her own business by the time she was thirty:

It just seems a natural thing of building up my career so I can go and do exactly what I want... I'd like to do jobs just because I'd like to do them and not have to do them. I've been lucky that I've had such a good range of stuff that I've been offered and been able to do.

In due course, since she enjoys 'working on big stuff', she hoped to work on big television dramas or films, or a big concert tour for a few months to get as much experience as possible. Alex was hoping to become an assistant director and was building up experience towards that role by setting up sheets on her current job.

Suzanne hoped to be 'working for companies with a good reputation and doing good shows'. These features were more important to her than whether she was technically Deputy Stage Manager, Assistant Stage Manager, or Stage Manager.

DADA providers of Stage Management courses comment in Freakley (2004) T.P. 041 a pattern of rapid early progression, soon followed by starting up independently.

The hopes which these performers shared with us were of course partly conditioned by their professional experience to date. By and large, they do not seem overly ambitious. Their aspirations, grounded in their training, illustrate a realistic assessment of the world in which they have chosen to work, while remaining optimistic about what is inevitably a precarious professional environment.

12 Commentary

This pilot study is the first in-depth analysis of what happens to former DADA award holders as they seek to establish themselves after graduation. It has given them the opportunity to reflect on ways in which their training prepared them for working life, and to speak about their experience in seeking work, aspects of their employability, how they value their early professional activity and how they see those first jobs as providing a basis for developing and sustaining a career in the performing arts. It complements the analysis in Davies (2003) T.P. 036 (First Interim Report) and sits alongside Freakley (2004) T.P. 035 (First Interim Report) and other papers in this Second Interim Report.

From the detailed analysis presented in sections 2-11, we would highlight the following issues.

12.1 Working as a New Performer

As might be expected, these new performers reported finding their first professional jobs in a very wide range of contexts and in the first year after graduating most had experienced some discontinuity in employment.

This paper gives examples of performers who made an excellent start to their career in terms of professional profile and salary level, and who had worked for all or most of the time since leaving college. Alongside these, some others reported only brief periods of professional employment.

A contract of several months clearly offers advantages in terms of financial security and means that the performer need not spend time attending auditions. It provides a relatively stable context in which to adapt to the new pressures of daily performance. However some performers spoke negatively of constant repetition of a performance once its maximum learning potential had been reached. Some also felt that multiple entries on a CV might appear more impressive than just one, however prestigious the job.

Several recent graduates had experienced a very congenial working environment, describing work as 'fun to do', 'I've loved everything I've done', and 'I was smiling all year'. For these new performers, at this early career stage, evaluation of their job(s) could be dominated by the pleasure of simply being paid to dance or act while making new friends and seeing new places. Those who had found their work satisfying valued highly the chance to extend their skills and could readily itemise what they had learned and gained from an engagement. However, others had found a lack of challenge in their early jobs. In both cases, they saw themselves moving on to work which would let them develop as performers, and sought opportunities where the reputation of the company or director would enhance their CV. Some recent graduates had yet to secure substantial professional work over 18 months after leaving college, and for them in particular 'keeping positive' during long 'down' periods was a priority.

This included retaining one's self esteem and purpose and being pro-active about auditions. Maintaining a performance standard called for regular classes, gym sessions and so on, but few could meet the cost of these as frequently as they thought necessary.

Those who had a full-time (non-performance) job were rarely able to give enough time and energy to classes.

The second year after graduation brought mixed experiences. Some performers reached turning points both positive and negative, and reassessed what they were doing or changed tack in some way. Some who had good contracts in year one had already progressed to further satisfying work. Others began to engage with the vagaries of the labour market for the first time.

12.2 Pay and Survival Strategies

A range of attitudes emerged towards pay. These new performers often found themselves carefully balancing the need to earn enough money against the attraction of a poorly paid job which nevertheless offered valuable experience. Most valued a high salary, but it was equally important to find a good employer who would offer acceptable working conditions, treat performers with respect, take account of their concerns and look after their comfort.

Student debt emerged as an important factor for some people, most notably for the actor who took a full-time job for which he had not trained in order to clear debts and become financially secure before seeking work as a performer. Others adopted various strategies for financial survival.

Most common among these was the second job, though in practice this alternative employment (non-performance and often outside the sector) was often the prime job in terms of income so it was not merely complementary. These ranged from teaching (which did draw on training in dance and drama) and certain other jobs which required high level skills, to casual 'fill-in' work. Some found work outside their professional area which did in fact develop broad and transferable skills. Individuals made it clear to their employers that they would need time off for auditions, or else they 'worked around' these by doing part-time jobs. They could not easily quantify the time given to attending auditions, but it could be a substantial investment of time. The need to be flexible about their availability for work and the need for realism about the likely peaks and troughs of their career was clear in their comments and the strategies they were developing.

12.3 Patterns of Work and Pacing Oneself

The novice stage managers who spoke to us faced promising opportunities. However the intensity of their periods of freelance employment suggested the necessity to 'make space between jobs' to counterbalance the long hours of work which their contracts required.

Stress of a different sort faced performers. Some found the transition demanding from a relatively protective college environment to the workplace, with all its pressures. A live (and paying) audience, the need to maintain health and stamina and pace oneself, whilst often managing the practicalities of touring, heightened the pressure. Whether they found continual public performance stimulating or alarming, they were in agreement that no training could fully prepare them for this transition. In their stage work however they could make links with what they had been taught at college as they built their confidence as professional performers.

12.4 Schools, Agents and Auditions

Overall, these graduates said that they had been well prepared by their initial training. Coping with tax and national insurance matters was the one area where several students said they would have liked more instruction at college. They were not just filling in a form, but learning to become their own financial manager. Quite separately, it proved hard for recent graduates in stage management to navigate some freelance posts outside theatre and television and clarification or guidelines on appropriate rates would be useful. Few specific criticisms were made by performers of their initial training: these concerned a perceived lack of coaching for solo singing, of preparation for auditions, and of working with TV cameras.

College support after graduation had included in some cases directly recommending the former student for a job, or alerting recent graduates to forthcoming opportunities. This was in addition to links with agents attached to the institution and also the practice of inviting casting directors in to watch students' practice auditions and showcase events. Almost all these new performers spoke warmly about the continued support from their colleges.

They advised new graduates to 'put themselves about' because auditions provide valuable exposure as well as experience. Nevertheless, auditions emerged as a rather daunting experience especially for those who had yet to secure professional work. Much time and energy went into auditioning, which meant that only certain alternative jobs were practicable. Some felt despondent about attending many auditions, particularly where recalls had not been successful. In contrast to this, one performer referred to being called for audition as a success in itself.

Rather than schools, some performers said that independent agents had helped them find work, given advice on terms and conditions, and sometimes renegotiated salary levels. However, there were reported instances of contractual exploitation in their own experience or that of friends: they were clearly alive to such possibilities. A new performer is vulnerable at this critical transitional stage and may feel that s/he risks losing a contract by trying to renegotiate terms. There were comments about how the euphoria of securing a first job could obscure the need for careful scrutiny of the contract.

There were performers who had no agent and had been quite successful in finding work independently, while others found it difficult to secure an agent without an employment record to recommend them. Graduates found that agents vary in diligence and, it was suggested, integrity. Some were very happy with the ways in which the agent represented their interests, and changing agent could be provoked not only by dissatisfaction but also by the need for more specialist services to meet new individual needs.

As well as using college connections, their agents' advice and internet information, these new performers stressed the importance of sustaining personal contacts at all levels. 'Being known', 'being seen', and 'being in the loop' mattered. They said that it was worth the effort to sustain existing professional contacts.

12.5 The Part played by 'Luck'

These recent graduates pointed out that for some roles physical characteristics are crucial, and the casting director will prioritise these, regardless of one's talent or experience. The three black and ethnic performers minority spoke of particular hurdles which they faced, but also of improving opportunities for male if not yet for female actors.

When a recent graduate says, as several did, that luck played a part in his or her success or failure, or that they had been 'very lucky', we cannot speculate on how closely their talent and skills matched the job they sought or distinguished them from others to secure them those early jobs. It is however reasonable to presume that repeat offers of employment from the same employer or company indicate that they have proved to be good at what they do. Conversely, there are many possible reasons why someone may not have been able to get professional engagements. Unlike training institutions, we are not in a position to make any comment on such outcomes.

In some cases, certain inferences might be drawn from particular factors. One assistant stage manager was offered her first job by a company which knew her from previous work experience. She was not in that position by luck alone. As a student, having successfully completed most of her required modules early in her course, she was able to do much longer than the minimum work experience placement. This would suggest that she was an effective, organised student and her (pre-graduation) record had made her well placed for the transition to work.

While there is evidence that the recent graduates, whether or not they had held DADA awards as students, give credence to the notion of 'being in the right place at the right time', it seems likely that modesty too may be a factor in performers' assertions that they have been 'lucky'.

It is striking to note how frequently these new performers spoke in a workmanlike way of 'proving yourself' through 'keeping your head down', working hard, getting on with people, learning as much as possible, being reliable and doing a professional job. They talked about creating a reputation for such qualities rather than about making their mark through good reviews: critical or public approval was rarely mentioned and then almost as an unlooked-for bonus.

12.6 Future Directions

This pilot interview programme is the only component of this Second Interim Report which gives us information about how former DADA students have fared in terms of employability, job search and starting professional life. It has identified a number of issues which the award-holders prioritise at the start of their working lives. Some of these can be incorporated into further research:

- Managing risk: recent graduates' approach to balancing financial imperatives with professional work which will take them forward as performers
- Agents' role in supporting former students: examples of good practice
- Audition procedure, preparation for auditions, and feedback

- Casting practice and minority candidates
- Differential expectations and experiences of stage managers and performers
- Characterisation of a good employer

It would strengthen any further analysis to have reliable information about graduates at the point when they leave college. This would give more possibility for sampling to distinguish for instance between stage managers and performers, degree holders and those with other qualifications, and, potentially, DADA award holders from those who as students did not have an award.

Quite separately from these issues, it would be telling to track this core group as they gradually establish themselves professionally. A longer timescale would enable us to develop a better understanding of how early work experience prepares the way for further career development in very competitive circumstances, and also to confirm how well their early strategies serve them over time.

These new performers have shared their thoughts and have been extremely candid with us as a contribution to this research exercise. In six months or one year from now, they will have more experience and further reflections from which we could learn.

12.7 Coda: *This is a whole lifestyle.*

Other papers prepared as part of this evaluation have presented providers' and employers' views on the skills which DADA students need and on the employment landscape which they encounter after college. This is the first in-depth analysis giving the views of those who have trained with the support of the DADA scheme. As beneficiaries of the scheme, their assessment of their training, their employability and their professional experience as they seek to establish sustainable careers is central to the overall evaluation of the DADA scheme.

Any professional occupation entails a process of gradual socialisation. 'Transition to working life' means a multitude of things to a new performer. Something of this was conveyed by Nicole who had travelled a long way since her time as a DADA student, when she spoke about gradually improving her audition technique:

You're even hungrier to get the next job... It's a lifestyle rather than a career or a job. It's a lifestyle that you really have to get used to. It's really quite difficult. 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.

The performers whom we interviewed were diverse in background, training, aspiration and work experience to date. Having left college, they encountered in professional life a variety of threats and opportunities. In reflecting on events since their graduation, they articulated key aspects of how that process of professional socialisation was taking place. As their student lifestyle has been replaced by the lifestyle of a young performers for which they were equipped by their training within the DADA scheme.

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Appendix 1 Profiles of New Performers Interviewed

(Information as given on postal survey returns, August 2003)

1 Tammy

Tammy gained a Diploma in Musical Theatre from a college just outside London. She did not think that her DADA award had been an advantage in seeking work. She had an agent and since graduating had attended four auditions, but had not taken any further courses or training. Prior to college she had 8 GCSEs and RAD Grades 1-9 in Elementary Tap and Jazz. Aged 20, she gave a home counties postal address. On leaving college, after three weeks unemployed, she secured a fixed term contract as a singer/dancer for a cruise ship company, lasting from August 2002 until October 2003. She thought that her Diploma qualification had been an advantage in getting this job. She took it because the conditions of employment (other than salary) were attractive, it offered interesting work, suited her in the short term and she needed the money. She worked around 40 hours weekly and earned £15,000 - £18,000 p.a. She had no additional sources of income. In general Tammy was less than satisfied with how her career had developed during the first year, but she rated two aspects positively: these were 'quality of professional performance activity' and 'quantity of professional performance activity'.

2 Nicole

This performer left a school near London with a National Diploma in Musical Theatre. She thought that having a DADA award had given her an advantage in seeking work, writing 'If not, I would never have been able to train – I couldn't have afforded it'. Before entering drama school she had nine GCSEs, four A levels and also a BA Honours degree in Drama and Theatre Arts. She had an agent and had attended nine auditions in the previous year but had not taken any further courses or training. Nicole was 25 years old and gave a London postal address. She worked (as an employee) continuously from August 2002 to September 2003, mainly for one production company. This was as 2nd lead in first a UK tour and then a West end run of the same production. Apart from this she had a main role in a regional pantomime and a single cabaret booking outside London. At the survey date she was employed as an actress, giving her tasks as acting, singing, dancing. Her reasons for taking this job were that it was exactly the type of work she wanted, the salary level was attractive, and it offered interesting work. Working 32 hours weekly, she was earning at the level of £21,000 or more p.a. She had no other sources of income and was 'completely satisfied' with the way in which her career had developed in the year since graduation.

3 Lisa

Lisa gained a National Diploma in Acting. She did not feel that her DADA award had given her an advantage in seeking work, though she commented 'But it enabled me to train and was essential in this process'. She no agent and had attended six auditions since leaving college. She attended classes or workshops for which she paid herself to develop a broader range of skills and knowledge and because she thought it would improve her employment prospects. On entering drama school she had 9 GCSEs, three A levels with CDE grades and 7 B Tec certificates of achievement, with four distinctions. Lisa was 25 and gave a Greater London address. Professional work in the first year had been recurrent but not continuous and she did not think her National Diploma had given any advantage in getting her current work. Her time was split between two jobs; in the main job she was an employee, canvassing for a software company, working 24 hours weekly and paid at the level of £6-8,000 p.a. In her second job she worked about 18 hours weekly, earning at the level of £4-£6,000 p.a. Since leaving college, she recorded four periods for three different theatrical companies on a self-employed basis as an actor/producer for a fringe company, actor with a touring pantomime production, and front of house. She had no 'additional' income. Though neutral about her general satisfaction about how her career was developing, she was not at all satisfied about job security, earnings, hours worked and quantity of professional performance activity. However, she was 'completely satisfied' about opportunity for progression.

4 Suzanne

Suzanne had a BA in Professional Stage Management, having studied with a major provincial theatre college. She thought that her DADA award had been an advantage in seeking work, adding: 'Enabled me to study could not afford to have without it. Enabled me to take up work placements that were not paid'. Before going to drama college, she had gained 10 GCSEs (Grades A*-B) and three A levels (Grades A-C). She had attended one interview in the year since graduating, but had not taken any further courses or training. Suzanne thought that her degree had given an advantage in gaining her current job but commented that it was 'More to do with where I studied'. Aged 22, her home base was a provincial location at a distance from the jobs she had done. In the first year she had two periods of unemployment (about six weeks in all), and had worked on three contracts as an ASM for different regional theatres. She was working on a self-employed basis as ASM with a large outdoor summer festival for 43 hours weekly, giving her reasons as: it was exactly the type of work she wanted, the conditions of employment (other than salary) were attractive, it offered interesting work, and suited her in the short term. She was earning at a rate equivalent to £15-18,000 p.a. She had no additional income and was 'completely satisfied' with how her career had developed to that point, rating no aspects of her experience negatively.

5 Alex

This young woman studied at a well-known provincial theatrical college, gaining a BA in Professional Stage Management. She did not think that having DADA support had been an advantage in seeking work. She had attended one interview since graduating and had not taken any further courses or training. Before college, she held 9 GCSEs

(Grades B-D) and 2 A levels (Grades C and E). Alex was 21 and gave a regional home address within reach of her college. After a month waitressing she held professional jobs which ran consecutively from late September 2002 to the end of August 2003. She then spent ten months employed by a television company as a production runner, later a location assistant, arranging filming, booking crews and co-ordinating film schedules. For five weeks in the summer she was stage manager for a company producing open air concerts outside London, which involved managing and organising bands. She thought that her qualification had been an advantage in obtaining this job, which she took because it offered interesting work. She was working 65 hours weekly and was paid at a rate equivalent to £15-£18,000 p.a. Though generally positive about how her career was developing, she rated three aspects negatively (job security, continual skills development, and hours worked). She was however positive about opportunities for development.

6 Sarah

With a National Diploma in Musical Theatre from a London school of theatrical arts, Sarah felt that her DADA award had given an advantage in seeking work, noting also that 'To an extent it has helped me have less debt problems'. She had an agent, and had attended about 15 auditions, but had not taken any career-related courses or training since graduating. Before college, she had gained 5 GCSEs (Grades B-D) and 1 A level (Grade E). Aged 20, her home address was currently in the North of England. Mid-2003, she had two jobs, and thought that her qualification had been an advantage in obtaining both of them. She worked as a sales advisor, recommending and selling skin care products for 25 hours weekly, earning between £6,000 and £8,000 p.a. This temporary job suited her in the short term and she needed the money. She also had a fixed term contract as a teacher of musical production and jazz at a Saturday dance and drama school. She taught dance and movement to music for 4 hours weekly, earning between £2,000 and £4,000 p.a. The reason for taking this was that it offered interesting work. She had additional income from her parents and described herself as Black African and Black Caribbean. In general, she was not at all satisfied with how her career had developed and this applied to every aspect except 'opportunity for progression': about this, she was despite everything, positive.

7 Hannah

This 20 year old gained a National Diploma in Musical Theatre and Performing Arts. While she felt that her DADA award had been an advantage in seeking work, Hannah gave credit to her college's 'excellent advice'. Before college, her qualifications were 3 GCSE Grade A passes, 6 Grade Bs and 2 Grade C's. In addition, she had qualifications in modern, tap and ballet, but had taken no career related courses since graduating. Registered with an agent, she had attended 4 auditions in the last year. Her first professional job was as a dancer for a light entertainment company, appearing in 10 shows a week in a summer seaside production. After a period 'resting' in the autumn, this new performer obtained work as a dancer and understudy for a main part with the same company in pantomime at a provincial theatre. After a short period as a dance teacher, taking 8 classes a week, she worked for eight months as a dancer in various shows on a cruise ship. This was exactly the type of work she wanted, offering an attractive salary level (at £12-15,000 p.a.) and other conditions, and suited her in the

short term. Overall, she was completely satisfied with the way her career had developed so far, particularly in the opportunity for progression and quantity of performance activity, but she was not satisfied with job security.

8. Emily

Emily gained a National Diploma in Dance (Musical Theatre) in London, after 6 GCSE's Grade A or A*, and 4 Grade Bs. Without the DADA award she 'wouldn't have been able to afford to go to college, so wouldn't have the training and experience for auditions and work'. She had two periods of employment, as an office assistant at her 'old' college and at a theatre, on either side of a month demonstrating magic toys. She had subsequently worked for 9 months as a singer/dancer in nightly shows on board a cruise ship. Her reasons for taking the cruise ship work were that it was exactly the type of work wanted, other conditions of employment were attractive (35 hour week), the work was interesting, suited her in the short term and providing an income (at £12-14,999). Emily had no agent. Since July 2002 this 20 year old had taken classes/workshops, and was going to the gym, to develop a broader and more specialist range of skills and knowledge as well as to improve employment prospects. Overall she was moderately satisfied with her career development, though less so with job security and earnings.

9 Stuart

Before his National Diploma in Professional Acting outside London, this 26 year old gained 3 A levels grade A and 1 A level grade D, in addition to 7 GCSE's at grade A and 5 grade B's. As a DADA Award holder, Stuart felt that 'you are taken more seriously with an accredited qualification on your CV'. Though unemployed during the week 30th June-6th July 2003 (the week probed by the survey), he had subsequently found continuous employment; firstly as a croupier in a London casino, after undertaking croupier training; secondly as senior demonstrator and seller of 'magic' in a store. He gave no details of salary but, while rather dissatisfied with earnings, was very satisfied overall with his career development – completely satisfied with continual skills development and with the quality of professional performance activity, and highly satisfied with job security and opportunity for progression. Stuart had no agent, and had attended 2 auditions since leaving college. Reference was made on the survey form to a long term health problem or disability.

10 Oliver

Oliver did not have DADA support as a student. He had ten GCSE's (1grade A, 6 grade Bs, 3 grade Cs) and an A-level at grade A, as well as a BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts before qualifying with a National Diploma in Musical Theatre at a college outside London. He had an agent and had attended 3 auditions in the previous year. He listed two consecutive jobs: swing dancer and understudy in a major West End musical, followed by a year as an ensemble singer/dancer and understudy doing 8 shows each week in another popular West End musical. The attraction of this job was that it offered exactly the type of work wanted, as well as interest and job security, in the desired locality/region. The level of pay was £21,000+, yet on his survey return 'earnings' received the lowest (though satisfactory) rating, in a context of overall complete

satisfaction with career development so far. This 28 year old performer recorded no further full or part time career related courses since July 2002.

11 Annie

Aged 20 in summer 2003, Annie had DADA support for her National Diploma in Dance and Teacher Training at a college outside London. She had previously gained 11 GCSE's (3A*s, 6As and 2Bs), but after leaving college recorded no further career-related courses. She had an agent and had since graduating had attended 50 auditions. Initially, this respondent had held teaching jobs 'on and off, not regular'. Following this she worked as a shop assistant until August 03 alongside two consecutive jobs as a dance teacher. Annie refers to this teaching as her 'main job' which earned her £2-3,999. In fact her 'second' job brings in more money: £6-7999. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, she was overall only moderately satisfied with the development of her career, not completely satisfied with any aspect, and fairly dissatisfied with all except opportunity for progression and continual skills development, both of which were marked very satisfactory.

12 Stephen

Stephen did not have DADA support. He attended a provincial college to gain a National Diploma in Dance (Musical Theatre) after gaining 10 GCSE's (1A*, 1A, 6Bs and 2Cs). He had 1 S level, and 2 A levels at C grade, 1 A level grade D. After college he had two fixed term contract jobs, working overseas from July 02 to 30 Nov 02 for an international theme park company. This was followed with work for the same company's cruise line (January to August 03) as an ensemble performer and character actor. He had an agent and had attended 4 auditions since leaving college, but had taken no further full or part-time related courses. Overall, this 22 year old felt very satisfied with the way his career had developed so far, though it is noteworthy that this degree of satisfaction is reflected in only one individual aspect of his career: quantity of professional performance activity. He was moderately satisfied with other aspects, except for hours worked (very dissatisfied) and job security (not satisfied at all).

13 Fin

After gaining 9 GCSEs (1A, 5B, 2C, 1D) and A level grades of 2D's and 1U, this 25 year old completed his National Diploma in Professional Acting at a college outside London. His DADA award 'enabled me to complete the course'. After an initial month of unemployment, Fin gained a fixed term acting contract with a T.I.E. play. After a further two weeks of unemployment in the spring 2003, he recorded a further period of acting in the same play, working 42 hours per week. He ticked a number of initial attractions to the job: attractive salary level and other conditions of employment, wish to work in this locality/region, interesting work and job security. The performer had no agent and had attended 5 auditions since leaving college. He was overall very well satisfied with the development of his career so far, completely so with continual skills development and quantity of professional performance activity, and very satisfied with the hours worked and quality of professional performance activity. While not very satisfied with job security, this performer was moderately satisfied with both opportunity for progression and earnings, which stood at £12,000-14,999.

14 Christie

Christie did not have DADA support as a student at college in the south of England. At 22 years of age, she had 9 GCSE passes at grades A and B, followed by 2 A levels at grade A, 1 at grade B and 1 at grade C. She left college with a National Diploma in Musical Theatre (Dance), and found work immediately with a light entertainment company doing 'variety show type dancing' in a comedy show with 8 performances a week. After a month claiming unemployment benefit, this new performer found work as an usher/elf in 'Santa's Kingdom'. After a second spell of unemployment, she took a hotel entertainer course with an international hotel chain, and then worked with this company as a singer/dancer/entertainer at a Mediterranean hotel from April 2003 to the time of completing the survey. Christie had an agent and had attended about 20 auditions in the previous year. As regards satisfaction levels, she was very satisfied with job security and number of hours worked, moderately satisfied with opportunity for progression and continual skills development, less so with earnings (at £6-7999 per year), quality and quantity of professional performance activity. Overall, however, she was moderately satisfied with the development of her career so far.

15 Tim

Tim gained a National Diploma in Dance: Musical Theatre from a provincial college. He felt that his DADA award had given him an advantage in seeking work: 'although I finished college with a small overdraft, it's nothing compared to having no award, being £30,000 in debt and trying to find employment'. Before his college days, he had gained a school Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate in Ireland, as well as NCVA Level 1 in Dance. After a month's unemployment on leaving college, this 24 year old had gained a fixed term contract as an ensemble dancer in a well-known and popular musical which employed him up to the date of the survey. Overall, Tim was completely satisfied with the development of his career so far: completely satisfied with job security, quality and quantity of professional performance activity, and very satisfied with opportunity for progression and hours worked. While moderately satisfied with earnings (on a salary of £21,000+), he was not at all satisfied with continual skills development, taking classes/workshops with a view to improving employment prospects. He had an agent, and had attended 3 auditions in the past year.

16 Martin

At 24 years of age, Martin had 4 GCSE's, 3 at grade C, 1 at grade E, before achieving a BA honours degree in Professional Acting. He was supported by a DADA award, which he felt had given him an (unspecified) advantage in seeking work, but recorded a health problem as a limiting factor. He had started his career with a two-month period as a teaching assistant in drama, followed by a brief spell helping at a sports venue. As a black performer he had worked in acting roles in the theatre and community theatre, as well as two roles in TV. Income was supplemented (£10-11,999) by work on a casual basis as a care officer in a secure unit, described as the respondent's main job. Martin had an agent and had attended 12 auditions in the last year. Overall, he felt very satisfied with the development of his career so far, though curiously this was reflected by only one individual aspect of his career: job security. He was not very satisfied with earnings or hours worked, and expressed only moderate satisfaction with the remaining

four aspects of his career: opportunity for progression, continual skills development, quality and quantity of professional performance activity.

17 Daniel

Before Daniel's National Diploma in Professional Acting, this 24 year old achieved 12 GCSE passes (1 grade A, 3 B's, 4 C's, 2 D's and 2 E's). This black new performer recorded a list of activities as 'actor, music creating' as well as 'acting classes' and 'music creative workshops'. As of the 1st week of July 2003, he was unemployed and engaged in further study/training. Daniel noted that classes/workshops were taken for a number of reasons: to develop a broader range of, also more specialist skills/knowledge, to change his career options, and with the hope of improving career prospects. At college, he had a DADA award and felt that this had given an advantage in seeking work: 'It's like any qualification. It shows you have a certain standard of competence'. He had an agent and in the previous year had attended 80 auditions. Moderately satisfied overall with the way his career had developed so far, Daniel was completely satisfied with opportunity for progression and continual skills development, moderately satisfied with job security and hours worked, while not satisfied with earnings, quality and quantity of professional performance activity. No details of income level were given.

18 Michael

Aged 23 years, Michael had already achieved a gold medal (honours) for acting before gaining a BA honours degree from his Course in Performance (Acting Option). He had previously achieved nine GCSEs, five at Grade B, and five A levels at Grades A-E. He was now in the top earning bracket (£21,000 +), doing promotional work, a job which he took because it offered interesting work and he needed the money. Michael had taken further classes/workshops to develop more specialist skills in order to would improve his employment prospects. He had worked in the previous year as a deputy box office co-ordinator, overseeing the sale of theatre tickets, followed by the lead in a Christmas show, and a brief one-week contract as a stage manager for Theatre in Education. Overall, Michael was very satisfied with the development of his career, also more specifically with opportunity for progression and the quality of professional performance activity. Less satisfying were continual skills development and quantity of professional performance activity, and he was not at all satisfied with job security. Interestingly, he placed earnings in only moderate position on the scale of satisfaction.

Appendix 2 New Performers Pilot Interview Agenda

January 2004

SECTION A YEAR 1 SUMMER 2002 TO JULY 2003

- 1 Which of the jobs which you had during this period were you most pleased with?
Why do you feel that?
- 2 What appealed to you about this work when you applied for it?
Did the job turn out as you had imagined it would?
What was the best aspect of this job? In what way?
What was its worst feature? In what way?
How did you get this job/engagement?
- 3 Can you tell me more about the terms and conditions of the appointment?
Did you discuss these with your school/college at all?
With anyone else (e.g. agent)?
Were the terms and conditions negotiable?
- 4 Did this engagement contribute to your professional standing?
If so, how?

If the above is not a 'professional' job, ask for views about the professional job which s/he saw as most important.

Taking any one of the 'non-professional' jobs which you had up to August 2003:

- 5 What was the most important 'non-professional' work which you did during this period?
Were there ways in which this work connected with your professional activities?
How important to you is this distinction between different types of work?

SECTION B YEAR 2 AUGUST 2003 TO THE PRESENT

- 1 Were any experiences in your first year after college especially useful in opening up new opportunities for you more recently?
- 2 Can you tell me about the job you have been most pleased with since August 2003?
- 3 Was that a natural step from what you had been doing before?
- 4 Were there things about the job itself which were better or worse than previous jobs?

SECTION C TAKING STOCK

It can be a big transition from being a student to establishing a career. We are interested in the skills and competences which you think have stood you in good stead in professional practice.

1 Apart from your technical skills, what other preparation for working life has proved valuable to you?

Are there skills which you lacked when you first left college?

2 In seeking jobs, how far has the level of pay been a prime consideration for you?

3 Have you any further comments on terms and conditions of employment?

4 Has your school/college played a part in helping you to pursue work?
Or in advising you about contracts, terms and conditions?

5 What part has your agent played in securing work?
Have other people or factors helped in finding work?

6 How many auditions have you attended to date?
Have any of these called for any special preparation or learning on your part?

7 What opportunities have you had to learn 'on the job'?
How have you maintained your own professional development outside the workplace?

8 How far has your employment so far matched the hopes which you had on graduating?

To those involved in running workshops, teaching etc:

9 How do you see teaching as against performance?

10 Which strategies have you found most effective in getting the work you want?

11 What advice on job-seeking would you give to someone who will graduate this year?

12 People have sometimes spoken in terms of making a 'good start' to a career as a performer. How would you see 'a good start'?

13 Have you encountered a 'good employer'? What makes them a good employer?

SECTION D LOOKING AHEAD

- 1 Which aspects of your experience so far seem likely to provide a basis for your further development?
- 2 Do you see the future in terms of building a career?
- 3 What sort of work do you hope to be doing in two years from now?

*We appreciate your sharing your thoughts on these issues.
It is important that we are able to present the views of individual performers as well as reporting information gathered through surveys.
Thank you for your time.*