

A close-up photograph of a person's face, focusing on their eyes and hands. The person's fingers and lips are smeared with various colors of paint, including blue, red, yellow, and green. The background is a solid purple color.

EVOJVE

LINCOLNSHIRE ONE VENUES

**SO, YOU WANT
TO WORK IN
THE ARTS?**

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR NEWLY EMERGING CREATIVES

AIMS

I can see how I might have a career in the arts
I understand some of the practicalities
I'm going in to this with a clearer understanding of how things work

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INTRODUCTION

Working in the arts can be brilliant, rewarding, frustrating, difficult, well paid, poorly paid, an absolute disaster, and the best thing you will ever do. Sometimes all in one afternoon.

But talk to people who are some way into a creative career and they will all tell you the same thing:

I WISH WHEN I WAS STARTING OUT SOMEONE HAD TOLD ME ABOUT _____.¹

The aim of this guide is to tell you some of those things. You can't sidestep experience – that, you have to work on – but we will aim to provide some pointers to get you on the right track. Maybe this toolkit will save you some time, money and frustration. We can't generate talent on your behalf. That's something inherent. But you might be surprised how far good working practice can take you, and how dramatically the most talented person in the world can fail, if they don't work in the right way.

It's also worth bearing in mind that you might begin to work beyond your current speciality. Someone working in theatre will learn things that could enable them to work as an event manager; a film-maker might learn all sorts of techniques to begin working as a visual artist or a graphic designer or a web developer. As your skills and experience evolve, so can your career. Often you will learn something out of necessity (because you can't afford to pay someone else to do it, say) that goes on to be an incredibly useful string to your bow, opening up career opportunities that you might not have initially considered.²

The Covid-19 virus has meant that the arts have entered a precarious time, and venues, individuals and organisations are under lots of social and financial pressure that will undoubtedly last for many years. So, if you are looking to go into the arts, there has never been a time when it's been as important to make sure you're as well prepared as you can be.

What we're not trying to do here is tell you how to do your art. What we are doing is hoping to point you in the right direction to make a living from it.

NOTE:

In this toolkit we often use the words artist, creative, and practitioner. When you see those words they apply across art forms, from dancer to DJ, painter to playwright, musician to mime artist.

ANOTHER MUCH MORE IMPORTANT NOTE:

Everything changes. All that we've written here is correct as we write in autumn 2020. But tax rules, DBS processes, insurance, all of that – well, you need to check on it. We're a guide, but we won't be responsible if you get sent to the gulag for filling in a form wrongly. Please do your homework.

¹ I could insert any number of statements here...

² I couldn't afford to pay someone to do graphic design, so I learnt to do it myself. Not only did I save on expenditure, I also learnt to control the visual identity of the work I carried out. I've since also earned money designing for other people.

EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS

If you talk to people who work in the arts the world seems to be made up of two types of people: those who are freelancers but would love more stability; and those who are employed and wish they were their own boss. There are lots who are happy where they are of course, but that's the dilemma that many artists face: do I go freelance or look for a job? The truth is that there are lots of models of work if you want a career in the creative industries, and what is right for you might shift and change over time. Your personal priorities and responsibilities might shift, or a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity might drop into your lap. Or you might just change your mind. Stranger things have happened.

It's also perfectly possible to combine strands of work to create a busy successful career. Many people are practitioners and teach on the side. Teaching isn't a lesser option – it's a way of providing a balance, and a steady income. There are lessons that people learn as a teacher that translate out onto a stage (or screen or canvas or wherever) and of course a good teacher brings their real-life experience to the classroom. Just among writers we could list here Robert Frost, JK Rowling, Dan Brown, William Golding, Joanne Harris, George Orwell and myriad more who all taught and wrote. The same applies across all of the arts.³

We'll look at two broad categories of working as a creative, but just to say that there is no right or wrong – it's all a matter of personal preference, and acknowledging your circumstances. As a young adult you might be happy to live from hand to mouth for a while. (Perhaps we should call this the 'Starving Artist' model?) Of course, it's also possible to combine a job with freelance work, working a couple of days a week while you pursue your freelance career.

We could do a little table here that puts jobs into neat freelance / employed columns here. Something like this:

FREELANCE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Composer • Costume Designer • Stage Manager – project to project • Playwright 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stonemason • Street Dance Teacher in Village Halls • Trumpeter • Event Manager
EMPLOYED	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music teacher • Costume maker – Nottingham Playhouse • Stage Manager – Manchester Royal Exchange Theatre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Manager of Lincolnshire One Venues (Me!) • Education Assistant, National Theatre

In actual fact all sorts of jobs exist on both sides and it's perfectly possible to be a stage manager, a curator, an instrumentalist, a choreographer or a producer as a freelancer, or as an employee for an organisation – a job.⁴

³ I know a few people who have gone in and out of arts work. My friend Ruth – who was a beautiful actor, musician and puppeteer – decided to step away and trained, then worked, as a plumber. She earned a packet, and came back to the arts a few years later invigorated, and financially secure enough to be pickier about the work she took on.

⁴ I've worked managing community arts activity as a freelancer and now I do it for LOV. What differs isn't the work that you do but the way that you work.



CASE STUDY: LING PENG

Ling works as a musician, and is a leading erhu player in the UK. She's collaborated with countless musicians, often blending artforms between east and west. She also teaches and runs workshops.

Job title

Musician

What does your job entail?

Music performer, Arts workshop leader, composer

What are the best things about your career?

Performing

What are the challenges that you continue to face in your career?

Promoting shows to venues, and writing funding applications.

If you could go back and tell yourself anything as you started your career, what advice would you give yourself?

Get an agent to promote you.

Link to website or social media

www.ling-peng.com

BEING A PRACTITIONER

For many people the idea of being a practicing artist is the main aim of a creative career: you're a gigging musician, gaining a reputation, releasing songs, then an album and on until you headline Glastonbury; or putting on a play in the upstairs room of a pub and then getting a job helping out on a professional production, being employed as a director and going on to be artistic director of the Metropolitan Opera in New York. Or maybe you'd rather hone your skills as a painter or sculptor, spend some time in Paris or Tokyo and be discovered and command exorbitant prices at auctions of your work. Whatever the genre, there are people that have those kinds of careers.

There are also those who never really get anywhere and their artistic career fizzles out.

(And please let's not get started on *Britain's Got Talent* as a model for getting work – for the vast majority of people it isn't!)

But in-between those two extremes, there are thousands and thousands of everyday artists, creatives, working away, earning a living, and doing nothing but their art.

That's not quite true though – they are creatives, but they are also a business. You might be lucky enough to get yourself an agent or a manager at an early stage of your career. You might rapidly earn enough money to pay someone else to do your accounts and make applications and all of the other things that you'll need to do to get work. Many people, though, manage such things themselves for their entire careers – it will vary depending on what you want to do and how. There's lots of practical guidance below that will apply to practitioners.

Most artists 'work their way up' – that is they start small and gradually increase their reputation and the quantity of their output. Sometimes an artist will hold down a full or part time job that's nothing to do with the arts as they get established, with a tipping point coming where they are earning more from their practice than from their job.⁵ Sometimes people work for years and then decide on a career change, to follow the path that they really wanted to from the beginning but perhaps weren't able to.

But if you talk to pretty much anyone who works as a practitioner, they'll tell you that at some point they did other work as well. And there's absolutely nothing wrong with that. Rent needs to be paid and bills met! In an ideal world young creatives would be able to walk into a career. The reality is that you need to build experience, a reputation, and contacts, and that doesn't happen overnight.

⁵ I worked in bars. It was flexible and to an extent disposable (though don't tell any of my old bosses I said that). I could reduce hours to accommodate the creative jobs that I was beginning to get. Gradually I got to the point where I could give up on bar work, and I vowed never to clean an ashtray again.

GETTING A JOB

You get security, a regular wage, your national insurance is paid. You get sick leave, paid holidays and a pension contribution. What's not to like?

For many people, getting a job is THE way forward. Whether from school, college or university there are routes into employment in the arts that you'll be able to find and apply for. Jobs are competitive. A LOT of people want to work in the arts. And the wages aren't necessarily great. You'll often get more money working at a comparative level in a different sector. But for most arty people there isn't really an alternative. We put up with wages that are lower than our fellow former classmates because we love it. We can't do without it. (But see the bit on Unions, below...)

But let's shatter one illusion right here. Often creative types will say something like: 'Of course I will work 9-5 for this arts organisation, but I'll write my novel at the weekends'. Or: 'I intend to carry on my paintings despite having 40 hours a week less to play with'. Arts work is hard. You will be tired and you will want down-time. Of course, you WILL write that novel, but don't underestimate the effort and sheer hard work that both your job and your freelance aspirations will demand. If you try to do both you will be happy, but worn out.



CASE STUDY: OWEN CRAVEN- GRIFFITHS

Owen produces work for Apples and Snakes, an organisation that champions spoken word artists.

Job title

Associate Producer

What does your job entail?

Developing poets and the poetry community across the Midlands. Artist development and mentoring, programming live performance and festivals. Supporting artists working in the community and developing strategic partnerships with other organizations and artists across the region.

What are the best things about your career?

I get to help people develop their practice and help the general public/young people in education settings develop a love of poetry and language.

What are the challenges that you continue to face in your career?

Stigmas attaches to the perception of poetry. Supply and demand in terms of artists looking for opportunities and opportunities available.

If you could go back and tell yourself anything as you started your career, what advice would you give yourself?

Develop all the skills you can as early as you can and keep practicing. Don't expect things to work out for you and be prepared to adapt as and when it's necessary. Be on time.

Link to website or social media

www.applesandsnakes.org

BEING SELF-EMPLOYED

You can call yourself an independent, a freelancer, self-employed – it sort of all means the same thing. You earn a living by working from job to job, rather than working for a single employer.

Let's say you do stained glass. Your working week might include: delivering two sessions in a day-care centre, going into your local primary school for an afternoon, working on an application to Arts Council England for a personal project that you'd really like to do, and working with a church to support them as they design a new window to replace one that was vandalised. You might spend half a day doing admin work (the school still hasn't paid you for the last time you went in, and your phone number has changed so you need to sort out new business cards.) You'll most likely spend time updating your social media, though that's probably spread out rather than being a particular block of time. And you might spend some time working on a technique that you're trying to get right – no pay, not a commission, just you working on getting better at your craft.

When you work will depend on what you do. If you work with communities, like LOV does, you'll probably end up working outside of normal office hours some of the time. Those community participants who can't wait to get involved in your arts activity may well have 'proper jobs' and so if you want to work with them you'll end up working evenings and weekends because that's when they can make. That said, if you're employed, with a full-time job in the arts, you may well end up working then too – so if you're a stage manager for instance, theatre shows are on in the evenings and on Saturdays so that's when you'll clock in. At LOV we regularly work out of normal office hours, delivering workshops and meeting with communities.

As a freelancer you'll find a pattern that works for you and go with it. Writers for instance love telling you how they work. Google it and see. "I have a cigar at 7am and then go to my shed and type solidly from 7:45 until 2pm. Then I have a lunch, usually soft-boiled eggs and spinach. My afternoon sees me answering my correspondence." The internet's chock full of paragraphs like that.⁶

But also, part of your working week as the stained glass person might include: working in a picture framing shop on Fridays and Saturdays. And that might well make the difference between you being able to pay the bills or not. Listen. Any emerging artist who tells you that all they've ever done is their art is either:

1. Lying
2. Living at home
3. Rich
4. The child of someone rich
5. Starving hungry
6. Telling you this in the dark because their electric has been cut off
7. Some wunderkind who got discovered straight away – and good luck to them! But they're exceedingly rare...

So don't beat yourself up if it's a struggle at first. This phrase crops up a lot in this guide: do your homework. Look for work. Work hard. It'll be okay.

If you're going to be self-employed there are things that you'll need to be in top of. You'll need to register with the Inland Revenue (the tax office), officially, and then you'll be responsible for your taxes and national insurance. If you're bringing in decent wages this can be up to 30% of anything you earn, so make sure you know what you've earned and spent and, if you need to, put money

⁶ When self-employed I found that mornings were good for admin, and evenings were better for creative work. So sometimes I'd be up at the crack of dawn working on a budget or a funding application, but if I had a film to edit, I'd stay up late. That's what suited me; you'll find your own rhythm as you develop your career. To be honest I still find that's true as an employee. I've written most of this after 9pm, but still if I have some dull Health and Safety forms to complete then that's better done first thing.

on one side. You'll most likely need to be able to do risk assessments that cover what you do. You might need public liability insurance (many organisations that will employ you will insist on it.) You might need to get a DBS check – almost certainly the case if you're going to get work in schools.

But all of that is doable. We'll talk about it below. Don't panic.



CASE STUDY: TARA CRÈME

Tara is a Freelance Composer

What does your job entail?

Composing for film, theatre and concerts, on a project-by-project basis. Also I lead a community choir – arranging music, leading rehearsals and organising concerts.

What are the best things about your career?

How every project is different, so you are constantly facing new challenges, and developing your art. Working with lots of different people. Working creatively on something I love.

What are the challenges that you continue to face in your career?

Not having a steady income and insecurity about future work.

Erratic deadlines – it can be all or nothing. If a composing job – particularly for film – has really short deadlines with lots of revisions needed it can be stressful and exhausting. Keeping the choir workload is usually fine but if I'm in the middle of a deadline for a composing job it can get hard to juggle the two. With the choir organising concerts – always fun when they happen, but fixing dates and performances is always a challenge.

If you could go back and tell yourself anything as you started your career, what advice would you give yourself?

Work harder at making and keeping contacts, it's not enough for the work to speak for itself. Work harder on the presentation of your work – pitches, CDs etc

Link to website or social media

www.taracreme.com



Waiting for the children to arrive for the Newstead Abbey Victorian Christmas event

CASE STUDY: STEVEN ADBY

Steven works delivering Living History sessions in education, using creativity to help primary schools to teach a vibrant history and arts curriculum. He also works as a choreographer, specialising in baroque and other historical dance.

Job title

Freelance Educator

What are the best things about your career?

I love giving children the chance to experience things they might not otherwise have a chance to do. This can range from hands on history sessions; handling and investigating artefacts, taking part in hands on activities through to participating in drama sessions by not only dressing up but acting too. Our days in schools are designed to stimulate children and I love the fact that children of all academic abilities can participate – it's wonderful to see children who may struggle academically find themselves able to act or fully contribute in a session. It's a great 'leveller'.

Enabling children to realise there is a 'bigger' world out there just waiting to be discovered and realising that learning can be fun and doesn't have to involve writing are strong elements too!

I enjoy being my own boss, visiting both new schools and 'old friends' and being able to develop new sessions or move quickly to adapt to any changes in curriculum that will have an impact on our offering.

What are the challenges that you continue to face in your career?

Making sure that the sessions I offer meet current school needs. Luckily, things don't happen overnight so we are able to adapt or create new sessions in line with the latest government guidelines. Asking for advice and suggestions from teachers and heads is a good way of keeping abreast of the situation so that what we offer meets their needs.

Although outside our control, the tightening of school budgets is of concern, so it is important the schools feel they are getting value for money when having us in.

If you could go back and tell yourself anything as you started your career, what advice would you give yourself?

That every day will be different! Some days you will come home feeling as though you've lost the plot, but that isn't your fault... just the nature of the beast. Some groups or schools are just 'more difficult' than others for various reasons!

Not to be over-critical of yourself and be kind to yourself too... there's nothing wrong in giving yourself a pat on the back... but don't get complacent either

Anything else?

Don't be afraid to ask for advice or for constructive criticism. Both are vital to help develop and improve what you can offer or bring to the party.

Believe in yourself and trust your instincts... both in a positive and negative way....

Admit when something isn't working. Don't waste precious time trying to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Instead, work out what elements work, identify the weak areas and build from there. Learn to say sorry and NEVER 'rule by fear'. ALWAYS give praise and encouragement, even for the smallest of things. It's an amazing morale booster!

Link to website or social media

www.partakehistory.com

PRACTICALITIES

What follows is a load of information, all of which might point you in certain directions. If you're expecting links to helpful websites I'm afraid you're going to be a bit disappointed. This links we might point you to will go out of date and so we'll work on the assumption that you know how to look, rather than telling you where to look.

FINDING WORK

There are lots of places where jobs get advertised, either freelance opportunities or full and part-time jobs. A really good source is Arts Jobs, an online resource provided by Arts Council England. Once you've signed up you can look for jobs based on location, artform, hours – all sorts. It's easy to use and pretty much every arts organisation in England puts up available positions there. At LOV we all got our jobs after seeing them there. There are similar pages in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Search online and you'll find them.

Newspapers all have jobs advertised online, local and national (and international). The Guardian is particularly good for creatives. Local authorities have jobs pages that you can check out. Sign up to all of them – you might pick up an opportunity in one that you miss elsewhere.

Here's a bit of honesty – sometimes work isn't advertised. Sometimes it goes to people that have previously worked for an organisation and done a blinding job. So – do a blinding job wherever you work because people won't forget you. (They also won't forget you if you always turn up late. See below...)

If you're a practitioner and looking for work as an actor, musician, artist – well, those opportunities are also advertised in loads of places. But many of your chances will be home-made. You'll sort out a gig for yourself, find a village hall that will let you put on your play, you'll talk to your local arts centre about any opportunity they might have to support you. You'll take chances and you'll probably do all sorts of work for nothing because you believe in what you do. But look at 'Grants' below, because there is money available to help you with that.

You might also have to think about where you're willing to work. You might be happy to move to a nearby city for a great job; or you might relish the idea of working in Doha or Dublin or Detroit. You might be completely happy where you are and have no interest in moving.

You choose.

EDUCATION – DEGREE, OR NOT DEGREE?

You know what? As with so much else in this guide there is no right or wrong answer to this. It completely depends on you, on what you want to do, on how you learn, and what your circumstances are. Some people relish work and the experience, but also security and money that it brings. Other people love studying and get loads out of it. And it's not just degrees, this applies to any qualification – including adult education opportunities where you return to study after a period of other activity.

What almost everyone agrees on though is that if you are going to study, especially now that fees are so significant, please make sure that it's the right course for you. There is no point in going to university unless, when you look at the syllabus, you think – yes! That's for me! The same goes for a night class or any other type of study. Money spent achieving a qualification that you don't want and which isn't useful is money wasted.

It's all about finding out what is right for you.⁷ Do your research. If the area that you want to work in absolutely requires a degree then go for it. Often practical experience will move you forward just as well. And don't be afraid to apply for work where they asked for a qualification that you don't have, when you have real life experience that means you'd be the best person for the post. Here's a daft example:

EMPLOYER: So you haven't got a degree in computer animation?

YOU: No. I didn't get round to a degree because I was too busy designing the dinosaurs for Steven Spielberg's films.

EMPLOYER: Great. Have the job.

ALTERNATIVELY:

EMPLOYER: You've not got much animation experience.

YOU: I spent three years being taught by the guy who designed the dinosaurs for Steven Spielberg's films. I was his intern for the summer he did *Lost World 9: Stegapocalypse*.

EMPLOYER: Great. Have the job.

Famously, Nick Park of Aardman Animation started making A Grand Day Out (where Wallace and Gromit go to the moon) as his degree show. Part way through he was taken on by the company who let him finish his degree and work for them in parallel. Google it. It's a great story.

Study if it suits you or your ambitions, your personality, or your career. But it's not the only way into the arts.

⁷ I studied as a mature student and got loads out of it. I was studying because I wanted to, not because of school or parent pressure. For me, my time at Uni definitely paved the way to my career. But I've successfully collaborated with people who didn't take that route, including fantastic creatives who came to the arts loads later on in their lives with absolutely no arts qualifications.

CASE STUDY: JENNY GLEADELL

Jenny works at The Collection and Usher Gallery in the heart of Lincoln

Job title

Exhibitions and Interpretation Officer

What does your job entail?

In my job I research, develop and coordinate the exhibitions at The Collection and Usher Gallery, which is a very wide remit as we serve many different purposes and have a really broad audience base. I get to work closely with contemporary artists to support and develop exciting new commissions and exhibitions and with national partner venues to bring high quality and inspirational projects to Lincoln. Our temporary exhibition programme includes thematic art and history exhibitions, contemporary art and touring exhibitions supported by ACE NPO funding, as well as family-friendly summer blockbuster exhibitions. What people don't know is that my job is also incredibly practical at times and people are always surprised at how much hard physical work goes into putting on an exhibition!

What are the best things about your career?

I think the best thing about my career is all the interesting, creative people I have collaborated with so far and how much you can learn about society through working in the creative sector.

What are the challenges that you continue to face in your career?

I think it is balancing the need to constantly research and grow relevant knowledge while also delivering big projects to tight deadlines. In the arts sector, I don't believe the work stops when you leave work really, you are constantly finding inspiration and researching. The wider challenge is the current lack of funding for the sector and the resulting instability this causes, and I know this has had a huge impact on every aspect of our work.

If you could go back and tell yourself anything as you started your career, what advice would you give yourself?

I would say to my earlier self (and anyone else who would listen) 'try to say yes to everything'. I think the best opportunities arise sometimes when you least expect them and sometimes you don't believe that you are ready for them. I also believe that doors open up when you show interest and meet the right people, even if you just invite someone for a coffee to talk about their work.

Anything else?

People will tell you that you aren't experienced enough early on in your career – people did the same with me – but don't let that set you back. Young, exciting talent is what the arts needs. If you show willing, passion and commitment, you will get to where you want to be.

Link to website or social media

www.thecollectionmuseum.com



Credit: Justin Hibbs

CASE STUDY: ROSALIND DAVIS

Ros works as a freelance artist, curator and educator, including a significant curating role at Collyer Bristow Gallery. She's written a great book that you can look up: *What They Didn't Teach you in Art School*. It's a fantastic 'further reading' book for this toolkit – a comprehensive guide for people starting a visual arts career.

Job title

Artist, Curator, Writer, Mentor, Educator, Consultant

What does your job entail?

They all require these:

- Project Management and Development
- Meeting deadlines
- Research
- Generating ideas
- and being active in the art world – networking.
- Studio visits /organising meetings
- Supporting production/ commissioning of new work (mine or others)
- Promotion, Communication, Marketing i.e. writing lots!
- Liaising with artists, partners, organizations etc.
- Audience Development
- Art Handling, Framing, Transport
- Fund Raising
- Budgeting
- Documenting & Cataloging Archiving
- Evaluating
- Creating conversations and connections between artists

What are the best things about your career?

Developing my practice and work and creating conversations and connections between artists and curators.

What are the challenges that you continue to face in your career?

Precariousness – not just financially but with all aspects of being an artist – need a lot of resilience, determination, adaptivity and creative problem solving.

If you could go back and tell yourself anything as you started your career, what advice would you give yourself?

Build your own art world ASAP! I did that a bit slowly to begin with. Make the most of every opportunity you get!

Anything else?

Engage as much as you can.

Link to website or social media

www.rosalinddavis.co.uk

GRANTS

If you are looking for funding to produce a creative work or for an organisation one of your key ports of call will be Arts Council England – assuming you live in England of course. There's also Arts Council Northern Ireland, Arts Council Wales, and Creative Scotland. And the Crafts Council, The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Awards for All and then literally thousands of trusts and foundations that give money to organisations and projects that meet their aims.⁸ And if you've stumbled across this and you live overseas, well, I trust you can look for the organisations that exist in your part of the world.

When you start off it seems almost madness that someone might give you money to do the work that you want to do. But these funds have aims of their own, and if your aims meet theirs, you may end up being a beneficiary of their funds – and so you get to create the work that you want to.

The most important thing when applying for funding is to do your homework. A funder won't give you money for just anything. You need to be able to demonstrate that you can be relied on to deliver quality work that aligns with their aims. There's literally no point in applying to a funder if you can't do that.

We're a Lincolnshire organisation, and so based in England. So let's take a look at Arts Council England (ACE) and how their funding works. Lots of this will apply across arts funders though, including those in other parts of the UK.

It's important to stress that from time to time the guidelines change, so you'll want to check that what you're looking at is the most up-to-date version when you're planning your application. ACE has an online application system called Grantium, and you need to register and be accepted on it before you can apply. Sometimes that can take a couple of weeks to process, and a lot of people find Grantium really hard to get their head around. Persevere, read the guidelines. It's worth it.

You can apply to ACE as a company or as an individual. If you and some of your friends want to set up a company that's great (there's some more about that below) and you can apply to ACE as a new company; but you must have a bank account in your company's name. It's the same if you're an individual. Basically, you need to have a bank account in the same name that you put in the 'applicant name' box when you start your application, whether you're *Jane Smith* or *Tate Britain*. There are set questions that everyone needs to answer.

You might be putting together a little application – your first – to work on a script, develop it as a street theatre play and present it to festival audiences. You'll have to answer similar questions to someone organising an enormous outdoor theatre festival that your small project might be a part of in a year's time. The questions are, broadly:

- What do you want to do?
- Is anyone else involved?
- Where do you want to do it?
- Why do you want to do it? What do you hope to get out of it?
- What might others get out of it? And how many people might it be for?
- Is there any evidence that people want it?
- How will you connect with those people?
- What will it cost?
- How will it be managed?
- How will you evaluate what you've done?

That might seem a really daunting list, but for our little example above the answers can be as straightforward as this:

This application is to develop a script and to create a short street theatre project suitable for festivals. We will be applying for all significant festivals that will take place in the Midlands during summer 2021 and we've got provisional agreements

⁸ Lincolnshire One Venues has four major funders right now – Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Youth Music, and Arts Council England. We're also supported with money and support in kind by a load of other organisations. Our home is at the University of Lincoln. They're our accountable body so they look after a lot of the practicalities.

*with Hit the Streets and Stre'Theatre festivals⁹ to present the work. Hit the Streets have committed £*** to the project should this application be successful. We are a new collective and while I'm the lead on this application our intention is to develop our organisation through this work. What we do is accessible and fun, and our background is creating family-friendly outdoor work. We currently have *** followers on social media and we'll use that, and the festivals' own publicity to draw attention to our work. The costs are modest, including writer's fee, three actors rehearsing for a fortnight, some money for costumes and props and a bit for travel expenses and admin. [You'll have to be quite precise here. ACE like their budgets line by line.] The project will be led by me – I got distinction at college on the Arts Management module and was the treasurer for the DramSoc. We'll create audience questionnaires to gauge the success of our work and use that to develop what we do in the future.*

Obviously that's a very simplified version of what you would write, but this general principal is important: it needn't be complicated. The example above is a bit theatre-ish; it doesn't matter what your artform is, just be ready to demonstrate that what you want to do will **help** the funder to deliver **their** aims.

Some Arts Council England myths:

I'LL ONLY GET FUNDED IF I'VE DONE LOADS OF WORK ALREADY.

ACE (and other funders) will judge your application on its merits. Part of that is track record, but everyone starts somewhere and there's no reason why your project, which is well thought through, carefully budgeted and supported by a creative network shouldn't be successful.

I NEED TO TICK BOXES.

You don't. You need to apply for what you want to do. ACE will expect you to adhere to and champion good practice around equality and diversity, but they won't expect you to pretend to be something you're not.

I NEED TO DO EVERYTHING ON THE CHEAP FOR MY FIRST APPLICATION.

You need to make your budget make sense. A big part of that – and it's something that can be difficult to get your head around at first – is to remember that you need to pay people properly, including yourself. ACE are unlikely to approve a budget where you don't pay proper wages. Look up what Equity and Musicians Union¹⁰ rates are for actors or players if you're working with them. Similarly, if your project relies on touring to thirty venues around the country and you don't have a figure somewhere for travel costs, your budget will be looked on as weak. Your application is more likely to be rejected because it is unrealistic than because it is too much. If you end up doing more work than you'd originally planned, well – that happens. But if you budget in three weeks of work at £100 a week, your project won't even be paying national minimum wage and so it will almost certainly fail to attract a funder.

⁹ Don't bother searching for them, I made them up. But in their place imagine a local festival or two where you, or your mate, did some volunteering and are on first name terms with someone that might be able to help you. You give them a ring, go for a coffee, and before you know it you've got a couple of provisional bookings.

¹⁰ Equity is the actors' union, Musicians' Union is for, well, people in the music industry. There are loads of unions that support creative professionals, and they're covered as a separate section. I'm a member of BECTU. There's some more information about unions below.

Some other things to remember that apply across the board:

- Do your research. All funders have information out there and you can see what they've funded in the past. That's useful to see if you're a good fit, but equally if a major funder has just bankrolled a project in your area that's really similar to what you're proposing, well, you might want to contact them and see if they'd be interested in your project right now.
- Learn from your projects. As you go forward, you'll gain experience and that is an asset. All funders will want you to evaluate what you do; don't make that tokenistic, but rather, make it have a positive impact on you and your work. What could you do better? Use your experience and what your audiences and participants tell you to develop exciting new projects that will attract funding.
- Look for funding to fit your project; don't significantly reshape your project to fit a funder's criteria. Remember that if you're successful you're actually going to have to deliver the work as you've described it. If you've compromised, your heart won't be in what you end up doing. Similarly with budgets – if you're not realistic you can end up trying to work out how to do something that's difficult and expensive with little or no money.
- Put a figure in your budget for 'contingency'. This is for unexpected changes – fuel costs might go up and if your project involves a lot of driving that will have a big impact. Something you thought you could get for free might fall through and so you have to pay for it instead. There are hundreds of reasons why your budget might change, so having a bit of money to act as a safety net is really helpful.
- When writing an application, less is often more.¹¹ Most applications have word count limits for each question. Your challenge is this: describe what you want to do and describe it really well, but in as few words as possible. Sometimes funders offer the opportunity to attach supporting material. Be frugal! Three really good pictures of your work will sell it better than ninety dodgy phone snaps.
- Some projects might benefit from time. It could be best to put in for a small application to develop initial ideas, and, once you've completed that, make a more substantial application for funding to deliver an ambitious project based on that research.
- Staff that work for funders are super-busy.¹² Don't pester them with calls asking when you might hear about your application, or if you can explain your complicated idea in great depth, in person, over a coffee, or asking if they can evaluate your application before you apply. Read their guidelines to see what support they can offer. Foster good relationships. If you see someone from ACE at a gallery opening say hello, but remember that every single other person in the room also wants money from them...
- Remember that you might not be successful. A bit of a downer, this, but all funders receive more applications than they can fund. When you're applying, think about what might happen if you don't get the money. Is there anyone else that you can apply to, for instance? Could you do a smaller version? What are your options? And when you're writing your application, make sure that it is the best that it can be. And:
- If you don't ask, you don't get.

¹¹ Being brief is hard work – you really have to choose your words carefully. I love this quote – it's by Mark Twain or one of that crowd: "I'm sorry my letter is so long, I didn't have time to write a short one."

¹² One of the things that really surprised me about ACE was that they wouldn't always come and see work that they'd funded. They do, but not always, and as more pressures come into play it may well be that they see less work in person. I'd thought it was a given that someone would turn up, perhaps with an actual clipboard, making sure that I was doing what I said I would, and counting how many people were in the audience. The truth is that they're massively interested in supporting work but they're a small team can't get to everything. I was pleasantly surprised though, that when I spoke to a member of staff one time they had a really good knowledge of my work, and truly understood the aims of my practice. They do their homework, and they have a passion for the arts, even if they can't be there in person.



Performing with The Flying Pickets

CASE STUDY: MARTIN GEORGE

Martin works as a professional singer, performing roles in musical theatre and opera. He's also a member of The Flying Pickets, touring internationally.

Job title

Singer, Actor, Musician

What does your job entail?

Performing. Occasionally teaching.

What are the best things about your career?

Having the career that I wanted. Job satisfaction can be immediate and spiritually rewarding when efforts and collaborations are successful.

What are the challenges that you continue to face in your career?

Finding opportunities post austerity.

If you could go back and tell yourself anything as you started your career, what advice would you give yourself?

Be open to opportunities and don't be afraid to be bold!

Anything else?

Don't expect to earn a massive amount! Anything that seems 'a healthy amount' will turn out to be a bonus and you will have to pay tax on it!

SOCIAL MEDIA

You know all about social media and so we're not going to teach you how it works. You use it day in and day out.

But what we will say is this – make sure your personal and professional social media presence is separate. If you use an online gallery like Instagram and you link to it to send people examples of your work, the last thing you want is them getting access to loads of pictures of you and your mates downing shots in Magaluf.

Your social media accounts are like a CV. Make sure they reflect you and your work in the best possible light.

CASE STUDY: ROB THROUP

Rob balances a freelance career with a more regular job.

Job title

Nottingham Playhouse Duty Manager /
Freelance Workshop Leader

What does your job entail?

Day to day running of the FOH operation of a regional producing house / the planning and delivery of regular youth theatre sessions.

What are the best things about your career?

Working with people at a human level. Whether they are audience or participant I have to understand their needs.

What are the challenges that you continue to face in your career?

Having an insufficient budget and or staff to deliver the service I want and should / either having the courage to apply to or knowing where to find my next gig.

If you could go back and tell yourself anything as you started your career, what advice would you give yourself?

Build a network of likeminded people who you can learn together with and apply apply apply.

Anything else?

Don't just sit back and let something annoy you. How can something be improved? If you think it's better suggest it. It can open more doors than you think.



Onstage at the New Theatre Royal, Lincoln

CASE STUDY: ADAM SLEPOWRONSKI

Adam teaches at Lincoln College and also delivers as a freelancer

Job title

Lecturer in Performing Arts, Director, Choreographer

What does your job entail?

At Lincoln College, I design, deliver and assess Level 3 and 4 UAL Extended Diplomas in Performing Arts

In my freelance work, I direct, choreograph and creative facilitate for a range of arts and educational organisations.

What are the best things about your career?

Combining theatre, arts and education, continuing a portfolio-based career.

What are the challenges that you continue to face in your career?

Lack of funding for freelance projects. Lack of enthusiasm for innovative arts-based education. Restrictions on time and resources.

If you could go back and tell yourself anything as you started your career, what advice would you give yourself?

Slow down! Don't try to do everything at once. Don't worry; quality takes time and things go wrong. Not everyone is well-intentioned; be smart and savvy, and patient. Ask for more advice from a range of people.

Link to website or social media

@adamslep

DELIVERING WORKSHOPS

There are thousands of creatives out there teaching other people how to be creative. Some people are solely workshop leaders, other people do it on the side; they're a painter, and they deliver workshops on painting technique. Some people make it a real business; for instance there are places all round the world where, as a paying guest, you can travel to a foreign land (or a distant county), sleep in a lavishly converted barn, drink the local tippie and be taught how to capture a landscape. Or breathe life into a character. Or play a lute.

The key thing, really, with delivering workshops for a living is that you need to have a skill to offer to others – a practice, or a level of experience that you can sell. You don't need to be a maestro – though they do it too of course – but you should have something that's worth passing on. This might seem obvious, but it's worth mentioning here: workshop leaders are teachers and you need to know your subject. And, just because someone is a great musician, say, that doesn't automatically make them a great music workshop leader.

So – what does a good workshop leader need to think about?

- Lots of arts centres offer workshops for their audiences. They'll advertise when they need workshop leaders (see the section above on finding work). But so do all sorts of other places – a National Trust property, a library or shopping centre for instance all might have creative workshops on offer. And sometimes they won't advertise. A seasoned workshop attendee might become the leader by default.
- Can you put on a workshop under your own steam? In other words, can you rent a community centre room, make posters and advertise on social media, sell places and make some money that way? You'll need to do a bit of research. What's the budget? How much do similar workshops cost in the area? Then you'll be able to do some quick sums like this:

Room hire	£25
Materials	£25
Tickets	10 people
	@ £7.50 = £75
Profit	£25

But with this example you're relying on having ten people take part. If only four sign up you'll be £20 down. If twenty people sign up though, would you have to hire a bigger room, or spend more on materials? It's all doable, but there are variables that you need to take into account.

- Have great content. Like with hairdressers, happy customers will follow you.
- Plan, plan, plan. Turn up knowing exactly what you're going to deliver – even if that changes once you're on the ground running the workshop.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN & VULNERABLE ADULTS

Often an employer will require you to have what's known as a DBS check. This stands for the Disclosure and Barring Service: they're the government organisation that makes sure that people working in schools, day care centres, hospitals etc. don't have a criminal past that means they shouldn't be there. It's standard procedure for an employer to carry out checks on new staff to ensure that they're not someone to be concerned about.

It is an employer's responsibility to carry out a check, not yours. Be wary of employers that suggest that you need to pay for a check to work for them – that's not the case. It's a bit of a grey area for freelancers. Most will end up paying for a DBS check for themselves at some point. If you are asked to do a check you'll need to provide proof of who you are and fill in information that will provide background information about your past. The DBS guys will check you out and then you get sent a certificate that says you're okay to work with children and/or vulnerable adults.

If you get a check done, and you're paying for it yourself for whatever reason, then get it for Child and Adult Workforce (so it will cover you to work in a school and a sheltered housing unit, rather than just one of those). It's just a box you tick when filling in the paper form. It doesn't cost any more and it'll be more useful long term.

There is also an option now called the Update Service and you should definitely register for that – you need to do it within a fixed time of getting your DBS certificate through. It's an online service where you pay £13 per year (at present) for you and future employers to have ongoing access to your certificate. So if an employer asks for your certificate, you can give them your name, certificate number and date of birth and they can look you up. The real advantage is that it doesn't run out. With a paper certificate it was only valid on the day it was issued. The benefit of the Update Service to employers is that it is constantly updated, and so any new offences are logged. We really hope this gets adopted as the standard way for DBS to operate. It's safer, cheaper, and can go from one organisation to another without loads of paperwork.



Creating balloon art at Sotheby's Auction House

Credit: Tribal London Event Photography / Nicola Bushell

CASE STUDY: DANNY SCHLESINGER

Danny is a freelance clown, actor, and balloon modeller.

Job title

Danny The Idiot.

What does your job entail?

Performing and entertaining with balloons at all kinds of events.

What are the best things about your career?

Being creative, forging my own path & bringing joy to people.

What are the challenges that you continue to face in your career?

Improving business skills, adapting to new technology & seeking new markets & customers.

If you could go back and tell yourself anything as you started your career, what advice would you give yourself?

Get good at business systems, planning, and the marketing basics.

Be the best you can in your chosen field.

Make sure you have a work/life balance.

Anything else?

Ensure you enjoy what you do, even though it is work.

Link to website or social media

www.dannytheidiot.com

JOINING A UNION

In the arts, as everywhere, unions have been instrumental in ensuring rights and safety standards for workers in their respective industry. If you're a union member they can really back you up if you have difficulties with an employer, whether you're self-employed, or an employee.

It's always worth looking up what unions have provided. Governments of all political stances have demonised unions; the truth is that most of the employment rights that we take for granted were fought for by workers, and mostly union led. We're talking about really fundamental things, going right back to simply having a day off a week, which was then pushed further into having a weekend. Sick pay, holiday pay, maternity leave, the right to a safe workplace; all of these are fundamentals that were fought for by unions, or by similar workers' collectives before unions existed. If you're an employee or a freelancer and you join a union, you'll be adding your name to all of those that have fought for your rights in the past. Unions have also been instrumental in fighting for the rights of freelancers. So for instance, if right now you have a casual job and you get holiday pay added each month – well, unions got that for you.

Joining a union is a personal decision of course. In the arts there are a load to choose from, depending on your artform, with different benefits. We encourage you to look what's available, what they do and to choose yourself to join or not. Just search online. It's worth looking at what a union can offer practically. BECTU (Broadcasting Entertainment Communications and Theatre Union) for instance has an insurance offer that means that members can get a good level of public liability insurance at a really low cost (on top of your membership fees).

Unions have spent many years negotiating pay levels for staff. If you're planning a creative project you want to pay people properly and you can look up what that should be. There are standard hourly rates for most staff, and then project rates for – say – writing a stage play, which are different depending on how long it will be and where it will be shown. Those rates are, in turn, different to the rates for writing a radio play. If you need help phone them up or email. They're really helpful.

STARTING A COMPANY

It is surprisingly easy to set up a company. Really, you just have to decide that you are one, and you are. But if you are a company there are a couple of things that you need to consider.

- Decide what sort of company you are. If it's just you you'll most likely be a sole trader. If you're working with one other person you can be a partnership. If there's a few of you there are a number of models that you can choose from.
- You have to let the tax people know that you exist, and then you have to file a tax return each year, even if you don't make very much. There's more about tax below, and you can find a lot of information and support on the GOV website. Don't get put off a venture by the idea of tax – it's actually quite straightforward.

Think about the identity of your company. If it's just you, you maybe don't need a company name, you can just trade as yourself. But it might be that a company name will help to give your work a bit of a presence that it doesn't have as an individual. It could be as straightforward as just adding 'Arts' to your name, so Jane Smith trades as *Jane Smith Arts*. Or *Auntie Jane's Kooky Pots*. Or *The Jane Smith Consultancy*.

If there are a few of you, making an artists' collective or a band or a theatre company or what have you then you'll want a name. You'll want something that really represents you or is quirky and memorable. You might want to search online to make sure there isn't someone else that's already using that name (spoiler alert – Royal Shakespeare Company is taken) and while that might not be too much of a problem if they're not a creative company or they're in a different country, you might struggle to get a good domain name if you want a website, for instance.¹³

If you start to search for creative organisation names you'll realise how many of them there are. Think about this carefully – how do you stand out? The day you get your first logo will be a really exciting one, even if you designed that logo yourself.

If you set up a company you'll want to think about what your aims and objectives are. If you're collaborating with others having a mission statement will be important. As you develop you might think about other policies and governance documents too, especially if you start to expand. Or, you might purposely keep things simple, keep your company management down, be more responsive and simply have a company name to use as a brand for funding applications.

Limited Liability is a legal status for companies that offers certain protections to the people that run it. But there are some responsibilities that come with it too – you have to file paperwork with Companies House every year and they are strict about getting it right and on time, with fines if you don't. Realistically, becoming a Limited Company isn't something that most creatives do immediately. But as your business grows it's definitely something that you should consider. If you aren't a Limited Company you can't legally include the word Limited or LTD in your name, however distinguished you think it makes you sound.

¹³ I am part of a community theatre setup that wanted an identity. We were amazed to find that our first-choice company name wasn't taken by anyone else. We could get a great domain name and be confident that we weren't treading on anyone else's toes.

CASE STUDY: TOM SIRACUSA

Tom manages the Menier Chocolate Factory in London.

Job title

General Manager

What are the best things about your career?

Being involved in the creation of theatre productions from the initial idea phase all the way through to production. We are a building-based theatre company which annually produces 6 shows per year (normally 2 musicals and 4 plays) and we have a very small team (myself, the Artistic Director, two production assistants and two marketing/box office staff), so we have to be very hands-on throughout.

What are the challenges that you continue to face in your career?

As we are a 180-seat commercial theatre (we receive no public subsidy), we have to rely on box office income as our main source of funding. As a result, we have to (1) programme shows which we are confident will have wide audience appeal (as well as critical approval) and (2) be stringent with all budgetary considerations regarding production expenses.

If you could go back and tell yourself anything as you started your career, what advice would you give yourself?

When starting out, learn as much as you can about every aspect of your business. Try to absorb information from mentors or any other sources to which you have access about how the work has been done in the past. While lawyers (to do your rights agreements and other legal matters), general managers (who handle the administration of your show) and casting directors can be useful, you should try to do as much as you can on your own -- you will only benefit from it later in your career. And it will also save you a lot of money.

Anything else?

Try to immerse yourself in whatever form of the arts you want to be a part of - if you want to be a theatre producer, go see as many shows as you are able both to see what other people are producing and to develop a knowledge of potential artists (writers, directors, designers, actors) you may wish to employ when you are in the position to do so.

Link to website or social media

www.menierchocolatefactory.com



Jeanie with her team (and Frank the dog) while filming *Game of Thrones: The Last Watch*.

Credit: HBO/Helen Sloan

CASE STUDY: JEANIE FINLAY

Jeanie is a Filmmaker and Artist.

Job title

Artist and filmmaker Artist, Curator, Writer, Mentor, Educator, Consultant

What does your job entail?

I make and direct films and artwork – for the cinema, for broadcast and for exhibition

What are the best things about your career?

I love meeting interesting people and asking the kind of personal questions that social niceties would prevent me from asking. I have had some great adventures discovering and tracking down stories all over the world. I love showing the results in a cinema or on tv and engaging with the audience that watches. It's magic and a total joy.

What are the challenges that you continue to face in your career?

It's always enormously challenging to maintain the stamina that is needed to complete a film or creative project over many years, from initial germ of an idea to fully realised. It's hard to raise the money, it's hard to get the access, it's hard to continue pushing, it's demoralising to discover that still only 7% of directors are women. But it doesn't mean that the journey and the challenge is futile, the end result is so rewarding and can have a worldwide impact.

If you could go back and tell yourself anything as you started your career, what advice would you give yourself?

Trust your instinct and your heart, always be good to people and don't waste your time on people or projects that don't value human endeavour, kindness or you. There are people that will and they are the ones that are worth your time. Show more, tell less.

Anything else?

Don't wait for permission, shy bairns get nowt.

Link to website or social media

www.jeaniefinlay.com
@jeaniefinlay on Twitter
Instagram, Facebook and YouTube

RISK ASSESSMENT

So many people panic when they hear the phrase ‘please can you send me your risk assessment’, but it needn’t be scary.

Let’s risk assess me typing this guide:

WHAT IS RISKY ABOUT WHAT YOU’RE DOING?	WHO IS AT RISK AND HOW?	WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?	SO, IS IT RISKY ANY MORE?
Electricity – I am typing this on my laptop which is plugged in	I am. I might get an electric shock	I’ve had my laptop tested to make sure it’s safe, and I only bought it a year ago from a reputable dealer	Not risky at all.
Trailing cables	I am. There’s a lead that’s plugged in and I could trip over it and whack my head.	I’ve tucked the cable down the back of my desk so it’s completely safe.	Not risky at all.
Using a screen for long periods of time	I am. I’m doing a lot of typing at the moment and that can have an adverse effect on my eyes, or cause headaches.	I take regular breaks away from the screen. I had my eyes checked recently and use glasses for close work.	Not risky, but I’ll monitor things, and if I get tired eyes I’ll look at what other measures I can put in place.
Throwing my laptop out of the window when it doesn’t save my work properly	Someone walking past my house could be hit by the flying laptop.	I regularly save my work as I go on, and I’ve done an anger management course. ¹⁴	Not risky at all.

It’s as simple as that. There are all sorts of templates that you can use, some of which are more complicated, with scoring systems for how likely danger is, and how dangerous it is. You’ll find literally hundreds online to choose from. At LOV we use the HSE (Health and Safety Executive) template as our starting point. You can’t get much better, as they are the people that make ALL the rules. But this is what you do to do a risk assessment:

- Identify the risk
- Think who might be affected
- Decide what to do about it
- Assess whether that means you can go ahead safely.

That’s it.

The example above is quite straightforward. If you’re organising a large-scale outdoor event you’ll have a risk assessment that comes to many pages, with everything from bad weather (provide staff with waterproof clothing and/or sunscreen, make sure the audience knows it is outdoors, ensure electrical items are under cover or in waterproof housing etc.) to assessing nearby wildlife.¹⁵

¹⁴ Actually, I’ve never done an anger management course so watch out if you’re going past my house and you hear typing.

¹⁵ I genuinely had to do this for an outside theatre show in the lovely village of Norwell, just up from Newark. It was a promenade performance with the audience walking around the village. At one point they were close to a swans’ nest. I had to check that the swans wouldn’t be upset by what we were doing – and that they wouldn’t get territorial and start to go for the ticket-holders as they passed by. A swan can break a person’s arm you know...

THE most important thing about a risk assessment is that you are realistic, and that you follow the safety measures that you put in place. Sometimes the thought of having to risk assess an activity that could be perceived as dangerous can put someone off even suggesting it. But a good risk assessment – and a good event producer – will identify the risk for even the most outrageous sounding activities and help you to put measures in place to ensure that it can go ahead safely. So:

WHAT IS RISKY ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE DOING?	WHO IS AT RISK AND HOW?	WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?	SO, IS IT RISKY ANY MORE?
Chainsaws – I am going to juggle them as a part of my circus show in Lincoln Cathedral.	I am, audience members are and so are Cathedral staff and passers-by. The building is also at risk from damage.	I have been juggling for 15 years, and I can juggle three chainsaws consistently and without error for five minutes. The chainsaws have been blunted, and altered by a professional to work more slowly than normal. They are actually unable to cut through wood or similar material, I demonstrate the chainsaws on a ripe watermelon. I use pre-recorded sound to make them seem noisy and more dangerous. I have performed this act on 23 previous occasions with no issues. I can provide references from previous local authorities. My decorative costume has safety panels built in that are invisible to the audience. Wooden staging protects the floor.	Low risk.

We'd say that's a pretty clear risk assessment of an activity that on the face of it seems completely reckless. In reality there'd be more detail, with each element that you've put in place explained more fully.

If you've done this risk assessment though, and then decide to use normal chainsaws, and something went wrong, you could well find yourself in hospital, or prison, or a prison hospital.

Or, a morgue. Which brings us on to:

INSURANCE

If you're working as a freelancer, or if you've set up a company, you should think about insurance. There are a couple of types of coverage that you might well be asked for:

Third Party, or Public Liability Insurance – this covers you if something that you or your company is doing goes wrong and someone such as an audience member or a passer-by is hurt or property is damaged.

Employer's Liability – if you're a company, or if you employ someone, this covers them for accidents at work etc. This is required for volunteers too. You might also want to think about insuring the equipment that you use to create your art – if you take your own equipment into schools what would happen if a 7-year old with sticky fingers ended up damaging your equipment?

There are loads of insurance companies out there. You'll find it a lot easier if you find one that understands the field of work you are in. They will talk your language. It can be soul destroying talking to a general business insurance provider about how a fake guillotine works for your production set during the French Revolution. But talk to a theatre insurer and they won't even bat an eyelid – they'll ask you when the show's on because they'd love to come and see it. Unions can point you in the right direction.

Some work that you do might need a specialist insurer, such as pyrotechnic work for your rock extravaganza.¹⁶ But if you talk to someone that's at least in the right area they'll tell you what they cover and point you in the right direction if you need something more. You won't get that if you're trying to fill in an online application to a high street insurer

¹⁶ More often than not, if you are doing a show with significant pyrotechnics, the work will be insured by the company that you're employing to do the bangs and flashes, rather than you. But, if you are employing them (subcontracting) you have a legal responsibility to check that what **they're** doing has a risk assessment in place and that **they** have proper insurance.



Nathan wearing the animatronic wings he made for the Nottingham Playhouse 2019 production of Skellig

Credit: Alex Hatton

CASE STUDY: NATHAN ROSE

Nathan works at Nottingham Playhouse, managing the team that create all the props that are seen on stage. He also works freelance.

Job title

Head of Props Workshop

What does your job entail?

Day to day running of the Props department.

Realization from design and references in the script to finished props, from an initial design meeting through to the working items that are seen on stage. I liaise with designers and directors working closely with the other production departments. Props are quite often built between skill-sets, involving electrics, wardrobe, set construction, stage management and the scenic artists.

We work in a variety of materials and techniques depending on how the job has to be built and finished so we need to be knowledgeable in carpentry, upholstery / fabrics, mould making, sculpting, metal work, puppet making, computer aided design, mask making, costume, and more.

As well as producing shows I need to keep the workshop and stores in safe working order and upkeep the maintaining machinery.

I need to be an ambassador for Nottingham Playhouse, doing interviews, open days, back stage tours and that sort of thing, also working with other organisations.

What are the best things about your career?

Difficult to know where to start on this one. I am fortunate to have a career dating back to the late 80's, that is something to be proud of in itself. It is immensely fulfilling and all about the making. I am always looking for the next challenging build. Passing on knowledge is also very satisfactory. It is a great feeling to know that some people who had work placements with us years ago have successful careers of their own.

What are the challenges that you continue to face in your career?

Always time vs budget.

These days, more so since the austerity measures of 2010 onwards. These days we produce more shows but have very little increased budget or staffing levels, this has had diverse effects on well-being. Budgets have not risen with production values.

Communication is always the key, if a team member fails to communicate then this can have knock on effect as to how we are able to work to deadlines. Having a designer that is a good communicator is like having an extra pair of hands in the workshop.

If you could go back and tell yourself anything as you started your career, what advice would you give yourself?

Get a diving licence sooner!

Be bolder with asking for a fee that you are worth.

If someone is bullying you then there will always be someone who will listen.

Link to website or social media

www.facebook.com/stuffandnonesense
www.nottinghamplayhouse.co.uk

TAX AND SELF-EMPLOYMENT

Tax can seem remarkably complicated when you start out. Essentially, even if you are just you, beaver away on your art, you are effectively a business, and as such you are liable for tax and National Insurance. The basics of it are this:

INCOME: Money that comes in

- Grants
- Fees (such as for performing a gig or delivering a music workshop)
- Sales - money from selling things (143 CDs at £7.50 = £ 1072.50)

EXPENDITURE: Money you have to spend to earn that income

- Studio time fees
- Materials
- Heating bills
- Office costs - postage, printer ink, software, envelopes
- Travel costs
- How much it cost to record and press the CDs

PROFIT: What's left

- Your wages - this is generally what you pay tax on
- Money that you re-invest in your business - this becomes expenditure next year

So, **INCOME** minus **EXPENDITURE** equals **PROFIT**.

There is also an allowance that you don't pay tax on, which at the moment is the first £12,500 that you earn in a year.¹⁷ So:

If you earn £10,500 you don't pay any tax – you've earned less than the allowance.

If you earn £15,000 you just pay tax on £2,500, the amount you've earned above the allowance.

If you earn £32,000 you pay tax on £19,500 – your wage minus the allowance.

But even if you earn less than the allowance, you still need to declare your income. If you have a job and also do freelance work, your two sources of income will be combined, and when added together if it goes over £12,500, that's what you pay tax on.

You can hire an accountant if you want, or you might well choose to do your own taxes. It can all be completed online and is surprisingly straightforward once you've got to grips with it.¹⁸ The main thing to remember is that you need to keep a record of everything that comes in and that you spend. If you don't have that information you're going to struggle.¹⁹

If money that you spend contributes to your business costs, that is called a business expense, and it can include all sorts of things. Printer ink and paper, phone bills, travel costs (such as bus fares, a taxi home after a gig or mileage to go back and forth from Boston to Skegness), getting business cards made, paying a mate to design your website and buying glitter or glue for a workshop all count as business expenditure. If you use a room in your flat solely for work, part of your rent and bills can be legitimate business expenses. It depends on the size of your flat or house.²⁰

¹⁷ The tax-free allowance changes each year, so make sure you check rather than taking our word for it...

¹⁸ I've never used an accountant. My freelance work model was quite straightforward: I got paid to deliver work, and it cost me x amount to do that. I paid tax on whatever the difference was, as described here.

¹⁹ There are some mad questions on the tax form. For instance, they ask if you're a lighthouse keeper.

²⁰ Say you live in a two bedroom flat with a sitting room, and your second bedroom is solely used as an office and storage space for your business, then one third of your flat is being used for your business (you don't count kitchens or bathrooms for this.) So, one third of your rent can actually be paid by your business. If you had a separate dining room, then it'd just be a quarter of your flat being used (because you're using one room of four, not one room of three.) Again though, these rules sometimes change, so check rather than trusting us. And it gets a load more complicated if you get a mortgage.

A lot of the language used around business expenditure includes the word 'solely'. What you spend money on needs to be solely used for business. If you go on a holiday and on one of the days you have a meeting with an arts organisation in the area, you can't put the whole holiday through as a business expense. (Sorry!) But, if you spend £15 on fuel to go from your holiday B&B to the arts organisation you've arranged to meet, well, that £15 was solely used for business, and so it is a legitimate expense.

Please don't freak out about tax. It's quite straightforward and they are surprisingly friendly and helpful people – as long as you're not trying to swindle the state! The other thing to remember is that it's quite a slow process. This is the normal pattern:

EXAMPLE WORK PERIOD

April 6th 2020 – April 5th 2021
(I.e. the current tax year while this is being written.)

SUBMIT YOUR TAX RETURN

Any time after April 6th 2021 but before 31st January 2022. If you fill in your tax form online it will tell you straight away how much you owe.

PAYMENT?

You'll pay in two instalments – the first is also due on 31st January 2022, and the second will be 31st July 2022. You'll also pay in advance for the next tax year. This can feel like a real imposition! But it's money that you will be earning, and of course it'll get taken off down the line.

COLLABORATING

Working with other people can be really rewarding; it can also be a nightmare.

If you get a job in the arts (or anywhere else) you'll find yourself a part of a team working with common aims. At LOV we deliver participatory arts activity across the county, connecting venues with the audiences they serve and inspiring communities and schools to develop their own cultural landscape. That's what we do. Within that we all have different roles, and we all bring our own personalities and experience to the table.

If you're working on your own you'll still collaborate – it might be with a venue or other organisation. If you're a musician and you get a gig you'll collaborate with the venue to realise your vision. They'll bring their experience to what you do and will have loads that they can add to enhance what the audiences experience. They'll also have lots of practical support they can offer. The venue will have a brochure that comes out and you'll be in it. They might ask you to run a workshop. They should be able to connect you to the audiences that you want to reach and help you discover new ones.

Running an artists' collective or a new theatre company or being in a band or something like that can be such fun. You're with your friends and you believe in the same stuff and you've got a great name and a funky website (who knew that AngryKittensOnTheMoon.co.uk would still be available?) and you're passionate and you've got a show coming up. You're doing it on a shoestring but it's going to be great.

Sometimes it can fall apart, whether you're in a job, or a freelancer, or starting a new company. It's a bit like living in a house share: little things can start to niggle, and before you know it you're having full blown slanging matches about a grill pan. There's one person that always turns up late, or who never does what they said they would. It can get ugly, quickly. Normally you can just shrug it off – but if you've got a deadline coming up or it's production week for your play or anything where the pressure is on, well, it can be unbearable.

What you really want from a collaboration is that, when you put your ideas together you multiply the impact that they have. Working with some people can be about finding compromises and coming up with an average of your ideas. It's easy to foster relationships where you compromise a lot and create mediocre work. A really great collaboration will take the skills and experience of the collaborators and splurge out something new and exciting and greater than the sum of its parts. You should spark and crackle and create exciting work where ideas abound.



Delivering a community art workshop for Bright Ideas

CASE STUDY: DIANA ALI

Di has an amazing career that involves working as an artist, a teacher and lecturer, and an international curator. She is also the mentor on the BBC's Big Painting Challenge.

Job title

I don't have a single one.
Visual artist & International Curator
Lecturer
Workshop leader
Creative mentor,
Board member, Nottingham Women's Council.
a-n artist council member

What does your job entail?

I curate exhibitions around themes based on my practice, so it is an extension of my art work. I deliver art workshops to communities which involve many diverse groups (Asperger's society, men and women that have been through domestic violence, kids that have been kicked out of schools, mental well-being)- to enable them to have a voice through art.

I work with different sectors (business, voluntary, education, Institute of Mental Health, law, councils) to promote engagement through creativity.

I'm an arts educator/ lecturer for degree programmes and a creative mentor, helping emerging artists to get their work out there. I'm an advocate for artists around the country- making changes in policies for artists

What are the best things about your career?

Every week and day is different, working with different types of people in different environments.

People ask me to help them through art and its very rewarding – my skills can help people to move on.

I work with like-minded people where we get things done, especially when things need changing.

Travelling to places I would never have thought of, so I can do big art shows as well as have a holiday.

Working hard and playing hard.

What are the challenges that you continue to face in your career?

It can be non-stop and sometimes there is no routine. But once that job/project is done it's a good feeling of achievement.

It can be difficult getting paid work when you first start but once you persevere and you get your name out there, the work keeps flowing in.

Convincing people that art is a valid subject, especially in education – many arts courses are being shut down so people / government can be hard to persuade – however, that's when I become an advocate and an art activist to drive me through it – putting my passion out there rather than sat at home being annoyed.

If you could go back and tell yourself anything as you started your career, what advice would you give yourself?

Don't go for the easy option.

Have fun along the way. If that means having regrets – then work with it at a later date in your art – it can be a useful theme. It'll work out in the end.

Don't be lazy. Don't waste time and do it tomorrow.

Anything else?

If anyone says you can't be an artist, don't believe them. Work hard. If you have an idea, write a proposal, network and connect; there's always someone who will listen. If you want to send that email just PRESS THE BUTTON, you never know. The worst you can do is say 'what's the point'.

Link to website or social media

www.dianaali.com
Instagram: diana_artist_curator

AND FINALLY...

Sometimes working for yourself can be difficult. If you're your own boss, you are also your own alarm clock and calendar. You might find that you have to work long hours, that it's difficult to get a break, and you never see your cat. Then, it's the opposite for months. Tumbleweed. No income.

The truth is that it doesn't suit everyone. There's also nothing to be ashamed of about changing your mind. The work that you've done while you **have** been self-employed is great experience and can really enhance your CV when you send it out to an employer.

Sometimes, a job can seem like a real bind and as we've mentioned above in the arts it might not be a fantastic wage.

A lot of people get jobs and then later in life when they're more financially secure return to their creative practice. For some people that's after they've had a family that has grown up and left home! For others it could be...

Can someone tell us to shut up? There are so many different models and examples that we could put here. Let's leave it be. We've got better things to do than write down lots of ways that your arts career might go. And you've more important things to do than read what we wrote.

The truth is that as with everything else in life there is no definitive right or wrong. You might get a brilliant job and the company goes bust a couple of months later. And at risk of putting a cliché here, you could get hit by a bus. (If you're reading this fantastic resource on your phone while you're crossing the road then you've only got yourself to blame.)

Here at LOV we say this:

Go for it. Get an arts job. Launch a theatre company. Form a band and get a seven-album deal. Make your own fireworks. Photograph sheep. Design gardens for blind people. Print beautiful bespoke wedding invitations. Paint.

Be creative.

You might not be the richest person in the world and sometimes it might be difficult. But you know what?

As long as you love it, you won't regret it.

