

Actor



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Description

The glamorous picture of an actor's life attracts many people to the profession, but the sad reality is that at any one time more than 80 per cent of actors are out of work. It is very difficult to make a living in this business, and most people have to be content with acting as a hobby in amateur theatre or part-time professional work. Having said that, however, someone with a great deal of determination and talent can make headway, especially if they make the effort to learn at drama school and also make good contacts with others already in the profession. They work in theatres, film and television studios, on location, etc. Work can be either indoors or outdoors, when sometimes the physical demands can be considerable. The range of activities that fall under the umbrella term 'acting' is large, from puppetry to high classical theatre. The work often involves long periods of inactivity, for instance in films when the sets are being changed, which prompted one actor to observe that 'film acting is 98 per cent boredom followed by two per cent of terror'.

Requirements

An empathetic nature assists actors to realistically portray the emotions and reactions of the character they are playing: a good speaking voice is necessary and especially in theatre work a good memory is needed, as remembering a big role in a long play is no mean feat. Fitness and a strong constitution, and in particular perseverance and self-reliance when they find themselves between jobs and the future uncertain are all qualities that are needed to pursue the acting profession.

Education

The prospects in this profession are relatively open ended. Some actors transfer to directing. Some become teachers. Some leave the profession and become writers, for instance.

Opportunities

Some people are able to break into the acting world without any qualifications, or by transferring from a related profession such as being a musician, or having a lucky break from amateur acting, but the majority of actors have studied at a drama or stage school. There are many different courses run at the various colleges, and these may be one, two or three year courses, some of which will lead to a degree in Drama or Theatre Arts, etc. Most applicants for courses will need to pass an audition. Courses are run for applicants at stage schools at any age from five upwards, and it is possible for people to enter acting at almost any age.

Contact addresses - Cumbria

For further information, see your local career guidance centre and your career advisor.