

Nottingham Playhouse Theatre Company presents Kenneth Alan Taylor's

Beauty and the Beast

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Introduction



Photo: Drew Baumohl

The Nottingham Playhouse makes bold and thrilling theatre. It is world-class, made in Nottingham and as diverse as our community.

Situated in Nottingham city centre, Nottingham Playhouse puts on a wide variety of drama, music, dance, comedy and of course, the legendary Nottingham Playhouse pantomime.

Nottingham Playhouse has been one of the United Kingdom's leading producing theatres since its foundation in 1948. Touring work nationally and internationally, the Playhouse remains firmly rooted in its vibrant home city, where its spacious modernist building – fronted by Anish Kapoor's Sky Mirror – is one of the region's most popular landmarks.

Within these walls we create productions large and small: timeless classics, enthralling family shows and adventurous new commissions.

We are currently The Stage Regional Theatre of the Year – an award made in large part in recognition of our uniquely ambitious and meaningful engagement with our many diverse communities.

Full of pantomime fun, read on to learn more about the characters and world of Nottingham Playhouse's production of *Beauty and the Beast*. We have lots of information, not only about the classic fairy tale, but also about the history of pantomime itself and the history of pantomime at the Playhouse.

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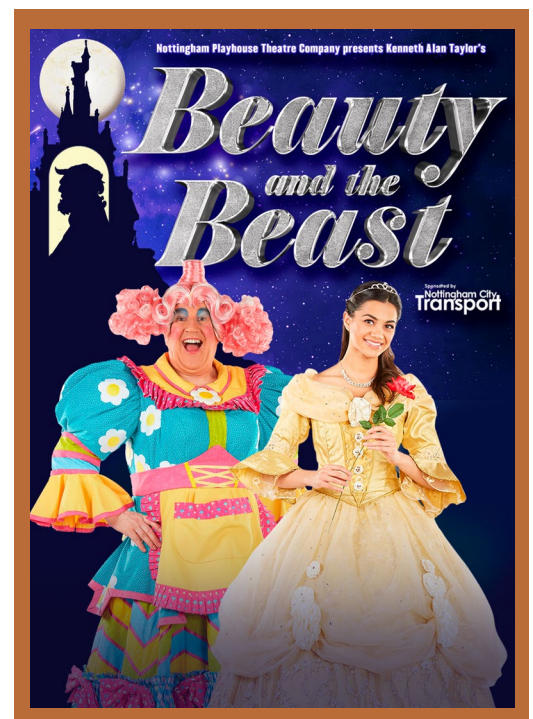




Photo: AdobeStock

The History of *Beauty and the Beast*

Beauty and the Beast originates from a French fairy tale written in 1740 by Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve. Since then, the story has been rewritten and adapted many times. You might have seen the 1991 Disney film, which was actually inspired by another adaptation by Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont who made the story shorter and simpler.

There have been many adaptations of the tale, but they all tend to root around a father stealing a rose for his beautiful and intelligent daughter, who he then as punishment must send to live in a castle with a beast.

Cast and Creatives

Cast

Madame Fifi – John Elkington

Beast – Scott Armstrong

Belle – Lisa Ambalavanar

Veronique – Megan Cerys-Holland

Maurice – Tom Hopcroft

Gaston – Bradley Judge

Florence – Clarice Julianda

Jacques the Lad – Myles Miller

Youth Chorus:

Red Team: Milly Caswell, Shakiyah Mitchell, Georgia Reid, Donté Slater, Stanley Syalon, George Turton.

Blue Team: Annie Besson, Serai Bondswell, Samuel Brown, Ruby Hardy, Nathan Hayward, Delinda Lee.

Reserve: Hannah Keen

Creatives

John Morton – Music

Kenneth Alan Taylor – Writer

Bill Buckhurst – Director

Morgan Large – Designer

Zoe Spurr – Lighting Designer

Hannah Stone – Assistant Director

Emma Waugh – Wardrobe Supervisor

Matt Ledbury – Production Manager

**NOTTINGHAM
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Beauty and the Beast

Filled with magic and monstrous fun, this tale as old as time is the perfect festive treat.

Join us to laugh and cheer, 'boo' the baddies and singalong to magnificent musical numbers – it's a guaranteed great night out for all the family.

When the beautiful Belle is trapped in an enchanted castle by a mysterious beast, the stage is set for a spellbinding adventure. Can she escape with the help of her friends? Will Belle melt the beast's frosty heart and lift his curse before it's too late?

Packed with hilarious characters, stunning sets, glittering costumes and plenty of panto humour, you won't want to miss our legendary pantomime.

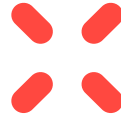
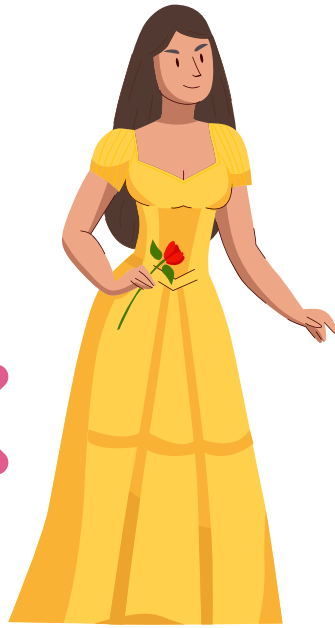


Character Breakdown



Maurice – The patriarch of Belle's family, Maurice is a loving and doting father, who wants to shower his children with gifts from his travels. He would do anything for his children, but that sometimes leads him to make bad decisions, like trying to steal a rose for Belle. Nevertheless, he is still a very kind man and sticks by Belle when she is forced to stay at the Beast's castle.

Jacques – Nicknamed Jacques the Lad, Jacques is Belle's brother and lives in the village with his family. He is loyal and protective of both his father Maurice and his favourite sister Belle, which means he doesn't get on well with the overbearing Gaston. Jacques is a funny young man who has loads of fun with Madame Fifi and the rest of his family.



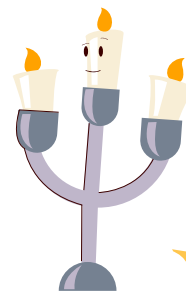
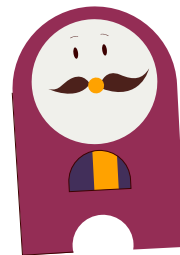
Gaston – Gaston lives in the village that Belle is from. He is a self-obsessed, smug and narcissistic man, so naturally Belle rejects his many proposals to marry her. Despite his claims to be the biggest, strongest man, Gaston is actually quite cowardly and refuses to help when Maurice gets captured by the Beast.

Belle – Belle, one of Maurice's four children, stands apart from her sisters. She is clever, kind and beautiful and even said to be the prettiest girl in the village. Belle loves reading and has big dreams of wanting to see the world, but she is willing to sacrifice her own happiness to save her father from captivity.

The Beast – Once a superficial prince, the Beast was cursed by an enchantress to be an ugly, scary creature. After years of looking like a beast, he has started acting like one too and appears to be a very bossy and demanding master of the castle. Despite his bad manners, he is generous, kind-hearted and willing to give Belle all the books she could dream of.



Madame Fifi – A woman of many talents, Madame Fifi works for Belle's father doing the washing, cooking, cleaning and more! Fifi comes from Northern France and is a funny but friendly member of Belle's household. Although she can be very silly, she is also brave and stands up for Belle and her family whenever they need it.



Clock, Candelabra and Teapot – The clock, candelabra and teapot are magical servants in the Beast's castle. They are very welcoming to any guests and provide feasts and funny jokes to entertain their visitors.



Photo: Pamela Raith

The Making of Panto

Panto and Christmas go together like the holly and the ivy but most people don't know that we have a team of designers, painters, prop-makers, costumiers, set builders and lighting specialists who are busily working on the show all year round to get it ready in time for the festive season.

At the beginning of this year, as the glitter had barely settled from last year's panto *Sleeping Beauty*, our Designer Morgan Large set about creating the vision for this year's show. The first stage of the process is to present the Playhouse team with a white card model of the set – this is a complete to-scale replica and usually has various pieces of furniture and backdrops to build up a picture of what everything is going to look like. It is useful to do this as early as possible so that our team can make use of quieter periods in the theatre's schedule to start sourcing materials and do vital prep work.

In June, there is another meeting to showcase final designs for the show and this is where our production team can really start to get excited for the show...

Our Wardrobe department will begin to source fabrics for costumes and, once casting is confirmed, each actor visits us to be measured up. From this, paper patterns are created of each costume and worked up in fabric, ready for an exciting first fitting. Some of the most elaborate individual costumes can take a week or longer to construct and it's always important for our actors to feel comfortable, as well as being able to bust those all-important dance moves! Our Wardrobe team, therefore, have to ensure that all costumes are as light and flexible as possible which can be a tricky task, especially with some of our Dame's fancy frocks which often have a circumference of up to 3.5 metres and use between 15 to 20 metres of fabric.

Meanwhile, our Props and Stage Management team will be making a list of everything they need to either make from scratch, buy new for the show or find in our existing stores of useful props which can be re-painted and re-purposed for this year's show. As the rehearsal process begins, there can



Photo: Fraser Youngson

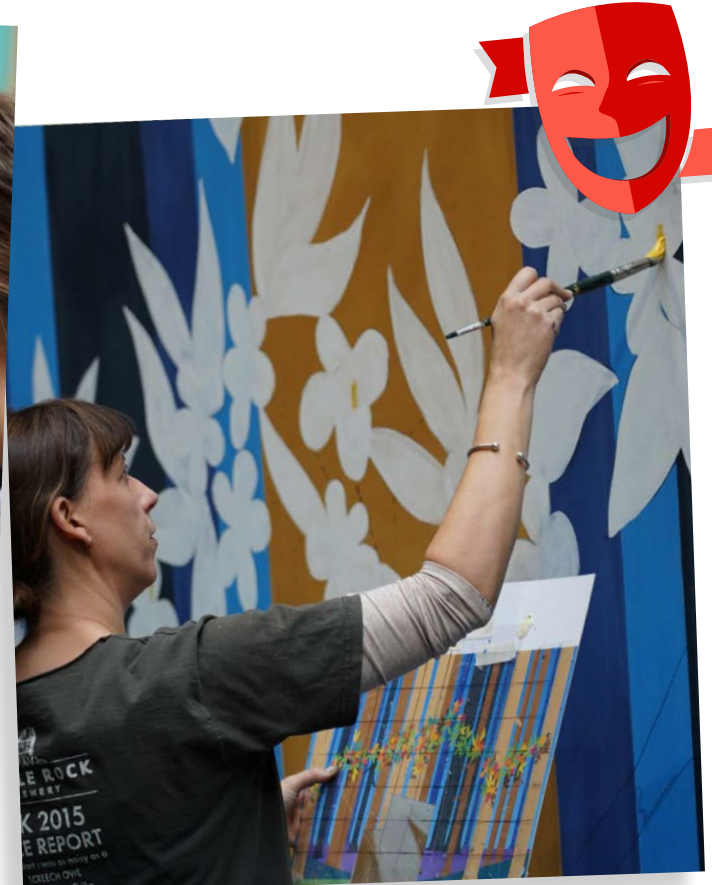


Photo: Fraser Youngson



also be some last minute additions when new jokes and lines are written into the script – as happened, in recent years, during the rise to fame of The X Factor’s Honey G where the team had to quickly source her trademark cap and glasses for a gag!

As well as our on-site workshop and Wardrobe department, we have our wonderful Paint Shop which is situated just behind the stage. Here our team of painters beaver away painting every piece of scenery you’ll see on the stage today. Our lovely ‘front cloth’, which you’ll see at the beginning of the show, can take up to three weeks alone to paint. If there’s one motto our Paint Shop team live by it’s ‘add more glitter’ and a fun, lesser known fact is that Kenneth, the Writer, paints his own small section of one of the cloths each year as a fun, annual tradition.

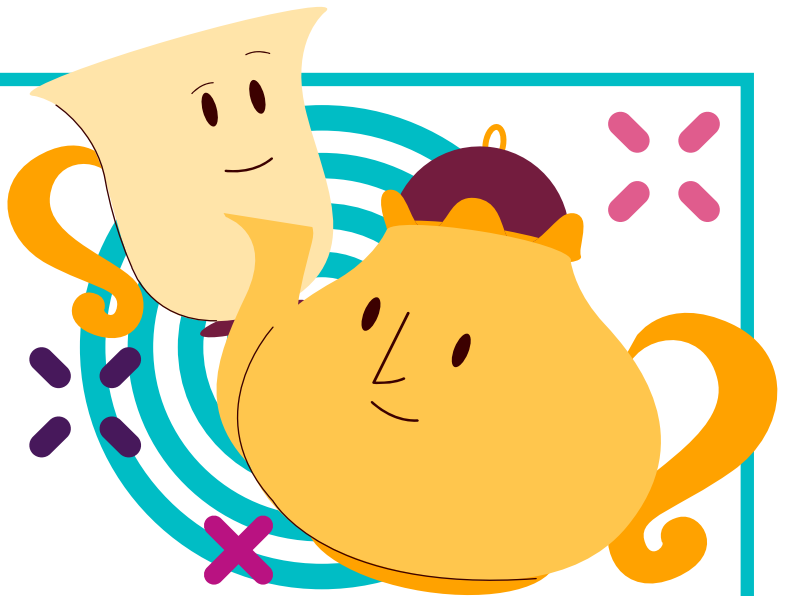
Throughout the autumn, work on the production really begins in earnest and, following three to four weeks of rehearsal, it’s then time for Tech Week! This is where all aspects of the production come together

– our actors get to run through the show on the stage for the first time and all our production teams get to see their props, costumes and paintwork in all their glory, glistening underneath the stage lights. But work doesn’t stop there, as tweaks will be made throughout the week and, once the show opens, our teams have to maintain their handiwork. Our Wardrobe team, for example, can use up to 100 pairs of shoes, 60-80 pairs of tights and around 500 hair grips throughout the festive season. Not to mention the daily laundry run and our two Dressers who are on hand for every show - especially to help with those quick costume changes!

We’re incredibly lucky at the Playhouse to have such a dedicated and creative production team and army of technicians who work hard to create the magic you see on stage. Many of them agree that Panto is always the most special time of the year; it’s exciting to see their designs and creations brought to life onstage and the pleasure it brings to you, our wonderful audiences.

Panto Games

Beauty and the Blink: Gather around in a circle, facing inwards. Select someone to be Belle, who will leave the classroom so they cannot hear or see what is being done in the circle. Whilst Belle is out of the room, select someone to be the enchantress. When Belle returns to stand in the centre of the circle, the witch will carefully blink at people who will then be cursed and turned into a random object. Belle must try and figure out who the enchantress is before the whole group are stuck as objects forever!



The Beast's Rose: Select someone to be the Beast, and find an object to represent his rose. They must stand at one end of the Classroom, with their back turned to the rest of the Class and the rose sat to the side of him. Whilst he is looking away, the rest of the class must slowly and carefully creep up and try and collect the rose from his side. BUT! The Beast can turn at any moment, and if he catches you creeping, he can banish you from his castle back to the start. Whoever grabs the rose breaks the Beast's curse and wins the game!

What a Charmer!: To make a spell as powerful as the one the enchantress cursed the Beast with, there are two things you will need; a magic potion made of all the right ingredients, and a magic spell with the perfect powerful words. Plan a potion that would make someone beastly, think about things that make you feel beastly. Think of the colour, the bottle and the smells. Once you have done this, come up with a magic spell using these powerful words; MOON, POINT, FOG, CREATURE, THORN





Photo: Pamela Raith

Panto at the Playhouse

Beauty and the Beast was written and directed by Pantomime legend, Kenneth Alan Taylor. It is his 38th panto at Nottingham Playhouse, a tradition he introduced to the Playhouse himself when he was Artistic Director in 1984. He played the Dame at the Playhouse for over 20 years, and still writes and directs the show to this day. Our Dame is now played by John Elkington.

When You Watch The Show

Keep an eye out for the aspects of traditional pantomime; such as the slapstick comedy, audience interaction, and the character of the Pantomime Dame!

Watch out for topical references, what do you recognise from other films or music?

Look out for the different ways that changes in scene are shown on stage, and how characters are included in scenes when they are not physically present.

History of Panto

Pantomime comes from the Middle Ages, originating in the Royal Courts of the Kings and Queens. During the Tudor age, there would be a series of performances around Christmas leading up to Twelfth Night on the 6th of January in which an atmosphere of "misrule" would take over and social and gender norms would be inverted. Until the 1930s, pantomime would also include an alternative storyline called the Harlequinade which would also follow the same characters of Harlequin, Columbine, and Pierrot. This was very popular through the 1800s and is where the modern appearance of clowns comes from.

There are several features that are very important to the genre of Pantomime. Pantomimes generally revolve around a traditional folk tale, such as Jack And The Beanstalk, Cinderella, or Puss In Boots. The narrative is adapted to incorporate some of the essential pantomime moments. These include

the characters resting on a log and being picked off one by one by a monster, to which the audience is encouraged to shout "Its behind you", as well as other moments of interaction such as the main villain arguing with the audience.

One of the most unique aspects of Pantomime is its emphasis on cross-gender casting. This is traditionally called Travesti, which means disguised in French. The central male character is often played by a woman, and this is known as a 'Breeches role', which comes from a time when laws restricted the use of child actors. One of the most famous Breeches roles is the role of Peter Pan on the stage. Pantomime also features the older woman character being played by a man, which is called a 'Pantomime Dame.' This can be dated back to the 1500s when women were not allowed on stage and therefore all female characters were played by men. Nowadays, cross-gender casting is called "Cross-casting."



Photo: Pamela Raith

Interview with the Writer

What do you think makes pantomime special at the Playhouse?

I think it is because it is aimed at families, it's very much a family show. A 4-year-old or an 84-year-old could enjoy it. We are very strong on storyline, and the fact that it is squeaky clean. It is designed so that no one is offended. And I am very strict about that. I aim at the families. That doesn't mean that we talk down to the audience, there are scenes in the performance that get quite dark. Even if they don't quite understand each word, they will get the feeling of it. The story is so important.

How do you adapt a story for the panto?

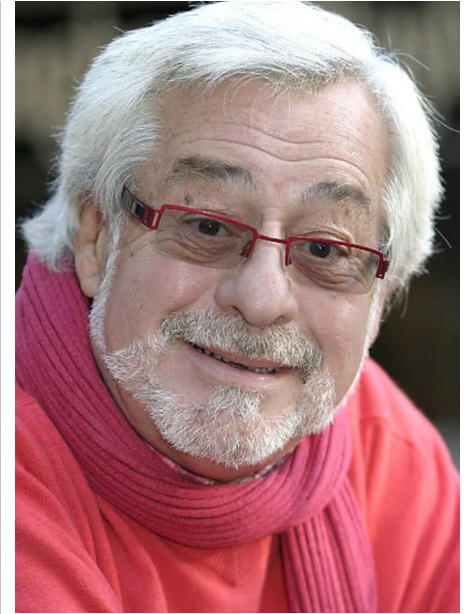
I always go back to the original story, if I can find it. One of the problems nowadays is that Disney gets hold of them and change them completely, down to the names. I still stick to the original when I can. For instance, the Pantomime for the Playhouse this year, Beauty And The Beast, the Disney one is completely different to the original. I've gone to the original story, where she had two sisters and a brother and a father who isn't an inventor because I think you should stick to the traditional narratives. The Disney one, whilst very good, has almost nothing to do with the original story despite the fact that there is a beast and a beauty.

Who is the best character to write for?

Well I love writing for the Dame. I don't really think I have a favourite, but I concentrate on writing for the Dame because I used to play her. It obviously is a big part. I don't think I have a favourite. When I write, I write with our Playhouse regulars in mind. I know them, and I know their strengths, I write for them.

What has been your favourite panto to be involved in?

Oh I have no doubt whatsoever, and it's hardly ever done, and it's Mother Goose. When I was in them I used to play the Dame, and Mother Goose has the best Dame. She's a completely rounded character. The Dame in nearly every Pantomime is there for the comedy relief, for people to take the mickey out of. In Mother Goose, she's vain, she's lovable, she's nice, and then she turns nasty. It's also the most moral pantomime. Usually, the plot of the Pantomime revolves around money. If you think about Jack and the Beanstalk, or Dick Whittington, it's all about gaining money. Mother Goose is about wanting just money and how wrong it is. It's a very moral pantomime. It's also a fantastic Dame. The reason that it is rarely performed nowadays is the absence of star Dames, the only one really now is Christopher Biggins.



Kenneth Alan Taylor – Writer

What are the essential ingredients for a good pantomime Dame?

There was a wonderful oneman play about a Dame, where the old Dame talks to the audience as he prepares himself to go on stage, applying makeup and such. I think there's a line in that which sums it up; "She's a creature of wonder, because when she comes on stage the children sit and wonder: is she or isn't she?" The odd thing is, when I was doing the Dame, the children outside wouldn't recognise you, as they believe the illusion on the stage. I think that's essential. The Dame, and indeed all of pantomime, is also about the actor's personality. John, our Dame, is all John when he is on stage. Pantomime is all about personality.

Job Roles in Making Theatre

You may have heard the phrase 'get a proper job' in relation to working in theatre. But this is very out of date. There are many job roles with good salaries in theatre and culture. Nottingham Playhouse has over 100 permanent staff! Here are just a few...

Actor

Actors bring characters to life on stage with their performances, using speech, movement and expression to act a script or improvise their roles.

Administration

Administrators deal with customers, run offices, and take care of the day-to-day running of the business.

Agent

Agents are often the first point of contact for anyone looking to hire actors. Few actors work without the support of an agent. Agents can also supply artists for corporate and private events. Their clients may include actors, singers, dancers or supporting artists.

Artistic Director

The artistic director makes sure their theatre is putting on the kind of shows that fit with the artistic aims of the organisation.

Arts Journalist

Every show hopes for good reviews. Journalists get the word out about the show to the public. They make sure people know what shows are on offer and what is happening in the world of theatre.

Backstage Crew

Building sets, helping create props and operating equipment, the backstage crew support the designers and performers with the running of the show.

Box Office Staff

Box office staff work in cinemas, theatres and concert halls. They are responsible for taking bookings and payments for tickets. Box office staff also arrange for group visits and discounts. They may also advise on seating for people with disabilities or special needs.

Carpenter

Carpenters and joiners in the theatre and dance sector and crafts sector work with wood. They work in theatres or in workshops. In the theatre and dance sector, they specifically make, fit or repair scenery and props that are part of a play or show.

Choreographer

Choreographers create routines and movement sequences for singers and musicians to perform.

Costume Designer

The costume designer is responsible for designing all the costumes to be worn in a production. This can involve a mix of designing from scratch, and sourcing existing items of clothing.

Dance Teacher

Dance teachers educate and instruct on different forms of dance. They work with individuals and groups of all ages and abilities to help them learn dance practices.

Dancer

Dance is a term for describing ways of using the body to tell stories, interpret music and express emotion. Some dance forms require an intense training starting from an early age; others can be learned later.

Dialect Coach

Dialect coaches or voice coaches work with actors to develop and improve their vocal technique, and help them adopt convincing character accents.

Director

Theatre directors take responsibility for the overall creative production of plays.

Dramaturg

A dramaturg is a theatre practitioner who focuses on how to convey the particular message the director wants to highlight.

Events Staff

Events staff work with centre and gallery and theatre managers to deliver an event. They manage, organise and oversee the running of a venue or function. They are responsible for coordinating all the arrangements such as room bookings, catering and special effects or promotional items.

Finance Staff

Finance staff officers in the performing and visual arts sectors provide administrative support to organisations.

Front-of-House Staff

The 'front-of-house' of a theatre refers to all areas accessed by the public, including the auditorium. Front-of-house staff look after the public to make sure their visit is safe and enjoyable.

Hair, Makeup and Wigs

People that work in hair, makeup and wigs for the theatre and dance sector help to style performers. The style of makeup needed depends on the type of production. The hair, makeup and wigs may be contemporary and straightforward or require more creative approaches. Performers may need to appear as from a different nationality or from a different historical period. The makeup artist will also need to dress wigs and attach them correctly to the actor or performer.

Lighting Designer

Lighting designers work to ensure effective lighting for a commercial property. They aim to enhance a building's environment through lighting.

Lighting Technicians

Lighting technicians are vital to theatre. Their work may involve design, operating lighting rigs, and looking after equipment.

Marketing Officer

Marketing is about understanding what a customer wants and promoting this product, event or service. It is also making sure the public is talking about a brand, which for the arts sector could be a theatre, museum, art gallery or community arts project.

Participation and Education Staff

Arts education staff in the creative industries support teachers and development workers in cultural venues. They work in art centres, galleries, theatres and other venues to provide an educational experience. They may work with individual children or visitors, small groups or a whole class.

Playwright

The playwright or dramatist is the author of a production, the writer or adapter of the original play. Often they work alone, but sometimes they also collaborate with a director and the cast.

Producer (Live Events)

Producers of live events are responsible for running successful live spectacles. The producer works on live shows and events in the music industry such as concerts and music festivals. They must coordinate technical staff and performers to ensure everything runs smoothly. They have to have high-quality acts and performers for a successful event. Live events may be one-offs or regular annual events. They can be held in indoor and outdoor music venues of all sizes.

Props Manager

A props manager supervises the building, making and buying of the props needed for a production.

Puppeteer

Puppeteers animate and manipulate puppets as part of a theatre, television or film production. Puppetry is a performing art used to entertain adults or children.

Sound Designer

Sound design can involve making sure the mix of sounds is correct at a live event, designing the sound effects on a mobile phone, and many other things.

Sound Engineer

Sound engineers work in the theatre and dance sector to handle all aspects of a production's sound. They ensure that speech, music and sound effects can be heard to the best effect in a theatre production.

Sound Technician

Sound technicians ensure that the best sound possible is available in a variety of venues for performances. They prepare, operate and maintain technical equipment to amplify, enhance, mix or reproduce sound. They work in recording studios, films, radio and television programmes (on set or location) and live performances, including theatre, music and dance.

Special Effects

Special effects and pyrotechnics staff are responsible for special effects and pyrotechnics required as part of a production. In some shows, for example using magic, special effects may be an integral part of an act.

Stage Designer

Stage designers are responsible for designing stage settings for productions. This can range from single-scene dramas to complex scenery and scene changes required by major productions.

Stage Manager

Stage managers coordinate all aspects of a theatre production or event, including actors, technical staff, props, scenery and costumes. They make sure technicians and performers alike are in the right place at the right time and ready to meet their cues.

Stagehand

Stagehands in performing arts are the behind-scenes support staff for a production. They carry out a wide variety of jobs backstage to ensure a production is successful.

Technical Manager

A technical manager in the theatre and dance sector coordinates a production's technical staff. This could include the set-making staff, lighting staff and props-making staff.

Wardrobe Assistant

Wardrobe assistants work to provide support with costumes and accessories. Performances like plays and musicals rely on a strong wardrobe team to make the production look credible.