

WORKING IN THEATRE: Choreographer



A theatrical **choreographer** creates the dance elements in a play or musical, and often teaches them to actors, singers and dancers. Choreographers work with the creative team—especially the director and, if they’re available, the composer—to decide what kind of movement will help to tell the story or support the vision of the piece. They often have degrees in dance, although specialized choreography degrees do exist. Choreographers often start out as dancers, who then discover a passion for designing movement. They are usually hired on a per-show basis as contractors. Choreographers may supplement their income by continuing to work as dancers and are sometimes hired on as dance captains for the shows they design.



UNFAMILIAR TERM: “GREAT WHITE WAY”

A nickname for Broadway, the street in New York City that is home to some of the world’s most famous theatres. Broadway was one of the first streets to be lit with electric lights, and its theatre signage has become iconic.

Note to students: You’ll get the most out of this video if you watch it twice. Watch it once, and then read the questions below before the second viewing.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1 Maria mentions seeing “people like her” while studying in New York City at Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. What do you think she meant by this, and why might it be important?

2 Maria says choreographers should “understand the individuality of what you have in terms of the actors or the dancers.” How might this idea apply in another area of leadership? (Think team captain, government, project leader, etc.)

3 Maria suggests “challenging yourself to step outside the box.” What do you think that means?

4 Why do you think Maria says choreographers need to understand the business side of theatre/dance?

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1 What can you identify with or what speaks strongly to you in the video?

2 Do you prefer to do things yourself or guide others to do them? What might that tell you about careers you might pursue?

3 Maria mentions “authenticity” in her advice to young choreographers. “Authentic” is defined as “not false or copied; genuine; real.” What does authenticity mean to you?

4 Explain how movement can sometimes convey a message better than speech. (Think about the phrase “actions speak louder than words.”)

FURTHER ACTIVITIES:

1 Take Center Theatre Group’s Career Path Quiz. First, answer the questions for yourself, and then take it a second time as you think a choreographer might answer them. What conclusions can you draw about your interests?

2 Search “choreography” on YouTube and watch one of the videos.

3 Find and research a college/university or online program that has a course of study in what interests you most.

Visit CTGLA.org/WorkingInTheatre and select “Choreographer.”

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