



## ...the People Behind the Curtain: Exploring Careers in the Arts | Me, Dorothy

KCPT's *Me, Dorothy...and This Road to Oz* is a documentary about the making of the Kansas City Ballet's production of *The Wizard of Oz*. Using this lesson plan along with clips from the documentary, students will explore the behind-the-curtain careers that make a stage production possible. Students will gain a basic understanding of the various types of professionals involved in the creation of a new work and understand the process of staging a ballet.

### Lesson Summary

In this lesson, students will explore careers in the arts through a narrative based on *The Wizard of Oz*. During their trip down the yellow brick road, they will meet a choreographer, composer and costume designer.

### Time Allotment

1 50-minute class period

### Learning Objectives

Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Compare and contrast the skills required for careers in the arts.

Recognize the contributions of a variety of professionals to the arts.

Identify careers in the community.

Understand the variety of careers available in the arts.

### Supplies

Computer

Projector

Speakers

### Audiovisual Resources

## Introductory Activity

Before beginning, ask students to complete the pre-assessment activity.

## Learning Activities

- Before beginning the lesson, ask students to complete the pre-assessment activity to determine what they know about the ballet. This can be found under the [support materials tab](#) along with the answer key.
- Tell students that today's lesson will be about careers in the arts and will introduce them to the different "behind-the-curtains" jobs that go into a ballet, specifically the Kansas City Ballet's production of *The Wizard of Oz*.
- Ask a student (or students) to read aloud from the following narrative or ask students to close their eyes as the teacher reads aloud: *Hello, my name is Dora. I live in the Midwest and am a 4th grader at my school. I love to dance and will dance in my room at home to music any chance I get. I have never had formal dance lessons or seen dancers perform live. But one day I was watching TV and I happened to see a ballet dancer dancing on a TV show. Her beauty, flexibility, and skill were awesome! I thought about what it might be like to get to see something like that in person. Each day I walk to and from school and one day I was on my way home from school, walking my usual way down the long brick road near my house, and the next thing I know I see a man along the road, moving his hands and body, like he is working out something. So I stopped and asked him what he was doing. He said, "I am working on choreography for a new ballet." I asked him "What is choreography?" He said choreography was the art of composing ballets and other dances and planning and arranging the movements, steps, and patterns of dancers. I asked him his name and he said Septime Webre. His moves were interesting so I asked him some more questions.*
- Ask the class what questions they would ask Septime Webre about being a choreographer.
- Watch the [Septime Webre video](#).
- Resume the narrative with another student or continue reading to the class: *Septime said he was on his way to the dance studio to continue working with dancers so I said, "Goodbye," and continued walking along the road.*
- Watch a [video of a rehearsal of the Kansas City Ballet's The Wizard of Oz](#).
- Resume the narrative with another student or continue reading to the class: *Then I saw a man with a notebook sitting on a bench along the road. He was writing something down and had headphones on listening to something on his iPod. I asked him what he was listening to and he said, "I am listening to some music I just composed." I asked him his name and he said, "Matthew Pierce, I am a violinist and a composer." I like music so I asked him if I could listen to some of his music and he said, "Certainly."*
- Listen to a [piece of music composed by Matthew Pierce for the Kansas City Ballet's the Wizard of Oz](#).
- Discuss as a class what part of the story that music might accompany.

- Resume the narrative with another student or continue reading to the class: *His music was interesting and beautiful. I was curious about all this so I asked more about his work.*
- Ask the class what questions they would ask Matthew Pierce about being a composer.
- Then, watch the [Matthew Pierce video](#).
- Resume the narrative with another student or continue reading to the class: *A taxi cab pulled up and Matthew said goodbye and got in the cab. I waved to him as the cab drove off. I started walking again. After about a half mile I passed a shop with dress forms in the window with costumes on them. I went up to the window, peeked in and saw a woman working at a large table. The costumes looked incredible! They looked like costumes from some magical place. I knocked on the door and the woman opened the door. She said hello and asked what I wanted. I told her that I was on my way home from school and saw the costumes in the window and wanted to see what she was making. She said, "My name is Liz Vandal and I am a costume designer. I am designing costumes for a ballet company." She showed me some costume sketches of different characters in the ballet. That got me really curious so I asked her these questions.*
- Share images of the [costume designs](#) with the class.
- Based on the images, ask students to guess which costumes got to which character. Answers: Yellow Brick Roadster, Emerald City Man, Emerald City Woman, Grasshopper.
- Ask the class what questions they would ask Liz Vandal about being a costume designer.
- Then, watch the [Liz Vandal video](#).
- Resume the narrative with another student or continue reading to the class: *I said, "Wow, thank you – that's so cool, good luck!" I left the shop and when I reached the end of the brick road to turn onto the paved street to my house I stopped at the small park near my house and sat down on a bench to think about the three interesting people I had met. They were all very different and I learned a lot from each of them about their jobs. I never thought about what I really loved to do and if I might someday have the opportunity to work at what I love. I stared up at the sky and wished that I could get to see the work they told me they were doing on the ballet company in my town. All of a sudden the sky got dark and I saw a flash of lightning and heard thunder far off. I kept thinking gee, I wish I could see that ballet with Mr. Webre's choreography, hear Mr. Pierce's music and see Ms. Vandal's costumes! I kept tapping my feet together saying, "I wish, I wish, I wish!"*
- Ask students to complete the post-assessment activity. This can be found under the [support materials tab](#) along with the answer key.

## Culminating Activity

Ask students to think about a "behind-the-curtains" career that interests them. This might be best done by discussing jobs they are familiar with and giving suggestions. Ask them to research that career and report back to the class during the next meeting with a paragraph description. As a class, decide on the questions the reports should address to create a grading rubric.

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<https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/51290a5e-c8a1-4771-9f9e-138c226af089/me-dorothy-and-the-people-behind-the-curtain-exploring-careers-in-the-arts/>

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