

## ACTOR

### Kaitapere

## Print Page

### Description

Actors entertain people by acting out a role using body movement and speech.



Tahī Mapp-Borren and Andrew Ausage in the play Troilus and Cressida

### He Whakamarama



Mahi ai ki te whakangahau tangata ma te whakaari i tetahi mahi ma tana whakaoreore i tana tinana, me tana korero.

### Alternative Titles

- Performer
- Thespian

### Tasks and Duties

Actors:

- audition for parts in performances on stage, in film or on television
- study scripts in order to understand the part they are playing
- research their character, if their character is based on a real person or if the performance has a historical setting
- memorise their character's lines and cues

- memorise their character's physical movements
- rehearse their role in order to bring the character to life
- discuss their character with the director and the other actors they work with
- act out the role for an audience
- may improvise parts of their character's personality or actions during rehearsal or in front of an audience.

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## Personal Requirements

### Skills

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***"Theatre, television and film use the same skills, but with theatre you have to project yourself a lot more because you need the audience in the back row to pick up what you're saying."***

**Nancy Brunning, Actor**

Actors need to have performance skills such as how to best use their voice and body to create a character. They need to have skill in interpreting and analysing roles, creative ability, memorising skills, good communication and listening skills. Any other skill that can be used in an acting role, for example playing a musical instrument or singing, is useful.



Photo: Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School, photographer M. Parrott  
Matu Ngaropo and Jean Copland in the play Troilus and Cressida

### Knowledge

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Actors need to know how people behave and speak so they can create believable characters. They need to know about body language, movement and how to project their voices in order to fill a room. Actors should also have knowledge of a variety of books, plays, poetry and various cultures. They may need to know how to market and promote themselves as a small business.

### Personal Qualities

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Actors need to be self-disciplined, motivated, confident in themselves and their ability, and dedicated to acting. They need to be imaginative, creative, observant, and able to accept criticism and work well under pressure. It is also important for actors to be able to take direction, work well as part of a team and turn up to productions prepared and on time.



***"You need to have passion and really strong determination, because every week you go to an audition and get rejected, and that can happen nine times out of 10."***

**Oliver Driver, Actor**

## ***Physical Requirements***

Actors should be fit and healthy, as the work can be physically demanding.



***"It takes a lot of stamina, especially when you're performing on stage for six weeks. So you need to keep your body fit, do proper warm ups, and get as much sleep as possible before a show, otherwise your performance is going to suffer."***

**Nancy Brunning, Actor**

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## ***How to Enter the Job***

### ***Secondary Education***

Acting is a skill and talent-based profession, so there are no specific secondary educational requirements. However, a good secondary education helps an actor to better interpret the roles they play. A good level of spoken English is important, and subjects such as drama, history, social studies, and maths are all useful. Participating in extra-curricular activities such as theatre sports and debating is also useful.

### ***Tertiary Education***

A tertiary qualification in performing arts is preferred.

#### ***Related courses:***



[Performing Arts \(General\)](#)  
[Acting, Drama and Theatre](#)  
[Circus and Street Performance](#)  
[Show and Event Management](#)  
[Maori Performing Arts](#)

#### ***Take off to tertiary!***

[Take off to tertiary!](#) - information and advice to help with study or training decision-making.

#### ***New Zealand Qualifications Authority:***

[Dance](#)  
[Drama](#)  
[Film and Television](#)  
[Maori Performing Arts](#)  
[Music](#)



## Performing Arts General Professional Acting

### **Entry Requirements**

There are no specific entry requirements to become an actor. However, if approaching an agent it is preferred that the person has had some acting experience. For example, participated in acting workshops or completed a degree at university or a performing arts school.

### **Useful Experience**

Experience in amateur acting, modelling, dancing and most performing arts, or any sport or other pursuit that involves team work is useful. Because acting involves playing all sorts of characters, any life experience is also helpful.



***"Starting from the bottom up isn't a bad thing, because by helping out backstage you can observe the way actors prepare themselves. Lots of people want to just get up there and be stars, but it's a lot harder than that."***

**Nancy Brunning, Actor**

### **Training on the Job**

Many skills are gained when working as an actor. There are also part-time and full-time courses and workshops available through performing arts schools, polytechnics and private tutors.

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## **Working Conditions**

### **Work Places and Travel**

Actors work indoors in places like theatres, television and film studios, and radio stations. They may visit libraries and archives to research information about their role(s). They also work outdoors on location. There may be lots of travel due to location filming and touring with plays and productions.



Photo: Circa Theatre

Wellington's Circa Theatre

## **Equipment**

Depending on the production, actors may use costumes, make-up and stage props.

## **Workplace Conditions**

Workplace conditions vary widely depending on the production and what the script calls for. Indoor conditions may be hot and noisy, while outdoor filming takes place in all weather conditions. The work may also be repetitive.



***"When people are making a production, everything is very stressful and happens very fast, so the more you can do to make it less stressful for everyone, the better; things like turning up on time, being prepared, knowing your lines."***

**Oliver Driver, Actor**

## **Employment Conditions**

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### **Hours**

Actors work irregular hours and they may have long periods without work. When they are working, their hours are often long and irregular. Actors may also need to work evenings and weekends and they may need to be on call.



***"The hours you actually work are variable. You might be on set from seven in the morning till seven at night and the total capacity of your acting is one hour, but then on some shows you might have to go hard out for the whole day."***

**Oliver Driver, Actor**

### **Salary**

Earnings vary greatly for actors in New Zealand, and most have to supplement their income with other part-time work.



Source: Statistics New Zealand

[Interpreting Charts](#)

## Contact with People

Actors work as part of a team of other actors, usually under the supervision of a director. They have regular contact with the public, booking agents, writers, directors, producers and other people associated with theatre such as lighting and wardrobe designers.



***"Once you've finished training it's not just about walking out the door and getting a job. While at drama school, you've got to plan ahead, and pick up as much information as you possibly can from people working in the industry."***

**Nancy Brunning, Actor**

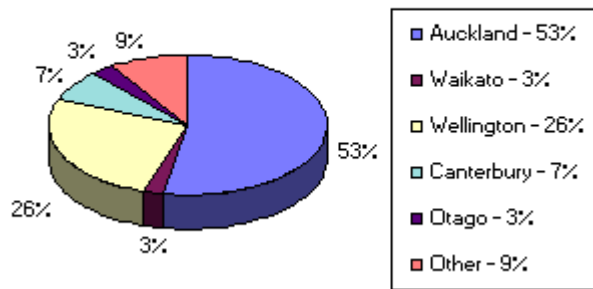
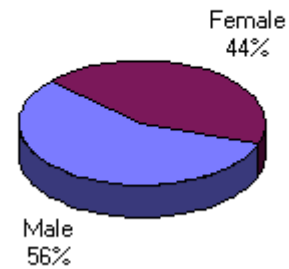
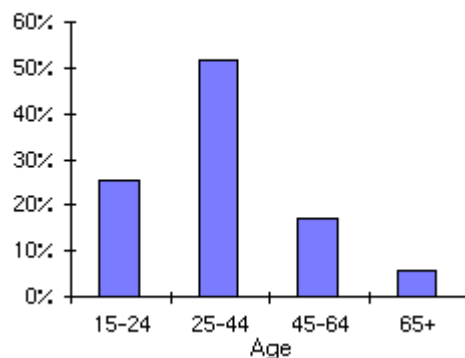
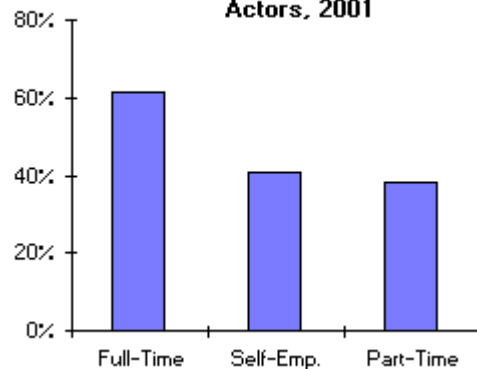
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## Job Market

### Market Details

These statements and statistics are based on information available from Statistics New Zealand about acting occupations. Charts and statistics on actors include data on stuntpeople.

- 693 people were employed as actors in 2001
- 61% were employed full-time
- 44% were female
- The highest proportion of people were employed in the Auckland (53%), Wellington (26%) and Canterbury (7%) regions

**Regional Location of Actors, 2001****Gender of Actors, 2001****Age of Actors, 2001****Type of Employment of Actors, 2001**

Source: Statistics New Zealand

[Interpreting Charts](#)

## Job Outlook

The outlook for actors is good, and the number of people employed in this occupation is expected to grow moderately over the next two to three years. However, competition for employment will remain extremely high because of an increase in the number of graduates emerging from tertiary training organisations. As a result, actors will increasingly need to be skilled and trained for running and marketing themselves as a small business as well as acting.

A large increase in government funding for the arts is expected to increase employment opportunities for actors, and is aimed at creating job security for people holding acting positions. Twenty two million dollars has been put into establishing a Film Production Fund and an extra seven million dollars has been injected into NZ on Air, with the aim of increasing New Zealand made productions and creating more employment in the industry.

The increase of overseas production companies filming in New Zealand is another significant employment booster. The filming of the Lord of the Rings trilogy in New Zealand provided a multitude of jobs for New Zealand actors. It also exposed New Zealand's capabilities as a filming destination to an international market. An increase in the number of international companies filming in New Zealand means more jobs for New Zealand actors as, even if the main character of a film is brought in from overseas, part roles will usually go to New Zealand actors.

Many actors work on a part-time basis and have other jobs to supplement their income. This is likely to continue to be necessary for people entering the industry. Job opportunities for actors in New Zealand are also largely dependant on the state of the economy, which affects the amount of money people have to spend on entertainment.

In today's market, it is common for actors to work in more than one medium, and many actors establish themselves on stage and screen. Within the stage sector there is a growing trend towards taking shows on tour all over New Zealand, including places outside the main centres.

(Written 26/04/2001 - Updated 15/01/2003)

## **Regional Market Details**

Northland / Auckland / Waikato / Bay of Plenty / Gisborne / Hawke's Bay / Taranaki / Manawatu-Wanganui / [Wellington](#) / Tasman / Nelson / Marlborough / West Coast / [Canterbury](#) / [Otago](#) / Southland

### **Wellington:**

The number of actors employed in the Wellington region is expected to grow moderately over the next three to five years. There is a growing appreciation of the theatre as a form of entertainment and the Wellington City Council has made the city a user-friendly destination for film makers. There has been an increase in job opportunities due to the number of television productions that have been based in Wellington in the last year and an increase in funding from Creative New Zealand. New Zealand film and television production has increased and production resources for film are being purchased, creating optimism in the Wellington region about the future of film production and job opportunities for actors.

Most actors in the Wellington region work on a freelance basis and are usually employed part-time. When working on large productions for stage or television, actors may work full-time.

### **Canterbury:**

The number of actors employed in the Canterbury region is expected to remain stable or grow moderately over the next three to five years. Major influences on employment opportunities include increased funding and community support for the arts, a greater number of festivals and touring circuits, and the prospect of film or television work.

Turnover among actors in this region is high and this trend looks likely to continue for the next three to five years. There is only one professional theatre in Christchurch, limiting paid employment opportunities and factors such as age or gender can also limit the roles an actor can audition for. Many actors find it difficult to retain full-time employment and as a result seek job opportunities outside of acting.

Most actors are self-employed and work on part or full-time contracts. Some actors create their own shows and take them on tours.

### **Otago:**

The number of actors employed in the Otago region is expected to remain stable over the next three to five years despite a variety of new companies forming, local courses training talented actors, and strong support for theatre in Dunedin. This is due to limited funding for projects and a need for companies to keep cast numbers low in order to reduce production costs. Most of the region's actors are involved in amateur productions and many move to Auckland, Wellington or overseas to obtain paid work. However, some remain in Otago for lifestyle or family reasons and others return between jobs.

Most actors in the Otago region are self-employed and work on a contract basis for projects that run for a few months. As a result, they can be very busy acting for short periods between which they work in other



roles. Even with more professional work available, few companies can afford to employ actors long-term.

Sixty percent of Otago's actors are male although the number of female actors is increasing as greater numbers of women are becoming involved in writing and producing theatre. Age is more of a barrier to working in this occupation than gender.

(Written 25/09/2001)

## **Current Vacancies**



[Writers, Artists, Entertainers, Sports & Religious Associated Professionals](#)



[KiwiCareers Job Vacancy Links](#)

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## **Personal Profile**

### **Nancy Brunning**



Since graduating from drama school in 1991 Nancy Brunning has primarily acted in New Zealand plays. Although her future in film acting looks assured after her star appearance in 'What Becomes of the Broken Hearted', she finds that the theatre gives her the greatest opportunities as an actor.

"The beauty of theatre is that you can get direct feedback from your audience. And each performance is never the same. It's like watching a film over and over; you tend to pick up something new every time, and audiences will tend to react differently."

Nancy picked up drama in the Sixth Form, and initially did it just for enjoyment. However, after she performed in plays for an international youth festival, her drama and Maori teachers encouraged her to take acting further. So when she finished Seventh Form, she auditioned for drama school and was accepted.

With the intention of only ever acting on stage, Nancy went to drama school not realising that the skills she would learn there would stand her in good stead to act in theatre, television and film. "Getting a role in Shortland Street was a fluke, as I had no desire to do television when I graduated." This comes from a young actor who, within one year of graduating, won an award for most promising female actor of the year.

Nancy suggests that if you're looking at acting as a career, you need to "Get as many auditions under your belt as possible because often what tends to happen is, if you don't get one part, somebody might have liked what you did anyway and they might consider auditioning you for another part. You also need to hook up with an agent, otherwise you won't be able to hear about all sorts of projects that are happening."

"Acting is not just about a director telling you what to do, it's about you bringing as much into a rehearsal process as you can," says Nancy. "That means doing background research on your character and coming up with suggestions on how the role would best be acted. It's also all about teamwork. Somebody once told me, 'You're not there to make yourself look good, you're there to make your fellow actors look good. "

Nancy's aware that it's a fickle industry and that fame is often fleeting, but for now she plans to keep doing this for as long as she can.

## **Oliver Driver**



Oliver Driver has been making a living from acting for over nine years. He first started acting at primary school and continued to do so right through his school life. "I have just always been interested in it and passionate about it. I did it lots at school and then started with the Maidment Youth Theatre. Then I started doing lots of workshops and classes with people; I didn't go to drama school or anything like that, but have done a lot of courses. You tend to break into this industry either by going to drama school or being involved in a major theatre project."

"When you first start out you almost have to accept anything that is offered to you - adverts, little parts in television shows, anything. Then as you get more experienced you can afford to be a bit more picky about what you do and focus on an area."

Oliver suggests that people interested in acting should work in areas other than just acting. "People should look at being an arts professional rather than just an actor, especially in New Zealand. When you are an actor you are in the best place to learn from others, because you spend a lot of time waiting. So while you are waiting you can just watch other people at work, like directors or camera people, then you can look at getting into those areas as well. It also helps you as an actor because you understand the process and other people's work."

Along with this, Oliver says dedication is a key attribute to have. "I say do it, go hard at it and work your hardest to break into the industry. Don't let anybody tell you that you can't do it and that you shouldn't, because a lot of people will and you need to have at least one supporter on your side, which should be yourself. Also set yourself goals; I always set myself dates and if I am not at a certain level in my career by that stage I will look at other options."

Oliver also stresses the importance of being professional. "This business is judged a lot on how well you get on with people. You have to remember that there are 50 actors out there that can do the job, so you need to make sure you reduce all of the crosses against your name, and you do that by being professional outside of the actual acting."

## **Further Information**

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### **Relevant Contacts**

- Acting agencies
- Theatre companies
- Television and film production companies
- [Actors' Equity](#)
- [Creative New Zealand](#)

### **Related Jobs**

- [Comedian](#)
- [Dancer](#)
- [Entertainer](#)
- [Model](#)
- [Musician](#)
- [Singer](#)
- [Stuntperson](#)

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