

AEC Industry Portfolio Reviews and Interview Materials Prep Suggestions

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The PRIMP Process

This is the first time the Architecture Commission is participating in the PRIMP program at USITT. Please know that we are learning with you and piloting this notion of introducing more theatre professionals to the exciting career prospects available in the Architecture, Engineering, and Construction (AEC) Industry. Theatre spaces are inherently complicated – it takes people who are knowledgeable about the use and ambitions of the creative and technical process to ensure the tools theatre practitioners need to be successful are implemented into the building design. You may be a good fit for work in AEC if you:

1. Have helped shape a building renovation or new construction of a theatre space.
2. Enjoy the technical labor and problem-solving of making something work!
3. Want to develop products that impact the industry in new and exciting ways.

It may be daunting to consider how to use your theatrical body of work to translate to a career in the AEC Industry. Perhaps you hadn't even considered these prospects before! You may have crafted a resume focused specifically on lighting or scenic design, but it is our hope through this process that you see how those experiences translate to understanding the venues themselves – whether based on the features or limitations of the built environment.

The reviewers you will meet come from a variety of fields within the AEC Industry, so they may not align with the exact type of job for which you would apply. Introduce yourself, and tell the reviewers what kind of work you're hoping to get, so they know what direction to lead their advice. Remember that architects and acousticians require specific credentials, degrees, and/or licensure programs, but many other jobs like integrators, consultants, manufacturers, and project managers do not.

AEC Career Portfolio Items

Having a formal portfolio for this industry is not required. If you've already started to develop one, however, please use it to punctuate your theatre experience! Most jobs in AEC will require you to read and/or create drawings, so showing that work will set you apart from other candidates.

Items to include:

- Your resume – please provide 3 copies so that reviewers can write directly on it
 - Bring both your “theatrical” resume as well as one catered to the job for which you want to apply!
- Clean drafting examples
- Sketch or drawing examples – or another example of a tool you've used to communicate an idea, problem, or solution
- A sample cover letter

Things to keep in mind:

- If you have digital work samples, have them downloaded on your fully-charged device; do not rely on Wi-Fi alone or a power supply.

Resume

There are many ways to organize a resume, and different employers may prefer different things. Depending on the credits you have and the type of job you are going for, you may choose to organize it chronologically, by genre if you work on multiple types of projects, or by most applicable to the job for which you are applying. Here are some things you may want to consider and include:

1. The top third of the page

1. This is what will get looked at most to see if you are appropriate for this particular job. Place your most relatable credits here, even if not in chronological order

2. Fonts

1. Be judicious on the number and size of fonts you use. A special font for your name and headers is fine, but make the bulk of your resume one consistent legible font.

3. Symbols / Theatre terminology

1. Limit the use of asterisks or other symbols. Also know that while these are theatre-related jobs, often the first person to pick up your resume does not have advanced theatre skills.

4. Dates

1. You will get differing opinions about whether to include dates or not. They are most useful to show your institutional knowledge and longevity with an employer.

5. Paper

1. A majority of resumes are submitted electronically these days. Do not send a .doc Word file; you must understand how to PDF a document! If you need to print materials, plain white paper is fine.

6. One page or two

1. Especially if you are new to the career, you should be able to trim your resume to a single page, tailoring it to the job at hand. As you advance, keep a working document that has every credit, and tailor it to the job as needed.

7. “Special skills” / Related information

1. Be judicious about the term “special skills.” Include things like:
 1. OSHA 10 / 30
 2. ESTA certifications
 3. Manufacturer certification programs
 4. 3D Building Information Modeling (BIM) software, 2D drafting programs and level of experience, etc.
 5. Other language fluency
 6. Speaking engagements / published written work in an Industry publication

Do be prepared to talk about whatever you list!

8. References

1. You will get some opinions on this one, but for the purposes of this interview, you should include references. Some employers could decide that “references available upon request” is just one more step on their part that is too much to go through to hire you. Confirm your reference’s preferred method of contact – and tell them they’re your reference! References should be able to speak to your recent body of work and work ethic. Do NOT list these references publicly on the internet; this is a time “references available on request” is highly recommended or to only list names/titles but not contact information.

Drafting and Sketch Examples

Drafting examples should be clear, legible, and detailed. Be prepared to talk about the program(s) used to create your work. Include photos of the completed work, if applicable. We recommend no more than 5 examples highlighting your best work.

Your reviewers would also love to see a sample of your communication tools in action. Perhaps you've had to sketch a concept idea for someone to understand what you mean. Maybe you built an Excel spreadsheet that does something unique but clearly shows your advanced skills with the program. Dynamic AutoCAD blocks are another great example of this. We'd like to understand your objective and how you used your creativity and/or work ethic to solve a problem or communicate an idea.

Cover Letter

The cover letter can be used to explain some of your theatre work and how it directly correlates to the job opening. Relate yourself to the job at hand but don't overpromise on your skills. Why are you looking to transition from theatre to an AEC job? What professional goals have you set for yourself?

Job postings may indicate a travel requirement, office arrangements (work-from-home, hybrid, fully in-person), or physical requirements of the job such as carrying equipment, operating a forklift or personnel lift, driving a truck, etc. It may be useful to reveal your experience or willingness to perform such tasks.

It's also great to tell the employer where you found their posting, so they can see where they are successfully reaching candidates. As a tip, try to throw in a detail you know about the company that isn't something gleaned from the job posting. Show them you researched their company and know why you want to work for them. And *always* use spell check and grammar check applications. It may be tempting to use AI to generate a cover letter but remember – reviewers will read many of these letters when reviewing potential candidates. Your cover letter **MUST** express your unique personality!

Websites

You may consider having a presence online, but you do not need to do a full website unless you wish to do so. Start with LinkedIn. If an employer does a Google search, you don't want your only hit to be photos on your social media. Be judicious about what is publicly viewable, and remember that anyone with a mutual friend may see what you post, especially in public social media platforms and groups.

This is for YOU

All of the above are suggestions that can help you focus on the decisions you make, depending on what you are trying to present. You will also have people give you multiple opinions about exactly the same part of your materials. Take everyone's constructive criticism, and present the best you!