



STEP into Drama School 2010

STEP into Drama School 2010

This booklet is a resource for all young people thinking of applying to Drama School, unlocking the mysteries surrounding the application process and beyond.

Accompanies STEP into Drama School DVD

step
southwark theatres'
education partnership



STEP into Drama School 2010

So you want to act?

The routes into acting are varied. Although it is possible simply to get a 'break' by walking straight from school into the professional world, in the performing arts it is very unlikely. A recent report found that 86% of working performers had been professionally trained. So if you are convinced that this is the career for you, you are much more likely to succeed with training than without it.

The Reality

Getting into Drama School is one of the toughest application processes around. Thousands of people audition for about 30 places per drama school, so you will have to be committed, tough and ready.

Even if you are successful in gaining a place at Drama School, you cannot expect to complete your training and then

start your career as a matter of course. The job prospects for newly qualified actors are thin, as they are for more experienced performers too. Lack of job security goes with the territory. Many actors spend much of their time 'resting.'

The nasty truth is that trained performers work professionally for an average of just **11.3 weeks** of the year. It isn't well paid either. Apart from a handful at the very top of the profession, performers earn quite low salaries so most of them have to run parallel careers as teachers, call centre temps, caterers, salespeople or whatever in order to be able to live throughout the year.

What is Drama School?

It might sound obvious, but Drama School is very different to most Higher Education. Drama School training is vocational, intensive and work-orientated.

Although courses lead to an academic qualification, such as a degree, these courses are practical training for work. While most students studying for University Degrees have contact with their tutors for a few hours a week, Drama School students are trained for long hours by staff with professional experience and visiting professionals. A full-time week at Drama School can be anything between thirty-five hours a week to forty-eight hours a week, depending on the School.

TIP

"Work backwards. Find out about how someone you admire onstage or on television got there. Each actor goes on a different journey, and there is no hard and fast route into what it means to be a successful actor.

However, most actors working in this country will have gone through the Drama School system."

- **Simon Stephens, The Brit School**

Applying to Drama School

You can apply to some Drama Schools through UCAS, though the majority of Drama School Applications are not done through a central body so you can apply for as many as you like.

The industry's advice is that you should complete your school education to the highest standard you're capable of before applying for Drama School. Many Drama Schools have academic entry requirements and, given the precarious nature of careers in drama or dance, it makes sense to have the best possible academic qualifications you can manage because you will almost certainly have to work in other fields as well as the performing arts.

All accredited Courses now lead to the award of an Equity card. This means that once you've graduate you are able to work if someone spots you and offers you a job.

What do Drama Schools look for?

1. **Potential.** Sally Ann Gritton, Head of Acting at Mountview, stresses that Drama Schools look for students who want to learn as much as they can: 'students have to be prepared to be open and go with the flow of the course.'
2. **A candidate suited to their school.** Each Drama School will offer you something different. Andrew Tidmarsh, Head of the Foundation Course at RADA, advises candidates to apply for Courses that best suit them: 'The training is different at each school. For example, The Drama Centre works students very hard—they train for about forty-eight hours a week. It therefore attracts a particular type of student who wants that intensity. RADA attracts candidates who want the prestige of a world-renowned training, while the Course at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama includes training in Acting for TV and Film. Research each Drama School and find out the nature of the course on offer, then ask yourself whether you want that kind of training.'
3. **Someone who wants the intensity of Drama Training.** Be absolutely certain that this is the path you need to follow. Be fully aware of the hard work that is involved, and the fact that getting in is very tough. Drama School takes no prisoners, and they will spot anyone who is not prepared at the audition!

Case Study

"It is important to audition for a number of different schools to ensure that you find the right one for you as each school has its own distinct, unique qualities and training techniques. LAMDA was my fourth audition and I knew by the end of the day that it was the school for me. Remember you are choosing the school as much as they are choosing you!"



STEP into Drama School 2010

The Audition

Most Drama Schools will ask you to prepare two monologues. They may also run a workshop before or after the audition to see how you respond to tasks and work with other people. The Monologue section is the part of the Audition that most candidates find nerve-wracking.

STEP asked Professionals working at Drama Schools, and Drama School Students and auditionees for some guidance on how to deliver a successful audition:

1. **Confidence is a must.** Andrew Tidmarsh from RADA stresses: 'you must be so confident with the two pieces you have prepared that you are bulletproof.'
2. **Understand the monologues.** Sarah Gale, a graduate of Rose Bruford emphasises that you need to understand your pieces inside out: 'Don't just learn the piece and build a character. Really know what every word means. Do you know **exactly** what that character is saying?'
3. **Reveal who you are.** "The key to Drama School auditions is to reveal who you are, not to conceal who you are", explains Andrew Tidmarsh from RADA.
4. **Don't get coaching on your pieces from a Professional.** Drama Schools recommend against this as a Professional actor will tutor you to act the way they act. "We are not interested in your pieces being polished", says Andrew Tidmarsh. "We are interested in you being confident so that you can deliver the monologue accurately. We are not interested in seeing the work of your drama tutor. We want to see your work come through the pieces."
5. **Pick contrasting pieces.** Choose two different pieces, to display your acting range. "If you are going to perform Romeo," explains Andrew Tidmarsh, "don't choose to perform someone who is experiencing love in your modern piece. Pick someone who is full of anger and rage."
6. **Go with the flow.** As much as you have rehearsed and prepared your speech, be adaptable. As Elliot Barnes-Worrell (recently successful auditionee of Central School of Speech and Drama) explains: "I had prepared Hamlet. It was my speech and I had rehearsed and dedicated my life to it. But after I performed it in the audition, one of the panel asked me to deliver it in a completely different way. But this didn't faze me. I was eager to take direction. You need to be eager and open to criticism. Prepare to perform your piece in a radically different way if they ask."

Finding Audition Monologues

If you experience difficulty in finding suitable monologues for your audition, The Royal Court Theatre in Sloane Square (near Victoria Station) has a bookshop that can help. The bookshop staff specialise in assisting with the selection of audition monologues and scenes, and personal advice is available to anyone wanting help in selecting new and interesting roles. The best time to come in for advice is between 3pm and 6pm, Monday to Friday. For further information, please contact the Bookshop team on 020 7565 5024 or at bookshop@royalcourttheatre.com



STEP into Drama School 2010

Serious? Use your time now!

- **Take part**
Get involved in as much drama as you can, both in and out of school. Southwark has an abundance of Youth Theatres, and Drama Courses.
- **Broaden your experience**
Get involved in backstage work too if you can. This will enhance your understanding of all aspects of theatre.
- **See**
Go to as many productions as you can, ranging from puppetry, street entertainers and childrens' theatre to big productions of the classics - not forgetting opera, musical theatre, one-person shows, performance poetry, spoken word, live art and any other sort of performance which near you.
- **Read**
Read as many play texts as you can and think about ways in which they could be staged.
- **Research**
Find out about the different training offered by Drama Schools. The Conference of Drama Schools website is a great place to start: <http://www.drama.ac.uk>

CHEAP TICKETS

Do you know that many theatres do free or discounted tickets if you are Under 26? The Scheme is called **A Night Less Ordinary**. To see which theatres participate, visit www.freelondontheatre.com

Youth Theatres

Southwark and Around

Blue Elephant www.blueelephanttheatre.co.uk

Half Moon Young People's Theatre Company <http://www.halfmoon.org.uk/>

London Bubble <http://www.londonbubble.org.uk/>

Oval House Youth Theatre <http://www.ovalhouse.com/>

Theatre Peckham www.theatrepeckham.co.uk

Unicorn Theatre Young Company <http://www.unicorntheatre.com/>

The Young Vic www.youngvic.org

Nationally

National Youth Theatre www.nyt.org.uk



STEP into Drama School 2010

Other Career Paths

The reality of Drama School and life on the other side may not appeal to you, but you may still want to work in theatre. There are other careers in theatre which you might be interested in, and here's a brief summary. See www.getintothetheatre.org.uk for more information.

CREATIVE

Casting Director; Choreographer; Designer; Director; Lighting Designer; Sound Designer; Armourer; Hair and Make-Up; Wardrobe; Writer; Literary Manager

TECHNICAL

Stage Manager; Construction; Rigger; Technical Manager; LX Director; LX Operator; Production Manager; Pyrotechnician

MANAGEMENT

Administrator; Education Officer; Youth Theatre Leader; Producer; Marketing; Press; Events; Theatre Manager; Finance

OTHER

Actor's agents; Arts Journalists; Theatre Critic; Voice Coach; Singing Coach; Dialect Coach; Drama Therapist; Speech Therapist

To find out more about theatre for young people in Southwark, see STEP's Website:
www.step-partnership.co.uk

Other Websites for Young People in the Arts

IdeasTap - A creative network and funding body for young people in the arts
www.ideastap.com

A Younger Theatre - Giving Young People a Voice in the Arts
www.ayoungertheatre.com

Masterclass - Offers free workshops and talks with leading theatre professionals for anyone aged 17—30
<http://www.masterclass.org.uk/>