

# Education Advisers

eGuide



**Drama and  
Theatre Studies  
in Private Schools**



# Education Advisers Ltd

UK Private School Consultancy service

Choosing the right private school for your child can be an overwhelming and nerve-racking experience for the whole family. It is, without doubt, one of the most important decisions you will make for your child. Your child's school will play a huge role in forming positive and resilient characteristics, developing talents, building confidence, and preparing them to face our ever-changing world. It is therefore essential you are confident you have fully investigated all suitable options, and are sending your child to a school in which they will thrive both academically and emotionally.



Since 2004 Education Advisers Ltd has supported over a thousand British and international families in identifying and gaining entry to the best-fitting schools. Our commitment is to provide completely impartial advice, and to ensure you and your child are fully informed and prepared from the very beginning until they are happily enrolled in a school.

The process of identifying and applying to schools need not be stressful. Managed with expertise and empathy, it should be the first step of an exciting and life-changing journey for your family.

We produce these guides to provide parents with what our experience tells us are the most important considerations when navigating your child's education. We hope you find this guide on How to Choose the Right IB school a useful resource with which to begin your journey.

We also invite you to request a free initial 20-minute phone consultation to explain your objectives and learn more about the most suitable strategy for your individual circumstances.

*Mary Murayama BA (Oxon), MA (Sheffield) QTS - Managing Director*

## Our core services

Our key commitment is to find the best-fitting private school options for any particular family or child. Our advice is completely impartial, and led by each family's priorities and requirements. We offer a range of bespoke consultancy services, but most fall into one of the following categories:

- Education for Life strategy and consultancy service for new parents
- Day school advice and enrolment service (Ages 2-19)
- Boarding school advice and enrolment service (Ages 6-18)
- 6<sup>th</sup> form applications, day or boarding
- Full consultancy and school enrolment service for families relocating to the UK
- Full consultancy and school enrolment service for families with dyslexic or SEN children
- Personalised pupil assessments in English and Maths
- Consultancy and mentoring for elite school applications
- Summer School recommendations
- University application consultancy service

Please note we do not offer visa, tutoring, guardianship or home relocation services. However, we can offer some initial advice, and introduce relevant, reputable service providers with whom we frequently collaborate.

# Introduction

## Part 1 – Drama / Acting/ Theatre Studies at ages 11 to 16

**"Don't put your daughter on the stage, Mrs. Worthington  
Don't put your daughter on the stage  
The profession is overcrowded  
And the struggle's pretty tough  
And admitting the fact  
She's burning to act  
That isn't quite enough....."**

So wrote Noel Coward in 1935 and it seems that the very thought of having a child who wants to work in theatre is just as troubling for parents today. To say a career in the Performing Arts is tough going for all, but what in real terms is a lucky few, is something of an understatement...but some do make it and, if your child is particularly interested and potentially talented, how would you go about giving them a chance to try...?

Once your child gets to senior school, the chances are that the school, either State or Private, will offer some opportunities to get involved in Drama classes. Curiously, despite the Performing and Creative Arts being one of the country's most prolific industries, Drama as a subject is not formally recognised in the National Curriculum; it comes under the umbrella of English and schools are not obliged to dedicate specific lessons to it. What this means in real terms is that in many schools Drama will be taught at Key Stage 3 ( Yrs 7 – 9) in rotation with Music and Art, meaning that if your child is lucky, they may have access to Drama for only one term of the school year. Private schools however tend to recognise the value of Drama, not only for its fostering of an appreciation of the Arts generally, but more importantly perhaps, for its ability to build confidence, as well as developing team building, time management, presentation and softer skills like sympathy and empathy.

Drama in private schools will also often be taught by skilled experts, usually with some former professional experience as actors or directors who understand the nature of the beast and want to encourage the next generation to get involved. Whichever sector your child is in, the curriculum will particularly in the first three years, revolve around developing 'story telling' and performance skills, exploring opportunities to work with masks and puppets etc. It is also not uncommon for private schools with their bespoke Performing Arts centres and full-time technicians, to employ an actor or director 'in residence'. These are professionals, usually on a year's contract, who as well as working with the children, are charged with producing projects of their own that promote Drama not only to the wider school but also to the public. These opportunities are fantastic for the 'wannabe' performer/director as they get to see first-hand how theatre is created.

For those students in the early years of secondary education who catch the Theatre bug, there are also plenty of opportunities to get involved with Drama outside of the classroom, not only by auditioning for school productions and inter-house Drama competitions, but also by taking LAMDA or Trinity College examinations. These are offered by most private schools in their extra-curricular provision, and will always incur an extra cost, but, just as musicians learn to measure their progression through a series of examinations, so too can the budding actor/musical theatre star work their way up through a series of graded exams, which are all aimed at developing skills and measure their progress against an internationally applied standard. The highest levels of these exams, known as the Licentiate, will also allow the candidates to work as teachers for the relevant examination board – a useful second string to the jobbing actors bow!

## Part 1 – Drama / Acting/ Theatre Studies at ages 11 to 16

As your child moves through the school, Drama will also be offered at GCSE and schools will follow one of the specifications offered by a number of Examination Boards; AQA, OCR, Edexcel, WJEC (or the English equivalent; Eduqas), or CIE (for IGCSE) being the most popular. The Drama exam has mainly practical focus and students are expected to demonstrate their understanding of how a text works in performance. Students do not have to be performers to take the exam as there are plenty of opportunities for them to develop their skills as designers (costume, set, masks, make-up etc.) as well as directors. Some of the units are internally assessed by the teacher but externally moderated by examiners from the Board, while others are externally examined and there is also a written paper, which again assesses the candidate's understanding of a set text (a playscript obviously) might work in performance and they will also be asked questions about a piece of live theatre that they have been to see during their course. Whilst it is not a pre-requisite that a student has GCSE Drama in order to go on to study A Level, the new courses are much more geared to being a stepping stone to the next level and, any student thinking of going on to A level would be well advised to take the GCSE if possible. We discuss the pathway through to A Level later in this guide.

So that is the 'academic' line, but how do you support your child's ambitions to become a performer? Schools are very busy places and, particularly in the private sector the number and range of extra and co-curricular activities on offer mean that a child can often be pulled in several different directions at once; especially if they are something of an all-rounder, they can find themselves struggling to balance their commitments to sports teams as well as find time to go to rehearsals, music practices and get their homework done. The difficulty with drama is that it is largely a group activity and so it is important for a budding performer to gain as much performance experience as possible and most schools will keep a watchful eye on their students in order to ensure that they are able to keep a good balance and stay on top of their academic studies, which will often mean limiting the exposure to too much drama.

There are however a small number of schools that specialise in the Performing Arts. Some of these, such as Redroofs and Sylvia Young Theatre School offer students as young as 10, a mixed curriculum of academic studies and performing arts training.

Sylvia Young's has a reputation for sending students to the West End and counts performers such as the late Amy Winehouse, Billie Piper and Emma Bunton and many soap opera stars among its alumni. Whilst clearly successful schools, they are often criticised for their limited academic curriculum.

One school that we feel manages to get that academic/ performance achievement balance right is Tring Park School for the Performing Arts in Hertfordshire, which teaches all the Performing Arts side by side with traditional academic subjects.



Set in what was originally Tring Park Mansion one of the homes of the famous banking family; the Rothschilds, the school itself emerged in London in 1939 and after several incarnations and mergers with other dance schools became one of two Arts Educational Schools; one in London and the other, Tring Park, in Herts; the latter being established in 1945. The two schools shared a name but had a different focus, with the London school mainly specialising in post -18 training for day students, while Tring Park developed as a vocational day and boarding school with around 60% boarding. It admits pupils from ages 8 to 18 but there are only 20 in the prep school from years 4 to 6. The two finally parted company in 2009 and Tring Park School for the Performing Arts was born.

As the name of the school suggests, this is a school for children with an interest in and hopefully a passion for the Performing Arts and all four of the arts disciplines are covered to a high standard; Dance, Musical Theatre, Drama and Music. All students are auditioned, even from 9 years old. They are looking for potential, at whatever age and stage you might be at. Where appropriate classes are differentiated and according to ability.. There is a huge amount on offer here - incredibly there are 23 A level subjects to choose from as well as professional qualifications in Dance.

The Principal, Stefan Anderson; himself a choral conductor, pianist and organist, explains that not all children go on to study further; two students of their current cohort have offers from Cambridge, so the academics do take as much of the spotlight as the Performing Arts, although obviously the majority will head down one Performing Arts path or other.

One of only nine specialist residential schools in the UK that are supported by the Government's Music and Dance scheme, Tring Park believes that it is not only vital to encourage its students to aim for excellence in their vocational choices but also to gain the widest possible skill-set to allow them to fulfil their potential. However, it is not a 'stage school' in the traditional sense, and they don't encourage students to have agents although some do. All their courses work in a cross-curricular manner, to encourage a cohesive approach to learning with the aim of expanding the eventual destinations for their pupils. Vocational Courses are designed to allow each pupil to achieve their maximum potential and explore all aspects of the Performing Arts in a safe, supportive and stimulating environment.

The most frequent question is how do the students manage to balance their academic studies with the vocational? The answer, apart from 'long days' and a lot of after school rehearsals, is that the 'Juniors' have their vocational classes in the mornings and then academics in the afternoon and the Seniors are the opposite. There is very little room for error, teaching is slick and the teachers have a lot to pack into each lesson because the children are in so much demand for other activities; vocational lessons, vocational qualifications and over 100 shows a year...this is not a school for the faint-hearted.



## Lower School (Ages 11-13 )

First to Third Form pupils can choose to specialise in either Dance or Performance Foundation Junior. The Performance Foundation course includes a range of Dance, Drama and Music classes, with the emphasis on the aspects of the Performing Arts which most interest and inspire them while the Junior Dance course focuses primarily on dance.

## Middle School (Ages 14 -16)

As well as teaching the core GCSE subjects, Maths, English Literature and Language and Science, students can choose three more subjects as options which includes a choice of two languages and the humanities. In the Fourth Form (Yr 10) the options increase: Performance Foundation pupils are able to pursue their studies in Musical Theatre, Drama or Commercial Music, whilst still studying all aspects of the Arts in depth. Drama students take Drama GCSE. Pupils on the Dance Course focus with greater intensity on the dance styles most suited to them.

## Senior School (Ages 16-19)

We are covering the Key Stage 5 options later in this guide but at Tring Park as well as taking a traditional Performing Arts A Levels. Drama students take Tring's own Acting Course. Dancers are also able to stay for a third year in the Sixth Form to complete their professional qualifications - a great opportunity for those who pose a 'triple threat'!

Tring Park's alumni include Jane Seymour, Thandie Newton, Caroline Quentin, Amy Nuttall and Anna Carteret. Recent alumni include: Lily James, Daisy Ridley, Drew McConie and Jessica Brown Findlay. Note that girls currently outnumber boys in a ratio of 2.4 to 1, but the school does run drama and dance classes for boys only to get more boys interested in Performing Arts and not feel intimidated by girls!

**If you would like to know more about Tring Park School for day or boarding or other schools that have great reputations for the Performing Arts, please arrange to talk to one of our consultants on 01622 813870 or [info@educationadvisers.co.uk](mailto:info@educationadvisers.co.uk) or email us the Enquiry Form in Appendix B at the end of this eGuide.**

## Part 2 - Drama /Acting/Theatre Studies at ages 16+

Most private senior schools will have encouraged pupils to study Drama on an extra- curricular basis from age 11 throughout the senior school and to get involved in school plays and theatrical productions because it engenders confidence in communication and presentation. Some schools will have the option of a GCSE in drama.

At age 16 when choices have to be made to decide on A Level or IBDP or BTEC subjects , it can become more difficult for some pupils to continue Drama in a serious way when their chosen subjects might be all consuming in say maths or science or business. Some universities regard Drama as a softer option at A level and it may not even be recognised for certain degree courses. Indeed, where the likely university degrees are already decided, the school may advise not to include drama A Level because a university evaluating say a medical school candidate may regard Drama as a soft option non essential subject. Whilst it is not unheard of for mathematicians and scientists to study Drama at A Level - in fact many lighting designers and sound engineers in the industry often come from a Physics background - some more traditional, academic subjects fit more comfortably with Drama and Theatre Studies; English Literature and History for example, and are often a good complement for Drama. Similarly, Psychology and other social science subjects work well and students are often surprised by the overlap in terms of content.

The total number taking Drama A Level decreased below 10,000 for the first time in 2019, a year on year drop of 9% over 10 years, but there has been a corresponding increase in students taking the BTEC in Performing Arts.

Then, there are the really serious performing arts students who might want to be wholly immersed taking for example Drama, Media and Music. If you are particularly creative and have an interest in the Creative and Performing Arts as a whole, you might be surprised by these words of caution; be careful about taking on too many artistic subjects at A level. Choosing to study Drama, Music and Art for example, is very time consuming as the practical elements in each demand a lot of extra time outside of timetabled lessons in order to ensure that final performances are polished and portfolios are complete. Given that the deadlines for completing coursework are earlier than the written papers (marks have to be submitted to exam boards by the beginning of May) students often struggle to manage their time effectively, as well as keeping up with revision for their written papers and other subjects. If you know that you want to go on to study only one of those three at University or vocational college, you may find that you are able to continue to study the other subjects of the disciplines through a vocational route offered by your school; Royal College of Music exams for example.

At this stage it is worth considering the three main types of curriculum. There are the traditional A Levels which can be taken under several different exam boards – Edexcel, AQA, OCR and WJEC. They vary slightly mainly revolving around the different proportions of coursework and practical study / performance.

## Part 2 - Drama /Acting/Theatre Studies at ages 16+

Then there are BTECs. These were hardly offered in the private school sector five years ago because of a reluctance to offer vocational subjects and a number of elite academic private schools regarded them as inferior to A Levels with more coursework and practical work. However, then a number of private schools realised that BTECs were more appropriate to SEN pupils or those who struggled with intensive academic subjects. The most relevant subject is BTEC Performing Arts which has become quite popular in a number of private schools who have a significant cohort of pupils with Special Educational Needs. The BTEC Level 3 in Performing Arts is a continually assessed, modular course, which can be a challenging course if it is taken with its three constituent disciplines of Dance, Acting and Musical Theatre / Performance and is equivalent to 3 A Levels in the National Extended Diploma qualification. However, it is also possible to take only one of the three pathways e.g Acting, where it is equivalent to one A level. The BTEC courses here are acceptable for University / Drama School applications by UCAS. At the time of writing there are still only a handful of private schools offering BTEC Performing Arts, but if you are interested to apply to one, please contact us on 01622 813870.

You can see the curriculum at <https://bit.ly/2Bq7N7a>

The IB Diploma Programme also permits the student to take Acting in the Arts Section. However, the IBDP has six compulsory subjects as well as three more modules. As such, for any student wanting to build a career in acting, we would say that the IBDP structured curriculum split simply does not allocate sufficient study time on acting to make it worthwhile as an entrance route to Drama School. What GCSE subjects are necessary to progress to drama A Level or BTEC? GCSE drama is desirable although not essential. A good grade in English – say 7 or higher is preferred as well as 4+ other GCSEs. Drama is often liked by some SEN children who may prefer it to hard academic subjects like STEM subjects. However, SEN children may find the BTEC Performing Arts curriculum easier to study than A Level because there are no written examinations.

At this stage it is worth considering the three main types of curriculum. There are the traditional A Levels which can be taken under several different exam boards – Edexcel, AQA, OCR and WJEC. They vary slightly mainly revolving around the different proportions of coursework and practical study / performance. A Level Drama which is the most common route chosen by aspiring actors. Bear in mind some private schools offer Drama scholarships, which you have to audition for, which gives the student a taste of the auditions which are essential to get into degree level drama schools.

Virtually all private schools will offer Drama and Theatre Studies as an extra curricular option to allow sixth form students in school theatrical productions. Those continuing in an A Level Drama and Theatre Studies may be looking to get into a career in performing arts or media. There is no point in hiding the fact that a career in acting is very precarious in gaining a regular income and most successful actors will first go to Drama School which ends up granting a Degree Level or Higher Education qualification. There are around 20 well known Drama Schools which we list later in this eGuide. Entrance is almost always by passing an audition. Such schools are inundated with applicants and thus the auditions often have a failure rate comparable to that of auditioning for a real play! Therefore, it is not uncommon to spend two or three years applying or waiting to get into one of the best Drama Schools like RADA (one of the hardest!)

## So should a student consider a change of school / college at 16, if their current school does not specialise in performing arts?

There are many schools and sixth form colleges which offer courses in Drama A Levels, but only a few really specialise in it or are skilled in guiding students to university drama courses, but these exceptions are really amazing, including Hurtwood House, Arts Educational, Hammond and Tring Park. All of these teach performing arts alongside traditional A Levels such as Maths and Sciences. Of these four, Hurtwood is by the far the strongest in exam successes across the wider spectrum and thus we are using them as a case study. Again, bear in mind that the higher your grade aspirations the more difficult the entry criteria will be.

In 2019 Hurtwood had a total of 49 students sitting for A Level Drama of which 89% scored grades between A\* to B. In fact, Hurtwood's score for all A Levels was 85.9% A\* to B which shows how exceptional their drama tuition is. Thus, for those students with a burning ambition to become a professional actor, you might want to consider a transfer at age 16 to a specialist Performing Arts school such as Hurtwood House or Tring Park. Bear in mind you are still going to have to pass an audition or interview to get into them as well! We use Hurtwood as a case study at this point, because their offering on drama is so exceptional, but we can introduce you to other A Level drama schools which may better suit your location or budget.

You will find that different schools study the curriculums of different exam boards, which include Edexcel, AQA, Eduquas, WJEC and CIE. Hurtwood study the Pearson Edexcel curriculum for A Level, to which they changed recently because it gives more attention to actual performance of which the components are explained in great detail in the full Edexcel course 92 page brochure at <https://bit.ly/3eRz2VA>

### Hurtwood explains:

We mount in-house productions to a high standard; we invite top experimental and fringe companies to perform and have co-produced Edinburgh Fringe productions.

We also run trips out to local and West End theatres. Our focus is not only on conventional theatre, for we believe in the integration of the arts, so dance, musical theatre and performance art all feed into the rich diet of the Theatre Studies student at Hurtwood. Students have the opportunity to learn from working professionals in a variety of different ways including workshops, masterclasses and one to one tuition.

Extra-curricular projects include: The Hurtwood Musical, The Hurtwood Music Concert, Acting & Dance Companies, T.I.E group, Performing Arts Fridays, Year 13 Play and Musical Theatre showcase plus regular Lunchtime and Classical Concerts. Students can also develop backstage and design skills through working with one of our team of technical professionals who support all our extra-curricular productions.



## **Musical Theatre**

Throughout the year we run a musical theatre programme for year 12 students. Initially, this introduces students to the ways song, dance and acting skills combine in musicals, but as the year goes on, it focuses on rehearsal for an end of the year Showcase. We combine a selection of numbers, linked together in a loose theme, in which all cast members have their moment to shine and present it in the last week of the summer term.

There is also a year 13 musical review. This is an opportunity for year 13 students who are interested in developing their musical theatre training and performance work.

## **Straight Drama Production**

For year 12 students, there is an Enigma option, especially for those who are serious about straight drama. An auditioned ensemble of some of Hurtwood's finest year 12 actors perform in the summer term at the local Cranleigh Arts Centre. For year 13 there is an auditioned ensemble which works to put on a production which is performed in the Spring term.

## **Student Led Work**

Students are encouraged to write and direct their own work and where possible this is showcased informally with all the full artistic and technical support which Hurtwood can offer.

## **Backstage / Technical Theatre**

The technical support for productions is outstanding. The designers and operators are top class. The equipment Hurtwood owns and hires is state of the art and there is a dedicated team of full time technicians providing support for all productions. They work alongside industry professionals who are imported to work on specific projects. Students regularly go to study Stage Management and Technical Theatre at the top colleges. We strive to make students realise that what happens behind the scenes is as important as what happens on stage.

## **Drama School Auditions**

There are extensive complementary sessions to prepare students for drama school auditions, including a showcase to perform their efforts to their peers alongside a selection of agents and casting directors invited from London.

## **Hurtwood Festival of Drama**

In the spring there is a run of plays and monologues, which are part of the Drama and Theatre academic exams. Students work hard to put on their own productions, which are open to the public and also assessed for A Levels.

## **The Christmas Musical**

This is not just any play – it takes students on a journey which ends up as near as possible to a West End experience – it costs £100,000 to put on and lasts two weeks, often involving 70+ students. It attracts a regular following which includes agents and casting directors.

Sometimes it is a classic like West Side Story or Guys and Dolls or it could be a compilation show like We Will Rock you. Parents can see it even if they cannot attend because it is live streamed around the world – and participating students will remember it for the rest of their lives!

### **Intensive Acting Course: July 2020**

One week course for students 14 to 19 years of age. Students work on acting skills for the stage and screen including voice, movement and stage combat. You will work hard, really stretch yourself, make friends and have fun. There is also the opportunity to try out your audition speech in front of a real school audition panel. The week culminates in a public performance to celebrate the progress you have made.

### **Intensive Musical Theatre Training Course: July 2020**

This one week course is for students (14 to 19 years) and is designed for the aspiring performer who wants to improve and develop their passion for performance. The course aims to cover a range of musical theatre styles and develop skills that can be applied in performance.

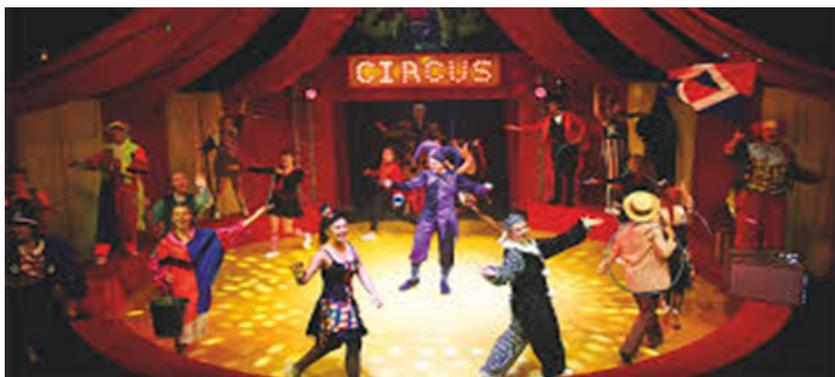
Musical theatre is about the collaboration of all three performance skills – acting, singing and dancing. By working with professional Directors, Musical Directors and Choreographers you will learn more in this one intensive week than you ever thought possible. The week culminates in a public performance to celebrate your progress as a performer and a person.

There are other schools offering longer Drama Summer Schools if you want us to find you alternatives.

### **Do you want to apply to a performing arts school for year 12 (sixth form) entry?**

If you want to apply to Hurtwood House or one of the other schools specialising in performing arts, contact us to discuss your requirements. Please bear in mind that you need to apply at least six months in advance of the date of entry in September.

Contact Les Webb or Mike Fanya or Sioban O'Connor on +44 (0) 1622 813870 or email us the Enquiry Form in Appendix B at the end of this eGuide.



## Part 3 - Getting into Drama School after your sixth form

Leaving school to become a professional actor, singer or theatre director can be one of the most exciting career aspirations to have.

However, we must throw in a few words of caution! The opportunities for a successful lifetime career on stage or screen are dramatically low. Acting can be a very cruel world of endless rounds of auditions competing against hundreds of other applicants, where only a few carve out a financial success.

Going straight from school into seeking acting jobs is indeed a very tough route towards establishing a career as an actor. You need a licence from Equity, the actor's union. Finding a job in the first place is tough if you do not have a track record – or indeed an agent! Some young actors have become successful straight from school, but it is very much a minority.

If you study a list of the most famous British names in theatre, film or TV acting, it is rare to find any who have not first graduated through the school of hard knocks – namely a degree from a Drama School. At first there seems to be a large variety of 20+ such schools, but if you look at the bare bones statistics only about 1% of applicants succeed in winning a place each year at a 3 year typical degree awarding Drama School. Two of the most famous schools, RADA and LAMDA, take fewer than 30 students each year onto their primary degree courses out of thousands of students applying- the chances of getting into Oxford or Cambridge Universities are greater in terms of the number of applicants v places.

### Have we put you off yet?

No? That is good because as well as talent you will need commitment and determination. Not only that, you **MUST STAND OUT!!** You need to be versatile and take any role you can get. If you only want to be Shakespeare heroines your career will be short. Many Drama Schools tend to be reluctant to take very young students as they lack the strength of character to last the pace. The sheer hard graft is too much for many. You must be creative, original, disciplined, courageous and completely focussed. You must not only have unique qualities – you must be able to do what your competitor students cannot do.

### Applying to most degree level Drama Schools requires:

1. **An application**
2. **A CV**
3. **A personal statement**
4. **An interview and**
5. **Passing several rounds of auditions.**

It is similar to a normal UCAS application **EXCEPT** everything rests on the audition. It is over in a flash of light – maybe two minutes per piece – you only get one chance.

You must be in control, overcome fear and nerves, making that panel focus on you and only you.

Your CV should detail a track record either at A Level or equivalent or extra curricular in one or more performing arts disciplines – drama, dance, music or singing. These are all covered in private schools and we can guide you to the best schools.

But let's get back to basics.

First of all, you need to research Drama Schools. We list 20+ better known schools in the Appendix, but this only contains the briefest of details. Drama Schools offer a plethora of courses. There are many short courses or foundation programmes sometimes focussing on key disciplines such as voice projection etc. However, the mainstream courses are 3 year degree programmes typically covering a BA Hons in Acting or Technical Theatre and Stage Management. Some schools have a specialist reputation for and focus on Singing, Dancing or Musical Theatre. You need to research as many schools as possible and decide which course appeal most and where you would prefer to study it. Read their websites, get their prospectuses, look at their videos, go to their open days and speak to their students. Be realistic – if they only have 25 to 45 spaces for thousands of applicants – can you win them over?

Apart from what the school offers in courses, how do they work? Ask them what they are looking for. Go to their productions. Do research. This level of interest will stand you in good stead at your interview.

Get their forms / documentation – start off by creating a good impression. Keep a copy because most schools will ask you questions based on what you wrote.

Drama Schools will require references. Make sure you have some good track records. Not necessarily in professional theatre but some evidence you have made a start in the field. Most importantly someone who knows what is involved in acting can vouch for you and the character that will allow you to survive and thrive.

Most of the bigger full degree organisations require you to use UCAS while Conservatoires now often use CUKAS. Don't rush it because the audition dates can come back at you very quickly leaving you seriously underprepared. With multiple applications spread them out – you don't want all the auditions in the same week! You will generally have UCAS deadlines in January and auditions in February and March, although some stretch till May.

The audition for each Drama School is obviously the critical part of each application. Some schools permit the applicant to select their own speeches to constitute their perfect monologue. Most require you to choose from a list they publish. To do the bare minimum you should choose 3 pieces of which one will have to be modern and two will be classical like Shakespeare, Webster, Marlowe, Jonson etc. It is best to have a few more pieces as backup., up to 7 in total. The school may ask you to carry on or recall you later to hear more pieces. It is best to try to make pieces relevant to your age and personality – would you realistically be cast in this role? Study a school's requirements list carefully and note speeches that their panel DON'T want to see like drunks, spirits or fairies! Your pieces should show contrast (to demonstrate your range).

You can buy audition – speech monologues, but avoid them, because too many others are using them. We can solidly recommend "The Excellent Audition Guide" by Andy Johnson because he gives you practical advice on the reasons for your choice rather than pieces to copy. He has huge experience from being a Drama Director at Hurtwood House, one of our favourite schools.

## Appendix A - Outline of 20+ Drama Schools

### Introduction

There are two types of institutions offering degree courses in Acting or Drama. Firstly there are the mainstream universities many of which offer Acting degree courses. However they take a rather more academic approach and generally require a minimum of 3 A Levels with good scores – perhaps ABB.

Then there are Drama Schools which specialise in Drama and sometimes other Performing Arts but they do not offer the huge array of other academic courses. Drama Schools place more emphasis on performance by auditioning as part of admission. You generally find their minimum A Level requirements are much lower – perhaps two A Levels at CC grades. They usually offer full degree courses, but most of the time they are accredited by a partner university. Drama Schools place more emphasis on creating successful actors and invariably publicise a list of famous alumni.

In the following section we concentrate only on Drama Schools.

Proper drama schools generally offer BA degrees in acting etc for 18+ yr olds and their fees usually start at £9250+ per annum – same as their validating university associate. Some start at £14,000 to £15,000. Some schools have courses for younger ages, say from 11. They may offer A Level drama and try to feed students onto their Higher Education drama school listed here. Ironically you might have a higher chance of getting into a traditional university, but it probably will not be as interesting as a Drama School and if you fail entry at first you could try a Foundation Programme first.

We now list the 20+ most well known Drama Schools (in no particular ranking order)



### **1. Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA)**

RADA offers both undergraduate and postgraduate courses. The undergraduate divide into (a) Acting BA Hons and (b) Technical Theatre and Stage Management FdA or BAHons  
Hardest to get into with around 30 only onto each of these courses. Degrees accredited by Kings College London.

Students 18+ Fees £9000 for UK and £20,450 for International  
Alumni: Peter O'Toole, Anthony Hopkins, Joan Collins  
<http://www.rada.ac.uk>

### **2. London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts (LAMDA) London W14 9DA**

Main undergraduate courses are (a) BA in Professional Acting and (b) FdA in Productional and Technical Arts. Degrees awarded by University of Kent.

Masses of high profile alumni: Donald Sutherland, Brian Cox, Tim Broadbent, Maureen Lipman, Patricia Hodge, Benedict Cumberbatch. Dominic Cooper  
<http://www.lamda.org.uk>

### **3. Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS) Glasgow G4 9RR**

Offers degrees in Drama, Dance and Music. Acting degrees include BAs in 1. Acting, 2 Musical Theatre and 3 Production Arts & Design. Note; 24 spaces on Acting undergraduate course out of 1800 applicants. Also as junior conservatoire for 7 to 18 yr olds.

BA Acting showcase attended by agents, casting directors and potential employers. HESA stats say 99% + of graduates employed within 6 months of graduation.

Alumni includes every Scottish luvvie in history – Robert Carlyle, John Hannah, David Tennant, James McAvoy, Ruby Wax  
<http://rcs.ac.uk>

### **4. Italia Conti Academy of Theatre Arts**

Founded in 1911 by actress Italia Conti  
London SW9 9PH  
Offers BA 1. Acting and 2. Musical Theatre  
Validated by Uni of East London

Fees £9250  
Alumni includes Noel Coward, Clive Dunn, Charles Hawtrey, Pixie Lott  
<https://www.italiaconti.com/ba-acting>

### **5. Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama (RWCMD) National Conservatoire of Wales**

Cardiff CF103ER  
BA Hons Acting

Alumni Sir Anthony Hopkins, Rob Brydon, Rhys Ifans, Keith Allen  
<http://www.rwcmd.ac.uk>

### **6. Oxford School of Drama Woodstock OX20 1ER**

3 year course validated by Trinity College London  
Final term moves to London

Alumni Claire Foy Sophie Cookson  
<http://oxforddrama.ac.uk>

### **7. Bristol Old Vic Theatre School**

Connected with Uni of West of England  
Bristol BS8 2XF  
BA Hons Professional Acting

Alumni Olivia Colman, Daniel Day- Lewis, Jeremy Irons, Amanda Redman  
<http://www.oldvic.ac.uk>

### **8. Royal Central School of Speech and Drama CSSD London NW3 3HY**

Part of Uni of London  
BA Acting + BA Acting (Musical Theatre)  
5000 applicants for every 45 spaces

Alumni Sir Laurence Olivier, Dame Judi Dench, Vanessa Redgrave  
<http://www.cssd.ac.uk>

### **9. Guildhall School of Music and Dance London EC2Y 8DT**

Less than 5000 students of which 61% are undergraduates  
Offer BA Hons in Acting and BA Hons in Production Art

Professional partnerships with Barbican centre and Royal Opera House  
Alumni Ewan McGregor, Joseph Fiennes, Daniel Craig and Jodie Whittaker  
[www.gsmd.ac.uk](http://www.gsmd.ac.uk)

### **10. The Drama Centre**

This is part of Central St Martins (the renowned Art School) which in turn is part of the UAL. However, UAL has announced that the Drama Centre is to close at the end of 2020 as it was losing £0.75 million per year. Thus, we cannot recommend it until there is news that someone has taken it over.

Alumni Colin Firth Emilia Clark, Michael Fassbender  
<https://www.arts.ac.uk/colleges/central-saint-martins/about-csm/our-programmes/performance-programme/drama-centre>

### **11. Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Birmingham B4 7XR**

Part of Birmingham City University  
BA Hons Acting BA Hons Stage Management  
Principal Prof Julian Lloyd Webber  
<https://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire>

### **12. Guildford School of Acting**

Part of School of Arts at University of Surrey  
Offers degrees in acting plus dance and musical theatre as well  
Need CCC at A Level or IB 30 points to get in plus audition  
Offers part time courses as well

Alumni Bill Nighy, Brenda Blethyn, Emma Barton  
<http://gsuk.org>

### **13. Manchester Metropolitan Uni School of Theatre MMU**

Part of Manchester Metro University  
Manchester M1 5NH  
Works closely with BBC North  
Offers BA Hons Drama and BA Hons Acting

Alumni; Amanda Burton, Steve Coogan and Richard Griffiths  
<http://www.theatre.mmu.ac.uk>

#### **14. Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance**

Started as Rose Bruford College of Speech and Drama in 1950 by  
"Bru" Sidcup, Kent DA15 9DF

Offers courses accredited by university of Manchester

Has 15 different BA Hons degrees including 1. Acting, 2. American Theatre Arts and  
3. European Theatre Arts

Fees £9250 per annum but an MA can cost £15,000 +  
Alumni ; Tom Baker , Gary Oldman, Pam St Clement  
<https://www.bruford.ac.uk>

#### **15. East 15 Acting School** Loughton Essex IG10 3RY

Conservatoire, Part of Uni of Essex

BAs in 1. Acting 2.Stage & Production Mgmt 3. Acting & Contemporary Theatre plus others

Alumni Alison Steadman, John Lyons , David Yip  
<http://www.east15.ac.uk>

#### **16. Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts** London SE15 5JT

Degrees validated by Uni of East Anglia

BA Hons in 1. Performance – Acting (34 places) 2. Musical Theatre (38 places)

3 year degree fees £14,700

Alumni Denise Welch, Amanda Holden, Glynis Barber, Ken Stott  
<http://www.mountview.org.uk>

#### **17. Arts Educational School** London W4 1LY

ArtsEd is actually a private school for ages 11 to 18 in which it offers Btecs and A Levels incl  
Drama & Theatre, Dance, Film Studies as well as the conventional subjects such as maths and  
English Lit

At the HE end it offers full BA degrees with 1. Acting and 2. Musical Theatre for private fee range  
of £14,910 but it requires an extra £547 for the qualification to be validated by City, University of  
London

Alumni include stars such as Nigel Havers but better known for its Presidents including Andrew  
Lloyd Webber and Robert Powell  
[www.artsed.co.uk](http://www.artsed.co.uk)

#### **18. Drama Studio London** London W5 5QN

Validated by University of West London

BA Hons in Professional Acting

Alumni ; Forest Whittaker, Emily Watson, Pip Torrens  
<https://www.dramastudiolondon.co.uk/>

#### **19. ALRA – The Academy of Live and Recording Arts**

ALRA South- London SW18 3SX ALRA North – Wigan WN3 4BF

BA Hons in Acting

Validated by St Mary's University London

Alumni ; Sarah Parish, Miranda Hart, Amrita Acharia , Jimmy Akingbo

#### **20. Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts – LIPA Liverpool L1 9HF**

Founded in 1996 by Paul McCartney

Varied range of 10 specialist BA degrees incl music and dance but also offers  
BAs in 1. Acting, 2 Applied Theatre & Community Drama and 3. Theatre  
and Performance Technology.

Degrees validated by John Moores University  
5000+ applicants for 200+ places (4% success rate)

Alumni; Madeleine Appiah, Leanne Best  
<http://www.lipa.ac.uk>

## APPENDIX B

### Enquiry form for Performing Arts Schools Advice

#### Parent details

Title                      First Name                                      Last name  
Email  
Telephone  
Address  
Country

#### Student details

Family name                                      Common name                                      Gender  
Date of birth                                      Nationality  
Current school name  
Current school address

#### Information

Requested start date?  
Which school category do you wish?    11 to 16    16 to 18    18+  
Which performing arts are you interested in:-  
1.     Drama  
2.     Musical theatre  
3.     Music  
4.     Dance

Any specific qualification you seek?  
Preferred school or location?  
Do you have any experience / qualification (such as Lamda or Trinity) ?  
Day or boarding or either?  
Do you have a budget for school fees?  
Any special requirements?

Please return this form to [info@educationadvisers.co.uk](mailto:info@educationadvisers.co.uk) or phone details to 01622 813870

Note: We only advise on fee charging schools and universities.  
The first consultation is free after which we can advise the appropriate fees for placement advice.

# Education Advisers Ltd

Contact us for a no-obligation  
initial consultation

Tel: +44 (0) 1622 813870 / 812852

Email: [info@educationadvisers.co.uk](mailto:info@educationadvisers.co.uk)

Websites: [www.educationadvisers.co.uk](http://www.educationadvisers.co.uk)

[www.best-schools.co.uk](http://www.best-schools.co.uk)

[www.bestsummerschools.co.uk](http://www.bestsummerschools.co.uk)

[www.sixth-form.com](http://www.sixth-form.com)

[www.bestprepschools.co.uk](http://www.bestprepschools.co.uk)

[www.best-sen.schools.co.uk](http://www.best-sen.schools.co.uk)

[www.ib-schools.com](http://www.ib-schools.com)

