



ACTORS: THE REAL EMPLOYMENT LANDSCAPE – UPDATE 2014

On Wednesday 26 November, professionals from drama schools and theatres, agents, casting directors and actors gathered at Birkbeck, University of London to hear and discuss the results of our study into the reality of graduate employment for drama school students. The event was organised by Drama UK and Birkbeck's Centre for Contemporary Theatre.

As a follow-up to the research we did in 2012 investigating the employment landscape for graduates from Drama UK Accredited schools, we tracked the same graduates in their second year of work and also looked at where graduates for 2013 have found employment.

In addition Drama UK are currently looking at actors working in the industry and the ethnicity and affluence of drama school students and a snapshot of this ongoing research was also given at the event.

Ian Kellgren, Chief Executive of Drama UK, said: *"The cultural industries are widely recognised for both their economic and social impact in the UK. In acting, graduates of accredited drama schools and conservatoires still secure the large majority of jobs across theatre, television and radio and it is clear that a proper drama education is at the core of this."*

Casting Director Jane Deitch - who supervised and co-ordinated the research said: *"What's exciting about the results is that they show a generation of graduates who are entering the profession with a pragmatic sense of its demands and many show a willingness to create opportunities within a fluid and challenging economic climate. These graduates have come out of Drama School prepared for the real world."*

Professor Rob Swain, Director of Birkbeck's Centre for Contemporary Theatre and Board Member of Drama UK, said: *"These findings begin to give us a real insight into how drama school graduates develop and build their careers in the first years after graduating. It is encouraging to see that the debate about no pay and low pay within the cultural industries seems to be having an impact, and we have seen more Equity agreements made, which broadens the type of jobs that young actors can consider. By improving our understanding of where acting graduates go on to work we can ensure that drama schools are equipping them with the skills that they will need to build successful careers."*

The UK has a world leading performing arts sector that needs the supply of a talented and appropriately trained workforce. Drama UK works to support this.

A summary of the research findings presented at this event can be found in the following pages.



GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH

2012 Graduates vs 2013 Graduates (One year out of drama school)

Key Findings

The research shows there are some signs that graduates who came out of Drama School in 2013 are benefitting from the economic recovery.

For the 2013 graduates there has been a small shift away from live and towards recorded media – where work is more likely to be paid. In addition fewer of the 2013 graduates have worked in the lower paid fringe.

More 2013 graduates are working in the West End, as theatres have the confidence to run shows with larger casts again.

There has also been an increase in commercial opportunities in 2013 (e.g. idents) and an increase in the number of jobs in feature films. This also reflects the fact that several major Hollywood blockbusters have been filmed in the UK.

In addition, students are increasingly creating opportunities for themselves by responding to gaps in the market. For example, one group of 2013 graduates created a Shakespeare performance for a pub garden, and were then contracted by the brewery to tour the performance around different pubs.

There has also been an increase in film school shorts. The reason for this is likely to be the fact that Equity (the trade union representing actors) now have an Equity Film School Agreement in place which has made this type of work more attractive to students and their agents.

2012 Graduates (one year out of drama school) vs 2012 Graduates(two years out of drama school)

Key Findings

When comparing the jobs that graduates undertook in their first year post-graduation and their second year, the study showed that the number of jobs was slightly lower (1,706 vs 1,326) but the number of paid jobs actually remained the same.

Jobs secured in the second year tended to be higher profile or of a longer duration (e.g. graduates were appearing in multiple episodes of a series rather than a single episode or were in more significant roles within the major theatre companies)

Of those students who did not record any acting jobs in their second year after graduation, many of them were working in other roles within the cultural industries, such as casting directors or agents, and were still using the skills obtained at drama school

12 jobs in major feature films were secured in the second year, compared to one job in the first year.

Overall, in their second year out of drama school, there seems to be an increase in commercial and paid jobs and more significant and regular roles.



UK CAST RESEARCH

This research is investigating the training, age, gender and ethnicity of actors cast in recent productions in the UK covering the key employment areas of: radio, TV, film and theatre.

This research is ongoing.

Key findings to date

Training

Drama UK Accredited School training accounts for between 60% and 83% of all theatre casts researched. Vocational training at a Drama UK or CDET school accounts for more than 60% of all casts in the Musical Theatre casts researched.

Far more cast members in the recorded media sector (BBC, Radio Times TV and Film) have had no training or only recreational training (eg youth theatre). This implies that it is easier to find work without prior training in this sector. In the BBC casts particularly there were often examples of actors who had started at the BBC as children and then made a career as an adult without any formal training.

Only 10%-12% of the casts researched have studied at university (not necessarily a drama related subject).

Training at accredited drama school still provides the industry with a large proportion of actors, particularly in theatre.

Age

TV currently shows the broadest spread of ages in the casting. The majority of jobs across all sectors researched seem to be for the under 35's and 91% of Musical theatre casts are under 35.

Gender

The gender research generally shows a slightly larger number of men cast. However BBC series show the most equal male and female split and bucks the trend by having 2% more women than men cast. This gender bias towards men is most prominent in the Film casts.

Ethnicity

White is by far the largest group featured in all the cast lists so far making up 70-85% of each list. The BBC, National Theatre and Musical Theatre categories show the largest casting of 'black' actors so far.

Cast lists included in this study:

Theatre

Eastern Angles Theatre Company, productions 2010 – 2013
New Vic Theatre, Stoke, all productions 2010 – 2014
Manchester Royal Exchange, all productions 2010 – 2013
Royal Shakespeare Company, productions during 2013
Royal National Theatre, all productions 2011 – 2013
West End Musicals 2013
Musical theatre UK tours 2013
Musical Theatre Cabaret/Musical Concert/Musical 2013

TV, Film Radio

BBC, Holby City, EastEnders, Casualty, Doctors, 2013
26 Radio Dramas broadcast 21st to 28th of Dec 2013
18 Television Dramas broadcast 21st to 28th of Dec 2013
385 Films from the years 2010 – 2012 grossing over £500k



DRAMA SCHOOL APPLICANT RESEARCH

Using enrolment data provided by the Drama UK Accredited Schools we have looked at the ethnicity and affluence of students applying to Drama School. This is part of an ongoing research project.

Key findings to date

Ethnicity

Although the percentage of BAME applicants is similar to the 2011 UK Census figures, there are some areas that are largely under represented, predominantly those from Asian backgrounds.

Asian or Asian British make up 7.5% of the population but only account for 1.52% of Drama School applications.

However those from mixed ethnicity background make up 3.19% of the population and account for 7.52% of Applications.

Looking at the Enrolment data out of the 13 BAME categories, drama schools on average positively discriminated in 9 of those categories. This suggests that in order for there to be more BAME actors, the focus needs to be on how to increase applications from this group.

Affluence

Affluence is based on the postcode of the applicant and measured using ratings featured on the website 'Checkmyarea.com based on a 1-5 scale with 1 being low affluence and 5 being high affluence.

Generally the data showed the same pattern across the last 10 years.

The lowest affluence rating (1), accounts for a very small number of students, generally no more than 3% of the entire cohort in every year. Although the biggest proportion of applicants come from the second highest rating of 4, there is quite an even spread across rating 2, 3 and 5 implying that there is a broader spread of social backgrounds than might be assumed.

For more detailed information about the research please contact Drama UK.

info@dramauk.co.uk

020 3393 6141

Drama UK, Woburn House, 20 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9HB