



ROYAL
BIRMINGHAM
CONSERVATOIRE



MFA ACTING

BRITISH THEATRE TRAINING
IN BIRMINGHAM, UK



FDS FEDERATION OF
DRAMA SCHOOLS

Member of Conservatoires UK

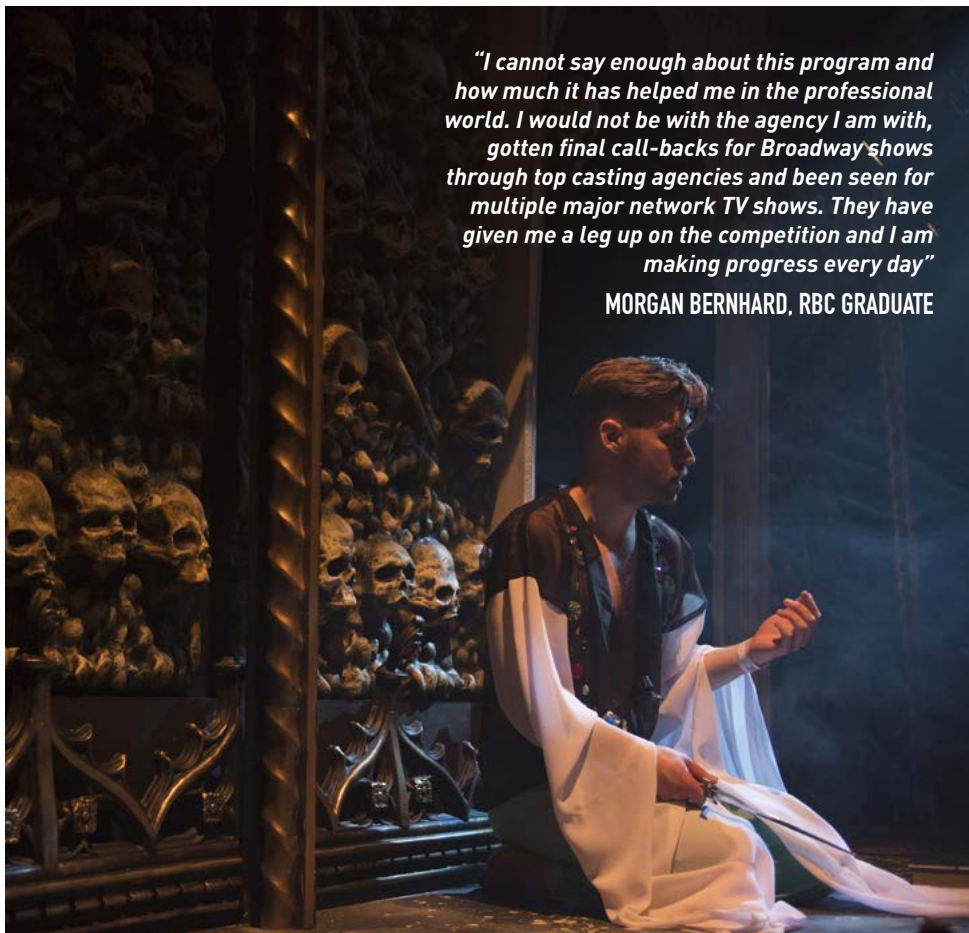
Birmingham City University

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"I cannot say enough about this program and how much it has helped me in the professional world. I would not be with the agency I am with, gotten final call-backs for Broadway shows through top casting agencies and been seen for multiple major network TV shows. They have given me a leg up on the competition and I am making progress every day"

MORGAN BERNHARD, RBC GRADUATE



WELCOME TO ROYAL BIRMINGHAM CONSERVATOIRE

At Royal Birmingham Conservatoire our students have abundant opportunities to collaborate and share ideas – we're proud to offer a vibrant creative environment that provides the highest standard of professional training for all.

As an actor at the Conservatoire you'll benefit from intensive training at a specialist, vocational drama school, and the individual care and attention we offer to inspire each person who joins us. The quality of our training is something we take very seriously across all our courses. You will benefit from our committed, professional staff and exceptional programmes that will ensure you are well equipped for your future.

We have strong links with the performance industry, giving you not only the opportunity to learn from professionals in external organisations, but also a chance to forge new connections.

We offer an especially warm welcome to all our international students, whom we feel contribute significantly to making Royal Birmingham Conservatoire a great place to train.

To see more of what we have to offer, please visit www.bcu.ac.uk/acting.

Professor Stephen Simms (he/him)
Vice Principal
Head of the School of Acting



OUR DRAMA SCHOOL

If you want practical training to a professional standard, training at a conservatoire or drama school could be the right choice for you.

While we are part of a university, meaning that you will leave with an internationally recognised qualification, we provide the style and quality of training expected of a specialist conservatoire - this means high contact hours averaging 30 hours per week. Our standard of training gives you exceptional vocational practice and professional development, together with established links directly to the industry.

All of our courses are demanding and energetic, allowing you to explore your potential and apply your passion in a challenging and supportive environment, paving the way for a successful career.

We are one of 20 member institutions of the Federation of Drama Schools – a professional organisation established in the UK to enable prospective students to identify high quality, intensive, vocational training for performers, directors, designers and technicians.

We have close relationships with many of the theatres in Birmingham – all venues where our students have opportunities to perform. We are also only a short journey away from the famous theatres of Shakespeare’s birthplace in Stratford-upon-Avon, and within easy travelling distance to London’s West End. Our MA/ MFA course normally includes a study day at the London Globe theatre. Birmingham itself, as the UK’s second largest city, is a vibrant cultural hub, and Royal Birmingham Conservatoire has become a key part of this ever-developing cultural landscape.



ALEX TAYLOR (HE/HIM)

Course Director, MFA Acting/Head Postgraduate Studies

Nominated in 2020 for Best Director by the Hong Kong Drama Federation for *The Normal Heart*, Alex Taylor’s international profile includes directing and teaching for the Juilliard School in New York (Master Teacher), the Hong Kong Academy (Head, Voice and Movement), the National Theatre of Korea and the Shanghai Theatre Academy.

He has directed over 40 productions, including *Lady Windermere’s Fan* (National Theatre of Korea), *Once on This Island* (Hong Kong Arts Carnival), *Bent* and *The Normal Heart* (Hong Kong, 2019).

As Course Director for MFA Acting, Alex takes charge of the content and delivery of the course and for the selection and casting of workshops and productions, as well as guiding the individual progress of each student. Past MFA seasons have included: *Sold* (John Godber), *Waste* (Harley Granville Barker); *Othello* (Shakespeare), *Mary Stuart* (Schiller) and *Harper Regan* (Simon Stephens).

LISE OLSON (SHE/HER)

Course Director, MA Acting

Previously to working at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, Lise trained actors for a decade at the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (LIPA). An American ex-pat, in addition to her many professional directing credits in the USA Lise has taught at The North Carolina School of the Arts, Pacific Lutheran University, and was Head of Voice at both Duke University and Purdue University.

The recipient of directing awards in both the US and UK, she was a founding director of Seattle’s first small specialist musical theatre company. Her theatre credits include West End productions and theatres across the UK, including other drama schools. She has also been directing at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire for 11 years.

She is an acknowledged international specialist in the areas of Vocal Violence and Acting through Song. She most recently contributed VOX FEMINA PUBLICA to the book *Amending Speech: Women’s Voices in Parliament, 1918-2018*. She also presented at ‘Women in Parliament’ in celebration of the Representation of People Act in 2018.

FACILITIES

In the 2022/23 academic year, our School of Acting will be moving to new premises, just a short walk away from the University’s City Centre Campus.

The School’s new home will offer teaching, rehearsal and performance spaces, including a Studio Theatre.

WHY BIRMINGHAM?

Based in Birmingham's city centre, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire (part of Birmingham City University) is within easy reach of all the theatres in the city and transport links to Shakespeare's birthplace Stratford-upon-Avon, and the West End theatres of London.

Being in central England means you'll be able to get to any major town or city in the UK with ease, which opens up even more opportunities.

Birmingham is the UK's second largest city and offers you the chance to live in an exciting, diverse city with world-class restaurants, entertainment and shops. The city is home to people from a range of different cultures and ethnic groups. Offering a heady mix of galleries, music, restaurants and bars, Birmingham has the UK's largest student population outside of London, and under 25's account for 40% of the population.



THE SIR LENNY HENRY CENTRE FOR MEDIA DIVERSITY



The Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity is a newly established research centre, bringing together the expertise of established media professionals and academics, working to achieve accurate representation of all sections of society across contemporary UK media.

The Centre believes that accurate representation of all sections of society in all layers of the UK media is vital for the health of the industry. We also believe it's crucial in ensuring a functioning democracy

and enabling critical human rights issues, such as freedom of expression, to be truly implemented.

The Centre aims to critically analyse policies in the media industry with a view to increasing diversity and inclusion, improving policy decisions and spreading best practice.

www.bcu.ac.uk/media/research/sir-lenny-henry-centre-for-media-diversity

GRADUATE COURSES

MFA ACTING

This two-year intensive postgraduate course is designed to develop you as an actor, developing your talents imaginatively, intellectually, physically and creatively in order for you to enter the industry in your home country. As you join the course you and your colleagues form a company and together you undertake a series of classes, workshops and productions designed to deepen and refine your abilities as an actor and your understanding of the processes of acting.

The course offers British, American and international actors a unique perspective that emphasises the European and British traditions of acting. In the current post-colonial world, perspectives as to how we identify 'Britishness' and the 'British tradition' are in the process of being re-examined, and the course also addresses these issues.

Running alongside classes in Voice, Movement, and Acting is a series of Acting Exercises and Workshops through which to explore and to integrate your Acting skills. Each exercise or workshop focuses

on a particular aspect of acting: Ensemble, Psychological Realism (Chekhov/Ibsen), Shakespeare, Acting for Camera and, in the second year, you have the opportunity to create your own, one-person performance (Major Project) as well as appearing in three full productions, each designed to challenge and develop both you, as an individual, and the group, as an ensemble.

The course features a balance of classical and contemporary texts. In the first year of the course, International and British students will collaborate together in classes, acting exercises and workshops. In the final term of the year, MFA students form their own company for an in-depth experience, normally of a classical play and also undertake professional studies, which includes audition technique and mock auditions. In the second year, the MFA company are showcased in a series of fully mounted productions. For an additional cost, graduating students from the MFA course can normally take part in the New York Showcase mounted by the Federation of Drama Schools.



MA ACTING

This one-year intensive postgraduate course is designed for British students or for those with the right to live and work in the UK, and is entirely focused upon acting and upon developing your talents imaginatively, intellectually, physically and creatively in order for you to enter the industry in the UK.

Running alongside classes in Voice, Movement, and Acting is a series of Acting Exercises and Workshops through which to explore and to integrate your Acting skills. Each exercise or workshop focuses on a particular aspect of acting: Ensemble, Psychological Realism (Chekhov/Ibsen), Shakespeare, and Acting for Camera. In the first year of the course, MA and MFA students collaborate together in classes, acting exercises and workshops. In the final term of the year, the MA group forms their own ensemble and take part in a full production and a Digital Showcase for members of the UK industry. Your Major Project, completed in the fourth term, provides you with the opportunity to create your own, one-person performance.

MA/MFA PROFESSIONAL VOICE PRACTICE

The MA and MFA Professional Voice Practice courses have been developed to educate those who wish to work as professional voice coaches or teachers within the industry or within Higher Education. The MFA course has been developed particularly with American students in mind. The emphasis within the course is on your own developing voice practice as well as on developing your teaching skills. MA and MFA Professional Voice Practice students work together in the first year covering modules in Voice Theory (Anatomy, Phonetics and Accents), Practical Voice, Voice and Text, Singing, Pedagogy and Placement and a Major Project. The second year of the MFA offers you an opportunity to go deeper into your own developing practice and to specialise in working either with the speaking or the sung voice, and there are further placement opportunities providing you with significant opportunities to develop your teaching or coaching abilities.

"I have a massive advantage over other actors because of my British training. The in-depth focus on script work, and having an essential understanding of the text as a prerequisite to the highest potential of performance have allowed me the advantage of being more prepared than most of my counterparts. I'm a much better actor because of this specific training."

PAUL CARTWRIGHT, RBC GRADUATE

One Voice Awards USA 2021: Best Male Voice Over Artist

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Where will I live?

All international students have priority for a place in self-catering single study bedrooms in University accommodation for at least the first year of their course, subject to application before the start of the academic year. Rooms are reasonably priced, please see our website for the latest information: www.bcu.ac.uk/student-info/accommodation.

However, some of our students choose to live in private housing so that they can live with other people on their course, or at least other students from the Conservatoire. We use the Students' Union's Student Homes scheme to ensure landlords and lettings agents are vetted.

If you accept a place with us, we will contact you to arrange the housing. Many students also arrive at their private accommodation a week or two before the course starts to allow them to settle in, organise UK bank accounts and mobile phones etc. More information: homes.bcu.ac.uk.

How much should I allow for maintenance and living costs?

In addition to your tuition fees, we estimate that you will require approximately £9200 (\$12,400) per year to cover the cost of accommodation, utility bills (gas, water, electricity etc), foods, books, stationery, travel and other basic expenses. If you are applying for the Student Route visa, this is the amount you will need to prove you have available. You must ensure that you will have sufficient funds available to pay the tuition fees and your living costs, as non-European students are not eligible for welfare benefits from the UK Government. For more information on living costs, visit www.bcu.ac.uk/living-costs.

Is there any support available while I study?

Yes there is! All international students can take part in an International Welcome, during which

you can meet and get to know other international students at the University. You can also take advantage of the University's Student Services department, which can offer help and advice on a range of issues from finance to health and well-being. Find out more about the support we offer at www.bcu.ac.uk/student-info/student-services.

When will I receive the result of my audition?

The audition panel will make a decision on your audition when they have completed all the U/RTA auditions and returned to the UK.

The admissions department will use the information on your résumé to create an applicant record for you. Once a decision has been made, your record will be updated and the decision communicated to you via an applicant portal. You will be emailed with log-in details for the applicant portal within three weeks of the end of the U/RTA auditions.

There are three possible outcomes from the auditions: an 'unconditional offer', a 'conditional offer' or 'unsuccessful'.

What is an unconditional offer?

You will receive an unconditional offer if you have satisfied the academic entry criteria for the programme. For example, you have already completed your undergraduate/Bachelor degree.

What is a conditional offer?

A conditional offer means that you will receive a place on the programme subject to you meeting certain conditions. These are usually academic, for example passing your undergraduate/Bachelor degree if you are applying for a Master's course.

What are the non-academic conditions of an offer?

There are a number of conditions that you must meet in order to come to the UK to study.

1. We should receive an academic reference for you to support your application.
2. You will also be required to pay a tuition fee deposit OR apply for and have evidence that you've been awarded a tuition fee loan (FAFSA – see below).
3. You should also have an up-to-date passport and be able to apply for a Tier 4 Student Visa.

We will not be able to issue you with a CAS (Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies) letter to enable you to apply for a visa until you have met all academic and non-academic conditions of your offer.

What if English isn't my first language?

You will be asked to take an Academic IELTS test (or equivalent) as part of the academic conditions of your offer. For more information, please visit www.bcu.ac.uk/english-tests.

When does the programme begin and end?

Classes will start in September and will usually end early in July. MA final projects are normally completed over the summer, and presented in September. The MFA programme is two years in duration.

Can I get financial aid?

Yes you can. Birmingham City University is included in the FAFSA list of schools and colleges. You can make a financial aid application as you would for a US school or college. For information see www.studentaid.gov.

Do you offer scholarships?

Unfortunately, there are no scholarships available.

What is a visa and do I need one?

You will need a visa to travel to the UK as a student. If successful with your visa application, you will be issued with a vignette in your passport which is valid for 30 days from your intended travel date on your visa application. This will apply if you are coming to study for a period of six months or more.

You will then need to collect your BRP (Biometric Residence Permit) card from the University when you arrive. More information can be found on the government website here www.gov.uk/government/publications/biometric-residence-permits-overseas-applicant-and-sponsor-information. The visa gives you permission to enter the UK.


Advice for international students regarding visas can be found at www.fafsa.ed.gov and www.gov.uk/apply-uk-visa.

Previous students have commented that going to New York in person rather than mailing documents was easier for their visa. They also said online services, such as WorldBridge (www.visainfoservices.com), were equally as helpful to expedite the process if going to New York wasn't possible, so these options may be worth investigating.

How do I qualify to travel to the UK as a student?

Birmingham City University is a registered UK educational establishment. In order to qualify to travel to the UK as a student you must be able to show that you have been accepted on a course of study. Information and assistance on how you go about showing this are available at www.bcu.ac.uk/international.





“What the MFA does for an American student is unique: it allows an in-depth understanding of British acting and theatre history and technique which one cannot get elsewhere. It allows a student to live abroad and fully immerse themselves in the world they are learning about.”

AMELIA SCIANDRA, RBC GRADUATE

CONTACT US

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