

## About Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, more about the role of Head of Scenic Art and the application process

### Bristol Old Vic Theatre School's vision

Bristol Old Vic Theatre School will continue to be an exemplar in modern international drama training, preparing exceptional young professionals to forge their careers in tomorrow's creative industries.

#### Our values:

**Belong:** we are sincere, we accept uniqueness and we adapt to include everyone who is part of our diverse and welcoming cultural community.

**Challenge with a safety net:** we are always learning in a practical and dynamic way; creating and collaborating within a forward-looking, safe and caring environment.

**Identify great talent:** we look to all backgrounds and communities to find the creative potential who will join us in setting the tone for excellence in our industry.

**Inner confidence:** we are proud of our expertise and passionate about passing it on to the next generation of industry professionals, knowing they will make a difference.

**Work productively & properly:** we are efficient, respectful and collaborative and understand that everyone needs down-time.

#### Our strategic priorities:

1. **Staff development:** by September 2021: To encourage and resource our staff to be dynamic in their roles, enabling professional development and ensuring that they are supported, happy and healthy in their work.
2. **Raising profile:** by April 2022: To be an integral part of Bristol's cultural and creative heritage, celebrating and reflecting the diversity of our city.
3. **Relationship building:** by September 2022: To enhance our national and international partnerships in order to create opportunities for our students, share

our expertise, learn from our global peers and broaden our multi-cultural perspectives.

4. **Financial Health:** by September 2023: To sustain, grow and embed a robust and responsible business model.
5. **Professional Working Environment:** by September 2025: To occupy spaces that we can learn, thrive and create in, and that help us to deliver and expand our exceptional conservatoire training.

## **Background to the School**

The Theatre School will celebrate its 75<sup>th</sup> year anniversary this year. The School trains students in acting, design, costume, technical skills, writing and directing. It operates across three sites in Bristol: the main Downside Road site in Clifton, the centre for Film, TV and Audio production at Christchurch Studios, and the scenic workshops in south Bristol.

Student productions take place across the city: along with those at Bristol Old Vic Theatre (our main partner), they are also performed in local venues, including the Tobacco Factory theatres, Circomedia in St Pauls, the Redgrave Theatre in Clifton, and the Wardrobe Theatre in Old Market.

Until the present academic year, the School presented over 200 public performances each year in Bristol and on tour; including to primary schools in Bristol, playing to some 16,000 young people, and the West Country tour performed in 22 venues within a two hour drive of Bristol.

The School also has a thriving Sunday Youth Theatre group and runs a range of summer short courses in acting; it is a BFI academy, regularly running short courses in Film Production training for 16-18 age students.

Some of the above has been less possible during the 2020-21 academic year due to the effect of Covid-19 but the School recognises how important these activities are and will plan accordingly as further Government guidance is issued. For further information about the School, please visit **[oldvic.ac.uk](http://oldvic.ac.uk)**.

## **Governance at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School**

In addition to the Council of Trustees there are sub-committees of the Trustees – the Audit Committee and the Finance Committee. Terms of reference can be found at **[oldvic.ac.uk/about-us/staff-governors/](http://oldvic.ac.uk/about-us/staff-governors/)**.

Through its membership of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama (**[cdd.ac.uk](http://cdd.ac.uk)**), there is a direct reporting line to the CDD Board of Governors in terms of academic standards, internal audit and financial year-end reporting. CDD is the Higher Education Provider registered with

the Office for Students that enables BOVTS and the other five CDD member schools to operate within higher education. Information about the CDD strategy can be found at: [cdd.ac.uk/about-us/how-we-work/strategic-plan-2019-24](http://cdd.ac.uk/about-us/how-we-work/strategic-plan-2019-24).

The School's current higher education courses are validated by the University of the West of England (UWE). The validation relationship with UWE is governed by an academic agreement renewed every five years and subject to regular reporting on academic standards. The School is an associate school of UWE, and sits within the [Arts, Creative Industries and Education faculty](#).

In July 2020 the Theatre School's Board resolved that the Theatre School would leave CDD with effect from July 2022. The Board and Principal & CEO have identified that UWE are their preferred Higher Education Provider and are in the early stages of discussion over the shape and model for our enhanced future collaboration. The shared vision:

Bristol Old Vic Theatre School (BOVTS) and UWE, Bristol will form an enhanced strategic partnership with a shared vision to deliver sector-leading performance skills and training.

### **More information about this role**

The School is a busy and vibrant place with experienced and committed tutors and talented students. Students are told that their first day at the Theatre School is the first day of their professional career, and their training reflects this.

With the appointment of the new Principal & CEO, Fiona Francombe, in August 2020, this is a time of positioning and planning the Theatre School for its future. There are challenges and opportunities in equal measure and every aspect of the School will need to adapt and be open to positive change.

Fiona will be leading on this work, working closely with Trustees to take the School in the direction it needs to go, realising the strategic objectives and negotiating the new partnership with UWE, whilst also running the School on a day-to-day basis.

The Artistic Director, Jenny Stephens, will continue to develop the School's creative work – appointing visiting directors and designers, choosing the productions and supporting the School's strategy.

The Finance Director, Margaret Playle, will maintain oversight of the School's financial health, focusing her attention on a future with reduced Institution-Specific Targeted Allocation (ISTA) funding, and supporting Trustees from her Company Secretary point of view.

Cathy Stewart, the School's current Head of Scenic Art, has run the course for eleven years and has successfully taught exemplary students who have moved directly to work across all areas of the performing arts and screen industries. Cathy is stepping away from teaching to focus on her career and to have some downtime.

The Course is fully subscribed with four students for the 21-22 academic year, and is scheduled for a review to ensure it continues to be as relevant to the changing industry as

possible. In addition to teaching, the role will require oversight of the Course review, and advising the School over the Course's future direction. A one year contract is initially offered based on the current course content, and pending the review.

### **Work arrangements**

The Theatre School is committed to helping its employees achieve a balance between their working life and other priorities such as parental and caring responsibilities, leisure activities, charity work and other interests. We will, as far as possible, support employees in suitable roles to work more flexibly – whether in the hours they work or where they work. In return we ask that careful consideration of the impact of working flexibly is given, and that a mutual agreement is reached that works well for both the Theatre School and the employee.

Due to the 'learning through doing' delivery of the School's courses, the Head of Scenic Art is expected to deliver the majority of the course in person at our Sheene Road site in Bedminster, and in production venues as appropriate.

### **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion**

The School recognises that its Trustees and staff cohort is not representative of Bristol, and the 91 languages spoken in the city. On the student body, the acting courses have a 30% representation, however, technical and creative courses have as low as 5% representation.

Over the last few years the School has changed a lot of its practices, which include (but aren't limited to) introducing more visiting external tutors and lecturers from diverse backgrounds, discovering more modern and representative writers for the students to study, and providing extensive training to staff on helping under-represented groups express themselves whilst training in a creative environment.

The new Principal is most concerned that all students, but particularly those who are unrepresented in the School, feel that they belong in a City that is facing its own challenges through BLM and its history. They must also know that the School accepts that it has its own journey to take, and that we want and need them to join us on that journey.

An Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Action Group has been established, made up of staff and members of the Student Representation Group to work towards bringing about genuine, effective and long-standing change.

### **The application process**

We hope you find this pack provides all the information you need in order to consider your application for this post. If, however, you have any further questions please e-mail [fiona.francombe@oldvic.ac.uk](mailto:fiona.francombe@oldvic.ac.uk)

Applications must be received by **Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021 at 12 noon**. If you decide to apply for this post, please download a copy of the Application Form and Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form from [oldvic.ac.uk/jobs](http://oldvic.ac.uk/jobs).

Application forms, with a covering letter of no more than one side of A4 describing what attracts you to this role, your experience and how it relates to the opportunities and challenges presented by this post and the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form should be returned by email to [jobs@oldvic.ac.uk](mailto:jobs@oldvic.ac.uk) or by post to:

Recruitment Office  
Bristol                      Old                      Vic                      Theatre                      School  
1-3    Downside    Road,  
Clifton,  
Bristol  
BS8 2XF

### **Shortlisting**

To ensure the fairness of the selection process, shortlisting will be based upon the information which you provide in your application and assumptions will not be made about your experience or skills. We will look for demonstrable evidence that you meet the criteria set out in the job description.

Please also refer to the Equal Opportunities section of the job description, which explains the Theatre School's recognition of the positive value of diversity, promoting equality and challenging unfair discrimination.

All applicants will be notified of the outcome of the shortlisting process.

### **The interview process**

Interviews will take place over Zoom / at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, 1-3 Downside Road, Clifton, Bristol BS8 2XF during the week beginning **Monday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2021.**

A second interview may be carried out if required. Details of this will be advised if appropriate.

Time scales and venues may be changed.

The appointment will be subject to satisfactory pre-employment checks.