

Bristol Old Vic
Theatre School

CANDIDATE INFORMATION PACK

DIRECTOR OF DRAMA



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WELCOME FROM OUR PRINCIPAL & CEO

Dear Applicant,

I am delighted to present this opportunity to you.

I joined the Theatre School as the new Principal & CEO in August 2020, at a time of positioning and planning the Theatre School for its future whilst also celebrating its 75th anniversary last year. Bristol Old Vic Theatre School (herein BOVTS) is a busy, vibrant, creative 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. The accolade of three Best Actor/Actress Oscar winners amongst the graduates of a single drama school is, to our knowledge, unmatched at any higher education institution globally.

The role of Director of Drama is pivotal both in terms of its position within the Executive Leadership Team, and with its responsibility to ensure the world-class training, particularly across the Acting courses, is protected and adapted to the modern theatrical and screen industries. The landscape ahead for drama schools is challenging and complex, with continued threatened tuition fee cuts and a reduction in grant funding from the Office for Students causing valued institutions to reconsider all areas of their training provision. This, though, leads to opportunity and to fresh approaches; a chance to pause, to reflect and then to respond positively and bravely. The Theatre School needs a Director of Drama who is outward-looking, aspirational and knows 'the business', who can bring those qualities into the School to ensure our students' training is current and vital, and which will enable them to walk into any aspect of the industry with the tools to enable them to build their careers.

The successful candidate will have a genuine interest in Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, its students and its staff. You will provide leadership and guidance around our productions and films, selecting pieces that are nuanced to our students' training needs and you will understand the inter-connectedness of working within a small and complex environment. You will be a highly effective communicator and you will engage and work with our staff, students and visiting professionals. You will introduce new ideas and freelance practitioners, always with an eye to maintaining the Theatre School's world-leading training and reputation. You will carry an empathy towards the variety of personalities and dynamics in the Theatre School, whilst also being able to maintain the course of direction. Lastly, you will be part of a formidable and charismatic team, alongside the executive leadership and our Trustees.

I am more than proud to be the current executive leader of this unique organisation with such a rich heritage and incredible national and international reputation, and I hope you will consider applying for this essential and prestigious role. I look forward to receiving your application.

With best wishes,



Fiona Francombe
PRINCIPAL & CEO

ABOUT US

A world-renowned theatre school, BOVTS is one of the country's most coveted drama schools developing the very best talent through its high calibre acting, technical, production and management training. BOVTS is an incredibly popular and important theatre school for anyone with an interest in the performing arts genres. BOVTS has both a national and international reputation and is famed for its well-established, professional and diverse range of available courses. BOVTS alumni are hugely prestigious and include Olivia Colman CBE, Sir Daniel Day-Lewis, Sir Patrick Stewart and Naomie Harris OBE as well as many others of international artistic and theatrical renown. For further information, please see oldvic.ac.uk/alumni.

The organisation is led by Principal and CEO Fiona Francombe, and has a strong board of trustees bringing together an invaluable blend of skills from business, professional services, property, health and the creative arts sectors. BOVTS is a theatre school that many students strive to attend and its impressive and successful alumni contribute to that pull factor. Competition is fierce, with only 1.8% of the total number of applicants to the Acting courses being successful in securing a place for the 21-22 intake.

BACKGROUND

The Theatre School trains students in acting, design, costume, technical skills, voice, writing and directing. It operates across three sites in Bristol: the main Downside Rd site in Clifton, the centre for Film, TV and Audio production at Christchurch Studios, and the scenic workshops in south Bristol. The Theatre School celebrated its 75th year anniversary in 2021.

Student productions take place across the city and the wider region: along with those at Bristol Old Vic (a significant 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. Whilst this gives our students invaluable experience of working in a cross-section of venues, it also proves challenging in terms of programming and budget.

The School has recently reviewed and modernised its prestigious BA Hons Acting course, which will lead to further reviews of other courses to ensure it is preparing its graduates for the modern creative industries they will forge their careers in. The School must acknowledge its strengths in the training it provides, whilst also looking to the working environment beyond it to ensure our graduates will be able to continue to influence change and be the creative industries' leaders of the future. This will include the inclusion of more screen-related work across the courses.

The School's vocational degree programmes prepare students for direct employment in roles across the arts and entertainment industries. Acting graduates from the class of 2022 have already secured roles in Netflix's *Heartstopper*, BBC's *Doctors* and Radio 4's long running soap opera, *The Archers*. Whilst several other 2022 graduates have been cast in theatre productions both in the West End and Sheffield Crucible.

Work is also on-going regarding a review of estates assets, with a property strategy in the early stages of development.

BOVTS also has a thriving theatre and acting skills programme for children and young people aged 4-18 years, which run during school holidays and on term-time weekends. There is a multitude of new short courses for adults and professionals in development, set to launch in autumn 2022. Outreach and widening participation are key goals in BOVTS future development strategy.

The widespread success of British actors means that UK conservatoire training is increasingly renowned within overseas markets. Perhaps owing to the success of BOVTS alumni at the Oscars, Tony and Emmy Awards, the School has seen steady growth in application to its MFA in Professional Acting over the past decade, a postgraduate taught masters specifically designed for international students. The 21-22 cohort of 14 hail from the United States, Australia, France, Portugal, Italy and Hong Kong. When combined with Bristol's renown as a world-class student city, the School's offer is clearly compelling to prospective students from all disciplines and BOVTS has successfully recruited international students to the majority of its other postgraduate programmes this year, including those introduced in the last three years, namely MA Drama Writing and MA Screen Acting.

The School's degree programmes are approved for US Federal Loan funding and it is hoped that the success of both established BOVTS-trained artists along with successful career launch of these newer graduates will provide the opportunity to further raise the School's international profile in the coming years.

OUR 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.

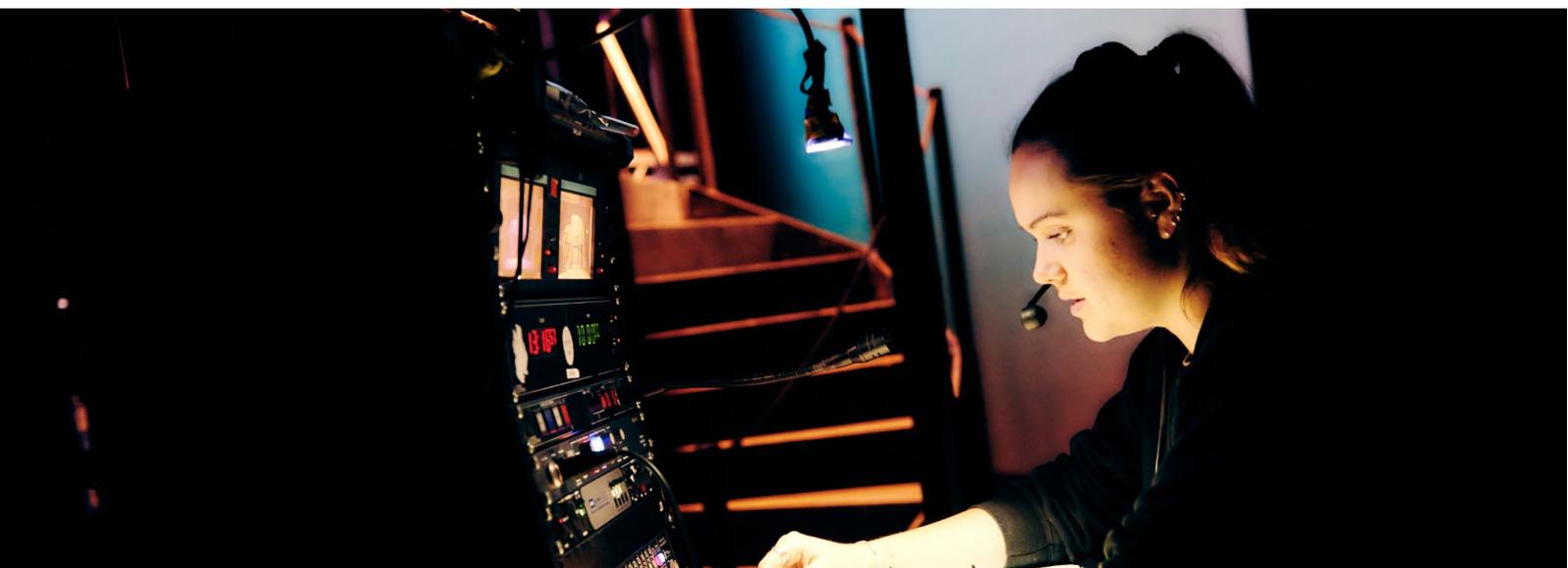
Identify great talent: we look to all backgrounds and communities to find the creative potential who will join us in setting the tone for excellence in our industry.

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:** on-going: To encourage and resource our staff to be dynamic in their roles, enabling professional development and providing support from them to be happy, healthy and efficient in their work.
2. **Delivering excellence:** by September 2022: delivering courses that reflect our vision and progressing with changes that ensure our students' training adapts to the fluidity of the creative industries' landscape.
3. **Raising profile & building relationships:** by September 2022: To have started our partnership with UWE Bristol and continuing to be an integral part of Bristol's cultural and creative heritage, celebrating and reflecting the diversity of our city. We will enhance our local, 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. **Where we are:** by September 2026: To occupy spaces that we can learn, thrive, innovate and create in, and that help us to deliver our exceptional conservatoire training.

OUR GOVERNANCE and BOVTS / UWE BRISTOL

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 [here](#).

The School's current higher education courses have been validated by the University of the West of England (UWE Bristol) for several years. This 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](#).

A revised Agreement with UWE Bristol took effect from 1st August 2022, creating an enhanced strategic partnership that enables the Theatre School to retain its autonomy and charitable status. The School's relationship with all levels of UWE's key personnel is positive, robust and mutually trusting, with very much a will to make the partnership forge a strong and collaborative future to the benefit of both institutions' staff and students, as well as the City of Bristol.

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.

WORKING AT BOVTS

All our staff are dedicated, hard-working and supportive of each other at all times. They are accepting and welcoming to everyone and are innate problem solvers and enablers. Their commitment has given the students a very high level of training during lockdown and a level of support and care that enabled those students to remain happy, healthy and engaged.

Our students are very talented, dedicated, and challenging of the School and of themselves. Our student reps make sure student voices are heard. Task and finish groups ensure progress is made in key areas. Regular meetings and open and robust discussion have led to changes and to insight into all aspects of School life from mutual perspectives. This provides opportunities for our students to experience how to

challenge in a professional way, to listen and to continue the journey towards becoming valued members of the wider industry.

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.

Being present in the School's buildings during the day for most of the working week will be necessary to enable the employee to feel part of the School and to help with communication and the flow of information.

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 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.



BRISTOL'S CREATIVE HUB

Extract from Bristol City Council's One City Plan 2020:

'Bristol (pop. 454,200) is the United Kingdom's 10th largest city and an established centre for creative innovation. Its globally recognised cultural ecology takes many forms: community celebrations, oral traditions, major international arts venues, the music scene and the work of thousands of independent artists. Bristol knows that its creative and cultural fabric, and the stories it shapes, are already defining the city and the One City Plan seeks to embed them as key components in the long-term future; as a way of working collectively, imagining and literally creating the city of the future. Creativity inspires communities and is vital to the success of all cities in the 21st century.'

The Theatre School is proud to be based in this creative city and will be looking to play a strong part in telling Bristol's stories to the world, and, through its outreach work, to providing young citizens with local access to world-class inspirational training.

BOVTS is a member of the Federation of Drama Schools (FDS), whose partners have a demonstrable track record of producing graduates with long term careers, providing professional training with recognisable identity and value in a complex market and have an emphasis on professionally focused opportunities and skill sets. The partner schools have decided to work together in respect of certain projects and common goals; this does not preclude working with other institutions in pursuit of similar goals.



THE ROLE

After eleven years as Artistic Director at the Theatre School, Jenny Stephens, has chosen to return to her freelance career in writing and directing. Jenny has driven the School's work in diversifying its student body, and selecting and overseeing so many productions during her tenure at the School.

We now need to identify a Director of Drama who will continue to develop the School's creative work – appointing visiting directors and designers, choosing the productions and supporting the School's on-going strategy.

The Director of Drama will be fundamental in helping BOVTS through a time of change and progression. You will have a strong passion for the creative arts industry and show empathy for the higher education teaching sector and its needs. You will be highly organised, adaptable, flexible, patient, self-motivated and happy to step into a busy, chaotic and friendly workplace.

Job Title:	Director of Drama
Reports to:	Principal & CEO.
Line Management For:	Director of Acting Courses, Head of Production, Head of Film Production, Head of Voice, Head of Directing, Head of Drama Writing (according to current job titles and structure)
Department:	Executive Leadership Team
Location:	The majority of the Theatre Schools' activities are based at the School's Downside Road site, with two other sites also currently used by the School in Clifton Village and in Bedminster. Input at other relevant locations as required to undertake the role.
Hours:	This is a full-time post, predicated on 40 hours week. Occasional evening & weekend work will be required.
Salary:	£54,400 per annum paid by BACS monthly in arrears
Pension:	7.5% employee contribution and 10% employer contribution to workplace pension administered by the People's Pension

Holidays:	25 days per academic year pro rata plus bank holidays in non-term time, plus reasonably organised Time Off in Lieu (TOIL).
Notice Period:	Three months
Probationary Period:	Six months

DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

OVERALL RESPONSIBILITIES

The Director of Drama will have overall responsibility for the creative direction of the Theatre School and any subsidiary companies to ensure it can operate efficiently and effectively, both across theatrical production and recorded media. They will ensure the excellent reputation of the Theatre School is maintained and strengthened, through both the selection of the most talented and suitable applicants to the Acting courses at undergraduate and post-graduate levels, and through the standard of training delivered by academic staff and visiting professionals.

The role will, as part of the Executive Leadership Team, develop and deliver the vision, values and strategies for the School, modelling a whole School approach and retaining the ethos of the School.

They will work effectively as part of the Executive Leadership Team and Council of Management (Board of Trustees) to ensure the artistic and operational sustainability of



the School; effective strategic and operational planning; and the Theatre School's pursuit of excellence.

They will have empathy for Bristol, its creativity and aspiration, and develop and maintain key partnerships to enable collaboration and opportunity that will, in turn, benefit the city and our students.

SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES

- To ensure the selection of the most talented and suitable applicants for acting courses.
- To occasionally direct a range of theatre and/or recorded media according to workload and other priorities.
- To select and have overall approval of theatre, TV/film, and radio scripts and productions for training students, taking student learning outcomes across all relevant courses into account in their selection.
- To take overall responsibility for the realisation of theatrical and media productions, in conjunction with the relevant heads of departments.
- To identify and manage freelance staff working on theatrical and media productions, including directors and designers, and to maintain oversight of them throughout their contract with the School.
- To work with the Director of Studies to input into course content and effect any proposed changes that will enhance our students' learning.
- To maintain links with theatrical and media communities in order to ensure up-to-date knowledge of trends and influences, and to adjust training accordingly in the best interests of our students.
- To develop a range of activities to best prepare our students for their careers in practical and financial terms.
- To oversee the promotion of graduating acting students to employers and agent representation.

- To develop and maintain partnerships to enhance our training and our students' experience, knowledge, and employability.
- To undertake second marking and academic reporting as required.
- To perform other responsibilities commensurate with the role as required.

REPORTING

- Present and report on the creative work of the School at Council of Management and at executive leadership meetings
- Report on artistic policy and other relevant information to the validating body, UWE Bristol, as required
- Ensure adherence to all relevant statutory and best practice policies and procedures across the School

MEETINGS ATTENDANCE

- Council of Management meetings and committee meetings as required
- Executive Leadership Team meetings
- Senior Management Team meetings
- Full and other staff meetings
- Academic Board (and any relevant sub-committees)
- Course Leader meetings

BUDGETARY CONTROL

- Adhere to agreed budgets for training activities for which the post holder is responsible.
- Hold responsibility for realising projected income from production-related activities, and exceeding these wherever possible.

EXTERNAL LIASON

- With Bristol Old Vic Theatre, other local and national arts organisations and production companies.
- With departments within UWE Bristol as required.
- With other relevant organisations to promote and widen understanding and knowledge of the course area.
- Representing the school at external meetings as agreed with the Principal.
- With potential employers for students.
- With alumni and other professionals in the arts and entertainment industry.



PERSON SPECIFICATION

IMPORTANT TO US

- Substantial and credible professional experience in a similar role
- Extensive current experience of the arts and entertainment industries
- Excellent communicator at all levels, including at Board level
- Ability to work at strategic and operational level
- Ability to interface effectively with operational and academic functions
- Management experience of creative and production teams
- Ability to build positive relationships with staff and students
- Willingness to build relationships with partner organisations
- Experience of income generation aspects of organisations, and of achieving required income from activities
- Ability to be flexible and adaptable in your approach
- To be strong team player in a close-knit, supportive environment
- To work to, and model, the Theatre School's vision and values at all times

WE'RE ALSO INTERESTED IN

- Organisational skills, particularly regarding scheduling
- Experience of working in Higher Education
- Experience of the charity sector



THE RECRUITMENT 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 our Executive Assistant initially: stephanie.lawrence@oldvic.ac.uk

Applications must be received by **Tuesday 4th October 2022** 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 www.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 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

The interview will take place at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, 1-3 Downside Road, Clifton, Bristol BS8 2XF in the week beginning **Monday 17th October 2022**.

It is anticipated that second stage interviews will take place at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, 1-3 Downside Road, Clifton, Bristol BS8 2XF in the week beginning **Monday 24th October 2022**.

Both these timescales and formats are subject to change. The appointment will be subject to satisfactory pre-employment checks.

Bristol Old Vic Theatre School is committed to creating and sustaining a fully inclusive and diverse culture.

BOVTS APPROACH

We aim at all times to recruit the person who is most suited to the job. Recruitment will be on the basis of the applicant's abilities and individual merits, measured against the job criteria and competencies.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

The Theatre School recognises the positive value of diversity, promoting equality and challenging unfair discrimination. We welcome applications from those currently underrepresented in our own workforce and across the wider arts and training sectors: these include, but are not limited to, people who are culturally and ethnically diverse and experience racism in our society, those with LGBTQ+ identities, neurodivergent and/or D/deaf and disabled, those with caring responsibilities and those who have experienced socio and economic barriers.

We will not discriminate or tolerate discriminatory behaviour on the grounds of age, disability, educational background, gender, employment status, ethnic origin, marital / partnership or family status, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, social class, transgender, working pattern or any other irrelevant factor in any aspect of employment.

We are committed to employing disabled people, and reasonable adjustments will be made to the recruitment procedure to ensure that no-one is disadvantaged because of their disability. If a disabled person is appointed, reasonable adjustments will be made to the workplace as far as possible, including premises & equipment, duties, practices or policies.



SELECTION & ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

The School uses a range of methods at the interview stage to assess candidates against objective job criteria contained in the job description and employee competencies applicable to the role. The purpose is to accurately predict a candidate's ability to perform the job in question. All interviews will be undertaken by a panel of two or more people, and we will endeavour for the panel to be representative of society.

Selection panels will keep written notes on each applicant recording reasons for decisions taken. These are disclosable to the applicant.

All disabled applicants (as defined by the Equality Act 2010) who meet the essential criteria as defined in the job description will be guaranteed an interview.

We are committed to improving the diversity of our workforce. Where two candidates are equally scored following interview or assessment, positive action will be taken and we may appoint a candidate with a protected characteristic which is underrepresented within the Theatre School.

