

## About Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, and more about the role of Admin Support to Trustees and the application process

### Bristol Old Vic Theatre School's vision

Bristol Old Vic Theatre School will 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. **Support our staff:** 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. **Deliver excellence:** 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. **Raise profile:** To be an integral part of Bristol's cultural and creative heritage, celebrating and reflecting the diversity of our city. To 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:** To sustain, grow and embed a robust and responsible business model.
5. **Where we work:** To occupy spaces that we can learn, thrive, innovate and create in, and that help us to deliver our exceptional conservatoire training.

## Background to the Theatre School

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

Oscar-winning alumni include Sir Daniel Day-Lewis (Best Actor in 1990, 2008 and 2013), Jeremy Irons (Best Actor, 1991) and Olivia Colman (Best Actress, 2019). 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. Both the Artistic Director and Deputy Artistic Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company are BOVTS alumni (Gregory Doran and Erica Whyman, respectively) as is the intimacy coordinator Ita O'Brien, who has been recognised for her pioneering work on award-winning dramas such as *Normal People*, *I May Destroy You* and *Gentleman Jack* for the BBC, and *Sex Education* for Netflix.

The success of BOVTS graduates and the quality of the School's training is reflected in fierce competition for places. In the 2023-entry admissions cycle, the School received 1,890 applications for the 28 places on its BA (Hons) Professional Acting course, a 70% increase on the number received just a decade before. All applicants are guaranteed to be seen at a preliminary audition. On average over the past three admissions rounds, just 1.5% of applicants to this course have been made an offer of a place.

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.

The School also has a thriving Sunday Youth Theatre group and runs a range of year-round short and non-degree courses.

For further information about the School, please visit: [www.oldvic.ac.uk](http://www.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 [here](#) .

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 [College of Arts, Technology and Environment](#)

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 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 partnership with UWE, whilst also running the School on a day-to-day basis.

The Director of Drama, Ali de Souza, will continue to develop the School's creative work – appointing visiting directors and designers, choosing the productions and supporting the School's strategy.

The Director of Studies, Stuart Harvey, has made great progress during his time in post and students are feeling more connected, heard and have clarity about their academic journey through the School.

You will be highly organised, adaptable, flexible, patient, self-motivated and with a keen attention to detail. The need for accuracy in minute-taking, archiving and process cannot be underestimated when dealing with both the Higher Education and charitable sectors. Trustees and the Executive team will rely on the admin support, the Clerk and the Company Secretary to ensure due process is followed at all times and across all areas of work. It will also be essential for you to maintain complete confidentiality at all times.

Although predominantly working one step removed from day-to-day activities in the School, you will be aware that our staff are dedicated, hard-working and supportive of each other. 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.

It will not always be necessary for you to attend meetings in person, and remote working will definitely be considered.

This role will rely on you to be able to attend all required meetings which will have been arranged 12-24 months in advance, and to occasionally support more occasional, urgent meetings if it is possible for you to do so.

## **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.

A newly-created role of EDI Manager has just been recruited, with the postholder starting their role in August 2023.

## 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 the Principal and Company Secretary: [fiona.francombe@oldvic.ac.uk](mailto:fiona.francombe@oldvic.ac.uk)

Applications must be received by **Monday 4th September at 12 noon**. If you decide you'd like to apply for this post, please download a copy of the Application Form and Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form from [www.oldvic.ac.uk/jobs](http://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 and your experience, 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

The interview will take place over Zoom / at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, 1-3 Downside Road, Clifton, Bristol BS8 2XF in the week beginning **11th September 2023**.

It is anticipated that candidates who are of interest might attend a second, more informal, meeting at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, 1-3 Downside Road, Clifton, Bristol BS8 2XF at a mutually convenient time. This will enable candidates to get a feel for the School, which we consider vital to the success of the role, whether it is then delivered remotely or not. Reasonable travel expenses for this attendance will be reimbursed.

Both these timescales are subject to change.

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