

GRAEAE

THEATRE COMPANY



ACTING AND AUDITIONING A PRACTICAL GUIDE

By Sarah Hughes
with a Foreword by Jenny Sealey
and notes from Graeae's Access Team

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Large Print version also available

Acting and auditioning - A practical guide

Introduction by Jenny Sealey

Twenty years ago, black and Asian actors were in a similar situation to the one disabled actors are in now. They had few training opportunities; roles in TV and film tended to be stereotypical bit parts where they were often the subject of ridicule - now there is a much more equal playing field throughout the industry.

The inclusion of black and minority ethnic actors in drama schools and other training providers generated the visibility of these actors and changed the face of British theatre, film and TV forever. Disabled people need to continue to challenge the industry and increase their visibility across the arts to reflect the diverse society in which we live. In order for this to happen, we need to address the attitudinal barriers in casting disabled actors.

To do this it is essential that Deaf and disabled actors are trained to a high standard and gain the support and confidence to market themselves in the right environments. Graeae has been working intensively with drama schools to equip them with accessible recruitment and teaching practice.

In 2011, Sarah Hughes, on behalf of the Actors Centre, delivered a weekend workshop for Graeae in Acting for TV. Graeae approached Sarah to share her professional insight on recruiting Deaf and disabled performers, drawing on her years of experience as a casting director. The following guide is the result of Sarah's insight and further research.

This guide has been commissioned by Graeae as part of its 2009-2012 Continuing Professional Development Programme, funded by Trust for London and Esmeé Fairbairn Foundation. Graeae has delivered CPD programmes for a number of years to address the attitudinal barriers facing Deaf and disabled actors accessing mainstream training programmes.

This programme aimed to create a pool of professionally trained, talented Deaf and disabled actors who would enrich the artistic industry, reflecting the full diversity of the UK's population.

The programme consisted of:

- Professional training for performers and artists (weekend workshops)
- Training for mainstream providers to increase access within existing training (including teaching, marketing and admin staff)
- Strategic partnerships with theatres to increase knowledge and experience of working with Deaf and disabled artists through our artistic programme

Article by Sarah Hughes

Acting is an honourable and important profession. Actors exhibit emotions and feelings so that others are better able to understand themselves and the human condition and who wouldn't want to be part of creating that?

Acting

Acting - what does it take and how do we get started? I have been a casting director for 20 years and spend my working life meeting actors. There are lots of myths, that actors are egotistical, unreliable, and over-dramatic and that acting is not a 'proper' job - the opposite is true. In my experience actors are organised, efficient, emotionally open, extremely hard-working, always keen to do *more* work, and - importantly - fun!

I often think the acting profession is under-rated. Of course, we all see examples of famous actors, making millions per film and living the high life in LA or Chelsea and being revered and loved. However, generally actors get a bit of a bad press – people may say it is a silly profession, or that acting is not a sensible job, that the profession is full of rampant egos, and that if you choose to be an actor you are likely to be perpetually unemployed.

Disabled actors can raise awareness and increase representation of the diversity of modern Britain; so never be persuaded that acting doesn't matter!

None of this is in fact true. Acting is an honourable and important profession. If you are an actor, you are an artist, and art is hugely important throughout history in making people understand themselves, understand others, and understand the times they live in. All societies throughout history have had a form of theatre. In Ancient Greece and Rome, the huge amphitheatres that were built were not just for Gladiators killing each other but also for theatre that thousands attended and enjoyed. Societies under siege, and countries in times of huge political turmoil, have found theatre to be crucial at these times and, as we move into another phase of political activism and turmoil at the beginning of the 21st Century, theatre and television drama will again help us all to understand ourselves - and actors are a huge part of this. Actors are in fact doing a massively important job on behalf of others; put at its most basic, actors exhibit emotions and feelings so that others are better able to understand themselves and the human condition, and who would not want to be part of creating that? So – never again be persuaded that wanting to be an actor is somehow silly or pointless! Disabled actors in particular can raise awareness and increase representation of the diversity of modern Britain in hugely significant ways; so never be persuaded that acting does not matter!

When you are deciding to become an actor, you will have to weigh up all aspects of the job. Certainly, it can make you feel vulnerable and – important one this – experience periods of unemployment, unless you have an excellent and flexible 'sideline' job. On the other hand acting can be hugely fulfilling, expressive, politically useful and liberating. Oh – and more actors than you think actually make a living from it. As a casting director, every day of my own working life I meet actors who own flats and cars and can afford to enjoy their lives.

So – make your own decision about a career as an actor based on your own energy for it and commitment to it; you *will* need a lot of both, but there *are* rewards, for yourself and others.

The ideal way forward is to seek out decent training. Be careful before you sign away your money. Be sure the school is a good one.

Training

We have all heard stories about actors who are just walking down the road or minding their own business in a pub and who are 'suddenly' offered a big film part. Certainly these things *do* happen, but it is more likely that the other actors who have been offered parts in the film have trained for several years and have then worked their way through lots of theatre and TV jobs and worked on their art for a long time. The ideal way forward is to seek out decent training. The best drama schools have three-year and (usually) one-year acting courses which will give you a very good background in acting and voice skills and teach many useful disciplines.

The obvious advantage of attending a reputable drama school is that you get three years of good training; agents and casting directors will come to your final year shows and you will get some good advice and make good contacts with top industry professionals. While there are plenty of smaller drama schools run by dedicated professionals, there are also some money-spinning enterprises cynically set up to take cash off young people desperate for a career on the stage. Be careful before you sign away your money. Be sure that the school is a good one.

The best drama schools are registered with the National Conference of Drama Schools
www.drama.ac.uk

The big five British drama schools are probably at this time Central School of Speech and Drama, RADA, Guildhall, LAMDA and the Bristol Old Vic. Other well-respected UK schools are Royal Scottish Academy, Drama Centre, Royal Welsh College, ALRA, Rose Bruford and Mountview. It is well worth doing some research on drama schools online if you possibly can, taking a look at their prospectuses, looking at the careers of their past students and generally getting a feel of each establishment. All these schools *should* be in accessible buildings and should have a very open mind about, and an active commitment to, taking disabled students. In my opinion many of the colleges are not very open to taking disabled students and if you have an impairment you probably have to be even better and even more talented than your non-disabled contemporaries. Do not let this current state of affairs put you off, as frankly the more good disabled students apply for drama school, the more the schools will have to address this issue.

If you don't feel that you want to go to drama school (or you get rejected; or you can't afford it; or you are a late starter and don't feel that you want to spend three years doing a course) then there are plenty of places where you can go to develop your skills. The City Lit in Holborn runs excellent evening classes, as does Morley College in Waterloo, there is also the Actors Centre (which has been very good in recent years at supporting disabled members, relaxing their usual policy about people having to have had a certain amount of acting work on their CV before they can join the Centre). There are also other evening classes and short courses, (some are outside London but most are London-based). Do be aware of spending a lot of money on training courses unless you have investigated each establishment thoroughly and done your best to ensure that the course will be good value for money.

Further advice from Graeae's Access Team on accessing training on page 14

Schools *should* be in accessible buildings and should have a very open mind about, and an active commitment to, taking disabled students.

Getting into drama school

Getting into drama school is notoriously difficult, for everyone who applies, so you will need to prepare very thoroughly. You will have to pay a fee just to audition, so it can get rather expensive. You will get very thorough instructions from the school about what to do and what to prepare for your audition, and my advice would be to follow these instructions to the letter. You will probably be asked to prepare one monologue from the classics (usually Shakespeare) and one modern monologue. Follow all the instructions you receive on this very carefully as many of these schools are sticklers for details and if they say 'no monologues from plays written after 1985' or some similar hard-to-understand instruction, go with it as they will have their reasons. Do not give anyone an easy reason to reject you!

I recently spoke with Philippa Cole, a disabled actress who has just completed her first year at drama school, and who had a rather lengthy, but ultimately positive, journey. Philippa auditioned for eight drama schools over a period of two years, before being offered her place at Drama Centre. She disclosed her impairment on all the application forms, though she says she was occasionally tempted not to do so, as she felt that being disabled was an 'issue' for many of the colleges. Philippa was often asked in her interview how she felt she would cope with the movement aspects of the course. She did sense that most of the schools had considerable anxieties about this, despite the fact that Philippa expressed no particular anxieties herself. Interestingly, Drama Centre was the only college where the audition panel did not discuss Philippa's impairment at the audition interview. However, since she has been there, the college has been extremely helpful and supportive around her access needs.

As far as applying and auditioning is concerned, Philippa reckoned that in total her auditions and travel cost her about £500 over the two year period (she does live outside of London) and that this financial commitment is obviously quite considerable. 'You do have to be certain that attending drama school is what you need. You need to be doing as much research as possible in advance of every audition so that you are very aware of the specific nature of each particular college, and that you follow all the audition instructions you are given. I would recommend picking audition monologues that are slightly 'different' and will probably not have been chosen by many other candidates.'

Phillipa's main piece of advice is not to be too nervous or negative about the possibility of getting offered a place, and if you have a rejection to keep on going. Her perspective was eventually, as she puts it, 'Sod it! I will just carry on applying until I get a place!'. Despite the expense and the effort she had to put in to getting there, she absolutely recommends drama school training and feels that it has been (and will continue to be) a very positive experience. She does also feel it is in many ways an advantage to have had some 'life experience' before applying, as she felt that by the time she was 22, rather than 18, she had a lot more perspective on life which has been very useful for her acting training.

Follow all the instructions you receive very carefully. Do not give anyone an easy reason to reject you!

If you have a rejection, keep on going.

Monologues

You will certainly get asked to prepare monologues occasionally either for drama school auditions or for other auditions later in your career. Shakespeare or other classical monologues are easy to find, and my advice would be to always learn and prepare monologues that you like and that actually chime with you. Be wary of going for the very obvious ones, such as 'To be or not to be...' or 'Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo', but on the other hand don't choose a monologue you have cobbled together from Act 3 of *King John* just because nobody else will be doing it. Balance, as always, is the key here! As far as modern monologues are concerned, feel free to look in readymade books of monologues but beware of choosing from these as again *everyone* else looks in them. Far better to do something you love that you have found by going to the theatre, reading plays or talking to other people about great areas of work.

What happens in auditions

Some auditions are longer than others. **TV auditions** are usually fairly brief, a little basic chit chat and then straight on to reading the scenes for your character. If your character has a lot of scenes, look at them ALL in advance – even if you have been told in advance which scenes will be read at the audition. Do not let yourself get caught out unprepared as on the day the people holding the auditions may decide they want to look at different scenes. If you have questions about your character, the time to ask them is *before* you start reading the scene. In a TV audition, you may well be filmed. Try to ignore the camera, as far as possible; the people who are auditioning you are not looking for a 'final' performance here, but filming you will help them remember you and make their decision-making process easier. Do *not* look into the camera but look at the person you are reading with. This might be the casting director, the director or anyone else who is in the room. The person reading with you may or may not be a particularly good actor, but do not let that put you off. In fact, enjoy it – they are probably making you look an even better actor!

Do not let yourself get caught out unprepared

Theatre auditions are a bit longer (probably about 20 or even 30 minutes) with much more opportunity to chat, and you will be expected to have some opinions about the play and the character. This is where your research before you go to your audition really counts. If there are references in the play to people or events you don't know about, then make sure you do your research so that you appear to know what you are talking about. Do not be afraid to have an opinion, but *never* say that you don't like a script, this will *not* be what the director or writer wants to hear! If you *really* hate a play or object to it on moral or political grounds, do not go for the audition.

You will be expected to have some opinions about the play and the character

One of the main jobs as an actor is to interpret scripts so you can't do your audition properly without one. This is even more important if you have to do any extra preparation with scripts in advance.

How to prepare for auditions

The secret of auditions is acting talent, yes – but also preparation. Get as much information as possible together before you go for your meeting. Here are some things to think about:-

Where are you going? Obvious but important. Make sure you know your route, look up the venue, investigate parking or accessible parking spaces and aim to get to the meeting 15 minutes early. The important thing is that you are as relaxed as possible and look as professional as possible when you get there. A key part of the actor's job is to be organised and on time whether for the 'half' in the theatre or for your calls on location when filming. If you can't manage to organise yourself for the job interview and can't get there on time, it's not going to look good when people are considering whether to give you a job.

Remember, people in the audition have asked for you and they want you to get the job!

Who will you be meeting? Do a bit of research if you can (the internet is great for this) on who is going to be there. Search for the director of the play or film – maybe you have seen a lot of their work and this will give you something to talk about in the meeting. Perhaps you have yourself done work which, as a result of your research, you now know is relevant.

Is there a script available? Unless it is a very unusual situation (i.e. It is an improvised piece, or the play hasn't been written yet), you need to make it your business to get hold of a script, or at the very least some pages of the script, in advance. One of the main jobs as an actor is to interpret scripts so you can't do your audition properly without one. This is even more important if you have to do any extra preparation with scripts in advance, i.e. converting documents into Braille, reformatting scripts or converting them into a system that makes it easier for you to turn pages. You might have to forward a copy to your access worker too if they are supporting you in the meeting. So really, do give this one lots of thought. If you are comfortable and know your way round your script well in advance, it is going to make it much easier to do some effective acting in the audition.

What you *do* with the script in advance of the audition is really think about it hard, read it, think about the character and find someone you know to read the script with you. If you rarely do auditions, you will probably be very nervous in the meeting so one thing you can do to settle the nerves is to make sure you are really on top of the script. If you have any questions about the character or the part, feel free to ask them in the meeting. Sometimes nervousness makes us forget things so it would be a good idea to make a note of any questions.

Do try to think of the audition as *your* time, so take your time, try not to get flustered and ask any questions you need to ask. Remember people in the audition have asked for *you* and they *want* you to get the job!

Further advice from Graeae's Access Team on auditioning on page 15

Approaching agents and casting directors

So – you are as trained as you need to be, and are raring to go as an actor. Who are the relevant people to contact? A very good publication, and probably the only one you really need, is *Contacts*, published by Spotlight. This lists all casting directors, agents, theatres, TV production companies, and anyone else you might like to get in touch with.

It is more likely that people are going to know who you are if you tell them you exist! Sometimes people say to me ‘Can I email agents or casting directors? Is it OK to write to people to invite them to see a show I am in? Is it OK to contact directors to see if I can come in to meet them?’ The answer is an absolute yes! As an actor it is up to you to decide how much time and effort you invest in networking and self publicity. And I strongly believe that the more you do, the easier it gets, and also the more you do, the more will come back to you. Don’t be shy. Write your emails, send out your CV and photo, make the most of any possible opportunities to attend workshops or courses. Go to Talkback sessions after plays and generally, pleasantly put yourself where people can see you. The more you talk to people, the more mailing lists you subscribe to, the more likely you are to find job opportunities. One word of warning on this however – do not make a nuisance of yourself. Be guided by common sense as to when enough is enough – for example do not ring up every week or hang around casting directors’ offices! And do not form the opinion that you are somehow ‘owed’ an audition or a meeting. Always take rejections pleasantly and keep the view that when one door closes another one opens.

Dear

I have heard that you are casting a production of THIS PLAY I WANT TO BE IN at THIS THEATRE in Oxford, so I am enclosing my CV and photograph as I would very much like to be considered for the part of ANNIE PART. I can confirm that I am available for your dates of 18 March 2012 to 22 May 2012.

I have done some research on the role and I believe I fit all the aspects you mention very well. I am in my late twenties, slim and tall and, having spent some time living in Yorkshire, I am very confident with a Yorkshire accent and have a good ear for accents in general. I understand the character is visually impaired; I am myself visually impaired, which I believe would enhance my understanding of, and ability to perform, this role, and of course would be happy to discuss this further at an audition.

My CV lists my training and acting experience, and if you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. Having seen your production of A PLAY THAT I ENJOYED two years ago at the PAUL JONES THEATRE in Reading, I admire the way you work and would be very keen to be part of THIS PLAY I WANT TO BE IN. I do hope we will be able to meet at your auditions.

**Best wishes
AMANDA ACTOR**

Photos should look as professional as possible, so it doesn't look like it was taken by your mum in the back garden.

What your photographs should look like

You will need what is known as a 'head shot' which is basically just a photo of your face. If you have the money, it is well worth investing in a session with a professional theatrical photographer who specialises in this type of work. However, if not, just find a friend with a good eye and if you can, have a look in advance through actors' headshots in a casting book such as Spotlight or just Google 'actors headshot' to see the type of thing that is required. The main thing is to try to have it looking as professional as possible, so it doesn't look like it was taken by your mum in the back garden and you have a tree growing out of your head. Don't smile in a very cheesy way, but on the other hand try to avoid looking like a criminal face of evil out of a tabloid newspaper. What you are aiming for is a pleasant expression and a photo that genuinely looks like you. If you can't see your photo, ask advice from people you really trust (and again probably not your mum!) You should also consider having a full body photograph taken. When deciding what to wear in your photo – keep it neutral as far as possible and don't wear gigantic earrings or really 'fashion-y' clothes, as you want the photo to last for a while, especially if you are paying for it! If you have facial piercings or tattoos you may want to have a set of photos where these are highlighted and a set where they are kept a bit more discreet. If you decide to advertise yourself on Spotlight (which I recommend despite the fee they charge) then choose a good neutral image which covers as many bases as possible. Of course, these days your online Spotlight entry can include a number of photos, but do have one you regard as an all purpose 'default' image.

**Spotlight
Performers
Directory
www.spotlight.com**

Is there a difference between the photos you should use for theatre work and TV and film work? There is no difference between the photos you should use for theatre work and those you use for TV and film work. However, you may want to consider having a variety of photos that you can use when applying for different types of acting roles, i.e. if you are applying for a role in a corporate video or for business role play, then it may well be worth having a photo of you wearing formal 'business' clothing, for instance.

Your CV

Ask around and look at other actors' CVs if possible, the main thing is that it shouldn't be too crowded with information, and that it gives a very clear and professional impression of you. Make sure your name and contact information (including an email address if at all possible) are clearly visible. Then list your jobs and training and any courses you have been on. Rather than spend a lot of time explaining, here is a basic example of a good CV. If you are at a stage when you don't yet have a lot of professional credits, be creative and focus on training you have done, any amateur or community performances and generally make the best of what you have.

**Turn overleaf for an
example of a good
CV**

Mock CV

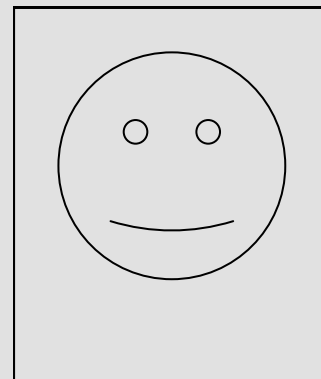
YOUR NAME

Phone : 07800 123456

Email: youremail@you.com

Agent: Your agent

Email: youragent@youragent.com



Height 5'7"

Eyes: Blue

Hair: Light Brown

Training

LAMDA

2006-2009

THEATRE

<u>Year</u>	<u>Role</u>	<u>Production</u>	<u>Director</u>	<u>Company</u>
2011	Sue Mills	The Play I Was In	John Ali	Red Box
2011	Example	An example	An example	example
2010	Example	An example	An example	example

TV

<u>Year</u>	<u>Role</u>	<u>Production</u>	<u>Director</u>	<u>Company</u>
2011	Dr King	Doctors	Eva Jones	BBC1
2011	Example	An example	An example	example
2009	Example	An example	An example	example
2008	Example	An example	An example	example

OTHER EXPERIENCE

2010- Voice Over – NatWest Bank and Grazia Magazine

Accents: RP, Geordie, New York, Manchester – good ear for accents

Skills: Singing: soprano; full clean driving licence; wheelchair basketball player

Additional Information I have attended many courses at the Actors Centre and the City Lit in London, and have done two physical theatre workshops with Frantic Assembly.

The best agents are knowledgeable and experienced, will work very hard to promote you and will listen out for any opportunities that would suit you as an actor.

Agents

There is no foolproof way of getting an agent, and you can certainly survive as an actor without one, but agents do help. They are a great point of contact for casting directors and directors to use, they will be able to work on your behalf and the best agents can steer your career and maximise your career opportunities.

Agents will take 10% or 15% of your wages but they should be able to negotiate on your behalf better than you can yourself and will be out there promoting you and inviting people to see your work. The best agents are knowledgeable and experienced, will work very hard to promote you and will listen out for any opportunities that would suit you as an actor.

Never pay money up front to an agent.

Early in your career it is also worth looking at co-operative agencies where the actors all work together to promote and look after each other. These are usually very hard working organisations, but you *will* have to do stints in the office yourself!

Never pay money upfront to an agent. If they do have expenses, such as copying photos (unlikely these days, since so much sending of photos and CVs is now done online) they should take this from your earnings rather than ask you for money upfront.

Ask around! Do you know other actors with agents? Can they recommend you to their agent as someone worth meeting? Don't be shy - ask! The best way to get on an agent's books is to write or email them enclosing your CV and photo, and a show reel if you have one. Ask if they are taking any clients on at the moment and would be interested in seeing you, and ask for a meeting. Then if you are lucky enough to get a meeting (this is usually quite tricky so write to *lots* of agents), go in armed with a list of questions. Alongside your impressions of how professional their office is and whether you like your prospective new agent as a person, there might be other areas to find out about:

If you have access requirements, are they open to understanding these?

Are they the sort of person who you would trust to talk to others about you and your impairment in the most helpful way possible?

What is their attitude towards disability? Are they open to suggesting you for *all* the roles you could play or do you feel that they might just put you in a 'disabled' category and don't see you any other way?

What other clients do they have, how many clients (if they have too many they are likely to be seriously overworked), and are any of them also disabled? Getting an impression of what other clients they have is very important – if you view yourself as a serious classical actor, then you may feel that an agent who represents a lot of singer/dancers on cruise ships and in panto is not the agent for you.

Agents... continued

Feel free to give a lot of thought to whether you would want an agent who has a reputation for representing only disabled actors. This *could* be an advantage at times, since this will mean that if big disability-focused series or roles are being cast, this agent will get prioritised for any casting information and you are more likely to get straight through the door. However, it does leave you with the risk that your agent is seen as 'only' having disabled actors on their books and that they will only receive good casting information when disabled actors are being specifically looked for. An agent representing a good mix of disabled and non-disabled actors is probably the ideal thing as then if your agent is doing their job properly you will be suggested for roles for disabled and non-disabled characters. More agents these days are taking on disabled clients to their books as part of a properly diverse clientele (good examples are Devine Management, Debi Allen Associates and Bloomfields Management) and as this starts to happen more, it should increase the opportunities for disabled actors to play a wider variety of roles.

When talking about any access requirements, the period between being cast and starting work is the time to have clear conversations with the director, producer or person responsible.

When you get the job

If you don't have an agent, then you will need to have conversations about pay and conditions – this would cover your wages, any expenses or per diems that might be offered, and also any transport to or from the job that you might need. A good expression to know is 'favoured nations' which means that every actor doing the job is on the same money. If this is the case (and it will be for a lot of theatre jobs), then there is probably not much possibility to negotiate. Although do establish that if the money goes up for anyone else, it must go up for you too.

However happy you are to get the job, try not to accept the first money you are offered. Even quite reputable theatre companies will hope to get everyone on as little money as possible and TV companies are notorious for trying to get actors (especially actors they feel are very keen and eager) for minimum wages. Ask what other actors doing similar jobs are being paid. If someone is offering £400 per week there is not much point in asking for £700 but my suggestion would be to ask for £500 with an expectation of £450, or at least to try to get at least 10% more than the initial offer. If you feel the wage is insultingly low, then walk away.

Unpaid jobs are the bane of every actor's life since all companies know that actors are keen to work. My advice on this would be to think very hard but work out whether there is a career advantage to you in taking unpaid work. For example, if it is a fringe or profit share job – will the company give you an allocation of free tickets every week so that you can invite agents and casting directors to see your work? Or if it is an unpaid film, will they cover your transport costs and will they guarantee that you receive a copy of the film so you can add your scenes to your showreel. In the early stages of your career it may be worth taking some unpaid work for the experience but only do it if you can see advantages for yourself.

When you get the job ... continued

When talking about any access requirements in the period between being cast and starting work, say what you need. If you need adaptations to equipment or scripts, or need to timetable in rest periods during rehearsals, this is the time to have clear conversations about them with the director, the producer and whoever else is involved.

Make sure you are thoroughly prepared before you go into rehearsals and have carefully thought about your character and have a good grasp of the script before you go in.

There is no doubt at all that a lot of acting jobs are based on reputation and recommendation, and all actors need to work hard at being cooperative team players. The acting talent bit is over to you, but always work on your skills between jobs.

**Further advice from
Graeae's Access
Team on Access to
Work on page 15**

And finally...

Keep going! Every time you get a knock back, get back up again and keep going. Acting as a career involves commitment and dedication, and as with most things, the more you put out, the more will come back to you. Research the careers of other actors and you will find that many have experienced years of rejections and near misses before becoming successful, and even when successful they still have to keep up the training, the energy and the commitment to keep their careers moving forward.

Further advice from Graeae's Access Team

Accessing drama schools; the Disability Equality Duty; access officers

When choosing drama schools, students need to consider the following:

- are all facilities accessible, including transportation and parking, toilets, social areas, etc.?
- what is the experience of disabled students who have been on the course previously?
- is there an access officer for the college and for the course?
- what support will the college provide, i.e., support workers, financial assistance for access, and what support can they facilitate through government bodies? See the following website for more information, including Disabled Students Allowance:

www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas/overview

- is the teaching inclusive? How does the course document/curriculum describe movement and voice work? Is there any guidance that suggests the work has been considered for visually impaired performers or actors who use BSL as their first language or have a differing speech pattern? Has inclusivity been considered with respect to the standards of evaluation?
- are the staff and tutors trained in disability equality/awareness? Is that training available to other students?
- is there access to printed materials in alternative formats? Is the library informed on creating accessible materials, Large Print, Braille and/or audio versions?
- remember that the Disability Equality Duty states clearly that a public institution must provide accessible training. In reality there are still very few Deaf and disabled students accessing drama training. This may mean that you are the first blind or Deaf student on your course, or the first wheelchair user taking movement, but this doesn't mean making the course accessible is your responsibility. You will have paid a lot of money to access high quality training, and the provider has a duty to deliver this. Make sure you are happy before you start; ask questions at interviews, etc.

Auditions—At drama school and beyond

- If you are a BSL user, discuss with the recruitment officer (or director) whether you can prepare and deliver your audition as a BSL monologue.
- If you have a differing speech pattern, can you use captioning or a communication support worker to assist with communication?
- Do you require scripts and printed material in an alternative format? Ask if the script can be provided electronically, large print or Braille.
- If you are blind or partially sighted, ask if there will be any ‘sight reading’, i.e., text material given on the spot. If so, can you have that to learn in advance? Alternatively, can you use ‘line feeding’, i.e., have an assistant or support worker whisper the lines to you in the audition room? (This is a technique that may require practice in advance, if you are not familiar with it.) Note: line feeding may also be accessed through audio description-type equipment, which you or the auditioners would need to provide.
- Does the college or production have a fund to support access worker costs so that you can attend an interview? The Access to Work (AtW) programme (see below) is specifically for paid work, so not really applicable for this, although some freelance actors may use ongoing AtW support to fund support at meetings, auditions and interviews.

Access to Work

- Access to Work (AtW) is a government programme that funds support workers and special equipment, as well as transportation, in order to facilitate employment for disabled people. This would apply to professional employment in the industry. For more information, go to:

www.gov.uk/access-to-work/overview
- While some freelance actors have ongoing AtW support, in most cases AtW will provide support only once the employment is confirmed. If you require a support worker, or special equipment, to perform your role, you might wish to negotiate the following before accepting employment:
 - who will arrange the AtW application and who will be responsible for managing the financial arrangements, i.e., paying the support worker, collating invoices, processing the AtW claim?
 - who will be responsible for booking support workers?
 - how do you deal with the issue of last minute scheduling and changes/cancellations?

Acting and auditioning—A practical guide

Foreword by Jenny Sealey and Jodi-Alissa Bickerton, Guide by Sarah Hughes, notes on access by Robin Bray Hurren and Michael Achtman. Project managed by Jodi-Alissa Bickerton, Designed by Kevin Walsh. Edited by Michael Achtman, Jodi-Alissa Bickerton, Liz How, Kevin Walsh. Cover image of Sophie Partridge in *peeling* by Patrick Baldwin, 2002. Copyright Graeae 2013, All rights reserved.



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A PRACTICAL GUIDE**

**by Sarah Hughes
with a Foreword by Jenny Sealey
and notes from Graeae's Access
Team**

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