



Bristol Old Vic Theatre School's acting for camera course

Pick of the crop

Jo Caird breaks down 2014's offerings for summer schools

Whether you're helping students find the right summer course or looking for a programme to develop your own skills and knowledge base, there's an enormous range available across the UK's major drama schools and beyond. Be quick though, as courses fill up fast. Many schools offer discounts for early booking. (Minimum age is 17 unless otherwise specified.)

Top three summer courses for ... acting

- ▶ The 'Summer theatre company' at **Royal Central School of Speech and Drama** brings together up to 14 students to work with tutors and a professional director on a text over three weeks (22 July–9 August; £1,590). Friends and family are invited to a final performance.
- ▶ The **Royal Academy of Dramatic Art's** (RADA) 'Contemporary drama summer school' is a two-week course for students over the age of 18 who already have some performance experience (11–22 August; £1,600). RADA associate director Nona Sheppard explains that because all the tutors are 'involved in the RADA family', the course is 'good taster of what the school is like' at degree level. The course culminates in a public performance.
- ▶ 'Acting (adults)' at the **Birmingham School of Acting** uses the principles of Stanislavski to help participants develop character in week one, before spending week two in intensive rehearsals for a performance at the end of the course. The fee includes a visit to a professional theatre production (4–16 August; £550).

Top three summer courses for ... Shakespeare

- ▶ **LAMDA's** four-week 'Shakespeare' course includes taught sessions and rehearsals (21 July–15 August; £2,450). Students have the opportunity to visit the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-upon-Avon, and London theatres including Shakespeare's Globe. Rebecca Lamb, who took the course in 2013, describes the tutors as 'passionate and supportive'. She says: 'They made exploring Shakespeare such an invaluable and special experience'.
- ▶ Students who complete the four-week 'Shakespeare summer school' (22 July–15 August; £2,900) at **RADA** can go on to apply for 'Shakespeare in action', a further six days of training that culminates in a rehearsal-basic performance of an adapted Shakespeare play at one of the school's theatres (18–23 August; £850).
- ▶ Shorter Shakespeare training is available at the **Royal Conservatoire of Scotland** (RCS), whose 10-day 'Acting: Shakespeare and Greek theatre' acquaints students with a variety of heightened text and verse speaking (7–18 July; £925). No previous experience is required, but the course offers insights for those considering studying drama at degree level.

Top three summer courses for ... acting for camera

- ▶ With a maximum of six students per group, the 'Acting for camera' short course at **Bristol Old Vic Theatre School** offers an enviable level of personal attention (7–9 July, 14–16 July, 1–3 September; £350). The result, says course leader Richard Maxwell, is a 'very intensive, very cosy' experience. After covering the basics and working on prepared monologues, students are paired off to create duologues that are

filmed and turned into professional quality showreel clips.

- ▶ On **Central's** five-day 'Acting for camera for beginners' course students work with industry professionals to learn about the technical aspects of shooting a scene and prepare monologues and duologues (29 July–2 August; £530). Ben Buratta is community drama and diploma manager at the school: 'Actors bring scripts that they've worked on, share them with students and talk about their experiences about working on those programmes.'
- ▶ The five-day 'acting for camera' course at the **Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama** (RWCMD) is led by Richard Mylan, currently appearing in BBC1's *Waterloo Road* (28 July–1 August; £400). Mylan teaches how to use improvisation and text to create an effective performance on screen.

Top three summer courses for ... directing

- ▶ The five-day 'Directing: for theatre' course at **RCS** sees students working with an experienced director on textual analysis, stage craft, the production process and working with actors. Taught by the school's dean of drama, it aims to help people begin to develop their own directing style (4–8 August; £490).
- ▶ **East 15 Acting School** offers a one-week course in 'Theatre directing' that includes rehearsal preparation, script analysis and technique. It's designed for those with theatrical, but not necessarily directorial, experience (21–27 July; £350).
- ▶ The 'Directors' weekend' at **Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts**, which is aimed at people aged 21 and over, is a good option for teachers hoping to hone their skills over an intense weekend of tuition. Taught in groups of 14 to 16, the course covers voice technique, getting the most from your actors, and aspects of lighting, sound and digital production (25–26 July; £240).

Top three summer courses for ... musical theatre

- ▶ 'Acting in musical theatre' at the **Guildhall School of Music and Drama** sees students aged 18 and over attend classes for half the day and work as an ensemble with a director and musical director for the other half (21 July–8 August; £1,950). The focus is on acting within the context of song, though some musical staging takes place. The fee includes two London theatre visits.
- ▶ **West End Stage** is a summer school experience that culminates with

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students performing a mixed bill of dance numbers, songs and speeches at Her Majesty's Theatre in the West End. As well as a broad range of classes (held at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama), the course includes a visit to a major musical and a chance to meet the cast. 'The highlight of my week was getting to meet the Phantom himself at the Q&A. Getting to quiz him on his journey into the business was excellent,' says former participant Chloe.

- ▶ **Arts Educational** is unusual in offering 4–6 year olds the chance to explore elements of musical theatre practice, including interpreting songs and short stories, on its five-day 'Junior musical theatre' course (21–25 July, 28 July–1 August; £140).

Top three summer courses for ... audition technique

- ▶ **Arts Educational** runs 'Audition technique in acting' and 'Audition technique in musical theatre' side by side (4–8 August; £280). Designed as preparation for drama school auditions, four days of skills development are followed by a formal mock audition on day five, where feedback is offered.
- ▶ **East 15's** five-day 'Audition technique' course sees tutors – professional actors with a great deal of audition experience – spend time with students working on their individual technique (21–25 July, 28 July–1 August, 26–30 August; £350).
- ▶ **LAMDA** offers the more in-depth 'Audition technique', a two-week course including vocal and physical exercises to help with audition preparation. A day of mock auditions includes sight reading and singing (21 July–1 August; £850).

Top three summer courses for ... backstage skills

- ▶ For students with an interest in backstage theatre, unsure of which



LAMDA gives insight into their training with a two-week drama school introduction

discipline they want to pursue, or for teachers looking for a broad overview, **Guildford School of Acting** offers the six-day 'Introduction to production skills' (4–9 August; £325). It explores set design, lighting design and technology, sound design for musical theatre, stage management and the process of taking a show from rehearsal room to opening night.

- ▶ **Rose Bruford College of Theatre & Performance** offers one-week summer courses in lighting design and stage management for students aged 16+ (both run 21–25 July; £395/£500). Classes are limited to 12 students and attract a broad range of participants: from young people hoping to pursue backstage skills at degree level to enthusiastic amateurs.
- ▶ **RCS** is one of very few schools to run a backstage course for 13–17 year olds: 'Stage production' (21 July–1 August; £465) sees a maximum of 12 students spend week one learning backstage skills and week two teaming up with a RCS drama summer school group on a production.


Top three summer courses for ... dance

- ▶ **RCS** runs five-day 'Modern ballet' classes for adults (ages 15+; 21–26 July; £510) and young people (10–12 years; 7–11 July; 13–14 years, 14–18 July), all of which are led by tutors from the school's BA modern ballet.

Masterclasses with the Scottish Ballet involve plenty of one-on-one time.

- ▶ 'Street dance' is a five-day course for 12–16 year olds offered by **Mountview** (4–8 August; £175). With group sizes of 14 to 18, participants take an active role in the choreography of an end-of-course performance. The course is led by trained choreographers who work in both classic and cutting-edge street dance styles.
- ▶ **Guildford School of Acting's** five-day 'Intensive beginners dance' is intended for adult performers hoping to improve their skills in tap, jazz and ballet (4–8 August; £325).

Top three summer courses for ... an introduction to drama school

- ▶ **RWCMD** runs two versions of its five-day 'The drama school experience' course, one including a voice workshop, the other a movement workshop (21–25 July and 22–26 July respectively; £350). Students between the ages of 16 and 20 explore improvisation, contemporary text, Shakespeare and auditioning, with tutors from the school's BA acting course.
- ▶ **Mountview** offers two 'Introduction to drama school' courses that mirror its full-time training, focusing on acting and musical theatre (28 July–8 August; £725). These two-week courses for groups of 14–18 'give students a real head start when competing for places and beginning their professional acting training,' says head of short courses, Eddie Gower.
- ▶ **LAMDA's** two-week 'Introduction to drama school' accepts students aged 16 and over and features classes in acting, voice, movement and singing, improvisation, Alexander technique and physical theatre. Performance-based work includes open rehearsals attended by tutors and other students (4–15 August; £850). 



Mountview's street dance summer school

More information on summer schools

- ▶ **Arts Educational** – <https://artsed.co.uk/holiday-courses>
- ▶ **Birmingham School of Acting** – www.bcu.ac.uk/pme/school-of-acting/courses/summerschool-adults
- ▶ **Bristol Old Vic Theatre School** – www.oldvic.ac.uk/short-courses.html
- ▶ **East 15 Acting School** – www.east15.ac.uk/summercourses.asp
- ▶ **Guildford School of Acting** – <http://gsauk.org/courses/summer-school>
- ▶ **Guildhall School of Music and Drama** – www.gsmd.ac.uk/acting/programmes/drama_summer_school
- ▶ **LAMDA** – www.lamda.org.uk/drama-school/all-courses/lamda-short-course-certificates
- ▶ **Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts** – www.mountview.org.uk/short-courses/young-peoples-summer.html
- ▶ **Rose Bruford College of Theatre & Performance** – www.bruford.ac.uk/courses/summer-school.aspx
- ▶ **Royal Academy of Dramatic Art** – www.rada.ac.uk/courses
- ▶ **Royal Central School of Speech and Drama** – www.cssd.ac.uk/study/short-courses/summer-school
- ▶ **Royal Conservatoire of Scotland** – www.rcs.ac.uk/shortcourses/summerschools
- ▶ **Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama** – www.rwcmd.ac.uk/other/short_courses.aspx
- ▶ **West End Stage** – www.westendstage.com