

RADA'S NEED FOR THE CHENIES STREET DEVELOPMENT

For more than 100 years, RADA has been at the forefront of training actors and technicians, from Malet Street/Gower Street, in Camden. We now also provide significant outreach activity with schools in Camden and elsewhere, and through summer courses.

To retain our leadership in the changing world of theatre we need to enhance our training and performance facilities; to ensure we continue to achieve freedom of access and a wide diversity in our student body we need to offer our own accommodation.

1. The world of theatre is changing. Portfolio careers – actor/writer/director/producer – are becoming common and partnerships and collaborations are being forged across artforms and between theatre-makers and institutions from business to science and technology.
2. RADA and its graduates are working hard to keep pace with – indeed to lead - this change. The RADA Festival, launched in 2012, provides a platform for new companies, new work and new ways of working and has already achieved significant success in nurturing new audiences and work which has gone on to be presented around the UK; this success has now be acknowledged by support from the Arts Council.
3. Directors who studied their craft as actors at RADA include Mike Leigh, Ralph Fiennes, Kenneth Branagh, Alan Rickman, Fiona Shaw, Richard Wilson and Rufus Norris, the incoming director of the National Theatre.
4. Also in 2012, we graduated the first students from our MA Theatre Lab, a course specifically designed to develop the cross-disciplinary and ensemble skills of performers. These graduates have already begun to take their places with innovative companies all over the world, while back at RADA we have forged an association with Told By An Idiot, a company that has remained at the cutting edge of UK theatre for 21 years.
5. Meanwhile our new writing department has for many years been supporting work and developing relationships with the Royal Court and Shakespeare's Globe in London and the Royal Shakespeare Company, Royal Exchange and Liverpool Theatres further afield and with many individual writers and producers. As a result of this work RADA has also produced a significant number of writers from its own acting courses, including in recent times Stephen Beresford, Tanya Ronder, Lolita Chakrabarti and Phoebe Waller-Bridge.
6. RADA students, graduates and staff are working with schools and communities across London, widening access to drama and sharing our skills and teaching for the benefit not only of the artform but society at large.

7. Our Business and Enterprise division works with individuals and organisations across the public and private sectors, including local and central government, deploying the same training in presentation, performance and confidence that has made the Academy and its graduates world-renowned.
8. It is hard to realise the potential RADA has to achieve all the above within buildings designed to support our continuing core activity of training the next generations of outstanding actors and technicians. The development of the RADA Studios in Chenies Street is precisely the resource we need to consolidate and expand this work while also being a major asset to the theatre-making and theatre-going community at large.
9. A revamped and upgraded main theatre - to be named in recognition of the great contribution to RADA over 50 years of Richard Attenborough - will not only be a home for the new work and companies coming out of RADA, but also a new venue in London for innovative and smaller scale productions.
10. Conversations with theatre producers such as the Royal Shakespeare Company, Theatre Complicite, Told By An Idiot, The Michael Grandage Company, Sonia Friedman Productions, and others, have made it clear that there is a real creative appetite for a venue which can host transfers of work from theatres such as the Donmar Warehouse, the Almeida, the RSC's Other Place in Stratford, the Royal Court Upstairs, Hampstead Downstairs as well as for companies both UK-based and international.
11. We believe that the former Drill Hall Theatre, managed and run by RADA, is ideally suited to create a commercial and artistic model to showcase this work and to bring some of the world's most innovative theatre into Camden close to the heart of the West End and into partnership with the brilliant theatre-makers of tomorrow.
12. In addition to this, improved facilities in the Studio Theatre and throughout RADA's buildings on Chenies Street will be of immense benefit for RADA's work both with schools and communities and the development of our performance and presentation training for business, enterprise and the public sector.
13. RADA is passionate about ensuring that our training is available to every young person with the talent to become a leader in the performance industries. Nearly 60% of our students receive bursary support from funds raised by RADA and 40% of our students come from families where the household income is less than £25,000.
14. We are one of the few UK drama schools that take equal numbers of female and male students onto our acting courses (and have done so since 1991) and currently 20% of our undergraduate actors come from BAME backgrounds.

15. While most of our undergraduate students are eligible for government loans for their fees and living costs, nearly all face a significant shortfall between the maximum loan available and the actual costs of living in London. Drama training is intense: our students consistently receive 35 or more hours a week of class teaching across 36 weeks of the year and in production weeks they will frequently work from 9 in the morning until 10 at night.
16. It is impossible for them to take on a part time job and very hard to commute long-distances and sustain the commitment and energy it requires to complete a drama school course.
17. We fear that the availability of affordable central London housing is becoming the biggest barrier to those from the widest range of backgrounds accessing RADA's training, which is why we believe it is now essential that RADA develops student housing of our own.
- 18. Student accommodation, along with the creative plans outlined above, forms an essential part of securing RADA's continuing place as a leading, if not the leading drama school in the world.**

Edward Kemp
Director of RADA