



early stagers

Ola Przytula, LAMDA

"When you come straight from university and haven't had a lot of work experience, it might be difficult to suddenly take on jobs without the security of being a student..."

Name, age, place of study & course?

Ola Przytula, 26, London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA), FdA Production & Technical Arts: Stage & Screen

What attracted you to this business?

I worked in advertising back home in Poland for five years as a video editor, but I got slightly tired of it and wanted to mix things up. I've always been a fan of theatre and enjoyed the backstage aspect, so I thought it would be a good idea to try it for myself. There is something fascinating and thrilling about live performances, which is very different from film and advertising.

What do you think of the course you're studying?

The course is perfect for anyone like myself who hasn't had much experience in theatre. It gives you amazing opportunities to work in any aspect of production - including construction, stage management, sound and lighting - so you can discover what you enjoy most and then pursue that area of interest. You get to learn a bit of everything and then decide what you want to specialise in, rather than having to decide at the very beginning.

What work experience have you had?

I occasionally work as a casual technician and I'm really enjoying it. Everyone is very welcoming and helpful and really appreciates the fact that you come from LAMDA, because they know you have the skills to work in more than just one area of production.

Who has been your biggest mentor/s?

I wouldn't say I have a mentor *per se*, but the tutors at LAMDA are very helpful. They really appreciate it if you have an interest in something and they will strive to help you develop that into something more.

What's the best career advice you've received so far?

The best piece of advice I ever got was: 'If it looks like there is nothing to do, pick up a broom and sweep the stage.' If you show people that you're prepared to work hard and willing to do things that others don't necessarily want to do, your employers will really take notice of you.

What's the most valuable lesson you've learned so far?

Be bold. That's definitely something I wasn't used to before I came to LAMDA, but now it's become part of what I do. It's very important to be able to step out of your comfort zone and face the challenges ahead.

Who would you most like to emulate?

I don't think there is one person I'd like to emulate. What I would most like to achieve is to find good work and be happy doing it. Turn my hobby into a job, in a good way.

What would be your dream project to work on?

My dream project would be to work on a big Shakespeare play at the Royal Shakespeare Company. I still haven't decided whether that would be lighting design or production electrician.

What's the toughest thing about entering this business?

Insecurity. When you come straight from university and haven't had a lot of work experience, it might be difficult to suddenly take on jobs without the security of being a student and having that safety net of saying 'oh, I am still learning'. Again, it's very much about stepping out of your comfort zone.

What's your experience of the industry's attitudes towards students?

My experience has been very positive. Everyone seems very kind and helpful.

I also find that people respect you more if they know you come from LAMDA.

What advice would you give to anyone following in your footsteps?

To anyone who is doing or thinking about doing the same thing, I'd say be bold and take a risk. As the saying goes: 'No risk, no reward.' It's very important to try things you haven't done before so that you can say definitively whether you enjoy this type of work or you never want to do it again.

What do you want your job title to be in 10 years' time?

I have no idea! I know I'd love to work in lighting, but whether that's making practicals, doing lighting design, or being an electrician is still to be decided. ✕

STATS

LONDON ACADEMY OF MUSIC AND DRAMATIC ART

Location: London

Industry courses: FdA Production & Technical Arts: Stage & Screen, BA (Hons) Production & Technical Arts Top-Up

Industry links: Autograph, Richard Martin Lighting, Anna Valley, White Light, Sparks, ChamSys, Nexo, plus many other suppliers and production companies...

Average number of students: 30 per year for the FdA and approx. 10 for the BA (Hons) Top-Up

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