



DISABILITY ARTS CYMRU INFORMATION SHEET

Essential Tips for Disabled Actors

DEVELOP YOUR SKILLS

The most important thing that you can do is to look for opportunities to develop your acting skills and gain as much experience as possible. You may want to carry out formal training by attending drama school or university (e.g. Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama), or pay for private classes / workshops. You could also join an amateur group or community organisation which regularly puts on plays. If you are under 18 you might like to join a youth theatre group, or consider performing at the National Eisteddfod. There are a lot of opportunities out there, so contact your local theatre, university or Arts Council office to find out what's going on, or search on the web (e.g. Theatre Wales' website has extensive listings of theatre companies).

To help with the cost, training grants of between £250 - £2,000 are available from the Arts Council of Wales (ACW). These grants are available to people living in Wales that are over 16 and not in full-time education.

Remember that organisations and groups have a duty to be accessible, so make sure that you let them know what your access requirements are.

GETTING YOURSELF OUT THERE

It can be difficult to earn a living from acting, so it is very important to be versatile and ready to develop a wide range of skills. This can include working in Theatre in Education, youth theatre, apprenticeships, amateur and community work, television work, and also being involved in running productions by working as a director or stage manager.

Prepare a CV and photo. Make the CV clear and concise, and the photo should be a good, simple black and white shot of your head and shoulders. Get yourself noticed by sending them to casting directors, drama groups, and anyone that might employ you.

Keep up to date with opportunities – contact drama groups and organisations and ask to be put on their mailing lists. You can also read about auditions in publications like The Stage and on Theatre Wales’ website. You could also get in touch with the BBC to be put on their Disabled Actors and Performers Directory (Email: diversitycentre@bbc.co.uk, Tel: 020 8752 5942).

There are a number of grants available from ACW to fund projects, and there are also interest-free loans to assist with your costs. These are available to individuals living in Wales that are over 18 and not in full-time education.

GET INSPIRED BY OTHER DISABLED ACTORS

For many years disabled people have been virtually invisible within the mainstream acting world. Disabled actors have been busy, however, producing some challenging and innovative work within disability arts theatre. Organisations such as Graeae Theatre Company are producing highly-acclaimed and controversial disability-led work which integrates sign language and audio description, giving a whole new dimension to the production.

Disability Arts Cymru’s Unusual Stage School, founded in 2006 gives disabled actors an opportunity to develop skills and produce and perform in a stage production, and we continue to work to support disabled actors in Wales.

Things are slowly changing in the mainstream - many talented disabled actors are now emerging as the barriers caused by discrimination are gradually shifting. In the UK actors such as Mat Fraser (Cast Offs, Every Time You Look at Me), Julie Fernandez (The Office), and Paul Henshall (I’m With Stupid, Holby City), are appearing on our television screens.

Try to experience some work by disabled actors and theatre companies – you may find it inspiring, and you may also make some good contacts at the bar after the show! Experience work by Welsh companies such as Hijinx’s Odyssey Theatre (www.hijinx.org.uk), UCAN Productions (working with young people - www.ucanproductions.org), and further afield there’s Graeae (www.graeae.org), Mind the Gap (www.mind-the-gap.org.uk), Deafinitely Theatre (working with Deaf people - www.deafinitelytheatre.co.uk), Extant (working with visually impaired and blind people - www.extant.org.uk). There is so much out there – keep up to date with Welsh tours by reading our What’s On.

ESSENTIAL READING

“**An Actor’s Life’s For Me**” written by Ewan Marshall for BBC’s Ouch website offers some great advice for disabled people looking to get into acting. www.bbc.co.uk/ouch/features/an_actors_lifes_for_me.shtml


Contacts, published by Spotlight, the essential handbook for anyone working or looking to get started in the entertainment industry. Whether you are searching for an agent or casting director, a theatre or a rehearsal room, a photographer or a voice coach, wigs or props – Contacts can help! Cost: £12.99 from www.spotlight.com/shop/contacts.

ESSENTIAL WEBSITES

Arts Council of Wales - includes an arts database of events, details of grants, and useful contacts	www.artswales.org
The Centre for Performance Research	www.thecpr.org.uk
The Conference of Drama Schools Ltd (CDS)	www.drama.ac.uk
Disability Arts Online - work by deaf and disabled artists	www.disabilityartsonline.org
Drama Association of Wales	www.dramawales.org.uk
ELAN (European Live Arts Network) Wales	www.elanwales.org
Equity - the UK Trade Union representing professional performers and other creative workers:	www.equity.org.uk
Graeae Theatre	www.graeae.org
National Council for Drama Training (NCDT)	www.ncdt.co.uk
Oren (Actors’ Co-operative Management – formerly Cardiff Casting) –	www.orenactorsmanagement.co.uk
Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama (RWCMD)	www.rwcmd.ac.uk
Theatre Wales - comprehensive theatre and performance website, including news, reviews and opportunities:	www.theatre-wales.co.uk
visABLE People (casting agency for disabled actors and models)	www.visiblepeople.com

ESSENTIAL CONTACTS

ARTS COUNCIL OF WALES

 9 Museum Place
Cardiff CF10 3NX

 029 2037 6500

 029 2022 1447

 029 2039 0027

 www.artswales.org

DRAMA ASSOCIATION OF WALES

 Unit 2, The Maltings, East Tyndall Street, Cardiff,
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