

# Awardee Report: BBM Youth Support Award for Drama



**Amanda Sullo**

## ***Introduction***

I proudly received the BBM Youth Support Award for Drama in August 2016, and with my schedule already set out in my application, I quickly booked my flights, accommodation and classes. I was on a plane just three weeks later! (I had to adhere to the age bracket restriction, with my 24th birthday coming up in October.)

The two key objectives of my trip were to develop my skills as a performer and theatre-maker, and to connect with other emerging artists from across the globe. I am so grateful to have succeeded on both those accounts.

## ***What I Did***

I was based in London for the duration of my time in the U.K. and undertook a number of short courses across different styles of performance and theatre-making. I also had the opportunity to watch live theatre and even made a trip out to Stratford-upon-Avon.

### Where I stayed

I stayed in Notting Hill (pictured) which was conveniently central to most of my classes and had easy access to Queensway and Bayswater tube stations, meaning I could be almost anywhere in London in under an hour.



### Short course at The Cockpit Theatre: Where the Hell Are You?



The most rewarding educational experience of my trip was a six week course called 'Where the Hell Are You?' which explored ways to fill the audience's imagination with a sense of where a character is in the physical environment. The course opened up to me new ways of performance and enabled me to use my physicality to express a sense of place. I had always thought of the physical world of the character to be the responsibility of the set or props, etc. so it was really interesting for me to see it in a new way.

## Short course at The Cockpit Theatre: Meisner Stage One

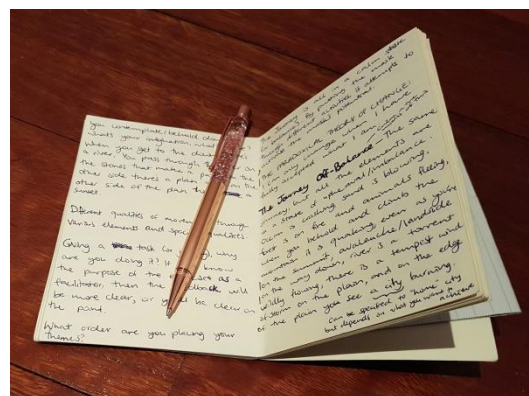
I wasn't sure exactly what to expect when I enrolled into the 'Meisner Stage One' five-week course. I knew about the style of character exploration from what I had read in books or online, but having never studied it. I was surprised by just how different it was to anything I had ever tried. It was a completely new way for me to explore emotional honesty on stage. The focus was on the other character you're performing with, sharing an intuitive exchange with them, and following your instincts.

In this class I also made some great connections with other artists. After classes we would stay back and discuss all our plans for future work and our careers as performers. We also saw a play together, which was really wonderful to share with likeminded artists. I continue to keep in contact with these women, with plans of working together in the future.

## Short course at the London International School of Performing Arts: The Pedagogy of the Neutral Mask

The five-day course I undertook at LISPA on Neutral Mask may have been the most intense and challenging courses I have ever done. In the lead-up to attending this course I was really excited about the content, exploring themes of Lecoq, Copeau and Bing – artists who I have admired for a long time, and styles I had never before studied in a professional context. On the first day of attendance I discovered that the other students in this course had all completed the full-time, 2-3 year degree at LISPA, so were very familiar with all the work we were about to do. At the end of the first day, I felt out of my depth and was very anxious about being 'unknowledgeable'.

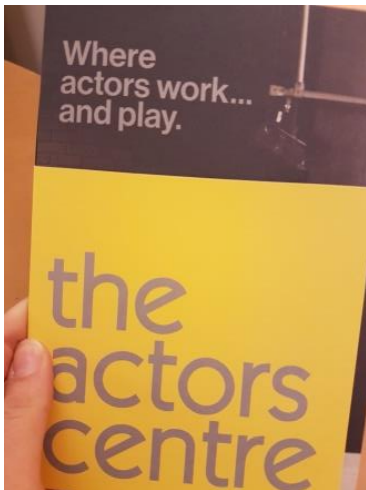
I persevered and decided to change my mindset: I was there to learn. This change in me didn't happen immediately as I continued to feel uncomfortable on the second day, but by the third day and onward I allowed myself to freely explore the themes. I was no longer intimidated by the knowledge of my peers, but through their warmth and sharing, I learnt a lot from them and made really strong connections. This course was important for me not only for the performance and theatre-making skills I learnt, but it was also a great lesson in perseverance.



## Short course at The Actors Centre London: Authenticity on Stage and Screen

This short course helped me approach scene work and monologues in a really new way. We explored ideas of authenticity in different forms and were given the opportunity to perform scenes and monologues using the techniques we were learning. Rather than a specific genre of performance style, this course opened up to me considerations of authentic performance that could be utilised for any performance work.

## Short course at The Actors Centre London: A Close-Up on Screen Acting



The screen acting course I did at The Actors Centre London was very practical. It was an advanced course with English film and television director Robert Bierman. Rather than discuss theory and follow with application, in this course we dived straight into work. We were given a scene to work on with our partner, and in turns each pair would enter the room to perform their scene to camera. Once every pair had filmed their scene, we would watch all the scenes together and received feedback from Bierman. We would repeat this three times in the day and progressively saw improvement in our own and each other's work.

## What I saw

I was lucky enough to attend a number of great live theatre performances. My favourite was *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* which impressed me not only with the performances of those on stage, but the production elements were astounding. I also had the opportunity to see *The Play That Goes Wrong*, *The Comedy about a Bank Robbery* (pictured), *A Room with a View* and *Confessional*, which were all so great in their own ways.

I was really inspired by everything I saw, and was so excited to attend theatre in a city with such a rich theatrical history. I always wanted to see shows in the West End, so it was a dream come true really.





## Stratford-upon-Avon



During a three-day break between classes, I took a road trip to Stratford-upon-Avon to immerse myself in the gorgeous city where Shakespeare was born (pictured), lived later in his life, and now rests. I was excited to visit and knew I was going to love it, but did not expect to have such a spiritual experience there, specifically when I visited his resting place. It was a moving moment, one which really connected me to a sense of artistic purpose and inspiration. The entire three days were really wonderful, being in a city that really embraced Shakespeare and their love for his work.

### ***Recommendations***

I would love to recommend future awardees to follow their passion, but also branch out and experiment. If there is something that you have always wanted to try or learn within your field, this is the time to do it.

I would also like to recommend not being afraid to strike up conversations with other artists. I found it really interesting to talk to actors and theatre-makers that lived on the other side of the world, and have made some really great connections with whom I now remain friends.

If you're an awardee for Drama and would like to see live theatre, to save money on those big ticket prices, I recommend visiting theatres the day of a performance and asking what tickets they still have available for that night. Theatres tend to sell last-minute tickets at a heavily discounted price. If you go to the theatre districts it's even better because if one theatre says they've sold out, you can just pop into the next one and see what's on and what's available.

If you have time, try to also get out of the city areas and visit small towns or countryside. I recommend Stratford-upon-Avon, Burnham Beeches, Stonehenge and Bath. You may be surprised where you can find inspiration. Car hire is very affordable and you can go at your own pace.

### ***Conclusion***

The BBM Youth Support Award was a timely experience for me as an emerging artist, and provided an incredible opportunity to grow and learn. As well as this, I have built

networks across the world and valuable professional relationships with artists who I hope to collaborate with in the future. I am really excited about what's next for my career as a performer and theatre-maker, and am so grateful for the BBM Youth Support Award being a big part of my development.