



dear john

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## I want to pursue drama training but financing it is a big hurdle – how can I increase my chances of scholarship success?

As the landscape of the entertainment industry and the world of media constantly evolves, more and more artists are learning to accept that creativity is just as important a factor in locating work to showcase your skills, as it is when you are on stage doing the work you have managed to get booked for. There are encouraging signs that developing good business skills is also becoming a more substantial component of arts education at every level too.

However, it is true that the same drive and creativity you are hoping to gain from your training may also need to be conjured up from somewhere to pay for that training in the first place.

Scholarships are certainly one option well worth exploring. Here follows some useful words of advice on how to give yourself the best chance of earning one, from both the awarding body and recipient perspective.

### what the experts say...



#### Maxine Glasby

Maxine is proprietor and principal of Expressions Academy of Performing Arts, Expressions School of Performing Arts and Expressions Casting Agency. Expressions was founded in 1989 as a part-time dance school and has 200 pupils. It progressed into a full-time three-year musical theatre course in 2003 and is currently in the final stages of application for membership status with the Council for Dance Education and Training. It is based in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire. Its patron is Samantha Womack who plays Ronnie Mitchell in EastEnders.

"In today's economic climate good performing arts training is increasingly expensive. Not only does the student have to pay college fees, but also living expenses. Scholarships are often the only way some talented performers would have the chance to attend full-time colleges. Talent often gets missed purely because funding is not available for the student.

"The Stage/Expressions Scholarship is now in its third year and has given many talented performers opportunities that may not have arisen without this. Competition is fierce, but for this reason in the previous two years we have

awarded the full scholarship and various other part scholarships to meet demands.

"The main ingredient in our scholarship winners is potential, which is vital. The candidate has to be proficient in one of the three major disciplines – dance, singing or acting – and have a will to learn in the other two disciplines. Dedication is also vital.

"So how do we judge in the situation where talent is equal between the candidates? We then look further into the student in different ways. The potential winner needs to be a role model to other students for the full three years and they also need to be an excellent ambassador for the college. They need to show they are worthy of the scholarship and need to be very passionate about what they do. Appearance is always a vital quality in the performing profession and we always advise the student to "remain a nice person" throughout. Success and friendship often don't mix well, but keeping level-headed and being a good team player is important. Be ambitious but also courteous at all times."

#### Ciara Lyons

Ciara, aged 19, from Crawley, West Sussex, is a first year student at Expressions Academy of Performing Arts, having won The Stage/Expressions Scholarship in 2010 for the full three years. She previously studied a two-year national diploma in performing arts at Central Sussex College. She has performed with West Sussex Youth Theatre in two productions and as a child was a pupil at Stagecoach for eight years.

"Performing whenever and wherever I could to build my confidence



and leave behind the nerves helped me when preparing to audition for Expressions Academy of Performing Arts, but I would say it was determination and focus that actually won me my scholarship. I had resolved not to panic about who was in the room and just relax and concentrate on showing what I am capable of.

"I have a strong passion to learn and observe everything that happens both in my lessons and also

in everyday life. I am forever wanting to experience different ways of performing. I feel that as a performer not only do you have this amazing opportunity to move your audience in many ways, but also to portray how you feel in such a variety of ways, whether through a dance, a monologue or a song.

"The advice so far that has been given to me is to never give up, try everything always and find yourself, explore who you want to be. Our course is extremely physical – it is very important to stay in shape and to always increase your stamina levels. My dance classes have really helped me stay focused, learn more about my body and how important every part is, and improve my technique. I know that this constant training, learning, devotion and hard work will make me even more focused, which will turn me into a professional powerful, performer."

### dear john sums up...

Throughout 2011, The Stage will be offering an unprecedented number of scholarships in partnership with performing arts training institutions across the UK. Application forms will be available to download for each scholarship as they become available, and full details can be found on our website.

Whichever of The Stage's scholarships you are applying for, bear in mind that there are likely to be more candidates than ever, but that competition is part and parcel of the industry you will be making a career in after your training. Competition certainly shouldn't put you off having a go. Equally, as both Maxine and Ciara note, the way to handle pressure isn't to get caught up in competitiveness, but to focus on showing what you have to offer.

Preparation and dedication are certainly qualities that will take you far, but attitude – both in terms of courtesy and openness to soaking up everything the course has to teach you – will make you more attractive to potential funders. Plus these qualities are also very attractive to the people who will be casting you at the other end of your educational journey.

John Byrne is an entertainment industry career advisor and author of *The Right Agent Right Now* ebook available from [www.showbusiness-success.com](http://www.showbusiness-success.com). Maxine Glasby can be contacted via [www.expressionsperformingarts.co.uk](http://www.expressionsperformingarts.co.uk) or on 01623 424334. For details of The Stage's scholarship partnerships with the Susi Earnshaw Theatre School, see page 19 and with Midlands Academy of Dance and Drama, see page 21