

A guide on how to fundraise

By Madeleine Mantock,
BBC Performing Arts Fund Training in Musical Theatre winner 2009

So, you've applied, auditioned and been offered a place. You are over the moon. Ecstatic. Then you realise how much it is going to cost and want to cry at the prospect of not being able to accept your place. Do not fear fellow MT's! The money is out there, you just have to find it...

This guide is by no means law and will not be effective for everybody. But it worked for me, so try and it and it might just work for you too!

The cost of attending some drama schools is grotesque: tens of thousands of pounds, which at a young age you just don't have saved up – unless you are incredibly lucky or your parents are in a position to cover the cost. I know for a lot of us this just isn't the case, and so we have to find the money from elsewhere. One important thing to remember is that no matter what background you come from or how much money you don't have, you have a place! That alone is an extraordinarily hard thing to attain. Think of how many people audition year after year, hoping to be what these schools are looking for. Sometimes they never are, and probably never will be. But you have been picked because you possess talent, potential and maybe a little something extra. What I'm trying to say here is that you deserve to have been offered a place, and no amount of personal circumstance should prevent that from happening.

Feeling shy or rude about asking for money is something you have to get over now. Think of it as a business transaction, you are your own charity.

Where to start?

I'll admit. This seems like a mammoth task, but it is do-able and as long as you are organised and pro-active there is no reason why you can't make the right contacts to help with your funding.

The biggest lesson I have learnt, is that although what we are searching for is money, it is the people who *have* the money that we have to tackle. Most people who have extreme wealth have it because they don't share it. However, some do; and making them want to help you is your goal. A lot of people don't have extreme wealth, but what they do have is the capacity to care and give what they can. Even when writing to big companies, remember that the lady on the reception desk can transfer your call to somebody else with more power and more money. People can always be persuaded and it is your task to get them on your side.

The internet is your friend. Not only can you use search engines to find out who the millionaires are in your local area (you laugh, but I did it, found his company and found his trust fund!) but there are lots of charity based search engines which take your details and then provide a list of relevant charities to write to.

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Want to write to celebrities or famous actors?

You might have read about famous actors or choreographers sponsoring people through drama school. It does happen, so it would be wrong to say it is a waste of time. However, choose carefully about who you write to and have a realistic expectation about getting a reply.

To be successful in getting funding from outside sources you need to be aware of what qualities you have as a person, your skills and what people might find exciting about you. These are the things you have to focus on when writing to people, not only because you want to show yourself in the best light possible, but also because if you write to someone who also possesses these things or who you honestly believe has inspired you and unknowingly changed your life in some profound way - then they are more likely to help you. For example, if you are an eighteen year old white male, who is obsessed with *Rent* and *Wicked* and your dream job is to be a Britney dancer, don't write to Bernadette Peters or Andrew Lloyd Webber because they probably won't identify with you.

A good way to get in touch with these actors (if they don't have a personal website) is to use the actor's directory Spotlight. Listed here is the address for their agent. Depending on how busy they are you may get a response, so do your research and create a contacts list of who you are going to send letters to.

If you have a particular admiration for someone's work, it wouldn't hurt to throw in a little personal note expressing your appreciation for them either. Not only would it be lovely to receive, but it might just help with your funding. Remember you have nothing to lose, only friends and fees to gain!

Be inventive and imaginative! We are actors after all. You must have sat there, as I did, and frustrate at the fact that you know all the money you need is out there somewhere. You just have to believe that you have the capacity to access it.

Who else to write to?

Think:

- **Personally** – some might label this exploitation, but you have to use what you've got. If you are black/gay/tall, write to people who have this in common because they might be more interested in helping others like themselves.
- **Geographically** – contact successful people from your area. It always helps to play the 'home-town' card. You never know, you might remind them of when they were leaving home to train.
- **Industry** – Performers don't always have lots of money. Don't forget the writers, directors, choreographers, and theatre companies as well.

- **Outside the box** – Don't shy away from writing to someone who you have a very distant connection to. I wrote to a pharmaceutical company who has a foundation which helps children in China. However, their head office is in hometown and that is why I managed to get funding from them!

Sell yourself

You need to market yourself in such a way so that you appear professional but not so polished that you don't look like you need any help.

Don't waste money on expensive printing and making your leaflet look fancy. This will cut unnecessarily into your funds and will also give the wrong impression. Just make sure that the information you provide is relevant and succinct. Remember that although you need to be honest and realistic about the money you would also do well to adopt an optimistic tone.

Let these people know that you have planned your finances. Even if you don't have the money yet, show them that you have accounted for all the costs you will encounter. Not just fees, but rent, bills, food, uniform/specialist dancewear, and the cost of having a social life.

At the end of this document you can see the leaflet I made

Remember your P's and Q's

It doesn't cost you anything to be polite, but sending a sweet 'Thank you' letter or taking the time to make a short phone call can make all the difference. Always remember to show your appreciation to the people who give to you, because drama school lasts for three years and I'd bet you any money that you will be writing to them again to ask for more.

Why not send update letters throughout the year to let your sponsors know how you are progressing through the terms? A surprise letter from their star-in-the-making could brighten their day, which attaches a positive emotional response to you which can only help in the long run.

Also, if an individual or company has refused money the first time round don't be negative about contacting them again. You never know, circumstances might have changed. Let them know how you are doing, what you've learnt and how proud you are to have survived your first year (albeit without their help). This might inspire them to sponsor you for your second year, because they now realise that your journey *is* something they want to be a part of.

At the end of the document you can see my letter of acknowledgement and thanks...

And my Christmas update letter...

If you aren't on a scholarship, can your school still help?

Many institutions can offer financial assistance if you are in need. The best thing to do is to make sure that your tutor or head of year is aware of your situation. They will have dealt with hundreds of students before you and will have first hand experience of how best to help.

- a) Find out if your school has an internal Hardship Fund (although sometimes this is only an option for 2nd and 3rd year students and remember to befriend the people who work in the finance office!)
- b) The school may be able to offer subsidised meals in the canteen etc.

Don't underestimate yourself - we are extraordinary human beings, and you can also help yourself.

Firstly, get a job. Start to take responsibility for the part of your income that you can control. Only when you are doing all you yourself can, do you have the right to ask other people to give you their money.

Get the support from your community. Organising charitable concerts, or sponsored runs can be very effective and if you have a large family/friend-base you can get lots of support from this avenue.

Don't try to live beyond your means

Going to drama school can be a bit of a culture clash.

Imagine: a large group of people, from different backgrounds, with different upbringings all with a different financial profile. Some on a scholarship/some not. Some with lots of money/some with no money. The important thing is to keep on top of your bank balance.

It can be difficult to curb your spending when you want to get to know everybody and go to lunch or the cinema or on a big night out with your year. But it is so important to keep in mind how much money *you* actually have to spend. If you have a weekend job, don't skip work to go on an outing with your new contemporaries, because in a few weeks everyone will know each other anyway. Take responsibility for your finances as much as you can, because it is more important to earn enough money to keep yourself afloat. You will make lots of great friends at drama school, but ultimately you are here for *your* training.

Helpful websites

The Stage has a 'How To' guide on funding drama school:

<http://www.thestage.co.uk/connect/howto/funding.php>

A scholarship search engine:

<http://www.scholarship-search.org.uk>

The *NCDT* has information on sources of funding in their Guide to Training section:

<http://www.ncdt.co.uk>

The *Conference of Drama Schools* has details on the types of funding offered at each institution:

<http://www.drama.ac.uk>

The *Directory of Grant Making Trusts* is an incredibly comprehensive resource:

<http://www.grantsonline.org.uk>

A fairly recent, up-to-date website:

<http://www.studentcashpoint.co.uk>

My own personal favourite:

<http://www.google.co.uk>

Letter of acknowledgment and thanks

Your Name
Your
Address
Goes
Here
Email: your_name@email.com
Tel: 07912345678

Dear

I have gratefully received your donation.

Thank you for investing in my future!

What you have given will work towards changing my life and somewhere down the line someone else's life too. You will receive twice yearly letters when I begin my training – one at Christmas and one in July; detailing the progress I have made and my experience of drama school.

I really appreciate that you have wanted to help me and I am truly indebted to you. With the money that you have given I will be able to train at the best drama school in Europe and become the best performer I possibly can.

Thank you again!

With love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Madeline". The signature is written in a light brown or tan ink on a white background.

Update Letter

Your Name
Your
Address
Goes
Here

Email: your_name@email.com
Tel: 07912345678

8th December 2008

Dear

I write to you now, sat in my flat in London reflecting on the most amazing few months I have experienced of late.

If I may, I will take you as far back as April 2008 when I received the great news that I had been accepted at the Arts Educational Schools, London! Although I have now completed the first term of my first year there, I still often find a little smile creep on to my face as I marvel at what I have achieved. (I have enclosed a reference from my Head of Year so you can get their side of the story too!)

The school welcomed us warmly with a fresher's party, and then came the hard work. We would sign in at 8am and leave the building at 6.30pm (unless we had rehearsals, in which case we could stay as long as 10pm). Class is hard and we are encouraged to push ourselves as opposed to being spoon fed, which is mentally challenging but rewarding. I am learning how to really use and strengthen my body so that I can be a technically good dancer but also how to be an intelligent dancer. Singing has also been a steep learning curve. I am accumulating masses of new repertoire from my teacher John Owen Edwards (an incredibly successful West End musical director and operatic conductor,) and strengthening my vocal apparatus with my technique tutor Ceris Deverill (opera trained at the Royal College of Music).

I have also made some amazing new friends, and as I spend all day every day with the same people we have become our own little family. Due to the intensity of the course and how involved you get with everybody's progression I have a very strong bond with everyone there and although I am looking forward to going home to see my own family, I know I will miss them intensely.

In the first year we are not given an abundance of opportunities to perform (as we are focusing on technique and strength), however we have done our Song and Dance project to the musical *Barnum*, our "Lonely Hearts" (acting) project in which we had to create a character from an ad in the paper and take them on blind dates, and our dance project to rock musical *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*. We also get the

chance to perform in front of our year once a week in first year Performance Class. For my song I was given "Funny Honey" from *Chicago*, and although it was a little strange at first singing to everybody in my year I found it really useful to put in to practice everything I had been learning in acting, singing lessons and acting

through song workshops. We are given immediate feedback from the head of acting which is always constructive and helpful.

I feel extremely grateful to be training at Arts Ed, not only because it is wonderful being there but also because its amazing reputation gives students opportunities others could only dream of. And so last night I made my West End debut in *Christmas in New York!* Not only was it an amazingly rare opportunity, but also the first step towards the rest of my career as a professional musical theatre performer. What made it even more special was a member of the principal cast, Adrian Hansel. The first musical I ever saw was *Fame the Musical* at the Aldwych Theatre and playing the lead was Adrian. It was his performance that night that inspired me to dance (I still have the merchandised t-shirt although it now fits like a crop top). Fast forward about eight years, he is still playing the lead (he is now Seaweed in *Hairspray* at the Shaftesbury Theatre) and I am still passionate and driven but the difference is that I am actively working towards my dream. To meet and work with him was such an honour, and after only 11 weeks of training I am so proud of my class (who were the ensemble in the show) and what we have achieved. I know that for all of us it was a very special night.

I have had a taste of what life is like after graduation and now I am fully fired up and ready to go back in January to work even harder. These amazing experiences have been made possible by you and the money that you gave to help me start the course, but I need your help again now to keep me there.

Fees for the second term are due on the first day back (Monday 5th January 2009) and although my student loan covers £1,500 of the fees I still have £2,083.33 left to cover. Any money that you can give will help, no matter how small the amount, because on top of these fees I have to finance money for food and rent. Which, during term time I have been able to cover myself with my part time job. However, it is not possible to find money for food and rent *and* fees when I am also doing a 50 hour week at college.

So if there is any part of you that is still interested in what I am doing here then please donate again so that I can stay. It would be absolutely heartbreaking to have to leave prematurely and bury all the amazing memories I have collected in these past few months. I can't tell you how much I do appreciate what you gave because it has allowed me to discover myself in the most perfect of places and I am truly thankful for your gift to me.

"I can no other answer make, but thanks, thanks and thanks."

-William Shakespeare

I hope you have a very Merry Christmas!

With love,

Your help can make a difference.

I have just won a place on the three year Musical Theatre course at the Arts Educational School in London, one of the most respected academies in the world. However, before I can take up the place in September I must find £10,750 for each year's fees, plus living expenses for my time there. With no financial resources of my own, I am asking for your help.

To work as a West End performer has been my dream for many years. At last that dream is within reach, and I cannot begin to tell you how fiercely happy, proud, scared, excited and relieved that makes me. This is only the beginning of course, and there is much work to be done, many disappointments to be felt, many rejections to be had before I make it as a successful performer. But with your help I can get there.



Photo: Sophie Lowen.

In return...

I can offer little in return for your generosity, except this promise: with your contribution for support, I will work my hardest to be the best performer I can possibly be, both during training and for the rest of my career.

Cover photo: Sophie Lowen



Photo: Sophie Lowen.

In addition I will send you:

- A letter of acknowledgement and thanks.
- Twice-yearly letters detailing my progress through drama school.
- Notice of public performances in London.
- Occasional updates thereafter to let you know how your investment is paying off.

A final promise...

Most professional musical theatre performers and actors are acutely aware of the struggle for funding that young performers face during training. As such is it increasingly common for those who have made successes of their careers to give something back to the profession by supporting young talent.

This is the promise that I make now: throughout my career I will nurture and encourage young talent, and when I am able then I will too 'give something back' by supporting future young performers in training.

So it doesn't end here. The money you give now will continue to work for the benefit of struggling young performers for many years to come.

Madeleine

Questions & Answers

How much do you need to raise?

With fees of £10,750 per year and living expenses of just under £8,000 per year, I will need to raise just under £55,000 for the three year course. (There is a breakdown of these costs on the back page.)

What public funding is available to you?

The only serious possibility of public funding comes in the shape of the government's Dance and Drama Awards (DaDA). These are administered through the school, however there are restrictions on the amount of funding and DaDA's are available to up to 58% of the students accepted by the school. If awarded a DaDA I would receive a scholarship to cover all but £1,225 of each year's fees (living expenses are not covered and I would not be eligible to apply for a low-interest student loan). If I did not receive a DaDA then I would be liable for the full amount of the fees and would have to borrow at commercial rates. At the time of going to press it is not known if I have a DaDA scholarship.

Why can't you get yourself a part-time job like other students?

Most university students have less than 20 hours of classes a week. Arts Ed students frequently have in excess of 50 hours of classes per week, with preparation time on top of that. Students are strongly discouraged from taking outside work. Some have to, but their study is necessarily affected.

Why fund a performer to train when there are already too many performers?

Without funding, the profession would be inaccessible to some of the most talented young performers we have. Thus only those with affluent families could afford the necessary training. The only criteria for access to training should be talent and commitment.

Aren't there better causes to support?

There is terrible poverty and injustice both in our society and in the world at large. If by supporting me you would give less to Oxfam, Shelter, Amnesty or similar then I ask you to focus your attention on these charities, whose work literally saves lives. However, if you are able to support me in addition to your charitable giving then you will be helping to lay the foundations for the next generation of performers such as Julie Andrews DBE, Sarah Brightman and Darcey Bussell CBE, all of whom trained at the Arts Educational Schools.

Who else trained at the Arts Educational Schools?

Among others:-
Amanda Barrie, Charlie Brooks, Martin Clunes, Joan Collins, Adam Cooper, Leslie Crowther, Janie Dee, Nigel Harman, Nigel Havers, Finola Hughes, Glynis Johns, Bonnie Langford, Stephanie Lawrence, Margaret Lockwood, Cherie Lunghi, Jane Seymour OBE, Carole Shelley, Hugo Speer, Ben Stevenson, Summer Strallen, Sally-Ann Triplett, Will Young and Catherine Zeta-Jones.

Sponsorship Form

I would like to support Madeleine Mantock during her training at the Arts Educational Schools London.

Name: *(please print)*

Address:

.....Post Code:

Email:

I wish to contribute to **fees only** with a donation of £ and include a cheque to 'Arts Educational Schools London'

I wish to contribute to **fees and living expenses** with...

A one-off donation of £ and enclose a cheque payable to 'Madeleine Mantock'

A regular donation of £ per month/year during the course, and have completed the standing order instruction below.

Instruction to your Bank to pay a Standing Order

Please fill in this form and return it to: Your Name, Your Address

Name & full postal address of your Bank or Building Society:

To: The Manager,.....Bank/Building Society

Address:.....

.....Postcode:.....

Name(s) of Account Holder(s):.....

Bank/Building Society a/c number _____

Branch Sort Code ___ - ___ - ___

Please pay the sum of £ (in words.....) monthly/annually to 'Madeleine Mantock' at NatWest, Sutton-in-Ashfield (Sort Code: 5x-xx-xx a/c: 4xxxxxxx).

The first payment should be made on/...../20..... (the course starts 8/9/2008)

The final payment should be made on/...../20..... (the course finishes July 2011)

Signature(s):.....Date:.....