

Sam Stacey

RADA Graduate 2014

'RADA built my skills base and trained me for a career I love.'

Sam Stacey graduated from the **BA in Technical Theatre and Stage Management (TTSM)** at RADA. After completing a **Foundation degree (FdA) in TTSM** he progressed to a third year specialising in scenic construction to top-up his studies to BA-level. When he finished his course he went straight into a position with Footprint Scenery.

We spoke to Sam about his path to RADA, his time here, and his new job.

'Well I wasn't very interested in school and felt like I was the least likely to succeed because I couldn't see a career that didn't depend on academic studies, but then I went to Stratford College and did a Diploma in Technical Theatre. I had to travel an hour and a half each way from home, but it was much more engaging.'

After completing the Diploma, Sam applied to RADA, *'Waiting for my interview I felt like everyone around me had a huge portfolio and I didn't, but I spoke about the projects I'd been involved in hoping that they would see my enthusiasm, and they gave me a place. Making the move to London was really hard and the course was very full-on. It was a pretty terrifying experience, but I really enjoyed finding out about everything in the first year.'*

Students on the FdA TTSM course are given the chance in their first year to work across all the areas associated with backstage and stage management including technical aspects such as lighting design, property making and sound design. In the second year, students start to specialise on particular areas and gain the skills for that area.

'At the start of my second year, I was appointed Head of Department for Construction on RADA's production of Howard Brenton's Bloody Poetry. While I was doing that I realised that I'd found the areas in which I wanted to specialise.' Sam was Head of Department three more times during that second year, building both scenery and his confidence. He then decided to apply to progress from his FdA to BA-level, specialising in scenic construction.



He said, *'The BA year is completely skills-based to prepare us for professional work in the industry. The year made us question instructions and spot flaws, thinking through processes from beginning to end.'* So Sam can now spot what won't work in a set of designs and pre-empt any problems, saving energy, time and money. Sam says *'I left RADA feeling completely prepared for working life.'*

In his position at Footprint Scenery Sam works specifically with a CNC Router. CNC is a Computer Controlled Cutting Machine; the technology is widely used in design processes because it saves time and wastage. It is essentially a router on a motor arm that brings into reality the shapes that the designer creates in the CAD (Computer Aided Design) software and allows for multiple repetitions of cutting.

'Barely a job goes by that we don't use it [CNC] - it can do in a day what might take us a month and every piece will be perfect or within a .25mm tolerance!' However, the machine won't mitigate for human error, and Sam's job is to make certain that every drawing is completely accurate. The training Sam received at RADA helped him understand and work with the CNC technology quickly, as well as giving him knowledge of the materials he works with on a daily basis.

Footprint Scenery advertised a temporary vacancy and while they were waiting to go through the recruitment process Sam was taken on immediately as a temp. *'On graduation day I found out that the job was permanent, which was brilliant. I couldn't have had a better opportunity than RADA has given me - they built my skills base and trained me for a career I love.'*