

Tom Lewis

First Year BA (Hons) in Acting

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Q. Can you tell me a little bit about your background?

I'm originally from Leeds, but I moved to London at 19. I finished my A Levels and worked for a year before moving here and then worked for another two years. I couldn't have not worked after I finished school - my parents weren't in a position to support me so I've always supported myself.

I started doing some drama on the side and eventually was invited to do a professional production at The Arcola Theatre. I was acting alongside a recent graduate at RADA who encouraged me to apply. I always knew I wanted to act but I think it's good that I got some 'life-experience' before I came to drama school.

Q. Did you feel like there were financial barriers in coming to RADA?

I was aware that I would get a full student loan coming to RADA, although I thought that drama school fees would be more expensive. Really, we're just like all other university students. Actually, we get more hours for free. You hear these days that students get only eight hours or less per week of contact hours whereas we're in every day, at least 9 to 5 doing intensive work. We're getting much more for our money.

I get financial help from both Student Finance and from RADA. I get sponsored meals which is one of the best things as otherwise I would be living really unhealthily! I have a really big lunch from the refectory here and then something small like a sandwich when I get home so my food expenditure is tiny.

RADA offers to help everyone, no matter of circumstance. Even people who, on the surface, you might think are able to cope on their own have some financial help - it can really make a difference. There is a real mix of people; yes some people have come from private schools (although most haven't) and there are some people who are in their 30's and up. It makes for a great and varied learning experience.



Q. Do you think there is a certain perception of RADA?

What are people's reactions when you say you go here? I think there are two main perceptions of RADA; first and foremost that it's the best school! Everyone knows the name, even back home!

Secondly, I think the impression is that RADA is full of toffs! I've been out with people from other drama schools and even they think that everyone who comes here is posh. I find it so weird that people say that because it's just not true! RADA is really judged on it's past - it has a lot of alumni that are 'white and middle-class', but it's not exclusively that. I've found it very inclusive.

Out of all of the auditions I've done, RADA is the best one. You're not judged at all, except for your talent. Before my first audition (I got in on my second attempt) I was intimidated because it's RADA. I think the 'Royal' in the name gives that impression, especially when you're from a small town.

I think the working-class/middle-class debate needs to be applied after you leave drama school. People whose parents can support them when they haven't got that much work are really blessed - London is very expensive and so it is true that working-class actors can be penalised after they finish their training. However, that's not RADA's fault - it's something that needs to be addressed in society.