



SCHOOL OF ENGLISH AND HUMANITIES

**MASTER OF ARTS**  
**CREATIVE PRODUCING**  
**for**  
**Theatre and Live Performance**

**GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS**  
**2009**

in association with



2007 LAURENCE OLIVIER AWARD WINNER

This Guide provides information about Birkbeck's

**MA in CREATIVE PRODUCING  
for Theatre and Live Performance.**

The Programme begins in early September each year.

**Applications for 2009-10 are welcome now.**

Details of how to make your application are given on pages 9 - 11

For applications received by **Wednesday 22 April 2009** there will be a round of selection interviews on **Saturday 23 May**.

For applications received by **Wednesday 27 May 2009** there will be a round of selection interviews on **Saturday 20 June**.

If vacant places remain on the programme after these interviews, further rounds of selection interviews for later applications will be arranged.

If you have questions about the programme or the application process you should email the Programme Director, Andrew McKinnon, at **[a.mckinnon@english.bbk.ac.uk](mailto:a.mckinnon@english.bbk.ac.uk)**

If you want to make enquiries in writing please write to  
**Andrew McKinnon  
Birkbeck, University of London  
School of English and Humanities  
Malet Street  
London, WC1E 7HX**

Please include a contact 'phone number in your email or letter.

## Introduction

The MA in Creative Producing for Theatre and Live Performance prepares students for professional roles as creative producers in a wide variety of theatre and live performance events including outdoor performance and street arts. It was launched by Birkbeck in September 2008.

This specialist Programme is practice-centred and practice-based. It is firmly rooted in the present-day realities of the role of the professional creative producer, and in the essential blend of personal taste and judgement, practical skills, creative team working, and problem solving needed for that role.

The Programme is based on current industrial practice and has been planned in consultation with a wide range of industry professionals. Its special features include the extensive direct input of professional practitioners.

The Programme is designed to appeal to a diverse range of potential students, and this is reflected in its diverse content, teaching and assessment methods.

The MA in Creative Producing is operated in association with the Theatre Royal Stratford East [www.stratfordeast.com](http://www.stratfordeast.com). The MA Programme is based at Birkbeck Stratford. Teaching takes place in Stratford East and Bloomsbury.

The MA in Creative Producing works in close association with the Birkbeck MFA in Theatre Directing, allowing students on both Programmes to inter-relate and interact. <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/study/pg/theatrestudies/index.html>

## Notes

1 The MA in Creative Producing for Theatre and Live Performance is a focussed programme specifically intended for those who want to become professional creative producers. It is not an arts management or arts administration course. If you are looking for such a course at Birkbeck please go to [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/study/all\\_courses/artsmanagement.html](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/study/all_courses/artsmanagement.html)

2 Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information about the MA in Creative Producing that is given in this document. However, Birkbeck reserves the right to vary without notice the contents of courses or parts of courses and to modify facilities and arrangements for students. Applicants and students should confirm the up-to-date position when they need to know it.

## The Programme Structure

The Programme is made up of Units that gradually build and consolidate your awareness and experience of the work of the creative producer. There are many opportunities during these Units to study and explore the work of the creative producer in practical contexts.

The Programme is structured around three key areas of study and experience

- creativity and the producer
- the producer's key skills and competencies
- the producer's work with people.

Of course these areas are all very closely linked in professional practice, but for teaching and learning purposes the Programme is divided into seven Units. Though these Units may seem separate, in practice they are interdependent and there will be constant cross-reference between them throughout the Programme. Most of the Units are 'progressive', which means that you must have completed the work of one Unit in order to be able to start on the work of the next.

## The Programme Units

The Programme has seven Units –

One      The Creative Producer

Two      The Producer's Toolkit      Three      Production Finance

Four      Producers & People      Five      Producers & Research

Six      Being a Producer      Seven      Personal Project

## UNIT ONE - The Creative Producer

This Unit runs throughout the whole Programme. It allows you to acquire a fully rounded understanding of your work as a creative producer. Throughout the Unit there will be classes, sessions and tutorials helping you to identify and understand your ideas and abilities and how best you can use your creative instincts in producing. The Unit develops your awareness of the kind of producer you want to be, and what you must do to achieve that goal. The UNIT ONE Induction begins the Programme, introducing you to its processes and structures and clarifying the demands of postgraduate study. It also allows us to make an appraisal of your individual needs on the Programme. In the autumn the UNIT ONE Observational Secondment allows you to spend about four weeks on an observational secondment to an arts organisation, venue or producing organisation in Greater London.

## **UNIT TWO - The Producer's Toolkit**

This Unit gives you a comprehensive grounding in the core skills that the professional producer needs, taking you from the foundations of the producer's role through technical terminologies through an understanding of structures through budgeting and scheduling to the basics of current legislation. At the end of this intensive and challenging Unit you will have acquired a secure foundation for the remainder of the Programme and for your future producing work.

## **UNIT THREE - Production Finance**

The Unit enables you to understand the financial realities of commercial and subsidised productions. It gives you valuable insights into raising and controlling finance for productions and into the producer's relationship with backers and investors. It introduces you to how public subsidy works and how it can be approached; co-productions between the commercial and subsidised sectors; sponsorship; and funding from trusts.

## **UNIT FOUR - Producers and People**

In this Unit you study the connections between the producer and two related sets of people – artists and creative teams; and communities and audiences. Producers have a very close relationship with artists and creative teams; and the Unit examines the commissioning of artists, developing and managing creative teams, contracts, employment practices and legislation, and intellectual property.

A producer's relationship with audiences and communities is different but just as important, and this Unit introduces you to strategies for identifying and understanding audiences, for marketing, publicity and media relationships; as well as for working with and among communities, educational and activist aspects, and building community interaction long-term.

## **UNIT FIVE – The Producer and Research**

This Unit enables you to acquire an understanding of analysis, research and exposition at postgraduate level. You will participate in and complete the work of one of a range of MA Options offered within the School of English and Humanities and the School of Law at Birkbeck. (You will be given guidance about choosing your Unit Five Option soon after you start your studies.) This Unit provides you with a broad model of how to think, study and learn in depth. It gives you tools of analysis, and helps you to make your analysis available to others and get them committed to it - all crucial skills for the creative producer. *Please note that your admission to any specific Option cannot be guaranteed.*

## UNIT SIX - Being a Producer

In this Unit you turn your attention to how you are going to maintain your role as a creative producer in practice terms. It examines business models for producers in the UK and helps you to investigate how you can best support yourself professionally. Essential matters such as sustaining entrepreneurship and dealing with taxation and company registration will be explored. The Unit also examines your personal management – how you plan for the future, keep up with new developments, handle stress and renew yourself creatively.

## UNIT SEVEN – Personal Project

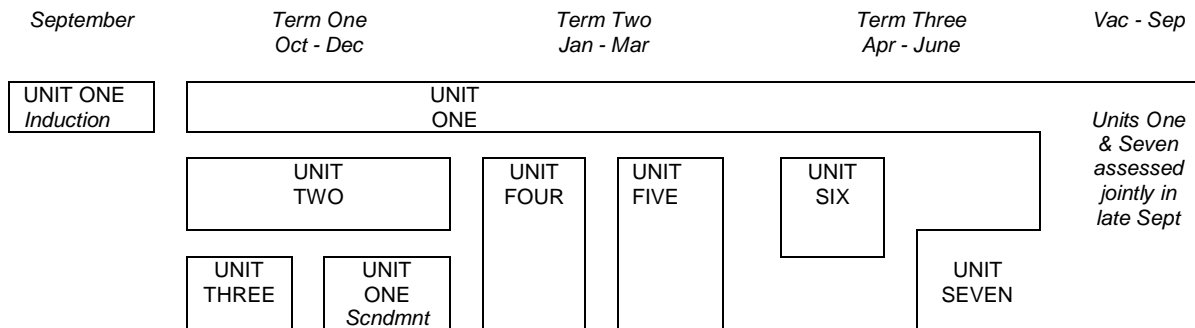
This Unit allows you to build on what you have learned by exploring in depth an aspect of your producing interests through a personally chosen project. There are three possible models for this.

1. Full Professional Secondment / Experience
2. Short Professional Secondment / Experience with Short Dissertation
3. Full Dissertation

These models can be interpreted flexibly in line with your particular interests provided your proposal can accommodate the Unit’s assessment guidelines. Your Personal Project should draw together your experience of the Programme and express your personal understanding of the creative producer’s work.

## The Units through the Year

The units are distributed throughout the year as shown below. You will see that Unit One (‘The Creative Producer’) is always present to help you relate everything you learn to the ‘bigger picture’ of yourself as a developing professional creative producer.



*This diagram is not to scale and does not indicate the relative duration of Units.*

### The Units Month by Month

This diagram explains more fully how the Units will appear in the calendar of the Programme. A more detailed week-by-week calendar for 2009-10 will be available in due course.

SEPTEMBER	Unit One <i>Induction</i>		
OCTOBER	Unit One	Unit Two	
NOVEMBER	Unit One <i>Secondment</i>	Unit Two	Unit Three
DECEMBER	Unit One <i>Secondment</i>	Unit Two	Unit Three
[VACATION]			
JANUARY	Unit One	Unit Four	Unit Five
FEBRUARY	Unit One	Unit Four	Unit Five
MARCH	Unit One	Unit Four	Unit Five
[VACATION]			
APRIL	Unit One	Unit Six	
MAY	Unit One	Unit Six	Unit Seven
JUNE	Unit One		Unit Seven
[VACATION]			
SEPTEMBER	Unit One	<i>assessed with</i>	Unit Seven

## **A Full-Time Programme**

The Programme covers one full year from September to September. You will be asked to do some preparation before classes start in early September 2009 (exact date to be confirmed), with full-time attendance from then on through the three academic terms until late May 2010. Individual work on your 'Personal Project' then continues until the final assessment of Units One and Seven in September 2010.

You will attend teaching sessions on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays (daytime and evening) at Birkbeck – in Stratford or Bloomsbury - during term-time. The number of sessions will vary from week to week. There may occasionally be classes and sessions at other times, but you will always be notified about the times of these well in advance. In addition you will have to undertake a substantial amount of private work and study originating from these classes and as preparation for future sessions.

It is possible for a student to study 'half-time' by splitting the Programme into two halves and taking it over two years. However this still requires full-time attendance for Units when it is appropriate during these two years. Please do not hesitate to ask if you would like more details about this possibility.

## **Teaching and Learning**

Several different methods of teaching and learning feature on the Programme. Small-group practical workshops, presentations, discussions, classes, and seminars will be held in Stratford East and Bloomsbury. These will very often be taken by experienced professional practitioners. There may also be teaching or study visits to other appropriate places in London.

As the Programme is closely related to the already-established Birkbeck MFA in Theatre Directing, you will share some teaching and learning experiences with MFA students.

Many classes and sessions will be interactive and you will regularly be asked to make short presentations or 'pitches' as part of the class-work. Practical exercises will frequently be used in classes, drawing on examples taken from the realities of professional theatre and live performance.

Throughout your time at Birkbeck you will have regular one-to-one tutorials with the Programme Director, and occasional tutorials from other appropriate professional practitioners.

## **Assessment**

In each Unit there is at least one opportunity for you to demonstrate your understanding of the work you have done in the Unit, which is assessed at the end of the Unit or shortly after it has finished. In most Units the primary assessment is by means of a Presentation that you will make to the whole group plus appropriate tutors to express your understanding of the work.

You will also be required to submit 'supporting material' to back-up your Presentation and be assessed alongside it. As appropriate, this might be a mixture of written material, notes and other illustrative material (such as a portfolio of visual references, for example).

Within several Units you will also participate in or be set practical projects or exercises, which will be marked and form part of the overall assessment of the Unit. At least one experienced professional practitioner will be involved in the assessment of your work for most Units.

The assessment of Unit Five - 'Research Skills' - will usually be done by means of a formal essay. Classes in study-skills and presentation are included as part of the Programme.

## **Secondments**

The Admission Process and the Unit One Induction will allow us to make a careful assessment of your strengths as a potential professional creative director and of your needs during the Programme. You will be encouraged to express your ambitions and your own understanding of your needs during this process.

Once you have started on the Programme you will be assigned a Unit One Observational Secondment to an arts organisation, venue or producing organisation in Greater London, which will take place sometime during the second half of the autumn term. *Please note that you cannot be guaranteed a choice of secondments in Unit One; nor can you be guaranteed a secondment to a particular kind of organisation.* Whatever Unit One Secondment you are offered will give you an opportunity to see an environment in which creative producers have to work, and to draw conclusions from that experience.

If you want to include a secondment in your Unit Seven Personal Project, then you may choose freely where you want to go. You will make the arrangements for the secondment yourself, with the full support of the Programme Director. Your process in getting and arranging this secondment will form part of your work in Unit Seven.

## The Admission Process

We want to admit the most talented, qualified and appropriate students to this Programme. During the admission process we will assess your potential to cope with the demands of the Programme and achieve the high standard required on completion. It is also important that we assess the suitability of the Programme for you. The philosophy and content of the Programme may not be appropriate for every applicant.

The admission process is therefore designed to allow us to be satisfied that you have

- the necessary abilities to cope with the demands of this Programme;
- the skills and understanding needed at this level of expectation; and
- the personal qualities and commitment needed to complete this Programme.

## Entrance Requirements

We take a broad view of entrance requirements and we acknowledge the value of professional and life experience as well as formal academic qualifications.

When you apply we expect you to have had enough previous experience of theatre or live performance in its widest sense (e.g., events, music, outdoor performance, street arts, festivals, etc., etc.) to allow you to appreciate the realities of life in the industry.

We also expect you to have adequate basic computer / IT skills, in particular a basic working knowledge of Microsoft Excel and PowerPoint.

In addition you should have **one of the following**

- an appreciable amount (normally three years) of directly relevant professional or professional-level work-experience; **or**
- a good honours degree from a UK university (or a directly comparable qualification from a non-UK university); **or**
- an undergraduate - or postgraduate-level diploma from a recognised UK drama school (or a directly comparable qualification from a non-UK drama school).

## **Applications**

In addition to completing the standard Birkbeck application form you must answer some specific questions about your experience of - and commitment to – theatre or live performance, and about your ambitions. You must also supply details of two referees. At least one of these referees must be able to supply information about your experience of theatre or live performance.

## **Candidates from Overseas**

Candidates from overseas must attend the selection process in person. If your first language is not English you must have certified evidence of your proficiency in spoken and written English prior to admission to the Programme, at a minimum level of 7.5 on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or its equivalent.

## **Selection Process**

After considering each written application, those applicants who are considered to be suitably qualified will be invited to participate in the Programme's selection process. During that process each candidate's potential to become a professional creative producer will be scrutinised and assessed in interview and also by means of at least one practical task.

## **Making an Application**

You should supply the Birkbeck Registry with the following three items, which should be sent together, not separately to the Registry.

1. A completed copy of the standard Birkbeck postgraduate application form.
2. A copy of your up-to-date CV.
3. A 'supporting statement' consisting of some reasonably short written answers to the questions supplied below (maximum 500 words response to each question)

**Keep a copy of all three parts of your application for future reference.**

## 1 The Application Form

This is the general application form for all postgraduate courses at Birkbeck College and should be completed as fully as possible. With regard to the section on **Professional Experience**, remember that your CV will supplement the brief summary details you can give here.

With regard to your **Referees**, at least one of these referees must be able to supply adequate information about your experience of theatre and/or live performance. The status or job-title of this Referee is much less important than her/his ability to testify to this experience, which may or may not include producing – the Programme does not prescribe a minimum level of producing experience before admission. **Please supply telephone numbers and email addresses for both your referees.**

## 2 The CV

Your CV should include details of all your experience of theatre and/or live performance, not just any producing experience you might have had.

## 3 The Supporting Statement

This should consist of your responses to each of the following questions or statements, which are designed to provide additional information about your experience of (and commitment to) producing and about your aims, interests and concerns as a future professional creative producer. Your responses are significant and will be fully taken into account by Selection Panels.

1. Describe a theatre or live performance project, large or small, that you want to produce.
2. What do you believe is the role of a creative producer when working with actors, performers, or other artistic collaborators?
3. If you graduate from this Programme in 2010, what do you see yourself doing in five years time?

Each question should be answered in not more than 500 words, but your answers can be shorter than this if you wish! Please note that, contrary to what is said on the application form, you are not expected to confine this 'supporting statement' to one sheet.

It is very important to remember that there are no 'correct' answers to any of these questions. We expect our applicants to reveal a wide range of experience, opinions, interests and ambitions. Feel free to be candid. We will be very interested to read your honest opinions and beliefs.