

## LONDON, UK SEMESTER ABROAD: THE FOUNDATIONS OF CLASSICAL ACTING

My semester in London has been one of the most influential moments of my actor training thus far. Every day I spent at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) was made up of artistic exploration and discovery, I was able to experience some of the greatest art available in the world, and the connections I made will serve me for the rest of my career.

While at the LAMDA, I took 15 credits of performance classes and performed in 3 staged productions of classical plays. My coursework in Acting, Voice and Speech, Movement, Singing, Historical Dance, and the Alexander Technique prepared me for these performances in front of my peers in London. The staff at LAMDA helped me to expand my skillset and actor “type” through these performances, casting me in multiple roles to break the mold of the actor I thought I was. I played three male roles during my time at LAMDA, culminating in my performance of Malvolio in Shakespeare’s comedy *Twelfth Night*. I believe this role was artistically career-altering for me, allowing me to explore my voice and physicality in a new way.



*Malvolio in “Twelfth Night” at LAMDA*

During my coursework, I also experienced this profound artistic transformation. I discovered a new sense of release that I have never before found in my performance, especially through my work in Clowning and Voice. “To act is just to play,” my movement professor constantly reminded me. In London I was able to rediscover the playful energy of theatre, and I will continue to do so in the years to come.



*Clowning class with my LAMDA cohort*

While abroad, I attended over 51 plays in two different countries. Seeing this much theatre influenced me as much as the actor training I received did. While I attended performances, museums, and public art installations, I kept a journal of my thoughts and opinions about the art I witnessed, forcing myself to digest everything I saw in an artistic and constructive way. Allowing myself to be critical of theatre—even the best theatre in the world—gave me a new footing and confidence as a theatre practitioner and director as well as an actor.

At the conclusion of my training at LAMDA, I was able to sit down with all of my professors and discuss the next steps in my career. I know there is much more work to be done to become the actor I want to be, but my time in London has brought me one step closer to creating the art I think the world needs. I cannot thank the Miller Arts Scholars Program more for the gift they have given me in allowing me to conduct my artistic research in London, and cannot wait to bring the lessons I learned abroad to the University of Virginia and Charlottesville communities, as we create meaningful art for years to come.