

Emma Hardy, Press Manager, Young Vic Theatre



Course of study	BA English Literature	Year of graduation	2014
City / Region / Country	London		

1. Tell us more about your job; an example of day-to-day work, average week, or a recent project (or how would you describe your job to a friend?).

I am the press manager for the Young Vic theatre, based in Waterloo. I manage the press and communications strategy for the organisation, including securing press coverage promoting the award-winning productions on stage at the theatre in London, shows on tour around the world, the training and development programmes the theatre runs for early-career theatre artists, the creative projects being run within the community, and the digital projects the theatre produces online.

I work on the delivery of individual show press campaigns and major press announcements - for example, when the theatre announces a new season of work. The media I engage crosses print, broadcast, online and social media. I will work closely with actors, writers, directors and creatives to secure individual coverage for them relating to the production, share information with the press for preview pieces, interviews and reviews, arrange press junkets, red carpet appearances, and generally help a journalist or writer acquire the information they need so that they cover our work accurately and positively. A large part of the job is working with writers and directors to ensure I am conveying their vision for their production to the media correctly, and responding to complex, timely enquiries from the press. I also manage media requests for the Artistic Director, including preparing briefing papers and delivering his vision via the media. I manage the general reputation

of the theatre and its employees and ensuring strong relationships with the rest of the cultural sector including sharing ideas and best practice.

During this year when the theatre has been shut, I have spent much more time generating press highlighting the insecurity in the sector, and the support the industry requires to make it through this time.

2. What attributes make someone successful in this job (or what skills are involved in your current role)?

As a publicist, it is important to be able to talk and write succinctly, persuasively and passionately about the thing you are promoting, with great accuracy. It involves intuitively knowing what makes a compelling story or a news 'hook' for a media outlet, and ensuring that matches the key message you are trying to convey. The job is more creative than you might think in terms of crafting a narrative and getting the attention of a journalist.

In PR, you need to be a good multi-tasker, with an ability to horizon-scan for future stories, angles and opportunities. An important attribute is also anticipating moments of potential vulnerability or risk, so these can be mitigated and managed.

PR involves building and maintaining good relationships with media contacts; often these involve honesty and openness. More and more, an understanding of social media and how that interplays or potentially supersedes more 'traditional' media channels is also important.

3. What do you like most about your job?

The Young Vic is trailblazing in its work around shaping a sector which is more representative, and telling the stories by people who have yet to be heard. As well as being an international powerhouse artistically, it simultaneously operates as a civic centre for the community, with local people at the heart of everything it does. That's a really rewarding mission to be helping support. No day is the same, and for me, being able to talk about and see theatre all the time is a dream job. I also find landing coverage which tells the story of the extraordinary work my colleagues do both on and off stage really rewarding.

4. What are the most challenging aspects (role or sector)?

The job is very busy, and often involves answering complex media enquiries at speed and thinking on your feet. However, this can also be where the best bit of the job lies; I like juggling different projects at once and working to imminent media deadlines.

5. How did your degree prepare you for your current role (or are there any skills/knowledge you developed which you are using now)?

I studied BA English Literature, so naturally the writing skills I developed are of great use in all areas of the job; from writing press releases and pitches to understanding tone of voice across different communication platforms. Further, an eye for detail and accuracy is important. Also, PR requires a knack for telling stories and crafting narratives, which studying English Literature definitely helped foster in me.

6. How did you get to where you are now in your career (or what experiences helped you)?

I didn't have any 'ins' to the industry, I just had been heavily involved in UCL Drama Society. I just sent my CV to loads of theatre PR agencies, and one of them took a punt on me in an entry-level position. I learnt a huge amount at that first company I worked for. From there, I moved to be

a Press Officer at the National Theatre for 3.5 years, before transferring to my current role at the Young Vic.

7. What advice would you give to current students about getting into / starting out in your sector? (e.g. relevant experiences, supportive people, necessary education)

I am a firm believer in writing to companies you want to work for, even if they aren't advertising or have a role open which is applicable. If you know you want to work for them, let them know. Good companies will keep CVs on file and be in touch if a position arises – I once had a PR agency contact me 2 years after sending in my CV to see if I was interested.

8. What is on the horizon within your industry that our students should know about? (positives or negatives)

This year has been a challenging one for the sector, and even with the Cultural Recovery Fund from the government, the cultural industries will struggle. The sector will look very different when we emerge on the other side. However, I hope art will be the thing which helps people to heal from this time and reconnect with each other, and those already in the industry are resolutely committed to ensuring it not just survives, but thrives.

9. If you could give a current student one piece of advice on something you wish you'd have known prior to starting your career what would it be?

Identify and know how to highlight your transferable skills. You'd be surprised how much you can already demonstrate you can do, which can be applied to your desired next step on your career path.