Alumnus/Alumna of the month

Introduction
Emma Warren-Thomas graduated from the UCL Department of Greek and Latin in 2008 with a BA honours degree in Classics with Study Abroad. She is now working as an Individual Giving Manager at the English National Opera.

What did you enjoy most about your time in Greek and Latin and at UCL?
I think I most enjoyed the fact that Greek and Latin was a small department and therefore very friendly and all the lecturers knew the students’ names and were supportive. Before that, I had studied Theoretical Physics for a few years at UCL and the Department of Physics is huge! It was not such a big step from Physics to Classics as it sounds, because Theoretical Physics is both logical and imaginative. I enjoyed parts of the Physics programme but I had taken Greek at ‘A’ level and loved Classics so this was where my heart truly lay.

What was your career path like after leaving UCL?
I had always loved theatre and the arts and, whilst in the Department, I was involved for two years running in the Departmental Greek plays at The Bloomsbury. I was props manager for Knights by Aristophanes and production manager for Medea by Euripides. I also helped with the stage design for Medea and was in the lighting crew for both! Whilst at university, I worked in the theatre bar and as an usher at the Hampstead Theatre in Swiss Cottage. Ushering was a wonderful job as you only had to do about 20 minutes’ work and yet got paid for watching lots of wonderful plays! I also had a three month internship in the Development Department of the Hampstead Theatre and I worked incredibly hard to learn as much as I could there.

In 2009, the job situation for graduates was terrible and I managed a cocktail bar in Kentish Town for a year. After that, I succeeded in getting a post as Development Assistant at the English Heritage head office in Holborn, so I was fund-raising and attending functions at lots of amazing venues, many of them castles! I left English Heritage to join the Royal Academy of Arts in Burlington House, Piccadilly, where I worked in the legacy giving programme. This sounds as though it might have been sad but, actually, it was wonderful, as I was liaising with people who had had a life-time of association with the Royal Academy and were delighted to think that they would be helping to sustain it in the future.
I must say that I have always managed to work in the most beautiful surroundings!

After working in a legacy programme, I wanted to acquire more experience of fund-raising for projects in the here and now, so I moved to the ENO about a year ago, where I fund-raise for unrestricted gifts through the Patron scheme. Patrons are people who give £1k *per annum* or more to the ENO. For this, they have priority booking and are invited to meet singers and directors and to attend opening parties. I also am involved in fund-raising for specific artistic projects such as the recent production of Wagner's *Mastersingers* which was hugely expensive: there was an enormous orchestra, the chorus was double the usual size and the performance was the length of two, so even rehearsals were incredibly long!

Another case was the recent production of “The Indian Queen” so we contacted Patrons who love Baroque music and who are fans of Peter Sellars, the Director! We also had to have an orchestra with special early music instruments in a raised orchestra pit.

**What do you like most about your current job?**
The ENO is a wonderful place to be, I love working in opera and I find it really interesting to meet and get to know the patrons. It is an extremely people-oriented job. There is an Events team within the Development team and we work together to decide which events would best suit the patrons (and then the Events team does the organising!) For instance, yesterday we held an afternoon tea with Mike Leigh, who will direct “The Pirates of Penzance” later in the spring. Actually, if you become a Friend of ENO for only £50 a year, you can attend dress rehearsals which are really interesting.
What was your first-ever job?
My first ever job was working for a camping shop near Turnpike Lane over the summer in order to save for a holiday. I turned up for the interview smartly dressed with kitten heels! However, I managed to persuade them that I knew about camping as I had climbed Mount Kilimanjaro with my school when I was 15 as part of World Challenge, and also climbed in the Zanskar Valley of the Himalayas.

What has been your favourite job?
My job at the ENO. I am not an artist but love being able to facilitate what artists do. There has been a lot of concern in the media recently over the potential Arts Council funding cut to the ENO. However, we are not so concerned! Actually, the Arts Council has confirmed the next two years of funding and wants to review our plans before confirming the third year of funding in November 2015. ENO recognises the need to be less reliant on public funding and we are looking at opening up the Coliseum during the day with a café and restaurant and starting a new production centre. We are also working with UCL in partnership, enabling students and academics to collaborate with artists and technicians.

I’d also like to mention the “Access all arias” programme which offers very cheap opera tickets to those under 30 or to anyone in full-time education. This means that you can end up with a ticket in the stalls for £30 and prices decrease as you go up the house! I would really recommend this to UCL students: http://www.eno.org/experience/access-all-arias

In what way did your studies help you in your subsequent work?
A great deal. Latin certainly helped me when I had to learn Italian in a year to spend my year abroad at the University of Siena (following my recurring theme of beautiful places!) Classics has an amazing literature including the creation of drama which is very useful for opera. I also felt that I had to study a lot of different things at the same time.

Siena

Also, I would have to say that Classics students are an intelligent bunch with a broad range of interests and I remember having very interesting conversations with all sorts of people – which has stood me in very good stead for fund-raising!

What do you remember most about your time in UCL Greek and Latin?
Sitting in the Greek and Latin undergraduate common room. There were only four pcs in there at the time and everyone wanted to access them as there was not the same internet access via phones, tablets etc then, and Facebook had just started! It also seemed quaint to have lessons in the Gordon Square houses and climbing all those stairs to rooms which felt like being in someone’s living room! They are happy memories.

Who at UCL (past or present) has most influenced you?
I think I would have to say that the late Stephen Instone, who was my personal tutor, and also Chris Carey. They were both very supportive especially as I sometimes felt like an odd fish – having started a Physics degree, I was older than most of the other students and I was living with friends who were working, not studying. I also fondly remember Stephen’s habit of bursting into reciting *The Iliad*!

Of what are you most proud about UCL?
Of course, UCL is always near the top of all the university league tables but it is a very inclusive place, despite being so big. Also, whatever your interest, you are bound to find someone with the same interest at UCL!

What is your favourite part of UCL?
I used to love the Old Phineas pub in the Students Union on the third floor. You could have a quick nap on the banquettes! Sadly, it is no more. I also loved the wood-panelled Room 106 in Gordon House and the Gordon Square gardens for picnics at the end of term. Professor Hornblower always seemed to be looking for a corkscrew!

What, in your opinion, would improve UCL?
I was very sad when the Garage Theatre was closed, as many Classical plays were performed there. I think there could be more facilities for the arts at UCL generally and perhaps more interaction with The Slade School of Art. Wouldn’t it be great if they were involved in designing theatre sets?!
Actually, I think access to UCL’s history and heritage has greatly improved. My mother works in the UCL Special Collections. There are some very interesting exhibitions in the Cloisters.

**Tell me something about yourself that most people don’t know!**

My undergraduate interview for the Greek & Latin Department was with Bob Sharples and I did not realise that he was an authority on Socrates. I told him, during the course of the interview, that I didn’t like Socrates and thought his philosophy was nonsense. He kindly said: “If you like Socrates, you haven’t understood Socrates!”. I was truly amazed when I got in!