

Lights, Camera, Action: Technical Theatre apprenticeship pilot has a successful stage debut

The pilot aimed to establish new routes into backstage training in theatres across Wales by delivering practical, work based skills.

Eight women and men took part in the Technical Theatre Apprenticeship Programme, which helped them to develop their skill-set and gain qualifications across lighting, sound and stagecraft to support the effective delivery of theatre performances.

The pilot was run by Wales Millennium Centre, with sponsorship from Cardiff and Vale College (CAVC) and financial support from the Welsh Government. It also involved a number of other theatres across Wales which provided placements for the apprentices during their training and development; with the apprentices returning to the Centre every few weeks for in depth knowledge and Essential Skills Wales (ESW) sessions.

Alex Davies, 19, from Milford Haven is one of the apprentices who took part in the pilot. During his apprenticeship he was based at The Torch Theatre, Pembrokeshire, and since completing the programme has secured employment with that theatre under a full-time contract.

Commenting on his experience, Alex said:

“I was brought into Technical Theatre by my Grandfather, who has now sadly passed away, he had started his own theatre company and trained me to be their tech, although all work was voluntary. As I progressed I started doing some work for Torch Theatre, under casual hours. When the apprenticeship was introduced I was asked by the Torch if I was interested in partaking. The apprenticeship really allowed me to further the skills I had been learning and work on much bigger projects with much bigger teams I was able to work doing what I really enjoyed and earned money at the same time.

“The apprenticeship was beneficial to me and I would highly recommend the scheme to other people interested in working in technical theatre. It gives you the chance to learn on the job and if you show a good attitude towards the work you’ll do well. The apprenticeship lead to a job at the Torch for me as I had proven myself to them that I was an asset to the tech team, now I will be given more responsibilities for oncoming shows and continue to learn more and better myself to move to bigger and better things in the future.”

Since commencing their apprenticeships in July last year all of those

involved with the pilot have now achieved their Level 3 Technical Theatre qualification, gained the Association of British Theatre Technicians (ABTT) Bronze Award in Theatre Practice, Flying & Electrics and gone on to secure employment – seven within theatres across Wales and one has set up their own sound-engineering business.

Welcoming the success of the pilot, Skills and Science Minister, Julie James, said:

“Apprenticeships are the start of an exciting and rewarding career and can benefit anyone of any age; giving them an opportunity to gain practical, on the job experience while gaining all the skills and qualifications they need.

“Wales’ creative industries have gone from strength-to-strength over recent years, gaining global recognition. There are now 50,000 people working across the sector and it is worth over £825 million to the Welsh economy.

“Ensuring we continue to nurture and develop skills talent, especially in highly specialist areas such as technical theatre support which has seen a decline in take-over recent years, is vitally important if we are to continue to support the future of this sector.

“I am delighted this new, innovative apprenticeship pilot between the Welsh Government and its partners has proved so successful and I look forward to seeing how it develops. It is a great opportunity for anyone considering a career within in the creative industries, especially if the higher education route is not for them, and I would encourage everyone to apply.”

Mathew Milsom, Managing Director of Wales Millennium Centre said:

“As a landmark arts venue and leading producer, we are seeking to raise the aspiration of young people across Wales. We are committed to the nurturing of new talent – both on and off the stage – and I believe that this apprenticeship scheme, along with The Centre’s creative learning programme, will help develop self-belief and creative skills in young people.

“Through the technical theatre apprenticeship scheme we are discovering and developing the ‘behind the scenes’ theatre stars of the future and I’m immensely proud of our first group of trainees who have worked extremely hard and have, as a result, secured work in the industry.”

Andrew Whitcombe, Cardiff and Vale College’s Dean of Work Based Learning said:

“This has been a unique experience for CAVC and our work based learning Consortium the Quality Skills Alliance. This shared apprenticeship is a real partnership with industry experts (WMC) delivering actual production experience and skills supported by the colleges expertise in academic provision. For the college this has been a substantive collaborative effort giving young people a gateway to an exciting career in a dynamic industry, with transferable skills as well.”

More information about the Technical Theatre apprenticeship programme, including how to apply for the 2017/18 Theatre Technician vacancies which start in October 2017, is available via the [Careers Wales Matching Service website](#).