

Sandra Cole

Actor Equity

> "The FEU Training workshop has given me the confidence to say "I can"... I honestly feel it has changed my life."

Can you tell us a bit about your career to date?

I am genetically an actor. I started at 15 in youth theatre and became professional in 1985. To supplement my income while raising my daughter I trained as a primary school teacher. Even there I introduced drama wherever I could.

I've worked mainly in theatre and radio and have done some television, e.g, one of my recent projects was The High Tide Festival in Suffolk/London performing in the powerful play Bush Meat, written by Jon Barton and directed by Matthew Via, which is about the Ebola virus breakout in Sierra Leone in 2016.

I am also performing my own poems/pieces with the Manchester based Take Back collective run by Julie Hesmondhalgh, Becx Harrison and Grant Archer. This project has helped me to find my voice and given me the confidence to share my poems, which I have written in response to what is happening politically as well as my own experiences of life. I've been hugely encouraged by the warm response I have had and feel proud to be able to share my truth in this way. I am working on my own show at present.

What do you like most about your work? Why is it so satisfying?

I just love acting and performing. I sing too. When I am on stage performing, that is who I am, it just feels so natural and beautiful. On stage is where I feel I am meant to be.

As for auditions - they are a real challenge! Rehearsals with a strong and creative director and cast can be amazing. But it's all about performing in the end.

I love working in Manchester; I moved from London and feel so embraced here creatively and personally.

What are the biggest challenges of maintaining a freelance career?

Keeping going financially is the biggest challenge. The other one is dealing with the little voice telling you to get a 'proper job'. It has taken me 40 years to believe that this is a proper job.

Dealing with those internal doubts and holding onto your confidence and self-belief can be very challenging.

I'm lucky having the teaching to fall back on and when I have to, I sign up for agency work.

Have you added new work/skills to your portfolio over time?

I've learned fencing, holistic massage, yoga, piano and Reiki. I also took part in a writing programme at the Royal Court in 2011/12.

What is the biggest challenge of learning the skills that you need?

There are so many things I would like to learn more about. I'd love to take courses in drama, journalism, painting, drawing and creative writing. Unfortunately the budget doesn't quite stretch to all that yet. However, I am learning so much just by doing what I am doing, which I love.

What FEU Training courses have you attended? Mobile Video Kickstarter.

What are the most important things that you've learned?

I have not stopped making short films since I attended this workshop. I have created so many video montages with music, and have brought real joy to family and friends with what I have created.

I never thought I could do this. The workshop has given me the confidence to say



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"I can." I've done some self-taping and am planning to do clips for YouTube. I honestly feel it has changed my life.

I'm also now on Instagram and love that too. The workshop has opened up the world of IT for me. The message on the workshop of, "Close up, close up, surprise!" really stuck with me, and I keep surprising myself with what I can do.

I feel FEU Training has helped open a door. It has boosted my confidence and I can't wait to see what else I can do with my new skills.

What has encouraged you to attend FEU training sessions?

It is great to come together with other creative people. I love to connect and am still in touch with other attendees from the workshop. I didn't know it existed until I got an email from Equity. It's a great resource.

Do you know any other organisation that offers business skills courses for creative? No.

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