

>> Snapshot

Rebecca Hardcastle

Actor

Equity



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

Initially, I trained as a musical theatre performer. I've also worked as a vocalist and actor in pantomimes. More recently I have been working for the creative education department of the youth theatre in Milton Keynes Theatre.

I'm also now an online singing teacher and teach singing at the Dancebox Studios and Theatre Works in Milton Keynes.

What do you like most about your work?

I love having the opportunity to be creative in my ever day working life. When I left drama school, I said to myself that I'd always be happy if I could make a living by being creative, which I am achieving. I particularly enjoy working with young people and all that they bring.

What are the biggest challenges of maintaining a freelance career?

Being in charge of your own time can be tricky. On the one hand, you have all the time in the world, which can actually make it hard to motivate yourself, as you have no deadlines and there is no one checking up on you. On the other hand, it is too easy to say yes to everything and get snowed under. Finding the right balance can be difficult.

It's tough choosing the work you really want to do while finding a way to balance your income. This can be particularly problematic in teaching during the summer months, when a lot of the work dries up. You have to find a way to cope workwise and financially during those gaps.

Have you added new skills to your portfolio over time?

I sometimes think I want to be a permanent student as I'm always keen to book myself on to courses. More recently I've taken courses on singing techniques, marketing and finance.

I'm open to any CPD opportunities. It's always good to

add skills and knowledge, especially when teaching others. Techniques in singing are evolving all of the time and some aspects have changed even since I was at drama school. I attend singing training not just for my benefit but also to support the work I am doing with my students. I think it is important to keep up with current research.

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

The biggest obstacle is money. I see a course once a week that I would like to do, but there is no way I can afford them all, particularly this year. It can be hard to choose which ones I should pay for and attend now, and which can be postponed. Last year the challenge was more about time as I was so busy in the theatre.

What FEU Training courses have you attended?

- How to drive traffic to your website
- Networking and social media
- Cash flow planning through the crisis and beyond
- Goal setting for 2021
- Good time to blog
- Make more impact on social media

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

All the courses are brilliant. I come away from every single one having learnt something new. The blogging webinar inspired me to just go and blog, which I did. I was concerned that I'd have no comments, but the trainer had said that because blogs stays around for the long term, comments can come later, which is what actually happened to me. Someone got in touch to say they'd been really enjoying the blog posts.

The lockdown finance webinar was hugely helpful. I'd just been put on furlough and didn't know what was happening. A spreadsheet to manage



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cashflow was just so, so helpful. It took the panic out of the situation and eased my lockdown anxiety. This session didn't just help me to overhaul my business books, it also helped me reorganise mine and my husband's personal finances.

The 'Drive traffic to your website' workshop was great as it helped me to review my own website as well as getting other people's opinions on it too, which was lovely as I got some highly positive feedback. There was also great advice on limiting the colour palette you use to make it more visually pleasing and, of course, how to be more visible on google.

An exercise I did on one of the workshops encouraged me to set up as an online singing teacher, which I did, and it has been very successful.

What has encouraged you to attend FEU training sessions?

You meet great people, and the calibre of trainers is excellent. It's interesting meeting people across different creative areas. It can feel a bit competitive when everyone is in the same field, which just vanishes when you get the mix of people at an FEU Training event.

The fact that it is an added benefit of my Equity membership is advantageous. These courses would cost a fortune to take otherwise, so it's so beneficial to be able to come along and participate.

You can spend a lot of time on your own as a freelance, so it's nice to be able to connect like this. Every time I've done an FEU Training course, I finish the day feeling inspired to keep going as a freelance.

Do you know any other organisation that offers business skills courses for creatives?

No.



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