

## **Ellen Baker - 2016 Alumni**

### **A Levels I studied**

- Music, Drama, History (& English lit – AS Level)

### **The course I went to study after SHS**

- Pre-professional Foundation Year Course at Bird College in London followed by BA (Hons) Professional Dance & Musical Theatre at Bird College. The foundation course was essentially a year to get prepped for auditions for 3-year degree courses – 9 months of dance classes (ballet, jazz, commercial, tap, contemporary, music theatre) to create a solid base level of skill and technique, acting classes (both group acting and monologue prep), and singing classes to prep audition songs. After the PPFY course, I gained a place on the Bird College 3-year degree course (so the PPFY course obviously worked!). A typical week of 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> year looked something like this:
  - Monday-Friday - 60 hours contact time minimum
  - 2-5 dance classes a day (ballet, tap, commercial, jazz, MT, contemporary, body conditioning)
  - 3-4 singing lessons a week (both ensemble and 1-2-1)
  - 2-3 acting lessons a week (group/solo/duet work)
  - 2-3 academic classes a week
- When we hit 3<sup>rd</sup> year, every morning from 8-12:30 we would have normal technique classes as we were used to from the last 2 years. Then from 1pm - 8-9pm we would either be in rehearsals for our 3<sup>rd</sup> year musicals/showcase performances (which were our opportunities to be scouted and contacted by theatre agents to take us on after our degree) or had the rest of the day to work on our dissertations. We had the option of doing either a fully written dissertation or practical dissertation with a viva voce to accompany it. I decided to do the former, writing an 8000-word dissertation on 'An Exploration of the Relationship between Genetics and Fitness in Female Dancers'.

### **What am I doing now?**

- I graduated this July just gone (July 2020) – graduating with a 1<sup>st</sup> Class Honours degree into a profession that essentially had temporarily closed! In terms of professional theatre, my options were extremely limited (it was dance classes in my living room for the foreseeable!). However, during 2<sup>nd</sup> year I had decided to get my Level 2 Fitness Instructor qualification (a separate venture alongside college). So, when life went virtual and everything seemed to rapidly slow down, it seemed like a good time to attain my Level 3 Personal Trainer course. Since March I have been working as a virtual Personal Trainer, building my personal private business as an online coach whilst also training for my Level 4 Personal training and nutrition coach qualification. In August, I also started at a brand-new boutique gym in Central London as a group class fitness instructor. Somewhere during that crazy time over summer, I also managed to sign with a theatre agent, whom I am still with at the moment. Although there is very little performing work around right now, I am keeping happily busy with my private PT business.

### **My plans for the future**

- As and when the theatre industry regains consciousness, my energy will be split 50/50 between performing and personal training. The joy of being an online coach is being able to fit my business around anything else going on in my life (e.g. if I land a role in a show). If 2020 has taught me anything, it's to take every opportunity you're offered and take every day as it comes. So, as the world opens up again, I will most definitely be taking this approach to my future; making the most of anything that comes my way.

### **Any other tips?**

- The best piece of advice I've had as a personal trainer from my more experienced colleagues is to be a sponge when you first qualify – try to get a good grip on the good and bad sources of knowledge and take in as much information as you can from the good ones. I think this advice could be valuable to anyone starting out on their career; aim to never stop learning.
- A potentially surprising fact: I wasn't interested in sport or PE in the slightest whilst at school (you would find me in the music & drama block, most likely). Despite knowing my passion for performing from a very early age, my love for fitness most definitely came once I left school. So, I suppose I'm re-iterating that age-old piece of advice; to not worry if you haven't got it all figured out by the time you get to the end of secondary school.
- I'm very quickly learning that life is like a long sailing expedition – you will hit unexpected storms, you'll get lost, you'll have moments of calm and moments of motion sickness, but no matter what happens, you're not docking and getting off anytime soon, so you might as well ride the waves as they come and enjoy the journey as much as possible.