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Performing Arts Alumni Riley Jones

What did you study at University and what was involved in the course? I studied BA (Hons) Performance at Northumbria. It was a three year course which introduced me to a range of acting methods including vocal and movement training. We then tried and tested these skills through the various productions we put on throughout our study. We were also lucky to have visiting industry professionals, such as directors, who worked closely with us to give us a taste of how things happen in a professional setting.

How else did you prepare for leaving University and starting out on a professional career as an actor? We received advice from lecturers about the steps we needed to take. I remember one really invaluable experience was

having an agent visit us and talk about how to secure an agent and build our CVs, etc. It must have been good advice because she ended up being my agent! It's also really good to chat to graduates who have studied in the same way you have and later gone on to build successful careers. Quite a few graduates shared their experiences with us which was great. The best experience you can get is from those who have done it before you.

What advice would you give performing arts students today? Work hard. If you put the work in, you get the rewards. Talent on its own isn't enough. It only gets you so far. You've got to be willing to put the leg work in...and there's plenty of it. Be prepared for long periods without work but stick it out and work hard. And listen when people give their advice. I've learnt so much from listening to other actors with more experience.

I'd also say to soak up as much as you can. Take it all in, learn as much as you can because once you get out there into the professional industry you need it all! But the biggest piece of advice I would give is to enjoy it.

Can you summarise your experience at university? It's hard to summarise my learning experience at Northumbria as I could go on for ages about how important it was for me. The course wasn't for everyone but it was one of the best experiences of my life and it has made me the actor that I am today.

You've just toured nationally with The Pitmen Painters and now you've returned to your native North East to work with Live Theatre. What is it about the region that brings so many of our artists back home? Live Theatre is a great organisation to work with – they've got a big, international reputation. So from a professional point of view, working with them is great. But to add to that, Newcastle is a great place. I've lived here all my life and I chose to study here. Having travelled all over the country I can safely say there's nowhere quite like Newcastle.

Riley can be seen in *Cooking with Elvis* from 17 October to 23 November. To book, log onto www.live.org.uk or call 0191 232 1232.

To find out more about Performing Arts at Northumbria University, sign up for the latest open day via www.northumbria.ac.uk/openday

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