

Working your way

If you are interested in a particular technique, smaller schools may focus on a training style, such as the ideas developed by Lee Strasberg or Sanford Meisner, writes **Susan Elkin**

Although there are many well-established schools with illustrious histories and enviable reputations, there seems to have been a spate, since the turn of the millennium, of small, new drama schools typically wanting to offer an alternative to what the big players can offer. Often they specialise.

Take, for example, the **Brian Timoney Actors' Studio** in north London. It expanded last autumn to offer a one-year, part-time course in method acting following the teaching of Lee Strasberg and his fellow advocates of the Method.

"We are trying to offer something different," says Timoney, "by being a boutique drama school focusing entirely on method acting as opposed to the big schools, which take the portfolio approach. Method acting is only one small part of what they do."

He also feels strongly that every drama student should be taught to manage him or herself as a business. "So we bring in marketing experts and casting directors to teach these skills," he says, adding that potential actors are creative people by definition and they need to learn to use some of that creativity to sell themselves to the industry.

Until this year, Timoney's school offered only short, intensive courses with the option to re-attend, and actors such as Jamie Roberts and Freya Parker passed through these. He still runs three-day 'boot camps' in method acting. Students are

beginning to use these as tasters to help them decide whether or not to commit themselves to the year-long, part-time course which runs mainly at weekends with other ad hoc sessions. The part-time course includes a week in Los Angeles, training both in method acting and in business management for actors, the cost of which is included in the fairly high fee.

So who teaches the students, week by week, back in London? Timoney himself does some and he has four other teachers working with him. "We audition our teachers before we take them on, which I think is probably fairly unusual," Timoney explains. "But we have to be sure the people we are employing really do know and understand the Method. All our teachers are working professionally elsewhere as well."