Theater: Contemporary Performance MFA

The MFA Theater: Contemporary Performance program is committed to creating a laboratory for the research of new techniques, aesthetics, and pedagogies based on an understanding of the evolution of traditional forms from Eastern and Western lineages. The program provides tools to both create and disseminate performative work as active social and cultural entrepreneurs.

A single cohort of students is admitted in alternate years for this 48-credit, two-year degree (currently recruiting for fall 2020). The first graduate program of its kind combining performance-making with contemplative practices, our curriculum encourages and explores authenticity in the arts. Students are plugged into an immersive studio environment, engaging the body, mind, and voice in crafting a performance.

The core curriculum centers around training the whole being focusing on:

- Contemplative arts and meditation training
- Psychophysical acting techniques
- Performance-making techniques, including a unique perspective on Viewpoints theory and practice as created by Mary Overlie and Wendell Beavers (with support of SITI Company members) and “Moment Work” as developed by Tectonic Theater Project
- Vocal work integrating Extended Vocal Technique, in the tradition of Roy Hart Theatre and Fitzmaurice Voicework™ applied to spoken and sung text
- Alternative techniques of generating text through ensemble playwriting and self-scripting
- Somatic movement techniques, including BMC™ and experiential anatomy
- History of Theatre in practice including dramaturgy and scripted texts
- Building a career in the arts in the 21st century

Our program is a laboratory, ensemble-based training in which you will work in close collaboration with your cohort. Learning is student-driven, with special attention given to each individual’s talents and interests. While you may choose to focus on a particular discipline, the training is interdisciplinary by nature, encouraging cross-pollination and the exploration of hybrid forms.

We encourage artists to take their place as entrepreneurs, leaders in contemporary performance, and educators. Our students are committed to developing and presenting socially, politically, and culturally relevant works in a national and global context.

Degree Requirements

The following outline is subject to change based on guest artists in residence each year. Training in contemplative practice, physical performance techniques, acting, directing, design, scripting, dance, performance-making, voice, and practice as research are ongoing throughout the curriculum. Students take 12 credits per semester, for a total of 48 credits.

First Year

Contemplative Training
- Meditation Practice and View
- Contemplative Dance Practice and Pedagogy

Physical Performance Techniques
- Somatic Foundations and Experiential Anatomy Lab
- Developmental Movement Technique

Performance-Making
- Foundations in Acting
- Viewpoints Intensive
- Guest Artist Workshops and Residencies with leading national and international professionals in the field of contemporary performance-making
- Modes of Text Analysis and Self-Scripting
- First Year Project Presentations
- Ensemble Development, Performance Project

Voice
- Introduction to Extended Voice in the tradition of Roy Hart Theatre
- Vocal Intensive: Application to classical texts and musical forms
- Knight-Thompson speech & dialect training

Experiential Research
- Theory and Context
- Practice as Research and Dissemination
- Intercultural Performance
- Social and Cultural Entrepreneurship

SUBTOTAL 24 credits (12 Fall, 12 Spring)

Second Year

Contemplative Training
- Meditation Practice and View II
- Deepening Mindfulness/Awareness Practice
- Contemplative Dance

Physical Performance Techniques
- Somatic Applications
- Developmental Technique II
- Contact Improvisation

Performance-Making
- Advanced Acting (styles including classical forms)
- Advanced Developmental (Physical) Technique
- Viewpoints: Composition, Directing, and Performance (every other year)
- Moment Work as developed by Tectonic Theatre Project (every other year)
• Guest Artist Workshops and Residencies with leading National and International Professionals in the field
• Musical Composition
• Second Year Ensemble Development, Performance Project
• Embodied Poetics
• Site-Specific Performance

Technique
• Modes of Text Analysis and Self-Scripting
• Alternative Modes of Contemporary Performance-Making

Voice
• Extended Voice: Application to Performance
• Vocal Pedagogy and Practice

Experiential Research
• Theory and Context
• Practice as Research and Dissemination
• Social and Cultural Entrepreneurship
• Intercultural Performance
• Somatic Pedagogy
• Pedagogy of Viewpoints
• Voice Pedagogy

Thesis
• Thesis Practicum
• Thesis Project

SUBTOTAL 24 credits (12 Fall, 12 Spring)

Total Credits: 48

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Course Listings (THR)

THR602
MFA Ensemble Training Module I (12.0)

THR652
MFA Training Module II (12.0)

THR702
MFA Training Module III (12.0)

THR722
MFA Training Module IV (12.0)