

School of Arts and Sciences

THEATRE ARTS

www.pitt.edu/~play/index.html

The Department of Theatre Arts maintains a philosophy of theatre education, the chief feature of which is a firm conviction that theory and practice, academic and creative work, and educational and professional theatre must be integrated for a successful program of theatre education. The theatre program promotes the study, practice, and experience of the art of theatre as an aid to the power of imagination and of understanding your place in the world. In the theatre history and criticism courses, you will be introduced to the study of drama as a separate artistic mode, different in form and function from literature, and to the theatre as an institution whose development has been influenced by complex social and cultural forces.

The activities of the theatre arts program are wide and varied. They include a mainstage season unified by a theme and coordinated with other University departments, so that a "mini-festival" of concerts, exhibits, lectures, and seminars often accompany each production and high school workshop. Besides mainstage plays, the department sponsors workshops (performances that spotlight the work of talented graduate students as directors and designers) and lab productions, which offer young directors a chance to hone their skills in a supportive environment while producing some innovative and exciting theatre. Pitt has three performance spaces: the Charity Randall Theatre (a proscenium theatre, seating 465); the Studio Theatre (a black box space, located in the Cathedral of Learning); and the Henry Heymann Theatre (featuring a thrust stage and seating 150).

The city itself has a lot to offer a budding theatre arts professional. Pittsburgh is home to numerous theatre companies and troupes, including Bare Bones Productions, City Theatre, the Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera, Pittsburgh Musical Theater, Kuntu Repertory Theatre, Open Stage Theatre, Pittsburgh Public Theater, Pittsburgh Irish and Classical Theatre Inc., Pittsburgh Savoyards, Scotch n' Soda, Saltworks Theatre Company, Quantum Theatre, Pandora's Box, Unseem'd Shakespeare, and Veronica's Veil Players. Many of these companies have open auditions or are looking for technical help with their productions.

At present, career opportunities in educational theatre are expanding in the areas of technical theatre and design and in creative dramatics and children's theatre. It is very difficult, by contrast, to find a job as an actor. Most available positions require academic work beyond the BA or equivalent experience.

Required Courses for Majors

The credit requirement for the theatre arts major is 46 credits, distributed as follows:

Core Courses (all courses are 3 credits unless otherwise noted)

THEA 0810 Introduction to Dramatic Art

The focus of this course is on the form of drama, specifically how it differs from other storytelling literature. Readings will cover periods and styles as varied as Greek tragedy, comedy, and tragi-comedy. Plays are written to be performed so lectures and discussions often deal with the translation of the written page into performance.

THEA 0842 Introduction to Stagecraft

This is a production-oriented course involving the study and application of the process and skills utilized in the realization of theatrical scenery, props, and lighting. This includes standard scenic construction techniques, materials and equipment of the scene shop, an introduction to scenic painting, drafting and properties design, and construction and basic lighting practices. Students will work in the scene shop, onstage, and on department running crews.



THEA 1102 Basic Acting (formerly Acting I)

Students focus on the extension and enhancement of basic acting skills using exercises based in a version of the Stanislavski system. Exercises from master teachers like Michael Chekhov, Stella Adler, and Uta Hagen enhance performance with emotionally invested circumstances, moment to moment talking and listening, and other important skill sets.

THEA 1220 Design for Theatre Production

This course presents an introduction to the design of scenery, costume, and lights. You will create several design projects focusing on the design process. This includes script analysis, research concept development, model making, drawing and rendering, and drafting.

THEA 1240 Costume Crafts

This is also a production-oriented course involving the study and application of the process and skills utilized in the realization of theatrical costumes. This includes costume construction, draping and pattern drafting, mask making, textile study, and fabric painting. Students taking this course will develop an understanding of the costume design and production process in addition to acquiring the skills necessary for the construction and completion of the costume design.

THEA 1341 World Theatre: 500 B.C.E. to 1640

This course will discuss the history of theatre, drama, design, and performance from ancient Greece to the 17th century. It will consider the specific cultures in which theatre and drama were created as well as the other arts and their relationship to the theatre.

THEA 1342 World Theatre: 1640–1890

This course will discuss the history of theatre, drama, design, and performance from the 17th century to the late 19th century. It will consider the specific cultures in which drama and theatre were created as well as other arts and their relationships to the theatre. The focus of the class will be on the theatre of Europe and the United States as well as on non-Western forms of theatre.

THEA 1343 World Theatre: 1890–1970

This course will discuss the history of theatre, drama, design, and performance from the 19th century to the late 20th century. It will consider the specific cultures in which drama and theatre were created as well as other arts and their relationships to the theatre. The focus of the class will be on the theatre of Europe and the United States as well as on non-Western forms of theatre.

THEA 1360 Theatre Criticism

This is a practical course in the craft of theatre criticism. You will attend local theatrical productions and write weekly reviews. This course is designed to develop skills in interpretation of the theatrical art, in understanding how the play operates in the theatre, and in creative writing.

Theatrical Production Courses (4 credits)

Four credits of THEA 0880 Theatrical Production are required for theatre arts majors. These 4 credits must be distributed as follows: 2 credits must be in a construction crew (props, light hang/focus, set painting, shop construction, etc.); 2 credits must be on a running crew. THEA 0880 credit is awarded only for work on departmental workshop and main-stage productions, not on lab productions. Exception: The stage management credit may be awarded for stage-managing a lab production.

Three Additional Performance Credits

Choose one of the following four classes:

TA 1103 Acting the 20th Century (formerly Acting II)

Focusing on work ranging from Ibsen to Pinter, this course focuses on preparing and presenting roles from plays that require the recognition of dramaturgical style and the playwright's political or social intent.

TA 1104 Acting the 17th, 18th, and 19th Centuries (formerly Acting III)

Focusing on plays from Restoration comedy to early realism, this course helps actors examine performance needs in terms of the political, cultural, and social context of each play while investigating social customs and dress, gender relationships, and the use of language, and their application to scene work.

TA 1105 Acting the Classics (formerly Acting IV)

Focusing on plays ranging from the ancient Greeks to Shakespeare's time, this course helps actors examine the political, cultural, and social context of each play, investigate social customs and dress, identify behavior, gender relationships, and the use of language, and apply their discoveries to scene work.

TA 1110 Directing 1

This course is an introduction to the basic technical and conceptual skills involved in directing plays for the stage. Heavy emphasis is placed on script analysis and conceptualization, creation of the ground plan, stage movement and composition, and rehearsal theory and practice.

Electives (12 credits)

Elective credits are required and may be selected from among performance classes, history, literature, criticism, or technical theatre and design.

Related Area

You can choose any area that corresponds to your interests. Studio arts is strongly suggested for designers. Other recommended areas include anthropology, Africana studies, classics, English, fine arts, foreign language, history, music, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and communications.

What the City of Pittsburgh Offers Theatre Arts Majors

The cultural resources of Pittsburgh are a strong asset for students in the Department of Theatre Arts. Pittsburgh is home to numerous theatrical producers, running the gamut from touring shows on their way to or from Broadway and resident professional companies to several community theatre troupes. Opportunities include discounted tickets, master classes and lectures, internships, and work backstage and onstage. Beyond the theatre, Pittsburgh is also home to a renowned symphony orchestra; ballet troupe; opera and light opera companies; several museums, including the Carnegie Museums of Art and Natural History and the Andy Warhol Museum; and an active circuit of film producers and art cinema houses.

What Graduates Can Do with a BA in Theatre Arts

Anything you want! Theatre training at Pitt is geared toward preparing students for careers in educational theatre in primary and secondary schools as well as colleges and universities. A graduate degree or other certification is generally required for employment. Students also undertake graduate work in law, education, psychology, business, and anthropology—or any field where presenting oneself to the public or analyzing how others are presenting themselves is a concern.

For students interested in technical theatre or arts administration, jobs are usually available in theatre, TV, film, museums, and other related fields. Theatre majors also work in broadcasting, public relations, and advertising.

And of course, a few graduates even go on to become actors, directors, playwrights, and designers! The odds are tough—very tough—but the rewards are great.

Endnotes

Theatre productions at the University of Pittsburgh are reviewed by major local critics and often have received national honors and attention. Undergraduates participate fully in all aspects of the production program, and ambitious undergraduates have the opportunity of directing or designing their own shows.

All Theatre Arts degree programs are accredited by the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST).

For more information on the theatre arts program, contact:

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Department of Theatre Arts
W. Stephen Coleman
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For more information on other majors, contact:

University of Pittsburgh
Office of Admissions and Financial Aid
Alumni Hall, 4227 Fifth Avenue
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Special Programs and Opportunities

PITT ARTS

Pittsburgh is a city that enjoys a rich cultural heritage; however, to most people this aspect of the city is hidden. Pitt wants to make sure all undergraduates can take advantage of the cultural activities in Pittsburgh. The University has initiated the PITT ARTS program, which provides you with ready access to Pittsburgh's many cultural institutions. Through this program (which arranges free admission and often transportation to events), you will have the opportunity to attend ballets, plays, and operas downtown; to visit area art galleries and museums; and to enjoy a wide variety of cultural programming on campus. Examples of past activities include art fairs, independent film screenings at the Harris Theater and Residence Hall Cinema, and free admission to the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Since Oakland will most likely be the center of your city experience, Pitt has made special arrangements for you to enjoy the amenities this community offers, such as the Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, and Carnegie Museums. All students can visit free of charge as often as they wish, simply by showing their ID cards.

Internships

Having an internship can be one of the most enlightening and productive aspects of your undergraduate education. It not only gives you a closer look at working in a particular field but can help you gain a competitive edge, make contacts in the marketplace, and earn credits toward your degree. Pittsburgh is an exciting place for internship opportunities: internationally known as a renowned center for health care and groundbreaking medical research, home to many corporate headquarters, and a city with a wealth of cultural and entertainment activities, including three professional sports teams and the Carnegie system of museums. Pittsburgh is also home to numerous small theatre companies, as well as larger organizations like the Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera or the Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre. Internships are not limited to Pittsburgh, however. Every year, students complete internships in cities such as Philadelphia, Pa.; Washington, D.C.; New York, N.Y.; and their own hometowns.

University Honors College (UHC)

UHC offers many resources for talented, active students—unique courses, special degrees, opportunities to perform independent research or teach, supplemental advising, and a social and academic community of similarly motivated students. UHC courses offer a more in-depth treatment of the material covered in nonhonors courses. Students work more problems, write more, read more, and discuss topics in greater depth. Although UHC does not have a formal membership and does invite all students to participate in honors courses, there are certain qualifications that must be met to be eligible to take UHC courses. Entering freshmen are automatically considered for UHC participation on the basis of their admissions applications. A minimum quality point average of 3.25 is required for current Pitt students.

Study Abroad

Studying abroad is an exciting way to add an international perspective to your undergraduate education and strengthen your credentials as a graduate. The University of Pittsburgh encourages you to take advantage of this opportunity (almost 5 percent of Pitt students study abroad compared with 1.3 percent, nationally). Study abroad will not only distinguish you when you enter the job market or pursue graduate study, but also help broaden your experience of the world beyond your own country's borders, giving you an appreciation of other cultures and peoples while allowing you to earn credits toward your degree. Scholarships are available, and financial aid is applicable.

Students have the opportunity to study at Queens University Belfast in Northern Ireland through Arcadia and fulfill credits in theatre arts. This university has earned an international reputation for academic excellence in all branches of engineering, history, physics, music, English, archaeology, and Irish studies. Along with comprehensive course offerings, you may appreciate that the university houses one of the best music schools in the United Kingdom. Arcadia is committed to providing excellent services to its students at home and abroad.

Another option is the Pitt in London program in England. Students may take courses in history, literature, politics, and art history taught by British faculty and a visiting University of Pittsburgh faculty member. Juniors and seniors can conduct internships for credit at a variety of British organizations, focusing on communications, business, politics, theatre, or museum management. Field trips to places of historic and cultural importance such as Stonehenge and Stratford-Upon-Avon are included. Students live in dorms in Kensington or with a family in the London suburb of Wimbledon.

Students also have the opportunity to study theatre arts in South Africa. Stellenbosch is South Africa's second oldest town, after Cape Town, in the world's most beautiful wine country, the Jonkershoek Valley on the southern tip of Africa. Superb beaches are a half hour away. Scenic mountains nearly 5,000 feet high form a spectacular backdrop. South Africa's million-plus square kilometers host a variety of landscapes, from breathtaking coasts and mountains in the south to the grassland bush in the north. The tip of the continent encompasses everything from the austere flats of the Karoo desert to the subtropical beauty in Natal's exotic beaches, capped by the majestic Drakensberg mountain range. Students will have a three-day London stopover before the program, a six-day visit to the famous Garden Route, and different cultural activities to keep them busy throughout the semester.