Department of Theatre Arts

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TEN FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**WHY MAJOR IN THEATRE ARTS?**

Our department emphasizes a solid liberal arts education through a balanced program of practical and scholarly coursework for all majors. Along with learning more about the literature and history of different kinds of theatre, we also want you to leave with marketable skills. All majors learn the basics of various design and communication applications, as well as practical skills like sewing, construction, lighting, and acting. Maybe most valuable to future employment, a Theatre Arts major learns to collaborate, to creatively problem-solve in a group, to develop self-discipline and expressive motivation, to meet strict deadlines and sustain commitments under stress of public performance.

**WHAT DO THEATRE GRADUATES DO WITH THEIR DEGREE?**

Theatre Arts majors use their skills and liberal arts foundation for a wide range of professional employment, including professional theatre and other creative media.

Some graduates go into Education, Law, Marketing. Some majors, because they have experience with coordinating complex events, become managers, consultants, and entrepreneurs. Our major includes a required course for students in their third year to begin charting options and opportunities for work or further study after they graduate. Faculty also advise and coach students auditioning for professional training in acting, or pursuing graduate training in stage management, and one of the design areas.

**WHAT KINDS OF PLAYS DO YOU DO?**

Our typical University Theatre season involves five productions, most often directed by Theatre Arts faculty covering a variety of genres and topics. On alternating years we try to do either a musical or a classic (often Shakespeare), and either a student-devised original work, or New Voices - one-acts selected from our Advanced Playwriting class. We also stage student-written one-act plays, selected by a department committee of faculty and students, every other year. We do contemporary and experimental work as well as well-known titles. It’s important to us that we offer a strong variety of opportunities and we aim always for 50-50 balance of roles for women and men. You can find out what we’ve done in past years by visiting the “archive” chapter of our UO University Theatre website.

We have a large proscenium theatre called the Robinson theatre, which seats 300 and is most often used for musicals, Shakespeare plays, or other productions needing a larger scale (in terms of cast size or scenic requirements). We also have a “black box” theatre, called the Hope theatre, with flexible seating of about 125, where we do more intimate or experimental plays. We have fully functional and up-to-date costume and scene shops, as well as new technology for sound and video production.

**HOW DO I GET INVOLVED WITH UNIVERSITY THEATRE PRODUCTIONS?**

All University Theatre productions hold auditions open to all UO students, regardless of their major or year in school. Thanks to the UO student union (ASUO), tickets to all of our productions are free to all UO students. If you are interested in getting involved with design or theatre technologies, the best route is to take a few introductory courses which require lab hours gaining experience with our design faculty, shops, and production systems. You can also volunteer for production lab hours or get hired as a student worker (must be eligible for work-study) in one of our shops. Our department issues a weekly email letting interested students know of upcoming auditions and production opportunities.

Don’t be shy – we welcome all students who have interest in participating and we’ll work hard to find a place for you!

**WHAT OTHER THEATRES ARE IN TOWN THAT I CAN WORK WITH?**

The Eugene-Springfield area has an unusual number of theatre opportunities throughout the year, from professional work available with the downtown Oregon Contemporary Theatre, the Oregon Festival of American Music (musicals), to the cabaret/dinner theatre ACE, and one of the oldest community theatres in the country, The Very Little Theatre. All of these are very welcoming to UO Theatre Majors and in some cases have led to part-time jobs and other useful connections the profession at large.

**WHAT KINDS OF CLASSES ARE REQUIRED FOR THE MAJOR?**

All majors take a variety of introductory courses that cover the areas of costume and make-up, set and lighting design, acting, and a three-term sequence in theatre history. The major also requires a set of both scholarly and practical advanced topics that students choose as they build their own route – these include advanced courses in stage management, costume design and construction, lighting, set design and construction, props, sound and video design for theatre, as well as advanced acting courses in voice and dialect, movement, improvisation, clowning, the Meisner technique and Shakespeare.

Students can choose from four options for their “capstone” course, where we hope you will be challenged to draw everything you have been studying together:

Playwriting, Dramaturgy, Play Direction, or Devising.

**HOW IS A THEATRE MINOR USEFUL?**

Our Minor program is designed mainly for those who think they may want to go on to be teachers (primary or secondary) who would be leading theatre classes or productions for their school. It’s a good “overview” program requiring what we think are the basics of the major and is deliberately flexible enough that you can meet the requirements easily in addition to another major’s requirements. Some students elect to complete a Theatre Arts minor because it keeps them active in a life-long creative practice they hope to sustain. Some choose the minor to augment their studies in Cinema Studies, Journalism, Music or Dance.

**WHAT KIND OF ADVISING IS AVAILABLE FOR THEATRE MAJORS?**

When you declare your major, you can choose or have a faculty advisor selected for you. All faculty hold regular office hours and are happy to help you with any questions you may have about general B.A. or B.S. requirements as well as requirements within the major. In addition, you will likely be working with faculty in production, seeing them in evening rehearsals or weekend work-labs, in coaching sessions and on field-trips. One of the key advantages to majoring in Theatre Arts at the University of Oregon is the very high degree of teacher-student contact, mentoring, and collaboration you will experience. You won’t be just a number to us!

**DO PEOPLE EVER DOUBLE-MAJOR WITH THEATRE?**

Many of our students double-major in Theatre Arts and another major of interest, and with diligent planning they are often able to complete both majors in four years. Most common are double-majors in Psychology and Theatre, Cinema Studies and Theatre, Philosophy and Theatre, and English and Theatre. Students who want to double-major in Theatre and either Dance or Music may find there are scheduling conflicts, particularly for any performance commitments. It’s do-able, but most complete in five years rather than four.

**BESIDES COURSEWORK AND PRODUCTIONS, WHAT ELSE?**

In addition to our courses and shows, the UO department of Theatre Arts offers a regular set of opportunities every student can engage:

* THEATRE IN LONDON PROGRAM – spring term every other year, up to 20 students can live in London and see 40 different productions, visiting theatres and studying British history and cultural contexts for theatre. Students also can elect to take a sequence of 9 intensive acting workshops led by practicing professionals in London. The Theatre in London Program cost includes tuition, housing, tickets and workshops, and a set of excursions out of London to see theatre in Stratford-Upon-Avon at the Royal Shakespeare Company, as well as excursions to Bath, Stonehenge, Avebury, Dover, Canterbury and Salisbury. See the UO’s GEO website for details.
* OSF SPRING BREAK – every Spring break, two faculty lead a group of up

to 20 Theatre Arts majors to see plays at the Tony-award winning Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, Oregon. Students participate in talks and workshops specifically designed for our majors. Thanks to Carol Williams, students pay a small fee for housing (nearby cottages with full kitchens), transport, workshops and up to five shows.

* OREGON SCHOOLS TOURING – every other September, we tour one of our University Theatre productions to rural Oregon schools, performing

sometimes for kids who might be seeing theatre for the first time! Students involved are paid well, provided transport, housing (motels, usually) and given a daily allowance for meals.

* KC/ACTF – every year, usually mid-February, our department participates in the Northwest region’s Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, where college theatre programs meet to share productions, workshops, auditions and other opportunities including competitions that can lead to professional internships. Students selected to participate are supported by an experienced faculty coordinator as well as faculty mentoring and partial subsidy.
* INTERNSHIPS – UO Theatre majors can apply for internships around the country and work with faculty mentors who can guide you through the application process and prepare you for interviews or coordinate UO credit (if the internship meets UO standards for credit). We have had students do internships with the Guthrie theatre in Minneapolis, the Steppenwolf theatre in Chicago, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Portland Playhouse, the Oregon Shakespeare and Utah Shakespeare festivals, the Eugene O’Neill

Theatre Center, Williamstown and New York’s Circle in the Square.

* STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS (POCKET, ABSOLUT IMPROV, DUCK TV)

On campus, students can work on shows for the student-led and funded Pocket Playhouse, organized to support student work in our Pocket Theatre (102 Villard Hall) almost every week. New works, familiar works, improve and parodies as well as open mic nights and other events keep the Pocket Playhouse very busy. Any UO student can participate in performing, designing, writing, directing or serving on the student board that coordinates and promotes Pocket productions. Students who have interest in comedy improvisation should join Absolut Improv’s open jams and can find themselves invited to join the company, which performs in the Pocket but also performs in various venues on campus and around town.

Absolut Improv is not affiliated with the department but has for years been a welcome feature of performance opportunity and rehearses in our studio spaces. Based in the School of Journalism, DUCK TV offers practical opportunities to write, direct, act, and learn camera/editing skills, often involving Theatre Arts majors. Students involved with DUCK TV are also regularly participating in independent film projects across campus.