STAGE DESIGN

https://communication.northwestern.edu/departments/theatre/about

Degree Types: MFA

The Master of Fine Arts in Stage Design program (https://communication.northwestern.edu/departments/theatre/programs) at Northwestern University prepares a select group of scenery, costume, and lighting designers for professional careers in the American Theatre, international theater and related design fields. Central to this three-year program of study is an emphasis on intensive collaboration between designers and directors, rigorous analysis of texts, thorough research and a fervent effort to nurture unique artistic voices. It is our belief that passionate, insightful artists immersed in a team-based environment, will generate bold, compelling theatrical works.

The first year of study emphasizes the importance of skills, training, and design process. The second year prioritizes collaboration, research, and imagination and serves as a transition from the activities and points of view of the entering student to the professional profile and attitudes of the graduating designer. The final year's activity concentrates on designing and the preparation of the thesis portfolio.

The MFA in stage design is a terminal degree program requiring thirty-three academic units over nine quarters during a three-year residency. The MFA degree is granted upon completion of the program with a minimum grade point average of "B" and successful presentation of a design thesis portfolio. The portfolio must show clear evidence of mastery of the full range of graphic and conceptual support skills in the student's major area(s) of concentration and an acquisition of fundamental skills in the secondary design area(s). Two additional years are allowed for the successful preparation, presentation and defense of the MFA thesis portfolio.

At the end of the first two years of study, each student is required to successfully present a portfolio to the faculty illustrating and articulating his/her development and vision as an artist and designer.

Please visit the MFA in Stage Design website (https://communication.northwestern.edu/programs/mfa_stage_design) or view our Design Photos slideshow.

Degrees Offered
- Stage Design MFA (https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/tgs/stage-design/stage-design-mfa)

Stage Design Courses

THEATRE 310-0 Special Topics in Directing (1 Unit)
Studies with directing faculty on special topics related to directing and theatrical forms.
Prerequisite: consent of instructor.

THEATRE 312-0 Text Analysis (1 Unit)
Seminar in analysis of dramatic texts as related to the problems of realized theatrical production.
Prerequisite: consent of instructor.

THEATRE 313-0 History of Directing (1 Unit)

THEATRE 320-0 Special Topics in Theatre Design (1 Unit)

THEATRE 333-2 Advanced Creative Drama (1 Unit)
Explores improvised drama as a teaching method and a means of learning for the elementary school child. Theory and practice through reading, discussion, films, and observation. Course culminates in extended teaching projects with children from local schools.
Prerequisites: THEATRE 333-1 (or equivalent) and consent of instructor.

THEATRE 340-0 Special Topics in Advanced Theatre Studies (1 Unit)
Content varies. Advanced study of individual playwrights, practitioners, regional theatres, historical periods, performance practices, or theoretical inquiries.
Prerequisite: THEATRE 140-1, THEATRE 140-2 or consent of instructor.

THEATRE 341-0 Theatre and Social Change (1 Unit)
Prerequisite: THEATRE 140-1, THEATRE 140-2 or consent of instructor.

THEATRE 342-0 Dramaturgy (1 Unit)
Seminar in creative dramaturgical research as it relates to the problems of realized theatrical production.
Prerequisite: THEATRE 140-1, THEATRE 140-2 or consent of instructor.

THEATRE 343-0 Puppetry History & Performance (1 Unit)
Seminar in the history and theory of puppetry with an emphasis on embodied experimentation.
Prerequisite: THEATRE 140-1, THEATRE 140-2 or consent of instructor.

THEATRE 344-0 Gender & Performance (1 Unit)
Exploration of recent research on the social and political background of gender, particularly women's access to performative expressions.
Historical aesthetics: changing debates on women's participation in the public theatre and the significance of the body in performance.

THEATRE 345-0 African American Theatre (1 Unit)
Study of African American playwrights, practitioners, theatre companies, historical performance practices, theoretical inquiries, or transnational influences.
Prerequisite: THEATRE 140-1, THEATRE 140-2 or AF_AM_ST 259-0 or consent of instructor.

THEATRE 346-0 Asian American Theatre (1 Unit)
Study of Asian American playwrights, practitioners, theatre companies, historical performance practices, theoretical inquiries, or transnational influences.

THEATRE 347-0 Latinx Theatre (1 Unit)
Study of Latinx playwrights, practitioners, theatre companies, historical performance practices, theoretical inquiries, or transnational influences.

THEATRE 348-0 Transnational Theatre (1 Unit)
Study of the history, theory, or literature of transnational theatre and other performance forms.

THEATRE 357-0 Orchestration (1 Unit)

THEATRE 376-0 Intro to Acting for the Screen (1 Unit)

THEATRE 402-0 Graduate Colloquium (1 Unit)
Advanced graduate study. Topics vary with instructor.

THEATRE 420-1 Collaboration: American Realism (1 Unit)
First in a series exploring collaboration between stage director and designers for production. Focus: collaborative process; realistic and naturalistic American drama.
Prerequisites: Permission of instructor.

THEATRE 420-2 Collaboration: Contemporary Drama (1 Unit)
Second in a series exploring collaboration between stage director and designers for production. Focus: contemporary drama.
Prerequisites: THEATRE 420-1 and permission of instructor.

THEATRE 420-3 Collaboration: Shakespeare in the 21st Century (1 Unit)
Third in a series exploring collaboration between stage director and designers for production. Focus: Shakespeare. 
Prerequisites: THEATRE 420-1, THEATRE 420-2, and permission of instructor.

THEATRE 434-0 Workshop in Drama-Oriented Teaching Techniques (1 Unit) 
Content varies; focuses on the origins and practice of storytelling, theatre games, and story theatre. Summer only.

THEATRE 440-0 Studies in Comparative Theatre & Drama (1 Unit) 
One aspect of the drama and theatre before the modern period.

THEATRE 441-0 Studies in Modern Theatre & Drama (1 Unit) 
One aspect of the modern theatre movement, a dramatist, or type of drama.

THEATRE 442-0 Theatre Practice (1 Unit) 
THEATRE 444-0 Dramatic Criticism (1 Unit) 
Principles of dramatic criticism from Aristotle to the present. Critical standards and methods and their application to the evaluation of drama in performance.

THEATRE 445-3 History of Western Theatrical Practice (1 Unit) 
History and theory of theatre and drama.

THEATRE 448-0 Studies in American Theatre and Drama (1 Unit) 
Intensive study of one aspect of American theatre and drama, such as political theatre, Chicago theatre, American drama and the American dream, or the history of acting in America.

THEATRE 450-0 Topics in Stage Design (1 Unit) 
Seminars with guest or resident faculty on advanced topics in theatre design; intended primarily for graduate design students. Prerequisites: Permission of instructor.

THEATRE 451-1 Seminar in Advanced Directing (1 Unit) 
Seminar in advanced directorial topics; required of graduate students in the MFA program in directing.

THEATRE 451-2 Seminar in Advanced Directing (1 Unit) 
Seminar in advanced directorial topics; required of graduate students in the MFA program in directing.

THEATRE 451-3 Seminar in Advanced Directing (1 Unit) 
Seminar in advanced directorial topics; required of graduate students in the MFA program in directing.

THEATRE 462-1 Advanced Studies in Lighting Design (1 Unit) 
Primarily for graduate lighting design students. Students develop lighting ideas and images based on text analysis and production parameters and explore graphic means of communicating their ideas and images. Prerequisites: Permission of instructor.

THEATRE 462-2 Advanced Studies in Lighting Design (1 Unit) 
Primarily for graduate lighting design students. Students implement lighting ideas and images through light plots. Photometrics and technical knowledge and skills emphasized. Prerequisites: THEATRE 462-1 and permission of instructor.

THEATRE 462-3 Advanced Studies in Lighting Design (1 Unit) 
Primarily for graduate lighting design students. Special topics are addressed through a paradigm of master classes, workshops, lecture demonstrations, and projects. Prerequisites: THEATRE 462-1, THEATRE 462-2, and permission of instructor.

THEATRE 463-1 Advanced Studies in Scenic Design (1 Unit) 
Script and the action of the play as the foundation for scene design. Use of initial reading of the script, combined with research, in forming design ideas. Prerequisites: Permission of instructor.

THEATRE 463-2 Advanced Studies in Scenic Design (1 Unit) 
Students apply drawing, painting, modeling and drafting skills developed in THEATRE 463-1 to create a mature design presentation that expresses their ideas clearly. Prerequisites: THEATRE 463-1 and permission of instructor.

THEATRE 463-3 Advanced Studies in Scenic Design (1 Unit) 
Using the process developed in THEATRE 463-1 and THEATRE 463-2, students generate a complete, professional scenic design for a major work of drama, including a fully documented package. Prerequisites: THEATRE 463-1, THEATRE 463-2, and permission of instructor.

THEATRE 464-1 Advanced Studies in Costume Design (1 Unit) 
Individual design process, involving text interpretation, character analysis, and research, in response to texts of various theatrical genres. Prerequisites: Permission of instructor.

THEATRE 464-2 Advanced Studies in Costume Design (1 Unit) 
Students apply costume design processes developed in THEATRE 464-1 to the interpretation of traditional and non-traditional text. Prerequisites: THEATRE 464-1 and permission of instructor.

THEATRE 464-3 Advanced Studies in Costume Design (1 Unit) 
Using the processes developed in Theatre 464-1 and Theatre 464-2, students generate a professional level costume design for a major work of drama. Texts may be in verse or operatic form. Prerequisites: THEATRE 464-1, THEATRE 464-2, and permission of instructor.

THEATRE 470-1 Acting 1: Realism/Naturalism and Physicalizing the Form (1 Unit) 
This course will alternate days between script-based text/scene work and the process of physicalizing text that can open up the body to an even deeper understanding and inhabiting of character. Through an alternating series of lessons, the class will focus on tools and tactics found both in the text and in the body that will help facilitate instinct, play, risk and improvisation. Students will employ these tactics to create character and deepen scene work. This course meets four times a week for three hours. Students can expect to have 10 hours of out-of-class work per week.

THEATRE 470-2 Acting 2: Contemporary Drama and Attacking the Scene (1 Unit) 
This section of acting class will build on the text work and character creation from the first section while continuing to grow and deepen the physical creative processes discovered in the fall. This course will focus on contemporary scripts whose structure may prove more elusive and activate multiple-character ensemble work. Continuing to focus on script analysis and given circumstances, students will learn how to read modern work for context and theme and how to find the characters within the plays that serve both. Writers may include Suzan-Lori Parks, Tarell Alvin McCraney, Young Jean Lee, Will Eno and Karen Zacarias. This course meets four times per week for three hours and students can expect to have 10 hours of out-of-class work per week.

THEATRE 470-3 Acting 3: Shakespeare 1 (1 Unit) 
First Year Acting MFAs will begin the practice of analyzing Shakespeare’s text with basic scansion through an in-depth study of sonnets and monologues. This course will meet two days per week for three hours.

THEATRE 471-1 Movement 1: Presence (1 Unit)
Movement I will explore contemporary physical training techniques for
actors with the intention of preparing the body for advanced creative
practice. This course will establish techniques for addressing our
physical needs first as people, then as artists, and finally as a character.
This class meets five days a week for two hours per session.

THEATRE 471-2 Movement 2: Research (1 Unit)
Movement II will delve into individualized actor research, integrating
the practices of physical training, creative movement, and performance
research—the development of physical actions for a role or performance.
The intention of this course is to cultivate the actor’s self-confidence and
self-reliance in the articulation of physical inquiries and the subsequent
development of relevant physical training and performance material. The
ensemble will continue to practice group exercises established in the first
semester that increase articulation, agility, core strength and partnership.

THEATRE 471-3 Movement 3: Integration/Practice (1 Unit)
Movement III, the final course of the first year movement series, will focus
on the integration of physical training, personal research, and creative
movement into a dedicated ensemble performance practice. The actors
will cultivate the vitality and excellence of the entire ensemble, and each
actor will be asked to sustain their individual training inquiries and sense
of self within a rigorous group practice.

THEATRE 472-1 Voice 1 (1 Unit)
This first quarter course focuses on physical awareness, relaxation
and freeing. Students are introduced to the sounds of English and the
American Stage Standard dialect through the use of the International
Phonetic Alphabet as they work to develop their voices for stage
performance. Students will perform selections of contemporary poetry in
solo and group pieces from a variety of poets. This course meets twice a
week for two hour per session.

THEATRE 472-2 Voice 2 (1 Unit)
The second quarter of voice builds on the foundation of the first. The
work will focus on Shakespeare’s works including sonnets, monologues
suitable for auditions and scene work. This course meets twice a week
for two hour sessions.

THEATRE 472-3 Voice 3 (1 Unit)
This class will explore the use of the voice in plays that demand highly
skilled use of language including dialect work from some of these plays,
which may include American Stage Standard and RP as well as other
dialects from the UK, Europe, Africa and the United States.

THEATRE 499-0 Independent Study (1 Unit)
Content varies. May be repeated for credit with change of topic.
Permission of instructor and department required. SEE DEPT FOR
SECTION AND PERMISSION NUMBERS.

THEATRE 545-0 Seminar-Studies in Drama (1 Unit)
Content varies. May be repeated for credit with change of topic.

THEATRE 546-0 Seminar-Studies in Theatre (1 Unit)
Content varies. May be repeated for credit with change of topic.

THEATRE 590-0 Research (1-3 Units)
Independent investigation of selected problems pertaining to thesis or
dissertation. May be repeated for credit. SEE DEPT FOR SECTION AND
PERMISSION NUMBERS.