The Professional Director Training Program

Admissions for fall 2020 are now closed.

“Our directing program is built on three key questions: What lights you up? (PASSION); What is the impact you want your work to have in the world? (VISION); What are the skills that you need to land your work on an audience? (CRAFT)”

- Valerie Curtis-Newton, Head of Directing
The faculty of the Professional Director Training Program seek directing students with demonstrated talent and clear potential for absorbing the skills required of a first rate theatre director. We look for students with an instinct for telling stories visually, who have a grasp of the actor's and designers' processes, who have a passion for ideas, language, visual art, music and a solid foundation in dramatic literature and theory; in short, we are looking for those who will become tomorrow's leading directors.

The Directing Program at the University of Washington School of Drama is a three year intensive, conservatory program designed to prepare students for successful entry into the professional theatre. Our program is based on the premise that the best training for directors is to direct under the guidance of several master teachers.

The classes and training include work in a range of types and styles of dramatic work including realistic, nonrealistic, classical and contemporary plays. The overall aim of the program is to provide students with the practical skills necessary to reveal, clearly and fully, the potential of any given text. By the time they finish their degree we expect them to be effective collaborators with actors and designers. We also strive to enable our students to expand their artistic ideas in a way that provides them with a basis for a life-long determination to fulfill and effectively reveal their artistic ideas.

Program of Study

In order to optimize contact with all of our performance faculty the following courses are the required core for each quarter for the first two years:

- Directing Lab
- Directing Seminar
- Design Studio
- Acting Process
- Physical Training
- Production

VIEW SAMPLE CURRICULUM
Directing Lab is where one of the Directing faculty works with directing students and actors two to three times per week. Our assumption is that graduate actors, designers and directors gain a great deal by doing studio work together as if in rehearsal, supervised by qualified master teachers. Since interaction between directors, actors and designers is a crucial dynamic of a director’s professional career, the faculty consider it important to provide a creative crucible, in a lab setting, for the necessary skills and sensibilities to develop.

Directing Seminar provides the opportunity to examine upcoming and current student-directed productions and then review the results. Additionally text analysis, staging ideas, adaptations, new scripts, and collaboration with other specialists are covered.

Acting Studio, which, when time allows, includes student directors, includes Stanislavski, action theory, Shakespeare, Chekhov and contemporary realism. The focus of acting process classes is to develop processes in both acting and directing students which they can then apply to a wide variety of scripts and situations.

Suzuki based physical training and Viewpoints are taken by all of the graduate acting and directing students every quarter. The work is a lab for addressing physical foundations of acting process and the full involvement of the body in space. It includes elements of tempo, concentration, power, and the relationship of real and imagined elements on the stage. We have found that directors develop useful diagnostic skills through physical experience and active observation of the physical training.

Production

Every quarter each student directs in the classroom, studio or both. Plays are selected in conjunction with the faculty and the length and nature of the project will be determined by each student’s pedagogical needs at the time. On occasion directing students serve as assistant directors to members of the faculty and/or visiting artists during their time at the School of Drama.

The principal studio for directing projects is room 218 in Hutchinson Hall, a 2,900 sq foot space with movable seating risers to allow for a variety of stage configurations. Studio 218 has lighting and sound systems. Directors can also expect to work in at least 2 of the
School's theatre spaces as part of the subscription season. The theatres' configurations are thrust, arena, and end stage.

In the second year each director directs a workshop production of a full length play in the School's subscription season. In both the first and second year each director may also direct in the annual short play festival. In the third year each student directs a fully-produced full length play as a thesis in either the winter or spring quarters. The casts for these productions are comprised of MFA and BA students and occasionally community actors.

Slideshows of past School of Drama productions.

Additional Coursework

After discussions with each student the faculty may advise additional coursework in such areas as Alexander Technique, Dialects, Lighting Design, Combat, Literature, History of Styles and Costume, etc.

All students are evaluated by all of the contact faculty each quarter.

Internships

One quarter of the program is devoted to a professional internship experience. MFA directors may intern either locally, nationally or internationally during winter or spring quarter of the third year. Local internships are available at the Seattle Repertory Theatre, Intiman, ACT Seattle Children's Theatre and Oregon Shakespeare Festival, among others. Beyond Seattle, UW directors have interned at the Mark Taper Forum, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, A.C.T. San Francisco, Actors Theatre of Louisville, the English National Opera (London), Na Zábradlí (Prague) and the Sovremennik Theatre of Moscow (Russia).

People

Meet our faculty
Meet our current students
Meet our alumni

Graduate Tuition and Financial Aid

School of Drama
University of Washington
101 Hutchinson Hall, Box 353950
Seattle, WA 98195-3950

Phone: (206) 543-5140
Fax: (206) 543-8512
Email: uwdrama@uw.edu

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