Dance

The Master of Fine Arts (MFA) program in Dance in the Performing Arts Department at Washington University offers an innovative approach to dance technique, composition, improvisation and production. It involves an energetic interplay of studio work with professionally distinguished dance instructors, seminars with faculty who are experts in their fields, and independent studies in choreography. This two-year program will expand students’ dance skills while engaging them with current concepts of dance as an art form, as an expression of culture and identity, and as a mode of critical thinking. The overarching goal of this program is to develop each dancer’s personal artistic practice while encouraging a global perspective on dance studies, performance, pedagogy and choreography.

The department offers performance experience through its repertory company, Washington University Dance Collective, for which students may audition.

Members of our dance faculty have performed with such companies as American Ballet Theatre, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Dance Theatre of Harlem, National Ballet of Washington D.C., Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, and Utah Repertory Dance Theatre. In addition, a distinctive feature of our MFA program is that it is run in collaboration with St. Louis’ Center of Creative Arts (COCA), involving a sharing of facilities and faculty born out of a common vision of the importance of the performing arts. As the leading dance school in the region, COCA is also the largest multidisciplinary arts organization in St. Louis and has a world-renowned faculty. We have a long history of engaging the talents of contemporary guest choreographers and répétiteurs from ballet, modern and performance art who bring a broad range of challenging new processes, concepts and choreography to our students.

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Faculty

Dance

Joanna Dee Das (http://pad.artsci.wustl.edu/joanna-dee-das)
Assistant Professor
PhD, Columbia University
Global dance history & theory; modern dance; African diasporic dance; musical theater; politics of performance

Christine Knoblauch-O’Neal (http://pad.artsci.wustl.edu/christine-knoblauch-oneal)
Professor of the Practice
PhD, Texas Women’s University
Ballet; applied anatomy; musical theater; performance studies

David Marchant (http://pad.artsci.wustl.edu/david-marchant)
Professor of the Practice
MFA, University of Iowa
Modern dance; composition; improvisation, Alexander Technique; somatic studies

Cecil Slaughter (http://pad.artsci.wustl.edu/cecil-slaughter)
Professor of the Practice
MFA, University of Iowa
Horton modern dance technique

Mary-Jean Cowell (http://pad.artsci.wustl.edu/maryjean_cowell)
Professor Emerita
PhD, Columbia University
Modern dance technique; theory and composition; dance history and ethnology

Theater Studies

Pannill Camp (http://pad.artsci.wustl.edu/pannill_camp)
Associate Professor
PhD, Brown University
18th-century French theater; dramatic theory; theater architecture

Robert Henke (http://pad.artsci.wustl.edu/robert_henke)
Professor
PhD, University of California, Berkeley
Ancient and Renaissance theater and performance; comparative literature; dramatic theory

Paige McGinley (http://pad.artsci.wustl.edu/paige-mcginley)
Associate Professor
PhD, Brown University
20th-century theater and performance; race, ethnicity and performance; American studies

Henry I. Schvey (http://pad.artsci.wustl.edu/henry-i-schvey)
Professor
PhD, Indiana University
Modern American and European drama; Shakespeare in production; expressionism and the arts; Tennessee Williams

Julia Walker (http://pad.artsci.wustl.edu/julia-walker)
Associate Professor
PhD, Duke University
Theatrical modernism; performance theory; history of acting

Rhaisa Williams
PhD, Northwestern University
Performance theory; African-American studies; gender; archival studies
At the end of their first year, students will propose a culminating project — typically a dance concert or other public presentation of creative work largely expressed in dance — and submit a paper about its production, including analysis and critique, that they will defend orally.

I. Technical Development: 15 units
10 units from the following:
- Dance 401 Theory and Technique of Modern Dance V (3 units; may be repeated once)
- Dance 4021 Theory and Technique of Modern Dance VI (3 units; may be repeated once)
- Dance 415 High Intermediate Ballet I (2 units; may be repeated once)
- Dance 416 High Intermediate Ballet II (2 units; may be repeated once)
- Dance 4281 Classical Ballet III (2 units; may be repeated once)
- Dance 4291 Classical Ballet IV (2 units; may be repeated once)

plus an additional 5 units from the above or from the following:
- Dance 403 Jazz III (2 units; may be repeated)
- Dance 407 Topics in Dance Techniques (variable credit; 3 units max)
- Dance 418 Variations in the Ballet (1 unit)
- Dance 423 Pointe Technique (1 unit)

II. Choreography and Performance: 20 units
- Dance 508 Dance Composition Laboratory I: Exploring Process and Format (3 units)
- Dance 509 Dance Composition Laboratory II: Exploring Alternative Venues and Audience Connections (3 units)
- Dance 510 Approaches to Improvisation and Spontaneous Composition (3 units)
- Dance 511, 5112, 5113 Independent Choreography Project I, II, III (3 units/course; total 9 units)
- Dance 512 Performance Artistry (1 unit; must be taken twice for a total of 2 units)

III. Research and Integrated Learning: 12 units
Required:
- Dance 520 Research Methods Colloquium (3 units)

Plus 9 units from the following:
Dance 413 Modern Dance and the African American Legacy II (2 units)
Dance 426 Performing the Political in American Dance (3 units)
Dance 506 Topics in Contemporary Arts Practice Research (3 units)
Dance 507 Topics in Contemporary Theoretical and Historical Research (3 units)
Dance 517 Workshop in Dance as Cultural Identity (3 units)
Dance 519 Guest Artist Residency Workshop (1 unit; may be repeated once)
Dance 530 Theories of the Body in Performance (3 units)
Dance 543 Critical Thinking in Western Theatrical Dance (3 units)

IV. Electives: 7 units

7 units at the 400 level or above with at least one course at the 500 level. These may be from any areas of the performing arts or relevant areas in other departments or programs.

MFA students are encouraged to pursue courses that support or help define an individual trajectory as an artist. These may include 400- or 500-level Performing Arts Department courses in costumes, stage lighting and design, or theater history. Students may also wish to pursue study in the departments of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies; Music; Psychological & Brain Sciences; Anthropology; Art History and Archaeology; or other courses relevant to the student's particular development.

V. Mentored Teaching Experience (MTE)

- LGS 600
  Each MTE will be fashioned around the student's interests, when possible, and guided by a full-time member of the dance faculty. For more information, visit the Mentored Teaching Experiences (http://pad.artsci.wustl.edu/mentored-teaching-experience) webpage.

VI. Final Project: 6 units

Dance 550 Final Project I (3 units); to be taken fall semester of the student's second year

Dance 551 Final Project II (3 units); to be taken spring semester of the student's second year

At the end of the first year, the MFA student will propose a plan for the final project and form a final project committee who will evaluate the final project. A concert is the typical format of the MFA final project. This concert or public presentation of the student's creative work must be largely expressed in dance. The concert or public presentation will be followed by submission of a written Production Book with analysis and critique. In some cases, the written documents may include research related to the production, or a complementary research paper may accompany the Production Book. The student will have an oral defense of the work in front of an invited audience and submit a final version of the written component, as well as a DVD of the concert or public presentation, for archival purposes within the department.