Performing Arts

Performing Arts at Washington University comprise dance and drama.

Dance

Students may select dance as a major through the Performing Arts Department. This course of study combines intensive studio work in technique and theory of modern dance, ballet and composition with seminars examining dance as a global phenomenon with forms reflecting culturally specific historical, aesthetic and anthropological features. The program also includes a broad range of courses such as stagecraft, music resources, improvisation, anatomy for dancers, pedagogy, dance therapy, musical theater dance, world dance forms, jazz and tap. Students also may choose to minor in modern dance or ballet or in world music, dance and theater. The interdisciplinary minor in world music, dance and theater encourages students already interested in the performing arts to explore those outside Euro-American traditions. A certificate program in somatic studies is offered through the University College division of Arts & Sciences.

The senior capstone experience is framed in consultation with Performing Arts faculty. In April, prior to registration for the fall semester, dance majors discuss the capstone requirement with their adviser. The dance capstone requirement can be satisfied by a senior honors thesis or senior dance project. The format may range from a research paper or written analysis of the student’s dance development to a project emphasizing movement expression (e.g., the creation of a video résumé, a performance, or a choreographic project). In all cases, dance capstones have a written component.

Those who study dance at Washington University learn from faculty members who have both professional experience and academic degrees. Students also have the opportunity to study with guest artists in residence who teach master classes and set choreography.

Students may audition for the Washington University Dance Theatre, which holds annual auditions for students. Selected students will appear in faculty and guest artist-choreographed concerts in Edison Theatre. Dance students particularly interested in performance may, with the approval of its director, rehearse and perform with The Slaughter Project, Washington University’s dance company in residence. Students may also participate in departmental drama productions as well as student work in choreography and theater. Each year, students have the opportunity to attend the regional American College Dance Conference to adjudicate work, perform, and take master classes.

Dance students have the opportunity to apply to MADE (Movement and Design in Europe) in France, a five-week summer program based in Paris and Normandy. Participants see dance companies, visit museums and take classes in Paris as a foundation for their subsequent collaborative work with European artists and fellow students in the Normandy studios. Dance students have the opportunity to study abroad during the year at University of Auckland, New Zealand; University of Ghana, Legon; and Roehampton University, London.

Drama

The drama major combines the historical, cultural and literary study of theater and performance with a full array of courses regarding theatrical production, including acting, directing, performance art, design (set, costume, lighting, sound) and playwriting.

The theater and performance studies faculty offer courses in theater history, performance studies, and dramatic and performance theory. Majors also may take cross-listed courses in such departments as African and African-American studies; classics; English; East Asian languages and cultures; and film and media studies. Our courses analyze theater and performance as resonant and significant cultural practices, both historically and currently. Courses combine rigorous critical analysis with attention to the corporeal and material embodiment of actual performance.

In small, individualized classes (capped by a maximum of 16 students) characterized by a high number of weekly contact hours (generally six), professionally and academically experienced faculty teach a rigorous system of production courses. A carefully graduated four-semester sequence in acting culminates in a capstone class for seniors (Acting IV) focused on individual projects. A two-tiered directing sequence issues into a public showing of student-directed work, and some students have chosen to direct a fully designed production as their Senior Honors Thesis. Recent graduates of the acting and directing sequence have been placed in prestigious MFA programs, internships and jobs in regional American theaters, as well as in various professional schools and graduate programs. A nationally recognized program in design and technical theater works students through a structure of costume, scene, lighting and sound design courses, with several electives on such topics as mask making and baroque costume that are informed by historical and cultural study. A highly successful playwriting program, enriched by the annual A.E. Hotchner Playwriting Competition and annual workshops run by leading American dramaturges, has produced playwrights whose work is now being performed in nationally recognized venues such as Chicago’s Steppenwolf Theater.

The culture of performance is abundantly rich at Washington University. A wide array of student theater groups, with a particular focus on improvisation, provides many opportunities for student-generated performance on campus.
Since 1991, the Performing Arts Department and Globe Education (London) have been running a national summer program held at Shakespeare’s Globe in London. This four-week program includes a 3-unit course on the textual, historical and cultural study of Shakespeare; a 3-unit course on acting Shakespeare (with particular attention to acting on the Globe stage); master classes taught by Globe personnel; playgoing in London and Stratford; and more. We also offer an intensive semester-long playwriting program in New York City held at Primary Stages, one of Off-Broadway’s leading producers of new works and home of the Einhorn School of Performing Arts.

Phone: (314) 935-5858
E-mail: pad@artsci.wustl.edu
Departmental website: http://pad.artsci.wustl.edu

Professors of the Practice
Christine Knoblauch-O’Neal
MAL, Wesleyan University
(Dance)

Bonnie J. Kruger
MFA, University of Illinois
(Drama)

David W. Marchant
MFA, University of Iowa
(Dance)

Jeffery S. Matthews
MFA, Virginia Commonwealth University
(Drama)

Annamaria Pileggi
MFA, Brandeis University
(Drama)

Cecil Slaughter
MFA, University of Iowa
(Dance)

William Whitaker
MFA, Florida Atlantic University
(Drama)

Artist-in-Residence
Ron Himes
Henry E. Hampton Jr. Artist-in-Residence
BSBA, Washington University
(Drama)

Senior Lecturers
Robert Mark Morgan
MFA, San Diego State University
(Drama)

Sean Savoie
MFA, University of Cincinnati, College Conservatory of Music
(Drama)

Andrea Urice
MFA, University of Virginia
(Drama)

Playwright-in-Residence/Lecturer
Carter W. Lewis
MA, University of Oklahoma
(Drama)

Majors
The Performing Arts Department offers majors in dance and in drama. For the major in dance, visit the Dance page. For the major in drama, visit the Drama page.
Minors

The Minor in World Music, Dance and Theater

Required units: 17-19

Required courses:

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<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Units</th>
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<td>Music 1021</td>
<td>Musics of the World</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dance 315</td>
<td>Dance Spectrum</td>
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And one to two of the following courses (3-5 units):

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<td>Chinese 467</td>
<td>The Chinese Theater</td>
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<td>Drama 223</td>
<td>Cross-Cultural Women Playwrights</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>AFAS 301</td>
<td>A History of African-American Theater</td>
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<td>Dance 343</td>
<td>West African Music and Dance in Context</td>
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Elective courses (choose 8 units):

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<td>Drama 368</td>
<td>Black Theater Workshop III</td>
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<td>Music 3021</td>
<td>Music of the African Diaspora</td>
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<td>Music 3022</td>
<td>Native American Musical Traditions of the Western United States</td>
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<td>Dance 305Z</td>
<td>Music Resources for Dance</td>
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<td>Dance 328</td>
<td>Contemporary Dance and the Michio Ito Method</td>
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<td>Dance 340</td>
<td>Ballet as Ethnic Dance and Classical Art</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dance 343</td>
<td>West African Music and Dance in Context</td>
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<td>U College Dance 235</td>
<td>Dance Doorways to India</td>
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<td>U College Dance 328</td>
<td>Dance of West Africa: Intermediate</td>
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<td>U College Dance 335</td>
<td>Bharata Natyam as Movement Narrative</td>
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Additional Information

This is an interdisciplinary minor, drawing on the distinctive methodologies and training inherent in several disciplines. This minor encourages the student already interested in the performing arts to explore those outside Euro-American traditions. However, students majoring in fields such as anthropology, political science, psychology, education, comparative literature, history and foreign languages may find this minor a useful complement to their primary discipline.

The Minor in Dance

For the minor in dance, visit the Dance page of this Bulletin.

Drama

For drama courses, visit the Drama page of this Bulletin.