THEATER AND MUSIC THEATER PROGRAM SEASON PROPOSAL PROCESS

2020-21 SEASON

Each year, the theater and music theater programs create our season by advising and supporting a number of theatrical projects created by senior certificate students and chosen through a proposal process in the junior year. To put together our season, we look for individual proposals that we believe offer exciting creative challenges to the certificate students, and we seek to create a season that overall provides diverse educational and artistic opportunities for the Princeton student community. We hope to be able to choose a varied season that tells theatrical stories from multiple perspectives in multiple styles and scales; and a season that we know that we can support from the point of view of our student, faculty and staff time, physical space and available resources. We are interested in a wide variety of offerings as part of our theatrical “season” – you might choose to propose other projects requiring resources – such as curating and producing a short festival or a reading series on campus, offering workshops to a specific portion of our community, or creating some particular kind of theater makers forum or one-off symposium, for example, rather than proposing a show.

We cannot support every proposal within the theater and music theater programs, and we cannot fully produce most pieces, so we ask you to come into this process as a member of a collaborative cohort as well as as an individual artist, with an understanding that our resources of space, time and people are shared with the entire Lewis Center for the Arts.

A primary resource for researching and preparing for a senior year theater project is John Doyle and Jane Cox’s THR 402 junior methods seminar, Theater Making Studio, which will meet on Monday afternoons in the fall semester of your junior year. Theater Making Studio will offer guidance and support in your own creative processes, in researching and planning proposals, as well as offering practical exercises and information that will help move you towards successful processes and productions as a collaborative group. A primary benefit of this class is the creation of a collaborative cohort of theater makers who can support each other in process and production during the senior year.

It is not mandatory to propose a theater or music theater project - it is possible to fulfill your senior year work on someone else’s proposed project as a director, designer, actor or dramaturg (or other role) without co-proposing and co-producing; to write theatrical work without doing a production; to write scholarly or journalistic work, to submit a departmental thesis that is related to theater, or to create work outside of the theater program through another program or student group, with program advising. If you are NOT submitting a proposal for a production or theatrical project that requires staff, space or other resources from us, you should nonetheless express your intentions for completing your senior project to Jane Cox, the program director, by the first day of fall classes of your senior year - since you will still need advising support, and unfortunately that resource is not limitless.

The theater season is a collaborative project between our senior certificate students and the theater program, in which we think of the senior proposing students as the co-producers, involved in all aspects of theatrical production alongside our faculty and staff. We do ask that if you are not able to commit to co-producing a project (by which we mean taking primary responsibility for designer and stage management recruitment where appropriate, casting, publicity, audience engagement and administrative and technical processes, in addition to fulfilling your own specific creative role) that you instead choose
to participate in someone else's proposed project rather than leading a proposal; or that you collaborate with a group of proposing students who can collectively follow through on co-producing. **The process of co-producing with our professional staff and faculty is fundamental to the education of any student who might intend to continue in the field, and an excellent education in collaboration and organization for any area of endeavor.**

If you do decide to propose a project, you may propose to devise, write, direct, perform, design, compose, dramaturg, or create as an ensemble piece (or something else we haven't thought of yet). You may propose a theatrical idea or project that doesn't fit the traditional idea of a production. As we choose projects for the season, we **do** look for proposing students who we believe can follow through responsibly and collaboratively with our faculty and staff on a multi-faceted long-term creative project. We **do** look for students who have experience in the area that they are proposing to work in. We **do** encourage you to take risks. We do ask that all participants in the theater season join the Program in Theater's commitment to inclusive casting for all projects, and to equity, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of theater making. We do ask that all participants think very thoughtfully about what they are asking of other students - in terms of time, energy and emotional support - especially if you are planning on creating an original piece of theater.

The theater program aims to help you to be realistic about what you might accomplish in the time available. For example, if you propose to write and compose a new musical and stage it in a few months, we will look for extremely strong evidence that this is something you can pull off! More often than not, new plays and music theater pieces that you are writing yourselves will be best served by explorations without the pressure of design deadlines. We also aim to be as fair as possible in our allocation of resources - for example, if you would like to work on your acting skills with a visiting or faculty director, we will likely put a portion of our program budget into that person, and **not** into costumes or scenery, for example. We would also encourage you to find other students with shared performance interests so that you might share a visiting or faculty director.

Since theater is (most of the time) an inherently collaborative medium, **we strongly encourage you to co-propose with your fellow students in some way, IF that is appropriate to your project** (we of course consider solo shows and other smaller scale projects with fewer collaborators). Since theater is an art form that takes place within community, **we ask you to be thoughtful and articulate about how your project might be inclusive to the broader community, and how it might improve the diversity of perspectives in our program and season. The theater program is emphatically committed to inclusive casting, and to the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion in all areas of theater making. We will also ask you to be articulate about what you are asking of your fellow students in terms of time and energy.**

There are any number of reasons that your proposal may not make it into the season which have nothing to do with your strength as an individual theater artist (for example, we had five other proposals telling a very similar story with similar casting needs; we had six proposals for musicals and we can only support two; we think you are asking too much of your fellow students and so on). If your proposal is not successful, **this is not a measure of your personal success or failure or our perception of your talent level,** and the theater program will do everything we can to help you find a good home for your theatrical work within the season, or to advise you on taking your project outside of the thesis season. We
hope that you will all be thoughtful and generous with each other to find appropriate roles for talented students whose proposals do not make it into the season.

Two notes of realism:

1) Since the music theater program is relatively new and does not yet have its own production budget, we do not have many resources in terms of professional or student music directors, student musicians and student or professional sound designers and engineers. Your project is far more likely to be successful in the area of music theater if you can bring some aspects of MUSIC to the table at the time of proposals, beyond singing.

2) We can only offer a professional or faculty director to two to three projects in a season. Don’t pin all your hopes on a professional director!

You MUST have completed HALF of the tech credits requirement (two tech credits) in order to propose a project, and have a plan for completing ALL your tech credits by the end of your junior year. You are also required to have taken at least the introductory level class in the field in which you are proposing – for example, directing, acting, designing, playwriting.

If you do decide to propose a project for our season, your proposal must take the following form (approx. 1500 words maximum, which is about 5 pages double spaced):

1) DESCRIPTION OF YOUR PROJECT and

* Briefly describe your project and tell us why you are interested in it.

* Tell us what you already know about your plans for this project. Present any research that you may have already done (historical context, cultural studies, visual research).

2) PERSONAL GOALS FOR LEARNING

* What do you hope to learn from working on this project? What do you see as the biggest challenges of your project for you? How do your own strengths and weaknesses relate to the choice that you are making for a production?

3) COMMUNITY GOALS

* Why should this piece of theater be done here and now?

* How does your project, and your approach to fulfilling your project, cultivate a diversity of perspectives in the theater program – both in terms of the story you are choosing to tell and in terms of how you propose to work or interact with the campus community? The theater program is firmly committed to the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion.
* What are you asking of other students? The theater program is committed to respecting all students’ time and energy; you should clearly think through what your proposal might mean in terms of time commitment for other people who choose to participate.

4) **COLLABORATORS:**

* Which creative collaborators (performers, designers, stage management, director etc) are **absolutely essential** to your project? Are you imagining that any of these people are professionals, and if so, why is that important to you? *Not every project in the theater program can be assigned designers, for example.*

* Who might you hope might take on the roles of director, music director, designers (if designers are appropriate)? Final directing and design assignments (if any) will be made in collaboration with the theater program when the season is finalized, but your priorities are very important to us.

* Generally speaking, the theater program encourages you not to pre-cast, with the exception of the proposing students themselves – it is in the broader interest of the theater program to keep our casting process as open and welcoming as possible. Nonetheless, you should list anyone you feel committed to casting in your production.

* Who will your stage manager be? You will be responsible for finding your stage manager for the project; we encourage you to enlist that person at proposal time. *Stage managing is the best possible preparation within the program for directing, so students interested in directing in their junior or senior year in the theater program should consider stage managing a show as soon as possible.*

* Audience – who might you hope would be the audience for your project? How might you propose to reach them in order to encourage their attendance, or to engage with them outside of performance, if that is of interest?

5) **OTHER RESOURCES FOR YOUR PROJECT:**

* What is the style and scale of your project in your mind? We encourage you to think about the scale of production you have in mind as you put your proposal together. *Many if not most learning experiences will be best served by smaller scale, more stripped down productions with freedom for exploration and play; occasionally your education will be served by more fully produced/designer productions. For example, if you propose to write a new play or musical, it’s unlikely that you will be well served by trying to finalize the writing in time for the inflexible design deadlines that go with production. Most students writing original work should not expect to work with designers. If you are primarily interested in working on your performance skills, we are more likely to spend our resources on fight choreography than on scenery, for example.*

* If you imagine your thesis involving a fully staged production, when and where would you prefer to stage it? *Senior projects are usually concentrated in the spring term, but there are slots available during the fall and reading period. Some possible spaces are: our Wallace Black Box Theater, the Berlind Theater, the Drapkin Studio. Alternatively, is there another
space on campus that better suits your needs? For example, Whitman Theater for an intimate piece, or a site-specific venue that inspires you?

* What are you particularly interested in learning and how does this relate to needed resources? *We use your educational goals as one of our main guides in deciding how to spend our resources throughout the season. Examples of resources are space, faculty time, guest artist time, fellow student time, production design costs etc.*

6) DESCRIPTION OF YOUR PREPARATION FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY

* Write a brief narrative account of what in your education, training and extracurricular experience prepares you for the project. How have you been involved in the thesis season before? Have you fulfilled, or almost fulfilled, your tech hours? Be sure to discuss your relationships with advisors, teachers and collaborators. Mention any of these people who might attest to your ability to follow through on your proposal.

7) YOUR MAJOR

* Can your senior project in theater be combined with your senior thesis in your major? (It is possible to use your departmental thesis as your independent work for the theater program as well, if appropriate)

8) REQUIRED ATTACHMENT (in addition to your proposal)

* Please attach a pdf of the play to your document. If you are proposing a musical, or music is a significant component of your project, please attach an audio file or drop a CD off at the office.

* If you are planning on writing something (including your own translation of a play), please submit a writing sample in pdf format. While we understand that you will make radical changes as you work on a play, it is still helpful to describe the play you hope to write as specifically as possible with a scenario, scene breakdown, character descriptions, etc. Playwrights should also indicate whether they are hoping for a production of their play (as opposed to a development process culminating in a reading); and, if you do, whether you have a director in mind.

9) RIGHTS

Knowing in advance about the rights will help us to determine whether the event will be a public performance or an academic project. Many rights agreements are available online from a number of major publishing houses. Some less mainstream works require writing to the publisher. *Please investigate who has the rights for the work you are interested in by searching online or checking the title page of the published script. We are not asking you to get the rights.*

Here are the most common rights holders:
For shows with an online application process to get the rights, please use the following information to investigate if the rights are available (if you can’t find any online information, please include with your submission a copy of the title page of your script that states who holds the licensing rights).

* Go to the appropriate site, and if necessary create your own guest log in. Use yourself as the producer and producing organization for this initial purpose. If we decide to proceed with your proposal & production, the Program in Theater will make a separate application.
* You will be doing an amateur production
* Audience size assume 100 (Black Box) or 350 (Berlind)
* Use the ideal dates you are requesting - 5 performances spaced out over two weekends
* Ticket prices range from $5 to $17
* Actors are paid $0.00
* Our web site is: http://arts.princeton.edu/
* We are not a tuition-based camp or program. We are not a contest, festival or conference.
* For this initial inquiry cutting of the script is not required.

* Our venues are:
  Wallace Black Box Theater
  Lewis Center for the Arts, Princeton NJ 08544
  The Berlind Theater
  91 University Place Princeton NJ 08540

**HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR PROPOSAL**

Our strong preference is for electronic submission. Please send your documents to Jfonseca@ by **Tuesday March 10th 2020 at 12pm**. If you must submit it in hard copy for any reason, deliver it to Joe Fonseca in third floor office in the LCA office by the same time.

You are strongly encouraged to discuss your thesis proposal with a faculty member in the theater or music theater program before submission. In the last week of March, we will interview proposers. Final decisions are always complicated based on space and rights availability; but we make every attempt to make decisions as fast as possible so that you can think about alternate plans if your proposal is not successful.
PREVIOUS PROJECT EXAMPLES

Directing Jose Cruz Gonzalez’s play for young audiences, *The Magic Rainforest*, including doing outreach and bringing in hundreds of school kids to see the show.

Producing a *Women in Comedy Festival*, fundraising for the project, organizing headlining acts, panels and workshops, and inviting students from around the country to participate.

Directing, producing, designing, performing and community organizing a Public Works/community theater production of the musical *The Odyssey* as a group of collaborators, working with Trenton youth.

Translating the Roman Comedy *Miles Gloriosus*, directing and performing in it.

Devising, writing and choreographing a *Choreopoem* around the experience of black women on the Princeton campus.

Doing lighting and set design and dramaturgy for *Fun Home*.

Playing the role of Phedre in Racine’s *Phedre*.

Playing the lead role of Young Woman in Sophie Treadwell’s *Machinal*.

Writing and directing a wild comedy about an African American family trying to cope with disease, economic pressures, the shadow of August Wilson and a son being at an elite college *HEART!!!!*

Translating from the Swahili and directing Said Ahmed Mohamed’s play *Amezidi*.

Stage managing *Next to Normal*. Playing a role in *Next to Normal* and doing outreach in relationship to Princeton Mental Health Week.

Creating a one woman show, playing herself as well as a dozen other characters, singing jazz standards, exploring her cultural identity *A Broad Abroad*.

Working with McCarter and various other groups to create show study guides.

Finding a new unpublished play about Asian American stereotypes and identity by contacting a playwrights agent, helping recruit actors and produce the play, and acting in the play.

Writing book, score and directing a musical about a number of kids/families dealing with Asperger's.

Doing costume design and creating masks for Sophie Treadwell's *Machinal*.


Directing *Othello*. Playing Othello.

Creating a documentary play about Princeton students and mental health.

Writing and directing an original play for Princeton Chinese Theater.

Performing a long form improv show.

Drama urging and directing an outdoor production of *Pericles*.

Playing Eliza in *My Fair Lady*.

Creating and acting a one man show of Gogol’s *Diary of A Madman*. 