
Applied Theatre (MA)

ACADEMIC DIRECTOR: Christopher Vine

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URL: http://sps.cuny.edu/programs/ma_appliedtheatre

THE PROGRAM

The Master's Degree in Applied Theatre (M.A.), the first program of its kind in the United States, is a sequential, ensemble-based program for students interested in the use of theatre to address social and educational issues in a wide range of settings. The program stresses the unity of theory and practice, and is linked to the professional applied theatre work of the renowned CUNY Creative Arts Team (<http://www.creativeartsteam.org/>).

Applied theatre is a specialized field that uses theatre as a medium for education and social development. It involves the use of theatre and drama in a wide variety of non-traditional contexts and venues - in teaching, the justice system, healthcare, the political arena, community development, museums, social service agencies, and business and industry.

The goal of the program is to educate scholar-practitioners to become future leaders in the field of applied theatre. Students explore key theories in the fields of theatre, education, youth development, and community building, and acquire the skills and strategies necessary for creating and implementing the work.

Career Prospects

Graduates of the Master's Degree in Applied Theatre program are prepared for careers and work opportunities such as:

- Teaching artists with theatres, museums, hospitals, and other community-based organizations;
- Education directors for cultural organizations;
- Facilitators of a wide variety of youth programs including after school, youth theatres, and specialist centers (e.g. juvenile detention centers, homeless shelters);
- HIV/AIDS prevention program specialists;
- Team-building, conflict resolution, and management trainers; and
- Activities specialists with national and international development programs, aid agencies, and refugee support and trauma-relief programs.

Students wishing to obtain New York State Teacher Certification may take additional classes with the M.S.Ed.in Educational Theatre program at CUNY's City College of New York.

Admission Criteria

In addition to the admission criteria for graduate degree programs, a background in appropriate theatre studies will be an advantage but not necessarily essential. Theatre experience, formal or informal, is expected.

Program Requirements

36 credits are required for the degree.

Required Courses - Students must complete 30 credits in the following courses:

- APTH 601 - Theatre and Learning: Theories Seminar
- APTH 602 - Community, Culture and Diversity: Theories Seminar
- APTH 603 - Playbuilding: The Process of Creating Group-Based Original Theatre
- APTH 604 - Teaching through Theatre: The Theory and Practice of Theatre-in-Education
- APTH 610 - The Group Theatre Session
- APTH 611 - The Co-intentional Director
- APTH 612 - An Introduction to Drama Conventions
- APTH 620 - Theatre of the Oppressed: An Introduction to the Work of Augusto Boal
- APTH 690 - The Project Thesis Part I
- APTH 691 - The Project Thesis Part II

Elective Courses - Students must also complete 6 credits from among the following courses:

- APTH 613 - Creating Meaning through Community Drama: Making Theatre Based on a Community's Own Stories
- APTH 625 - Community Acts: Performances, Rituals and Celebrations
- APTH 649 - Apprenticeship
- APTH 659 - Independent Study
- APTH 669 - Topics in Applied Theatre

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

APTH 601 Theatre and Learning: Theories Seminar 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course runs concurrently with the core courses in the first two semesters. Students will use readings from selected texts to place the central strands of the program's course work in an historical context and understand the key artistic, educational, and cultural theories that inform them. They will address important dimensions of the work such as learning theory, research methodology, community development and multiculturalism.

Essential content will include:

- History of Theatre Movements, Theories, Theorists and Directors that have informed the development of Applied Theatre practice
- Human Development
- Learning Theories and Theorists
- Theatre-in-Education, Drama-in-Education and Creative Dramatics
- Dramatherapy and Psychodrama

APTH 602 Community, Culture and Diversity: Theories Seminar 3 Credits

Prerequisite: APTH 601

This course runs concurrently with the core courses in the first two semesters. Students will use readings from selected texts to place the central strands of the program's course work in an historical context and understand the key artistic, educational, and cultural theories that inform them. They will address important dimensions of the work such as learning theory, research methodology, community development and multiculturalism.

Essential content will include:

- Definitions of Community & Artist/Community Relationships
- Principles of Youth and Community Development
- Race and Culture
- Issues of Diversity and Multiculturalism
- Research Methods and Ethics
- Assessment and Evaluation

APTH 603 Playbuilding: The Process of Creating Group-Based Original 3 Credits **Theatre**

Prerequisite: None

This course examines alternative structures for devising original theatre productions in various settings with different populations, in accordance with asset-based youth and community development principles. Students will apply their skills through a course project and enjoy an opportunity to create original theatre by working with a selected community/group.

APTH 604 Teaching through Theatre: The Theory and Practice of 3 Credits **Theatre-in-Education**

Prerequisite: None

This course is designed to prepare students to devise and perform appropriate theatre-in-education (TIE) interventions by analyzing case studies, conducting field research and developing the skills necessary to the actor-teacher. Students will gain an historical perspective, a theoretical over-view and a practical grounding in the working practices of the TIE team. They will reflect on what contributes to a successful educational theatre experience and examine the requirements for building effective partnerships between actor-teachers and educators. As a final in-class assignment, students will develop and present their own TIE projects to an invited audience of young people.

APTH 610	The Group Theatre Session	3 Credits
<i>Prerequisite: None</i>		
This course establishes the fundamental building blocks for group theatre processes that can be used both with untrained participants and professional actors. Its principle focus is how to establish an ensemble and begin to develop individual and group skills prior to embarking on a group performance project. The course will culminate with students planning and implementing their own sessions in the classroom working with an invited outside group.		
APTH 611	The Co-intentional Director	3 Credits
<i>Prerequisite: None</i>		
This course will develop actor-centered, collaborative approaches to leading creative teams and directing play texts. Although applied theatre is dependent on teamwork, both as a value and a practical necessity, this does not negate the need for the expertise and vision of the artistic leader. This class will examine the role of the director through the lens of a Freirean-based transformational pedagogy.		
APTH 612	An Introduction to Drama Conventions	3 Credits
<i>Prerequisite: None</i>		
This course introduces students to the key conventions in the drama-in-education canon such as the use of the still-image and role-play. It explores a variety of strategies that can be employed to apply them effectively for a wide range of groups in many different settings, both in and beyond the boundaries of formal educational institutions. Students will experiment with ways in which to sequence activities in order to structure effective learning experiences and will become critically acquainted with the pedagogical principles on which they are founded.		
APTH 613	Creating Meaning through Community Drama: Making Theatre Based on a Community's Own Stories	3 Credits
<i>Prerequisite: None</i>		
This course is designed to prepare students to devise and perform appropriate, theatre-based community interventions based on the community's own stories. They will gain a theoretical and practical grounding in the study of community theatre processes through which practitioners work in, with and for a specific community. They will intervene using theatre strategies, to interrogate particular interests, problems or issues that the community wishes to share.		
APTH 625	Community Acts: Performances, Rituals and Celebrations	3 Credits
<i>Prerequisite: None</i>		
This course offers students the opportunity to explore the theory and practice of community-based theatre, cultural community development and civic engagement through the arts, working in and with a specific community, facilitating creative acts by the community members themselves.		
APTH 620	Theatre of the Oppressed: An Introduction to the Work of Augusto Boal	3 Credits
<i>Prerequisite: None</i>		
This course provides students with an overview of the theories and methods of the Brazilian popular theatre director and activist, Augusto Boal. It also examines the important influences that have informed his work, including his experiences under military dictatorship and the liberatory pedagogy of Paulo Freire. As the final in-class assignment, students will research, devise and present a Theatre of the Oppressed forum theatre performance.		
APTH 649	Apprenticeship	3 Credits
<i>Prerequisite: Permission of Academic Director</i>		
Students will have an opportunity to spend one semester apprenticed to one of the Creative Arts Team's professional theatre outreach programs or to an appropriate program elsewhere. They will assess the work through a youth/community development lens, document and analyze their experience in journals and discuss experiences in special seminars with the Program Directors.		
Apprenticeships will be available at CAT with: the Early Learning Through the Arts Program, the Elementary/Junior High Schools Program, High Schools, Parent Education, Youth Theatre and After School Programs; the Student Shakespeare Festival and a selection of Special Projects. Students will have the opportunity to observe and assist in the preparation and implementation of specific projects, working alongside professional actor-teachers or youth theatre directors, under the guidance of senior CAT Program Directors.		

APTH 659 Independent Study 3 Credits

Prerequisite: Permission of the Academic Director

Independent study or project under faculty guidance. Written contract and report required.

APTH 669 Topics in Applied Theatre 3 Credits

Prerequisite: Permission of Academic Director

This course designation provides an option for offering special experiences with guest specialists of national and international renown, as and when opportunities arise. These experiences might include special master classes, seminars, conferences and special development projects at home or abroad. All projects will be developed by the faculty and approved by the Academic Director.

APTH 690 The Project Thesis Part I 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

The Project Thesis (Parts I & II) is the culminating capstone experience of the program. The course will be offered in two parts spanning the final two semesters. Working in small 'companies', students will research, create and implement an original piece of applied theatre. The written thesis accompanying the practical work will require each student to document the process, its goals and outcomes from her or his own perspective, to contextualize it in relation to its historical and cultural antecedents and to evaluate the experience, including personal lessons learned.

Before beginning the practical work of the Project Thesis, students will be required to submit a Project Proposal including a Review of Literature. The proposal will appraise the theories and main strands of thought they have encountered in the program to date, with particular reference to those most relevant to their project. They will also be expected to identify deficiencies in their knowledge and broaden their reading accordingly.

APTH 691 The Project Thesis Part II 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

The Project Thesis (Parts I & II) is the culminating capstone experience of the program. The course will be offered in two parts spanning the final two semesters. Working in small 'companies', students will research, create and implement an original piece of applied theatre. The written thesis accompanying the practical work will require each student to document the process, its goals and outcomes from her or his own perspective, to contextualize it in relation to its historical and cultural antecedents and to evaluate the experience, including personal lessons learned.

Before beginning the practical work of the Project Thesis, students will be required to submit a Project Proposal including a Review of Literature. The proposal will appraise the theories and main strands of thought they have encountered in the program to date, with particular reference to those most relevant to their project. They will also be expected to identify deficiencies in their knowledge and broaden their reading accordingly.