

Dear Student,

Greetings from Theater Studies!

We hope the answers to these questions will be helpful in your decision-making about colleges in general, and Yale University in particular. Thank you for your interest in our program.

Best wishes,

Nathan Roberts (Director of Undergraduate Studies) and May Brantley (Registrar)

Do I have to audition to be a theater major at Yale?

No. Any student who wishes to major in Theater Studies at Yale may do so. If you think you may like to major in Theater Studies, register for THST 110 and 111 *Survey of Theater and Drama* in your freshman year. This year-long course is the prerequisite to THST 210 *Introduction to Performance Concepts*, which is a class in basic acting technique. Usually taken in the sophomore year, THST 210 is the third required course (in addition to 110 and 111) for entry into the major. You will need to audition to get into THST 210 in the late spring of your freshman year, so that the performance faculty and DUS can determine how many sections of THST 210 to offer. All students that audition will be admitted. Entry into more advanced acting classes is by audition and—as with all seminars at Yale University—by permission of the instructor. We keep technique classes small so that instruction is one on one. Please note that advanced acting or directing courses are not required to complete a major in Theater Studies.

The major requires twelve courses in Theater Studies, equally divided between theory (dramatic literature, criticism, history, and performance theory) and practice (production seminars in acting, directing, playwriting, design, dance, musical theater composing, libretto-writing, and digital media performance, among others). Theory seminars and many upper-level production seminars, if there is room, are often open to students who have not completed the THST 110, 111, and 210 sequence (i.e., non-majors).

May I double-major if I decide to major in Theater Studies?

Absolutely. A third of our current Theater Studies majors are double-majoring in other disciplines, including Anthropology, American Studies, Computer Science, English, French, Humanities, Literature, Political Science, Psychology and others. It is possible, though difficult, to double-major in music. It seems to be almost impossible to double-major in studio art: too much time is required in both the studio and in the rehearsal hall to do well in both majors simultaneously.

Does the Theater Studies program determine my admission to Yale? How does my actual performance experience in high school, forensics, summer stock, community theater, regional theater, television, film, national tours, Off Broadway, Off Broadway, and/or Broadway weigh with my chances of being accepted into the theater program?

First of all, it is important to know that it is the Undergraduate Office of Admissions at Yale, not the individual departments and programs, which decides who is admitted to Yale College. Individual Yale departments and faculty have typically no say in who is admitted. For this reason, and also because of the volume of requests by high-school students for interviews with Yale theater faculty, for logistical reasons we are unable to schedule such interviews. The Office of Admissions does not accept theater performance videos; neither Admissions nor our program is able to review them. For those who have pursued dance at a high level, however, the Arts Supplement to the application includes the possibility of submitting dance videos that are reviewed by the dance faculty. For more information on the application process and Arts Supplement, please visit the Office of Admissions website.

Once admitted to Yale, the Admissions Office is interested in knowing about an applicant's interests and activities, especially when they have been pursued seriously over an extended period of time. You will have ample opportunity in the application to discuss your involvement in theater. Remember that the Admissions Office admits students into Yale College, however, and not into the Theater Studies Program. Last year there were fourteen applicants to Yale College for every one student admitted. Once you are admitted, you become a Yale undergraduate and can major in whatever you wish.

Once you've been admitted to Yale University, we are glad to meet with you, whether at Bulldog Days, a Theater Studies Orientation, or at another time. Although no audition is required to become a theater major, your acting experience before Yale may be helpful in getting cast in productions, and a number of students at Yale have already worked professionally in theater, film, and television. (It's hard though to be a full-time Yale student, do well in your academic work, and still meet a shooting schedule.) At the same time, it is also the case that some students who never set foot onstage before getting to Yale have acted up a storm once they're here. Your college years are a time of great change and should be a time for you to take chances and learn new things.

Where and how do curricular productions occur in Theater Studies?

The Theater Studies Program has its own theater, a big black box called the Whitney Theater, designated for Theater Studies senior projects and other curricular theater activity. The Whitney

Theater typically features up to nine productions in a given academic year. Most of these curricular productions have been proposed as senior projects by Theater Studies majors in their final year (majors can propose projects in directing, acting, dance, digital media, computing and the arts, or playwriting, among other areas, to fulfill their senior project requirement). Other senior projects take place in college theaters, Calhoun Cabaret, and elsewhere. These productions may be student or faculty directed.

The past two years of curricular production have featured an impressive range of projects, including seven world premieres. In 2015-2016: Ntozake Shange's choreo-poem, *for colored girls who have considered suicide / when the rainbow is enuf* (a collaborative Senior Project in acting and directing), José Rivera's *Marisol* (a Senior Project in directing), Michael John LaChiusa's musical, *Hello Again* (a Senior Project in directing), and *We Wove a Web*, an original dance theater piece, based on the lives and writings of the Brontë sisters, adapted and choreographed by a senior Theater Studies major (who also starred in the piece, dancing to an original score performed live by a 9-piece string ensemble). In 2014-2015: *Liminal*, a performance ritual devised, directed, and led by one of our majors, *Sonder*, a one-woman verbatim theatre piece curated and performed as a Senior Project in Theater Studies, *Legally Black*, a solo cabaret piece, *The Tell-Tale Heart*, a one-man retelling of Edgar Allan Poe's short story, with an immersive environmental setting and an original score performed live by a 13-piece string ensemble, and two faculty-led production seminars, each culminating in the performance of an original piece of devised theatre. *La/Dy/Da* was an adaptation of Henry James' *Portrait of a Lady*, devised by the students of THST382 (The Company and the Text), directed by a Theater Studies student in fulfillment of the senior essay. *Zero or More Disposable Lessons* was an original performance piece created by the students of THST447 (Objects in Performance) in conversation with and in celebration of the oeuvre of Polish painter, assemblage artist, set designer, and theater director, Tadeusz Kantor. The production was presented at Yale in the Whitney Theater, and subsequently traveled to La MaMa in New York City, and the Cricoteka Museum in Krakow Poland, as part of a celebration of Kantor's centennial. In addition, there were productions of Sarah Ruhl's *Eurydice*, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, and Kander and Ebb's *Cabaret*, which served as senior projects in acting and directing for four of our majors. Each year, some students write full-length plays or musicals as their senior projects; students also choreograph original dance pieces.

There are several full-time technical supervisors for undergraduate theater at Yale to oversee safety and to help with design and technical questions. The Theater Studies Program has its own full-time technical director who works in collaboration with a production and design faculty member, and with Yale's office of Undergraduate Production.

What is the senior project requirement in Theater Studies? How can it be fulfilled?

The Senior Project in Theater Studies gives students an opportunity to engage with theater, dance, and performance studies as methods of research that are interdisciplinary in scope and global in perspective. Combining creative and critical strategies, students will develop a sustained, in-depth inquiry over the course of one semester or year. The senior requirement in Theater Studies may be partially satisfied by acting in, designing, directing, dramaturging, or choreographing a production. All seniors producing a performance project will take part in a Senior Production Seminar during the semester that they produce their project; this seminar provides the opportunity to develop design presentations, troubleshoot and reflect on the production process, and design a portfolio that represents their work. Whether or not they produce a performance, seniors are required to write a substantial research paper as part of their graduation requirement. Seniors can also fulfill this requirement by writing a full-length play under the mentorship of one of our playwriting faculty. All written and performance-based work is advised by a faculty member.

What other performance opportunities exist at Yale?

In addition to Theater Studies curricular productions and production seminars, several other departments and programs at Yale, such as Music and Art, have performance or public presentation opportunities. There is so much art, orchestra, opera, chorus, film, chamber music, comedy, dance, and theater activity going on at Yale at any given time in many different halls and venues that there is no way to see it all (they are not all under one aegis or located in one performing arts complex).

In addition to performance opportunities within the curriculum, there is a vast extracurricular performing arts program. Last year there were over a hundred undergraduate productions, many of them directed and produced by students. On any given weekend there are 4-5 theater productions going on—in college theater spaces, the Off Broadway Theater, and common rooms or multipurpose spaces in colleges, including college courtyards. Some of Yale's busiest actors are not Theater Studies majors (though many are!). Prominent among the thriving extracurricular theater scene are the Yale Dramat and the Yale Drama Coalition. The Yale Drama Coalition offers an umbrella for all theater activity on campus, publicizing auditions, shows, production opportunities, and coordinating tickets. The Dramat is a student organization that annually brings in professional directors and/or designers to work with students on the mainstage. You can become a full-fledged member of the Dramat by working backstage in three Dramat productions. Dramat productions occur in the University Theater and sometimes in the Iseman Theater and Yale Repertory Theater. (An advantage of belonging to the Dramat is that you can

get complimentary tickets to Yale Rep, School of Drama, and Dramat productions.) Within and beyond these organizations, Yale students have access to unique resources one of which is the Creative and Performing Arts Fund (CPA): each semester any undergraduate student—whether majoring in an arts program or not—can apply for support for theater production, art exhibitions, concerts, dance, opera; the student submits an application to the head (or to a committee appointed by the head), of his or her college.

What playwriting opportunities are there through Theater Studies?

We host a robust playwriting curriculum for students throughout their years at Yale. Beginning, advanced, and special topics playwriting classes are offered by resident playwriting faculty and visiting playwriting instructors. Each year, a number of students write full-length plays or musicals as their senior projects, under the advisorship of our excellent playwriting faculty. Student playwrights arrange a public reading of their final script for their senior project for an invited audience.

The Yale Playwrights Festival is an annual event that features the original work of Yale undergraduates. Chosen from a competitive pool of applicants, Festival playwrights receive the mentorship of professional playwrights as they revise their scripts in the months leading up to the festival and work with a student director and actors to present a reading of their play. The festival performance includes a talk-back with mentors and audience members. Some student plays that have been featured in the Yale Playwrights Festival have gone on to New York and regional production soon afterward. Recent student scripts by students have been presented in the NY International Fringe Festival with a full Yale complement of actors, designers, and production staff. A 2004 Yale College graduate won the 2008 Wendy Wasserstein Prize for playwriting.

What opportunities in musical theater does Yale provide?

The Theater Studies Program offers upper-level seminars, cross-listed with the School of Drama, in musical theater history and in lyric and libretto writing; with the Department of Music, seminars in musical theater composing, directing, and performance are offered. These courses comprise the Shen Curriculum for Musical Theater (see <http://yalemusic.yale.edu/undergraduate/shen-curriculum-musical-theater>). There are also opportunities for voice training in the Music Department, usually in noncredit-bearing courses.

There are also several student organizations that specialize in producing musicals and opera, including the Musical Theater Group, the Gilbert & Sullivan Society, and the Opera Theater of Yale College. The Yale Dramat produces a commencement musical every year as well as one or

two other musicals per season. In addition to these, students occasionally mount musical theater productions at the Off Broadway Theater, a black box devoted to extracurricular productions, or in one of the college theaters. For most of these productions, there is a full student orchestra, student choreography, student musical direction, and almost always a full and lively house. Curricular projects supported by the Yale Baroque Opera Project in the past two years include Francesco Cavalli's *La Calisto* and Claudio Monteverdi's *Incoronazione di Poppea* and *Il Ritorno D'Ulisse In Patria*.

Is there dance at Yale?

Opportunities to dance at Yale abound. Since 2006, Yale Theater Studies has offered dance studies courses to majors and non-majors. The curriculum integrates the study of technique with history and theory, honing movement technique and composition alongside research and critical writing skills. Dance courses focus on diverse subjects, including traditional and contemporary West African dance, Balanchine ballet, American modern and postmodern dance, and dance in musical theater, dance composition, and theories of the body drawn from cultural, dance, and performance studies. A number of courses foster interdisciplinary discourse between dance and other artistic disciplines (music, visual art, film), and disciplines within the humanities and sciences. Many of the courses are cross-listed in departments and programs such as American Studies, African Studies, African American Studies, Film Studies, and Physics.

In 2011, we launched Yale Dance Theater (YDT), a faculty-directed, cocurricular dance research initiative. YDT meets twice weekly during the spring semester for three-hour rehearsals with professional rehearsal directors, culminating in a final performance. Past projects have involved licensing works by Twyla Tharp (2011), Merce Cunningham (2012), Reggie Wilson and Akram Khan (2013), Trisha Brown (2014) and Alvin Ailey (2015). In 2015, Matthew Rushing created a new work for the YDT dancers. In 2016, YDT worked with the Yale University Art Gallery to commission a new work from LeeSaar The Company, grounded in the study of Gaga. Students write about the studio process on an online blog. These writings form the basis for the Yale Dance Theater Journal, student-edited and printed annually. Admission to YDT is by audition. See the links below for more information.

Outside of YDT, guest workshops and dance technique classes are often offered during the year, coordinated by the Dance Studies curriculum and the Alliance for Dance at Yale (ADAY), the umbrella organization for student-led extracurricular dance. These classes are open to the Yale community. Look for announcements during the semester on these special offerings. ADAY also supports many—at last count, twenty—extracurricular student dance groups that regularly perform at Yale.

For more information on these initiatives visit:

Dance Studies at Yale: <http://theaterstudies.yale.edu/dance-studies-yale>

Yale Dance Theater: <http://ydt.yale.edu/>

Alliance for Dance at Yale: <http://www.yale.edu/aday/groups/>

Is it possible to major in dance at Yale?

At this time, we do not have a dance major. Students who wish to pursue dance studies take a variety of paths. A number of students major in Theater Studies, and concentrate on dance studies. Other students major in other disciplines, while passing through the sum total of dance courses. Upon the completion of one or more courses in dance studies, it is possible to undertake an independent study or senior thesis related to dance, either within or outside of Theater Studies. Interested non-Theater Studies majors must explore this option in conversation with their DUS, as regulations vary between departments.

Past Theater Studies senior productions in dance range widely—the possibilities are endless. In 2011, Alejandro Bustillos conceived and choreographed a senior project production called *STR-CRS'D*, which integrated queer theory and Shakespeare's tragedies to probe gender politics through dance. Derek DiMartini '13 created *The Void* (2012), a dance and visual art installation that explored the instabilities of individual and interpersonal identity. In 2013, Aren Vastola '14 choreographed a series of movements that he and his colleagues performed in unexpected quotidian situations, such as crossing the campus, eating in the dining hall, or waiting in line at the post office. Through these mini dances, he interrogated the performance inherent in everyday life. Rebecca Brudner '16 created an original dance theater piece *We Wove a Web*, based on the lives of the Brontë sisters, with original music composed by Gideon Broshy '16, performed live by a 9-piece orchestra.

What level of training must a student have to enroll in the dance studies courses?

The dance studies curriculum consists of a mix of studio-based and sit-down seminars. For the studio seminars, the level of dance training required varies depending on the course. THST 235-ART 235 *Dance Theater* serves as an introductory course, open to students of all levels. Courses such as THST 386 *Advanced Dance Repertory* and THST 335-AFST 435 *West African Dance* require a higher level of dance technique. However, there are always exceptions: students with no background in dance have enrolled in these courses and done well, out of sheer determination and passion for the subject. The studio courses require an audition and/or permission of the instructor, to ensure that the student is fully capable of handling the practical work.

If you are interested in one of the dance studies courses but unsure whether your level of training equips you to handle it, it is best to contact the instructor directly.

Is Yale Theater Studies a preprofessional theater program? Does Yale offer a BFA or a BA in theater?

There are basically two kinds of undergraduate Theater Studies programs in the United States. One is the conservatory program, in which students are offered intensive training in (usually) acting, and in which they emerge with a B.F.A. (bachelor of fine arts) degree. The other is the liberal-arts program, in which Theater Studies are pursued as part of a liberal arts curriculum, and students complete their studies with a B.A. (bachelor of arts).

Yale Theater Studies is a liberal arts program, offering a B.A. in theater. We believe that the best preparation for a life in the theater is the same as the best preparation for life in the 21st century: a broad and deep liberal arts education. The reciprocal relationship between theory (dramatic criticism, dramatic literature, theater history, and performance studies) and practice (acting, directing, playwriting, design, dance) is the emphasis in the Yale Theater Studies Program. (For information about schools that offer a theater B.F.A., you might want to contact the National Association of Schools of Theater, the accrediting body for educational theater programs in the United States. The Web address is www.arts-accredit.org/nast/default.htm). After earning a B.A. in Theater Studies from Yale, numerous majors have gone on to graduate work in theater and dance to prepare for professional careers.

Is there any contact between undergraduate and graduate theater students at Yale?

Indeed there is. Yale undergraduates sometimes perform in the Yale Cabaret and from time to time in small parts in School of Drama or Yale Rep productions. There is also, because of shared interests and proximity (they are on the same block), much informal contact between students of the School of Drama and the Theater Studies program. Drama School students also teach undergraduates as teaching fellows and section leaders in THST 110-111 and a few other large lecture courses. Graduate playwriting students have served as mentors for some undergraduate playwrights in the Yale Playwrights Festival, and serve as teaching fellows in some undergraduate playwriting classes.

There are also numerous Theater Studies/Drama School joint faculty appointees. In the 2015-16 academic year, for example, Theater Studies will offer *Shakespeare Acted*, taught by James Bundy, Dean of the Yale School of Drama and *Physical Comedy and Clown Technique*, taught by

Christopher Bayes, the Head of Physical Acting at YSD. On a case-by-case basis, and with instructor permission, undergraduate students may also be able to take courses at YSD.

I had understood that Yale offers a DFA in Theatre. How can I obtain information on the program?

Contact the Yale School of Drama. It confers graduate degrees (MFA and DFA). It is a separate unit from the Theater Studies Program, which is an undergraduate program in the humanities within Yale College. The School of Drama website is: www.drama.yale.edu

Do most students at the School of Drama get their undergraduate degrees from institutions other than Yale College?

Yes, most students at the School of Drama get their undergraduate degrees elsewhere. (A few have no undergraduate degree at all.) Most first-year students in the MFA acting program already have worked for several years in theater and have built professional résumés. Most first-year students in the directing program have been directing for a while or have started a theater or written a book. The Drama School seems to favor applicants who have already demonstrated their resolve and their talent by working in theater for several years. Many Drama School graduate students earned undergraduate majors in fields other than theater. That said, quite frequently, one or two recent Yale College students are offered places in the Yale School of Drama in a given year. Undergraduates at Yale may from time to time, by petition, be admitted into some graduate theater management or dramaturgy classes in the Drama School. Some students have been permitted to audit graduate design classes. A Yale undergraduate with permission of the instructor and the Theater Studies Director of Undergraduate Studies may take up to four graduate courses in the Drama School for undergraduate credit. There is no admission of undergraduates into graduate acting or directing classes.

Does Yale provide internships for undergraduate majors?

Yale undergraduates have apprenticed and interned in recent summers at the Williamstown Theater Festival, the Goodman Theater and Steppenwolf in Chicago, Manhattan Theater Club, Playwrights Horizons, and New Dramatists in New York, and many other places, including venues in Paris, Avignon, Madrid, Rio de Janeiro, Oxford, and London. There is a small stipend for student actors cast in the acting company of the Yale Cabaret summer season. The Theater Studies office maintains an up-to-date file of internship and apprenticeship possibilities. Fellow students' own word of mouth about internships is invaluable—and honest. The residential colleges at Yale have special endowment funds designated for travel and expenses for which

students going on internship may apply. The Deans' offices have more information about these opportunities.

What is Yale's policy on study abroad?

Yale encourages students to study abroad and provides need-based support for travel and living expenses. In the past few years students have spent a summer or a semester studying acting, dance, and design in Paris and its environs, in London at RADA, BADA or LAMDA, in Moscow at the Moscow Art Theater, and near Lublin, Poland, at Theater Gardzienice. Others have worked with the Yuyachkani troupe in Peru, and one student spent a summer studying and working in theater in China. Yale also offers its own summer courses in London, Paris, Swaziland, and Umbria.

Does Yale offer summer classes for high school students interested in theater?

Yes. For more information about these, see www.yale.edu/summer, or call Yale Summer Programs at (203) 432-2430. These classes are not under the auspices of the Theater Studies Program, the offices of which are closed in the summer.

Where online can I find more information about theater at Yale?

The Yale Office of Undergraduate Admissions maintains a helpful website. For information about Yale College's admission process, see: <http://admissions.yale.edu>

For an overview created for freshmen about theater at Yale as an extracurricular activity, see <http://www.yale.edu/admit/freshmen/extracurriculars/theater.html>

Another site, created and maintained by the all-student organization Yale Drama Coalition, an activist group founded in 1999, gives a vivid picture of and practical information about undergraduate theater at Yale: <http://yaledramacoalition.org>

The office of Undergraduate Production is also a useful resource for new and returning students interested in the processes and procedures involved in performance work at Yale:

<http://up.yalecollege.yale.edu>

To return to the Theater Studies Program's home page, click on: <http://theaterstudies.yale.edu>