

MFA in Drama Course

Directing Major

DRDI 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004 Professional Practice in Directing I, II, III, IV

Professional Practice is not a class but student-led, faculty-mentored participation and practice in a broad range of activities. These may include performances, directing projects, workshops, new play development projects, and outside internships, where appropriate, available, and approved by the Graduate Advisor. For directing majors, the *Professional Practice* module first considers the student's directing work, however, the student may also select to be assessed in the *Professional Practice* module in work as playwright, actor, producer, dramaturge, designer, management team member, or in other theatre related tasks. Other practica may include the operation and administration of activities under the umbrella of *Master Drama Ensemble*. *Professional Practice* can benefit students through the acquisition of in-depth and hands-on experience in theatre-related work, in preparation for the commencement or continuance of their careers.

This course is an on-going process in which the student is guided, through consultation and evaluation, and receives critiques of presentation of outcomes through peer, faculty, and public scrutiny.

DRDI 2005 Directing Non-Naturalistic Theatre

As students have acquired techniques of direction for naturalistic and organic acting, the focus of this course is to venture into the realm of so-called non-naturalistic theatre, and conduct experiments based on the major theatrical concepts of the twentieth century. Students are encouraged to discover the fine relationship between organic acting and that of the non-naturalistic or presentational stage. The history, theories, and concepts of various theatre forms are taught through practical exercises and scene work. Texts of different genres may be chosen to be experimented on to broaden perspectives and thus to stimulate creativity in the director. Some of such scene work may be developed into a full-length directing project, subject to the approval of the Graduate Education Committee.

DRDI 2006 Improvisation for Directing

There is a long tradition of improvisation in the development of western drama. From the commedia dell'arte, to Stanislavski's 'System' for producing inner truth, to the political theatre of Grotowski, Peter Brook's 'happenings', Augusto Boal's 'Forum Theatre' and San Francisco's 'The Diggers', work of the 1960s; improvisation has played an important role in the development of drama. Some of this work led to pure improvisational performance styles, while others added to the array of theatrical techniques available to directors and actors alike. This course investigates various aspects of improvisation techniques and their application within the directing process.

DRDI 2007 Traditional Chinese Theatre Techniques and Style

This course aims to acquaint students with the performing styles and acting techniques of the traditional Chinese theatre and then to explore the possibility of transforming these conventions and forms into contemporary work.

As directors must work with actors, directing students first learn traditional acting techniques from a master of the traditional Chinese theatre, and closely observe other staging techniques and conventions through rehearsals. The training provides students with a direct understanding of the psyche through external stylised techniques and thus opens up ways to improve efficiency of coordination, balance, range of emotion, voice, and movement, as well as research into actual Chinese opera. Students investigate the possibility of incorporating various traditional staging techniques with those of the contemporary stage, both in plays from China, local works, or adaptations of Western plays into an appropriate Chinese era.

Each student is expected to create a scene work related to the Chinese theatre, not merely by borrowing the forms, but with an understanding of the aesthetics and reasons behind such traditions.

As a large number of the students are of Chinese origin, this course also provides a chance to connect them to Chinese cultural traditions.

DRDR 2002 Directed Study in Play Reading

The ultimate purpose of this course is to encourage MFA students to read from a wide selection of scripts, instilling in them a habit of reading plays in their own time. The reading list comprises many of the most well known classical and modern plays that all post-graduate students should be well acquainted with. Some of the plays may have already been encountered at BFA level, and this can therefore be considered as advanced play analysis. It should also give students an opportunity for further investigation of the worldview of individual playwrights and enable them better to contextualise any given script within a wider cultural framework.

Students are allowed to read at their own pace. However, self-guided group-reading seminars are particularly encouraged. Orientation and consultation sessions are held to urge students to develop reading strategies. This course offers the opportunity for students to enrich and deepen their understanding of dramatic texts, both as literature and as performance texts.

DRDR 2003 Hong Kong Expression

This course provides a rewarding approach to theatre appreciation and analysis that serves to enrich understanding of Hong Kong theatre. In particular, the student is encouraged to keep a critical eye on local theatre culture, examining it as a broad expression of human identity, values and even of morality. The course focuses on local written work as well as actual theatre productions, not only as a performing art, but also as a form of literature, an aesthetic event, a commercial product, or the location of a message. De-coding and recognising the numerous elements within a written work provides students with a richer understanding of the script and its intention and motivation, and thus provides a basis for a deeper experience and personal response to the work and its environment. The influence of Chinese and Western theatre culture is also examined. The course encourages the student to reflect on issues pertinent to his/her own writing practice, its placement within the global drama context and the development of a personal drama philosophy.

DRDR 2004 Methods in Stage Directing I

This course is an advanced in-depth survey of all the functions and responsibilities of a director, as well as the theory, mechanics, and practice of how a theatre director utilises the pre-production, rehearsal, and production process in creating for the stage. Students gain a thorough understanding of the collaborative interdisciplinary process involved, and should master the necessary skills to direct and initiate projects in the professional theatre and related areas. Guidelines are given to improve problem-solving techniques throughout the directing process, along with methods of working with actors. Course work focuses on creativity, leadership, organisational skills, and communicative ability. Also, methods of conceptualisation, analysis, and articulation of dramatic works are explored and experimented on as a class project.

DRDR 2005 Methods in Stage Directing II

This course is an advanced in-depth survey of all the functions and responsibilities of a director, as well as the theory, mechanics, and practice of how a theatre director utilises the pre-production, rehearsal, and production process in creating for the stage. Students gain a thorough understanding of the collaborative interdisciplinary process involved, and should master the necessary skills to direct and initiate projects in the professional theatre and related areas.

Guidelines are given to improve problem-solving techniques throughout the directing process, along with methods of working with actors. Course work focuses on creativity, leadership, organisational skills, and communicative ability. Also, methods of conceptualisation, analysis, and articulation of dramatic works are explored and experimented on as a class project.

DRDR 2006 New Script Workshop I

The *Workshop* provides a forum for the development of new work in the MFA Directing and Playwriting programmes. Audiences may get a first glimpse of new work by MFA playwriting majors. The *Workshop* is an in-depth, hands-on, practical exploration of new script creation, developing original voices and art forms, exploring different and sometimes difficult tasks facing artists involved in the development of a new play.

The ultimate goal of the *Workshop* is to help playwrights and directors to incorporate each other's methods and to understand each other better in a collaborative process. In the *New Script Workshop*, through discussion and analysis, and through development or production of their own or their colleagues' plays, students should gain essential experience for their future careers as playwrights, dramaturges, literary managers, actors, and/or directors.

Within the various phases of the 'play-in-progress', four approaches to play development are utilised: cold readings, minimally rehearsed readings, staged readings, and workshop performances. Playwrights provide 'scripts-in-progress', present ideas, do regular rewrites based on readings and feedback from the lecturer, the rest of the class and even from the audience. Directors are expected to lead play analysis seminars, create staging, deliver an interpretive analysis of the play and lead rehearsals. Actors are expected to research characters and create performances. Role reversal is also welcomed. For example, directing students may produce scripts to be staged by playwrights, thereby stimulating an exchange of ideas and experience. The *New Script Workshop* is open to all students in the Academy. Staged readings and New Play Projects are open to the public as well.

DRDR 2009 Twentieth Century Great Masters

Twentieth Century Great Masters is the core course for Directing, Playwriting and Acting Students. The twentieth century has witnessed an extremely important development in the history of theatre, which has given birth to many different schools of thought and practice, as represented by prominent artists, who together have created a diversified arts scene without precedent. Theatre practitioners of the 21st century have the inevitable need to understand the essence of all these differences in order to prepare for their own personal development. This course studies the ideas and styles of certain 'great masters' who are generally accepted to have made a remarkable impact on the development of contemporary theatre and are still exercising their influence on the theatre arts today. Each student is encouraged, from the point of view of his/her major study, to reflect on, critique and assimilate such great masters so that he/she can understand what he/she is interested in.

At the end of the course, each student chooses a style which fits his/her interest and then create a scenes work or writes a special paper related to the particular style chosen.

TETE 2001, 2002 Performance by Design I & II

Performance by Design I & II is a core course for all MFA in Theatre and Entertainment Arts students and MFA in Drama students majoring in Directing. It is the focal point of the MFA in Theatre and Entertainment Arts studies in the first year of the two-year programme. It explores the individual potential and importance of the contributions made by each specialist area as well as how they creatively synthesize in the creation of memorable performance. In addition to the consolidation of the conceptual, artistic, collaborative, and technical knowledge and skills essential to the creative process, the student is encouraged to develop a personal style and to develop her/his distinct artistic voice while creating and contributing within different idioms and contexts. The short and long term goals of this course are the catalysing of creative partnerships and teams with the aim of using the Academy's Master's degree programmes as artistic crucible for the future development of performance within the region and as an ever greater influence world-wide drawing on the distinctiveness of Hong Kong as a meeting place for East and West.

Playwriting Major

DRPW 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004 Professional Practice (Playwriting) I, II, III, IV

Professional Practice is not a class but actual participation and practice in performances, school projects, workshops, play-reading projects, and directing projects, as well as outside internships. The student's assessable work can be as: playwright, director, assistant director, assistant to director, actor, producer, dramaturge, designer or as a management team member. Other practicum that can gain credits would be the operation and administration of the Master Drama Ensemble. Such practice can benefit students by the acquisition of in-depth and hands-on experience in theatre-related work, in preparation for the commencement or continuance of their respective careers.

This course is an on-going process in which the student is guided through consultation and evaluation, also receiving critiques of the presentation of outcomes through peer, faculty, and public scrutiny.

DRPW 2005 Playwriting Strategies

A course that focuses on the practicality of playwriting principles and techniques for communicating dramatic information, ideas, moods, and feelings through the composition of creative written work for the theatre. It includes instruction in creative writing craft, scene writing, script development, stage direction, dialogue and action analysis, editing and adaptation, script reading, and the process of creation of full productions.

DRPW 2006 Playwriting: An Art Form

The course aims to nurture playwrights to become well-rounded artists and dramatists addressing, how they express themselves, and even how they might transform what they see and understand of the world. The focus is on the process and development of personal tastes and styles, and on the discovery of a playwriting student's personal choices of expression, as well as on helping each student to write to the best of her/his ability. Encouragement is given to help students to write personally and truthfully about ideas that have great meaning to us.

At this stage of study, the student also focuses on completing and refining her/his full-length work through play-readings and group discussions. The completion of a producible draft for a future project/production, not necessarily the final draft, in a full-length format must be completed in this semester.

DRPW 2007 Playwriting: Tracing the Threads of Masterpieces

This course works in tandem with the *Play Reading* course. The colloquium is designed to provide students with diverse, inspiring, and practical stimuli from great literature throughout Western theatre to broaden as well as intensify students' aesthetic perspective on the creation of a masterpiece. It provides advanced and in-depth studies into the art of playwriting, understanding the historical development of dramatic composition from the classical Roman theatre to that of the twentieth century. Interesting comparative studies of different eras reveal changes of writing styles. Different approaches on similar themes demonstrate ideological positions adopted by various playwrights. Isolating these similarities or differences entail specialised areas of criticism and ways of interpretation.