From the Chair

Welcome to the MFA Theatre Program at Columbia University School of the Arts. As a theatre maker aspiring to further your education, deepen your work and make a mark in the professional world, you have many options to consider for graduate training. I believe Columbia has the most dynamic, immersive, and multifaceted offerings available. We have passionate, committed, world-class faculty in every discipline. Our motivated, entrepreneurial, and supremely inventive students come to us from all over the globe. The hive of theatrical activity that is New York City provides innumerable opportunities for our students to see the most exciting new work, interact with the most influential artists in the field, and build bridges into the profession while they are still in school. Our alumni are finding great success in the professional world and defining theatre for the next generation of audiences. I hope that you will be inspired by the words of my colleagues as you look more deeply into the Columbia MFA program and will apply to join us next year.

Christian Parker, Chair
Our Town, directed by Tyne Rafaeli ‘14, with Phumzile Sitole ‘16
Acting

Our Acting program seeks to train and develop artists for today’s world. Our goal is to expand the actor’s knowledge and creative imagination through strong discipline and technique. Our work focuses on both the classical and contemporary along with rigorous movement, voice, and speech training. Acting students work with some of the greatest theatre professionals who are united by a tremendous passion for theatre and a genuine love of actors. We promote collaboration, both within the cohort and with the other theatre disciplines. We focus on ensemble work as well as individual training to discover what makes each actor unique. We ready the actor for a career not just in the American theatre, film, and TV, but the world beyond.

James Calleri, Head of Acting

Directing

If you are looking for rigorous training in directing with an emphasis upon the collaborative process, in-depth critique, and the requirement to regularly put work in front of an audience in a laboratory environment, Columbia’s Directing concentration might very well be the place for you. Overseen by Professor Brian Kulick and me, the experience can be transformative. Visit us, see the current directors’ work, and chat with them about their experiences at Columbia.

Anne Bogart, Head of Directing

Dramaturgy

Our program seeks highly self-motivated, entrepreneurial, creative thinkers who are interested in deepening their total knowledge of the theatre, while finding new collaborators and newly expansive ideas about their professional prospects. We encourage you to think of yourself as a generative artist, future artistic director, producer, or institution-builder. Columbia will provide you with a foundation in dramatic theory, history, and literature as well as classes in producing, playwriting, directing, and various forms of theatrical collaboration.

Christian Parker, Chair and Head of Dramaturgy
Optics of Dying Light, written and directed by Misha Chowdhury '16, with Julia Joyce-Barry '15
1001, directed by Carl Cofield ’14, with Marcelo Carrascosa ’17 and Cassandra Nwokah ’17
Playwriting

The Playwriting concentration embraces diverse voices and aesthetics. There are many ways to write a great play, exemplified by our faculty, which includes winners of Tony and Obie Awards and the Pulitzer Prize, such as Charles Mee and Lynn Nottage. We seek to help each student find his or her own unique and idiosyncratic voice. We also emphasize practical knowledge and experience in the full range of dramatic writing, under the guidance of instructors like Tony Award-winning composer Jeanine Tesori and iconic TV showrunner Matt Williams. Because we believe playwrights need to hear their work and see it staged, each student receives a full production of their third-year thesis play, mentored by their favorite playwright or theatre professional. New York provides the perfect environment for career development, alongside a writer's all-important artistic growth.

David Henry Hwang, Head of Playwriting
Stage Management

The Stage Management concentration provides a contemporary learning approach for the career-focused student. Modern stage management requires its practitioners to be at the center of the organizational chart as a combination CEO/COO: setting the tone, driving the process, and delivering results. You’ll get in-the-trenches classroom training from subject-matter experts in a multitude of disciplines: Broadway, institutional theaters, opera, dance, television, and corporate events. You’ll get practical experience working on Columbia productions, as well as outside internships and field studies that are specifically tailored to your own interests. The goal? To build your industry contacts and increase your skill set so you are firmly prepared to work in a variety of situations as a leading-edge stage manager.

Michael J. Passaro, Head of Stage Management

Theatre Management & Producing

We want to educate and inspire you to create bold new work and shape the future of the industry. We also want you to stand out and land a job in this highly competitive environment. Our exceptional faculty of working professionals gives you an in-depth understanding of the big picture: the history of the industry, how the business operates today, and what lies ahead. And, just as importantly, we help you build a network of fellow artists and professional contacts that will serve as the foundation for your career in the theatre. Each year, we strive to bring together a diverse group of theatre makers from across the country and around the world. We hope you will consider joining our community.

Steven Chaikelson, Head of Theatre Management & Producing
1989, devised and directed by Tatiana Pandiani ’16, with Tina Wang
Blue Window, directed by Ken Rus Schmoll '00, with Gabrielle Greer '16, Folami Williams '16, Brynne McManimie '16 and Nico Kiefer '16
About the Program

The Theatre Program at Columbia University School of the Arts is an international, collaborative and interdisciplinary graduate theatre program named in honor of Oscar Hammerstein II, offering concentrations in Acting, Directing, Dramaturgy, Playwriting, Stage Management, and Theatre Management & Producing. The Program’s location in New York City, a global nexus of theatre, affords students the opportunity to experience a wide variety of theatrical productions, spaces, and performances available nowhere else. Students in the Program have the unparalleled opportunity to learn from—and work with—true visionaries in the theatre world. Students have access to an extensive network of Columbia alumni who run prestigious Broadway, Off-Broadway and regional theatres; direct and perform in Tony- and other award-winning productions; work in every level of the professional theatre world; and teach, mentor, and engage with students on an ongoing basis. Notable alumni include Diane Paulus, Beau Willimon, Darko Tresnjak, Anson Mount, Rachel Chavkin, and Barbara Whitman.

Visit arts.columbia.edu/theatre-brochure for application requirements and financial aid information.

About the School

Columbia University School of the Arts awards the Master of Fine Arts degree in Film, Theatre, Visual Arts, and Writing and the Master of Arts degree in Film Studies. It also offers an interdisciplinary program in Sound Arts. The School is a thriving, diverse community of talented, visionary, and committed artists from around the world with a faculty comprised of acclaimed and internationally renowned artists, film, theatre, and television directors, writers of poetry, fiction and nonfiction, playwrights, producers, critics, and scholars. In 2015, the School marked the 50th anniversary of its founding. In 2017, the School opened the Lenfest Center for the Arts, a multi-arts venue designed as a hub for the presentation and creation of art across disciplines on the University’s new Manhattanville campus. The Lenfest hosts exhibitions, performances, screenings, symposia, readings, and lectures that present new, global voices and perspectives, as well as an exciting, publicly accessible home for Columbia’s Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery.

For more information visit arts.columbia.edu.

All photos by Carol Rosegg.