

MFA Directing Handbook

Revised, updated to Fall 2018

Note: The Directing Committee conducts ongoing evaluation and review which result in some changes to the program. Updates will be recorded in the online version and the Directing Coordinator will alert students to any significant changes by email.

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MASTER OF FINE ARTS IN DIRECTING PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

The hunt for those individuals who will provide significant visions for the future of the Canadian theatre is a constant one. The MFA in Directing Program at the University of Alberta is committed to the development of those people. We train and educate candidates for a future as directors in the professional theatre.

The education we offer prepares our students to work in professional theatres, create their own work and companies, use theatre as a tool in community-based projects, promote and develop new plays, and to work as educators in various academic settings. Our program offers a thorough grounding in all aspects of the craft of theatre and an intensive orientation into the critical and theoretical areas of theatre, as well as serving to enhance the artistic vision of any prospective director.

The program is unique in the level of depth and breadth it attains. Initiated in 1972, the MFA in Directing was the first degree of its kind offered in Canada. It has always been responsive to the changing Canadian theatre landscape and seeks to adapt itself to the demands of current professional theatre practice. Its quality is attested to by the large number of our graduates who have and do play key leadership roles in theatres in Edmonton and across the country.

Objectives:

- to enhance artistic vision
- to graduate students who are imminently hireable; who will work and make their livings in the theatre
- to create an intense, immersive experience that combines practical work with academic study
- to impart specific skills and a complete grounding in the practical tools of directing across a broad range of theatrical styles
- to ensure a full academic basis of understanding so that the director is supported by the capacity for intensive theoretical study and critical analysis
- to connect our students with professional theatre practitioners, and to expose them to insight and criticism from working directors
- to expose our directors to a range of projects in size, space, aesthetic, genre and relation to its audiences
- to encourage our students to recognize the needs of the future of theatre through new play development

Program Requirements

The program is presented as a series of courses, practical workshops and directing experiences. Productions and practical directing exercises are mounted as part of directing and thesis courses. These are combined with course work involving graduate students from other Drama programs and are intended to broaden the MFA Directing students' knowledge of theatre, drama and related fields. The emphasis of the program is on the development of creative solutions to the practical problems of directing for the stage. You will direct six works in a variety of styles and spaces. Productions receive small budgets and technical support from the Department; three receive design support. In your projects you may use professional actors, faculty members, community actors, and/or students. **(See guidelines under Casting for use of Equity actors and the Administrative Info For Drama Department Productions (2016 document)).**

The program consists of a two-year residency and 33 course credits. It is a full 12-month program; while absence from campus is feasible during most of the summer months, considerable work is required. Make summer plans taking this work load into account.

Required:

- DR 683 (3) Styles of Directing I
- DR 684 (3) Styles of Directing II
- DR 685 (3) Advanced Projects in Directing I
- DR 686 (3) Advanced Projects in Directing II
- DR 601 (3) Methods and Tools of Research
- Thesis 900 (3) Thesis Prep.
- *18 additional course credits*, selected in consultation with the Directing and/or Grad Coordinator. These courses may include:
 - graduate courses from any area of the Department of Drama, including:
 - T DES 673 (3) Advanced Lighting Design
 - DR 607/617 (3) Production Dramaturgy and New Play Dramaturgy
 - DR 608/609 (3) Approaches to Dramatic and Theatrical Critical Theories (offered in alternate years)
 - Special topics seminars (DR 621–626, 659, 690): topics are established each spring for the following year
 - graduate courses from another department (selected in consultation with the Coordinator of Directing and/or Grad Coordinator)
 - DR 605 (Special Projects in Theatre)
DR 605 allows you to pursue independent study in areas outside of the usual Graduate course offerings. The availability of special projects courses (605) is dependent on the willingness of qualified faculty, who must agree to supervise these courses as an overload. **It is not advisable to take any 605's in your first year.**
A good use of 605 is as Research preparation for the thesis.

Each spring a list of the upcoming year's Graduate seminar courses and topics, with brief descriptions, is published and emailed to graduate students.

Selecting and Registering for Courses

Registration for courses takes place just prior to the beginning of term. A meeting will be set up with the Coordinator of the MFA Directing Program to review and discuss which courses (electives) are of interest to you. The Coordinator will relay this information to the Liz Ludwig and she will formally register you. If you are receiving a scholarship or a full-time GA¹ assignment, you must be registered as a full time student in each term, or your monthly pay will be affected. Usually, courses are laid out like this.

Courses by Term: Year One

Term One (9 credits)		Term Two (9 credits)	
DR 683 Styles of Directing I	Labs and Seminars & 2 short directed projects	DR 684 Styles of Directing II	Seminars & 1 full length play
DR 601	Methods and Tools of Research	Option	Normally a Design or Seminar Course
Option	Normally a Design or Seminar Course	Option	Normally a Design or Seminar Course

Courses by Term: Year Two

Term One (9 credits)		Term Two (6 credits)	
DR 685: Advanced Projects in Directing I	Seminars & 1 full length play	DR 686: Advanced Projects in Directing II	Seminars, Asst. Directing assignment, new play workshop or reading
Option	Normally a Design or Seminar Course	Option	Normally a Design or Seminar Course
Option	Normally a course related to thesis prep	Thesis 903: Thesis Prep	

Advising

Your Program Advisor is the Coordinator of Directing². S/he will work with you on your course selection, as well as respond to questions and issues that arise for you during your program. While you will have a Directing Course teacher/advisor for each of your directing projects and should work out most matters in the context of the specialized directing courses, the Coordinator will work with you on other aspects of your program plans. Normally you will meet with the Coordinator 1-2 times per term as well as by your request. Until a thesis supervisor is established, you will also work with the Coordinator as you develop thesis plans.

¹ GA refers to GTA (Graduate Teaching Assistantship) or GRA (Graduate Research Assistantship). These are often offered as part of a funding package for graduate students.

² Names of directing course instructors, the MFA Directing Coordinator and other roles that commonly intersect with your work are listed in an appendix.

THE PRODUCTION COMPONENT

The practical production component of the program consists of six directing projects. These projects range in size and scope, culminating in the thesis production at the end of your second year. **Directors must be aware that each production is a practicum for a number of students in other programs and must accommodate a variety of training needs.** Acceptance of proposals will therefore depend in part on such considerations, as well as on the directing student's individual strengths, needs and interests.

Two short directing projects (short one-act plays or excerpts from full length plays) are produced by each director in the first term of the first year. These receive minimal technical support and are cast from the final year BFA Acting class. The play choices will be made in consultation with your Drama 683 instructor and based upon your training needs. These projects also need to provide excellent training opportunities for the BFA actors involved.

Two full-length plays are produced in the Bleviss Laboratory Theatre (BLT) previously known as the Media Room; a contemporary play in your first year (second term) and a play with extended style in your second year (first term). Your course advisors will discuss the criteria of both with you during the term. Design and technical support is offered, as is a very small budget. Stage Management and a running crew are assigned as available. Casting is the responsibility of the directing student, as is finding additional members of the artistic team (eg. choreography, design beyond those students assigned, etc).

The New Works Project is presented in the second term of your second year. Normally work commences well before this (i.e. selection of new work project, dramaturgical work etc.), and *at least* early in Fall Term of your second year. The focus of the project is to work with a playwright as they develop a play. Your job is to assess the needs of the playwright and their play as you begin work, and to design a process to serve those needs. Directors should have a playwright chosen and have established a working relationship with him/her by the end of their first year in the program. The presentation form of this project will be determined between you and the DR 686 course instructor; it will range from a workshop reading to a staged project. Directors may choose to do their work on or off campus. This project is a good opportunity to build or enhance a long-term relationship with a playwright.

The Thesis Production is a full-length play produced within the Studio Theatre season at the end of your residency. This production enjoys a ten-day run (including a matinée) and receives full technical and design support within the limits of the budget. The thesis production should represent the culmination of your work in the program, provide significant challenges to you as a director, and fit appropriately into the Studio season.

Note on Production and Rehearsal Guidelines³

The productions during your term of residency are provided with a varying degree of technical and design support. The technical feasibility and level of support offered will affect play choices. It is imperative, therefore, that upon entering the program you obtain and read a copy of the *Production Guidelines* <https://vista4.srv.ualberta.ca/webct/logon/595312234051>. NB: these are currently under revision. **Please contact Production Manager Gerry Van Hezewyk should you have any difficulty accessing the link.** You are expected to be familiar with the *Guidelines* for each project. The *Guidelines* include information on technical support (and restrictions) for each production, room bookings, budgets, facilities, and many other important aspects of the department. In addition, you will also receive a copy of the **2018-19 Rehearsal Guidelines Document (Rehearsals Hours)** which outlines rehearsal hours and is a very important document throughout your program. You should also review the *Production Calendar*, which will outline meetings, deadlines and the production schedule for the academic year. **This is accessed on the Google Calendar; arrange for access from Jonathan Durynek, jdurynek@ualberta.ca in early September.** Directing students are responsible to be familiar with all aspects of these documents which refer to their projects, and to contact the Directing Coordinator or your project advisors (Directing course instructors) where questions arise.

Instruction and Advising

For each project you direct you are assigned a course advisor who conducts the term's seminar and advises you as you prepare, direct and reflect on your project.

The course advisor may be involved in interpretive and design decisions and meetings, casting choices, rehearsal schedules, and all aspects of the production. Before rehearsals begin, a rehearsal schedule should be submitted to the advisor for discussion. Production and interpretive choices will be discussed in depth. Generally, advisors attend the first reading of the play, one rehearsal per week, two run-throughs, the first cue to cue rehearsal and a tech/dress rehearsal.

The course advisor will generally not give notes directly to the actors or the production personnel. After each rehearsal visit, the supervisor and the student director are expected to meet to go over notes. **It is the student's responsibility to schedule this meeting before the next rehearsal occurs.** During the rehearsal period the student may also be asked to submit a rehearsal log that includes the goals (set and accomplished) for each rehearsal, an evaluation of progress, and plans for future rehearsals.

Each term project is accompanied by a relevant seminar series which addresses tools and methodology, some theory/research, and analysis of preparation and practice.

Planning and decision making for the subsequent terms require advance consultation with the upcoming advisor/instructor, sometimes the Directing Coordinator, as well as your current directing instructor.

³ This document is under revision and its name will be altered when revisions are complete. See your program coordinator or the department Production Manager, Gerry van Hezewyk, if you find the information you require is not available during this transition.

Proposals

For BLT shows, **3 proposals** are to be submitted in advance to the Directing Committee for approval; **submit an electronic copy of the proposal and scripts to the Directing Coordinator and submit 1 hard copy of each play to Helen in the office which will be made available to the Directing Committee for signout. The Coordinator will then forward the electronic proposals and scripts onto the other members of the Directing Committee, once they have had a chance to review. Sometimes, revisions are requested.** These proposals should be listed in **order of preference.**

Proposals should be brief and specific, while addressing the relevant elements of the following questions. *Proposals must take into account the capacities and confines of the production slot and make a positive case for how a compelling version can be mounted, yet within the restrictions of budgets, casting and other capacities.*

Justification: Why should the play be done? Why now? What is its significance? What opportunities and challenges does it create for you and for your development?

Feasibility: Address directorial AND production challenges as well as your approach to solutions.
Consider:

- **Casting:** Numbers? Gender? Age considerations? Possible doubling? Cuts? Available casting pool? (Note on Cast Size: the size of the cast has substantial impact on budgets and projects proposals may have to be rejected if unaffordable; discuss this closely with your advisor before you develop your proposal.)
- **Production and Technical demands** Note: refer also to *Production Guidelines* to determine resources and address how you will produce within these conditions. Do not hold anything back, as this is a central consideration when determining the feasibility of the production.
- **Text:** length, translation, cuts, other. Note: Rights must be obtained to finalize approval; this is managed by Theatre Administrator (David Prestley), who can assist in preliminary research and who makes all contacts with agents and playwrights on behalf of the department.

Approach: **Directorial Concept, Period, Stylistic Approach (concept) and Rationale?** Effects on casting, rehearsal and acting approach?
Why do you want to do it? Personal development and needs?
Set size and scope (list and describe locations, specify interior or exterior),
Costume (essential and critical elements and elaborateness, how many looks per character?)
Lighting (special effects and important and essential elements)?
Lights (requirements, moods, day, night, any projections? – if so describe)

Challenges: Directorial considerations? Specific problems and proposed solutions? List all production challenges (gunshots, someone falls etc),
- i.e. to avoid surprises once the play is chosen.

Resources: Necessary areas of investigation? Personal inventory and preparation, specific research plan (include a list of resources available)? Can the show reasonably be achieved given the financial and technical resources of the BLT?

After submission of your proposal, a meeting will be arranged with the course (or program) advisor, where you will defend your choices. You should come prepared to discuss the play, your concept and the above aspects of your production in an articulate manner. The Directing Committee has final approval on these projects.

Video Guidelines for BLT Shows

Where use of video is contemplated:

1. A workshop is required in advance of a production involving video to give designers and directors the information necessary so that they will know what is required of them and an awareness of the commitment needed. **Contact Gerry van Hezewyk to arrange.**
2. One minute of Video requires at a bare minimum three hours of preparation. This does not include setting up and adjusting the equipment as required.
3. If a designer is doing their first practical lighting design, a separate person must be responsible for video design and the coordination of that design element into the show.
4. If video is to be used in a BLT production, the video storyboard and thumbnails are due on the same day as final set designs and are to be presented at the first production meeting. Any video that is to be recorded (filmed) must not exceed 5 minutes in length.
5. All video shooting must be scheduled in advance with the full awareness of all members of the production team.
6. All video must be in place in every respect before the lighting hang begins. There is no time to troubleshoot the video while the lighting hang and cue process is happening. There are not sufficient resources at this level of production to do both processes simultaneously -- our experience in the past indicates that both processes are likely to suffer.

PRACTICAL DIRECTING PROJECTS⁴

FIRST YEAR

Term One

Two Directing Projects

DRAMA 683

Each director produces two short directing projects in conjunction with the 4th Year BFA Acting students (one in October and one in early December). Your 683 course instructor will contact you prior to the course commencing regarding cast size and gender breakdown, which is impacted by the composition of the acting class. Normally, the first project is selected by the DR 683 course instructor; the second is proposed by you and finalized in consultation with your instructor. Variations in this practice will be communicated by the specific instructor.

DR 683 projects are presented in one of the acting studios. The initial emphases are on working with actors, composition and blocking, and text preparation. Stage configuration and lighting plot is negotiated between the two MFA Directors in consultation with the FAB Technical Director, and other directing students, where relevant. Rehearsals are typically held during the late afternoon/early evening, based on the BFA Acting schedule. **See 2018-19 Rehearsal Guidelines document.** Casting will be done in consultation with your DR 683 advisor. The run will normally follow the standard FAB performance schedule: a Friday evening dress, a Saturday evening performance, a Sunday matinee and a Sunday evening performance.

Please see *Production Guidelines* for technical support details. See course outline (provided by your instructor) for additional detail or variations.

Term Two:

Contemporary Full Length

DRAMA 684

A full-length production in the BLT in late February/early March and late March/early April. Normally this is a contemporary play. **The DR 684 Proposal Deadline (3 plays) for 2018-19 academic year is October 1, 2018** and students should have a number of plays selected and available for discussion *when they arrive in the fall*.

The MFA Directing Coordinator in consultation with the Directing Committee and the two 1st year MFA Directors decide who will go first (late February/early March) and who will go second (late March/early April). This decision should be made early in term one; the order of these productions (first or second) will be normally be dictated by the order of the next year's thesis productions (May or September slots).

⁴ This section outlines major creative projects by term. See *MFA Directing Time Line* and *Production Calendar* for additional details.

- RUN DATES:** See *Production Calendar*. Standard FAB performance schedule.
- CASTING:** These productions are cast from the community. This includes Equity and non-Equity actors as well as BA students. It is advisable that directors begin to familiarize themselves with the Edmonton acting community upon their arrival in the Department. **Please see guidelines under Casting⁵ for use of Equity actors and the Administrative Info for Department of Drama Productions 2016 document. Please Note: Equity actors in BLT productions MUST be either alumni of the University of Alberta or faculty. You must notify David Prestley regarding the play (for royalties) you intend to do and the information regarding your cast (as Equity members must be approved).** Cast size restrictions may apply, given budgetary constraints for both costumes and transport/parking and Equity members' insurance. **These productions should be relatively small in size**, as normally only one production per student can be larger in cast size and these are normally required for Fall BLT shows in Year Two.
- REHEARSAL:** Begins approximately 6 weeks before performance. See *Production Calendar*. Rehearsal time beyond that allocated in the department production schedule and as spelled out in the *Rehearsal Guidelines* document is not readily available. Only in extraordinary circumstances are adjustments allowed and they need written approval from the Coordinator of Directing and the department's Production Manager.
- Rehearsal space is assigned. Currently this is in SAB (South Academic Building, which is 3 buildings West of HUB)
- TECHNICAL:** Technical support is available (see *Production Guidelines*). **Gerry Van Hezewyk, Production Manager & TD Advisor will oversee BLT project organization. See *Production Calendar*** for timing of meetings and consult with PM in advance with production questions. You may have a student TD assigned to your production, and s/he is supervised by the PM. Don Mackenzie, as the Technical Director, Studios (which includes the Fine Arts Building (FAB), will oversee the spaces in FAB. Stage configuration is flexible. Seating is normally set and limited by the stage and seating system configurations. Video use is not advised for this unit.
- DESIGN:** BFA and/or MFA Designers will be assigned to the show. Directors should consult early and often with the assigned designers, recognizing the other students' other deadlines and commitments.
- STAGE MGMT:** Stage managers from the BFA Stage Management Program will be assigned.

⁵ Casting: see page 12 of this handbook

BUDGET: The budget is approximately \$2000 (revised slightly each year) for these productions (subject to minor changes). (check with T.D. re: details).

MEETINGS: The director's attendance at all scheduled production meetings is required.

PUBLICITY: Admission to FAB productions is free. Signup sheets for FAB productions are posted outside the Drama Office the Monday before the run. Book your team's comps before the sheets go up. The director is responsible for front of house and any wider publicity.

ROYALTIES and PERMISSIONS:

These are negotiated by the department's Theatre Administrator, David Prestley. Permissions for presenting modern/contemporary plays usually include clauses forbidding adaptation and rewrites. The Director must be familiar with the constraints and requirements of all royalty agreements and permissions. **It is important that the MFA director contact David Prestley as soon as possible to see if rights can be obtained.** See *Administrative Info for Drama Department Productions (2016) document.*

PROGRAMS: These are created by the Director and *should use the department template*, including cast and crew considerations, Drama staff lists, as well as the Drama Emergency Bursary Fund statement. Request template from Stage Management or your advisor.

SECOND YEAR

Term One

Extended Style/Language

DR 685

A full-length production in BLT in mid-late October and late November/early December. The order of these productions (first or second) will be dictated by the order of the thesis productions (May or September/October slots). **The DR 685 Proposal Deadline (3 plays) is January 7th, 2019**

NOTE: many of the parameters for the organization of Fall BLT shows are similar to the first year (Term Two) BLT shows; see above for fuller details.

RUN DATES: See *Production Calendar*. Run is standard for all FAB shows.

CASTING: Cast from the community.
Please Note: Equity actors in BLT productions MUST be either alumni of the University of Alberta or faculty.
See Casting guidelines later in the Handbook.

- REHEARSAL:** Begins approximately 6 weeks before performance.
- TECHNICAL:** Technical support is available (**see *Production Guidelines***). The technical director for FAB, or a student TD under the FAB TD's supervision, will oversee production meetings and production organization. Stage configuration is flexible. Seating is limited by the design and seating systems configurations.
- DESIGN:** BFA and/or MFA Designers will be assigned to the show. See design/director time line, noting that the design processes and costing are to be completed before the spring/summer break.
- STAGE MGMT:** Stage managers from the BFA Stage Management Program will be assigned.
- BUDGET:** **The budget is approximately \$2000** (revised slightly each year, currently under review) for these productions (subject to minor changes). (check with T.D. re: details).
- MEETINGS:** The director's attendance at all scheduled production meetings is required.
- PUBLICITY:** Shows may be publicized outside the university if the director wishes and has time to pursue. The department's publicity staff does not publicize these shows.
- ROYALTIES and PERMISSIONS:**
These are negotiated by the department's Theatre Administrator, David Prestley. Permissions for presenting modern/contemporary plays usually include clauses forbidding adaptation and rewrites. The Director must be familiar with the constraints and requirements of all royalty agreements and permissions. **It is important that the MFA director contact David Prestley as soon as possible to see if rights can be obtained.** See *Administrative Info for Drama Department Productions (2016) document.*

Term Two

DRAMA 686: **The New Works Project**

NOTE: DR 686 includes four units:

- a) *New Works project*
- b) *professional development*
- c) *a workshop in an area needing further development*
- d) *assistant directing (at Studio or another theatre).*

Work on the New Works project normally starts in Term One (i.e. selection of project, dramaturgical work) and continues over the first half of Term Two (further dramaturgical work, rehearsals and workshop presentation).

The purpose of the New Works Project is for the director to develop skills in directing original Canadian material, and working with a playwright while a play is in process. The focus of the project is on the director/playwright relationship and on script development, culminating in public readings or performances of the plays. The public event will be designed based on the needs of the play, playwright and taking feasibility into account. Options often include full but simple workshop production, staged readings, or staged excerpts. Choices will be made in consultation with playwright and course/project advisor.

CASTING: Cast from community.

BUDGET:

The budget is \$150 for each of these productions. Note: this budget is for production elements only and does NOT include photocopying of scripts. There is a separate copying budget; arrangements for copying to be made with main office.

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PLAY CHOICES

Students should arrive into the program with a long list of possible play choices of varying styles, as you will find that you have very little time for lengthy play searches during your program. Specifically, incoming students should arrive with **at least 3 - 5 titles** that could work for **each** of the first three FAB production slots:

- 1. DR 683: a short play (more info provided by instructor);**
- 2. DR 684: a contemporary full length play (modest cast size and production needs);**
- 3. DR 685: a play with extended language or non-naturalistic elements**

During the program: Directors are encouraged to work with a range of seating configurations, stage-to-audience relationships and genres. Play titles will be negotiated according to your needs as a director, the needs and limitations of the department (including those of other students in design, technical and stage management programs), cast availability and budget restrictions.

CASTING

Casting for all FAB productions (with the exception of the two one acts in the first term of the first year, where members of the 4th Year BFA Acting class are used) is done from the pool of professional actors and students within the community. **Please Note: Equity actors in BLT productions MUST be either alumni of the University of Alberta or faculty.**

For FAB productions, both Equity and non-Equity actors may be used, with appropriate credit given in the program for Equity members.

For information on casting Thesis productions, see page 16.

It is crucial for the director (especially if you are coming into the program from out of town) to see as many productions in the community as possible in order to familiarize yourself with the acting pool. As a resource, first year directors should seek help in casting from second year directors and faculty.

Equity members cannot be used without permission of Canadian Actors Equity Assn (Equity); therefore, you must provide the department's Theatre Administrator, David Prestley, with a list of your Equity actors as soon as they are cast. Once submitted, you will be advised of any additional information required. **This must be done at least 2 weeks prior to rehearsal start.**

Provide:

1. Production Name and Project (eg Play and Author, BLT Production 685-1)
 2. the actor's name
 3. Equity number
 4. address and telephone number
 5. rehearsal dates
 6. first day rehearsal
 7. performance dates, times and number of performances
 8. full cast list.
-

The Theatre Administrator will then contact Equity for permission to use your actors. Although there is no remuneration offered for Equity or Non-Equity actors in FAB productions, Equity actors receive some benefits such as parking, insurance etc. Please inform the Theatre Administrator immediately of any changes to your Equity cast so Equity can be updated. *All Equity negotiations are handled by this department representative.*

See also "Quick References on Rights, Posters, Equity" which is available from the Theatre Administrator.

Note: For the thesis production, Equity actors are paid. Due to budget constraints, a limited number of Equity actors may be used. Currently the budget allows for **two Equity actors per production.** Our agreement with Equity does not allow us to pay non-equity actors. No videotaping of any production with Equity actors may be done without permission of Equity. Please contact the Theatre Administrator at least two weeks prior to a proposed video date.

PHOTOCOPYING:

Scripts

The Department will pay for a basic set of script copies provided the office is given a text in time to order these as required by the royalty agreement and/or, where legal, to use Printing Services. Further copies are the responsibility of the Director.

General

Each production will also have 500 copies for incidental use.

Posters and Playbills (excludes Studio Theatre):

1. Posters and playbills for non-revenue generating productions are optional and at the discretion and expense of the director or other creative team members. However, should such be produced, the following guidelines must be observed.
2. Poster Designs: check the rights agreement for billing requirements. As a general rule - the work's title should appear before the name of the playwright or anyone else on the production's creative team. **Remember to include dates, times, location of the performances, information for ticket sign-up, the Department's logo, and the course number (e.g. DR 684) on all posters.**
3. The playwright's name is typically no less than half the type size of the play's title.
4. Should you wish to include the director's name on the poster, we ask that you include the names of the designers.
5. Should you wish to include the actors names on the poster, we ask that you include the stage managers.
6. Playbills: always recognize the rights holder as well as the playwright and creative team – e.g. "Rights for this production courtesy of Samuel French".
7. Rights agencies may request copies of posters and playbills so keep extra copies just in case you are asked to forward them.

***BLT Productions have a grad student who serves as the theatre's FOH Manager; it is a GRA appointment. It is that person's job to proof all posters and playbills before they go to print to ensure that the above-stated rules and regulations have been followed.

Department of Drama *Rehearsal Hours Policy*

The **2018-2019 *Rehearsal Guidelines*** document governs all rehearsal hours. It recognizes several groups of students and has been worked out in consultation with several programs and based on extended experience. Directors are responsible for working within these Guidelines.

Please note: Any changes to the rehearsal hours that are outlined in the document and the start dates established on the ***Production Schedule*** are not advised and if implemented must be approved by the Coordinator of Directing and the Production Manager.

THE THESIS COMPONENT

The thesis component of the program consists of two major elements:

- a fully mounted theatrical production
- a written document about that work

The Thesis Production

The direction of a public performance of a full evening of theatre, normally produced within the Department's Studio Theatre season at the Timms Centre for the Arts. The thesis production is mounted in either May of your second year of the program (closing the season) or in October following your second year (opening the next season).

RUN DATES: Opens Thursday and runs for nine nights (Sunday dark) plus a matinée on the second Thursday. There is a Preview performance the Wednesday before Opening.

CASTING: **The April/May thesis slot is cast from the community.** Two Equity actors may be engaged under Guest Artist Contracts by the Department; the remainder of the cast *must* be non-Equity actors. All casting is done by the director. There is no provision for payment of non-equity actors.

The September/October thesis slot is cast using a combination of the 4th Year BFA actors (in conjunction with the BFA Acting Program) and 2 Equity actors from the community. If additional actors are required, they will be drawn from the community.

REHEARSAL: Begins approximately 4 and 1/2 weeks before performance. The entire contract cannot exceed 6 weeks which includes the run of the play.

TECHNICAL: Full technical support is available, within the limits of the budget. The Production Manager (Gerry Van Hezewyk) will oversee production meetings and production issues. The Timms Main Stage is a proscenium theatre with a seating capacity of 289.

DESIGN: Usually either an MFA Design student or faculty member will design the show. A Stage Manager will be provided by the department. Unlike FAB shows, the building of the show is not done exclusively by students. **Most labour and materials involved (sets, costume, lighting hang, etc.) in producing the thesis show must come out of the budget.** It is essential that all design elements are carefully considered and costed.

BUDGET: The budget will be provided by the Production Manager.

MEETINGS: The director's attendance at all scheduled production meetings is required.

PUBLICITY: As part of the Studio Theatre season, the thesis production receives normal Studio Theatre publicity, poster design and production, programs, etc. The publicist of Studio Theatre is responsible for PR decisions. The director will be called upon for program notes, discussion of images and themes that may inform poster design and other publicity, and possibly interviews or other information about the playwright and play.

In communication with the Directing Coordinator, the two MFA candidates will discuss who will do the April/May thesis slot and who will do the September/October thesis slot. The outcome of this discussion will ultimately be approved by the Directing Committee. Some important issues to consider when deciding are:

The April/May Slot

- The candidate will be finished their degree requirements in the spring.
- Deadline for thesis proposals, which requires significant preparation, is **March 15, 2019** of the first year to allow for consideration by both the Directing Committee and the Studio Theatre Committee.
- Approval of the thesis is relatively quick, as the season must be selected early in the spring. This ensures a full year for research and production preparation.
- This slot requires that the candidate will normally have the first slot of the winter (DR 684) productions and must have the first slot for the fall (DR 685) productions.
- **The majority of the written portion of the thesis is due before rehearsals begin**, and therefore research and writing must occur in conjunction with course work for the second year. This will have a large impact on course work load and teaching as well. Students are advised to get a start on thesis writing in the summer between years one and two. See Directing Time Line.
- The April/May slot closes the Studio Theatre season. As the show is held after the end of the second term, there may be slightly smaller houses and less student attendance.
- This production is often also an MFA Design thesis.

The September/October Slot

- The candidate will not be finished their degree requirements until the fall. Therefore, finances must be considered over the summer months. The Department offers a TA (teaching) or GRA (research) over the summer to help support the candidate, however, this amount is limited.
- Deadline for thesis proposal is **September 4, 2018** of the second year. This allows more time (over the summer months) for reading and preparation of proposals.
- This slot requires that the candidate will normally have the second slot of the winter (DR 684) and will have the second slot for fall (DR 685) productions.
- The written portion of the thesis may be done outside of term during the months of May, June and July, so the second-year workload is more manageable.

- The September/October slot opens the Studio season and is well attended by students and the community.
- Production support is not available over the summer months. Production staff return to the Department of Drama in mid August.
- Casting in the September/October Slot ***must include*** members of the graduating BFA class (number dependent on selection choices for Studio Theatre Production #1 and Studio Theatre Production # 2). Casting of BFA actors will be coordinated between the MFA Directing Program and BFA Acting Program.
- Additional casting (2 Equity actors and if needed, non-Equity) will be affected by The Edmonton Fringe Festival, held in mid to late August.
- An MFA or BFA design student may not be available to design the show. A faculty designer, or a designer from outside the department may need to be found. This is the Department's responsibility.
- ASMs may be more difficult to find over the summer months.

Proposals

For the thesis production, there are two steps to the process:

Proposal #1: 5 Title Proposal with minimal description. The proposal should be list the titles in order of preference. **Proposal #1: 5 Title Proposal & its accompanying scripts should be sent via both hard copy AND electronic copy to the Directing Coordinator. In addition, electronic copies (ONLY) of the proposal & scripts should be sent to each committee member.**

The Directing Committee then reviews and approves two proposals for further development. (NOTE: considerations for anything other than a published play script ***must*** be discussed with the Directing Committee during the first term of your first year).

Proposal #2: Fully-Developed Proposal (2 titles) is to be submitted as follows:

Send a hard copy AND an electronic copy of Proposal #2: Fully Developed Proposal (2 Titles) to the Directing Coordinator AND an electronic copy to each of the committee members. No additional scripts need be submitted at this time, unless the Directing Committee has asked you to find another play outside of the five plays proposed in Proposal #1 (5 Titles). Once Proposal #2: Developed Proposal (2 Titles) has been reviewed and discussed by the Directing Committee, a play will be selected to go forward to the Department Chair, who is also the Artistic Director of Studio Theatre. At this time, an additional hard copy ***may*** be requested for the purpose of circulation amongst the Studio Theatre committee. **Proposals for the April/May slot are due March 15 your first year; proposals for the September/October slot are due on September 1 (or the Monday after if September 1 falls on a weekend) of your second year.**

Proposals should be brief but specific. Follow the BLT approach for proposals, keeping in mind the different production conditions and the expanded readership. Your proposals should be realistic (include all production/design requirements needed to tell the story - i.e. 3 locations – 2 exterior, 1 interior, elephant appears), specific, and also inspiring. You are advocating for a feasible and compelling project.

While in process, proposals should be discussed or reviewed with your thesis supervisor, or where one is not yet assigned, with your Program Advisor (i.e. Directing Coordinator). Proposals should go to Directing in well-developed/finished form. They should indicate the director's order of preference, but keep in mind that any of the proposed scripts may be selected for production.

The initial **5 Title Proposal** should offer significant directorial challenges, fascinate you as an artist, and fall within the realm of the possible, given your areas of strength and the Department's resources. The director of the September/October thesis slot must take into account casting the play with a combination of 4th year BFA actors and 2 Equity actors (casting additional actors is possible, but should be kept to a minimum).

After submission of **Proposal #1: 5 Title Proposal**, the Directing Committee will meet to discuss the merits, feasibility and suitability of each title and will then request a more developed proposal of two of the titles. If needed, the Directing Committee may request additional titles at this time.

Once the **Proposal #2: Developed Thesis Proposal (2 Titles)** is submitted, the Directing Committee meets again to discuss and rank the proposed projects, before submitting them to the Chair for review and onto the Acting (April/May Thesis slot) and then onto the Studio Theatre Committee for consideration. The Studio Theatre Committee will evaluate the projects for technical, budgetary and production feasibility as well as for their 'fit' with the rest of the season. It consults too with Design regarding 'fits' with MFA Design Theses and student assignments. If, for some reason, the proposals are deemed inappropriate, the student may be asked to submit additional proposals. The Graduate Committee must also give final thesis approval (this administrative aspect is normally handled by the Directing Coordinator or Thesis Advisor).

Upon final approval, work should begin on the preliminary preparation of the written thesis and the production. By this stage, a thesis supervisor and designer(s) should be selected. Where possible, directors are encouraged to consider forging director-designer teams in the proposal and preparatory stages of a thesis production.

The Thesis Supervisor

The choice of a thesis supervisor is a key component of the thesis production. **All full-time Directing Faculty are eligible.** Students may request a specific supervisor; where possible faculty will oblige (this decision is often dependent upon the number of thesis assignments any one instructor may have underway, their affinity for the style of the piece and schedule).

Primarily, the supervisor is available as a resource for the student, both in terms of the production and the written thesis. **It is the Thesis Supervisor who puts together the Thesis Committee.** Students should not directly approach faculty in this regard.

In the thesis production process, the student director should demonstrate capacity for *independent* work as they pursue leading and realizing their (and their team's) artistic goals for the piece. They should demonstrate excellent communication processes with the production team (staff, students, faculty, guest artists). The primary role of the supervisor is to ask questions based in an understanding of the artistic goals, without interfering in the artistic vision, but including observations and questions which encourage the director to take their vision as far as possible. The supervisor assists the director with issues and strategies on request. The supervisor is also responsible for protecting the reputation of the Department so far as it is tied to the production.

The supervisor works with the student as the written portion is designed and pursued.

The Thesis Committee

The thesis supervisor is responsible, in consultation with the student, for putting together the thesis committee for the thesis oral examination. The committee normally consists of:

- **the thesis supervisor,**
- **an internal member (from the Drama Department)**
- **one external member (from another department),**
- **the Committee Chair, who may or may not participate actively in the examination and is normally from among the Drama faculty members.**

Their roles are to see the performance (usually twice), read the written document, and participate in the oral exam, which is based on production and document.

The Written Thesis

The written thesis concerns itself with three stages of work:

1. **background preparation and research***
2. **directorial analysis of the play to be produced***
3. **an edited journal of the directorial process: reflection and analysis of the production process and production**

***The first two stages must be completed prior to the design consultation and rehearsal period.**

Using the above as an outline, the initial parts of the written thesis should record a journey of discovery and decision making in relation to the practical and creative work for which you are

preparing. The specific individual needs of the play and the director will determine the particular nature and content of the written thesis.

1. Background Preparation and Research

There are many possible directions the background preparation and research segment of the thesis may take. Directors will select the specific emphasis that will work for them in consultation with their thesis supervisor. Elements which are often appropriate include:

The Playwright

- biography
- personal, social and political influences
- theatrical/artistic influences
- transitions and progressions
- writing process
- how has your play been influenced by the above?

The Playwright's Works

- development
- themes
- styles
- productions
- audience and critical responses
- where does your play fit into the playwright's body of work?

The Play

- what is it about?
- production history
- what are the key or dominant aspects of this play?
- how does/has it challenge(d) directors?
- how does it challenge you?
- why/how is it relevant now?
- How do these affect your approach to the play in the current context?

Additional Areas of Research (examples; each project will require variations here)

- specific performance styles
- specific rehearsal methods
- study of a specific director or other theatre artist
- study of a specific theatrical theory or approach
- study of a theme or concept central to the play
- study of a culture or historical period central to the play and/or your production

2. Directorial Analysis of the Play

You may wish to weave your directorial analysis into the background work described above or you may wish to develop a separate section. Any of the various methods for analysis may be used. Minimally, you should analyze the story, structure, theme, setting, style, major characters, key transition points, etc., but the format of this investigation is up to you. **A clear statement of your theatrical intent for the production concept and objectives should emerge from this research and analysis.** This section represents an expression and justification of your intentions for design, casting and rehearsal methods, and your overall goals for the theatrical production. The written thesis records a process and is a living document, one meant to be of use to you as a director.

3. The Analytic Journal: Reflection and Analysis during and after each phase of the Production Process

The journal portion of the thesis, written over the preparation, rehearsal and production period, presents the opportunity to discuss, evaluate and reflect on the choices you make. It is a record of the entire process. It is your opportunity to reflect as you go on 'what worked' and 'what didn't work' and why. The journal will ideally encourage questions during and after the various production processes, such as:

- What am I learning about the play that I didn't know before rehearsals?
- What did I plan to do and what am I/did I actually do? Why?
- How can I respond during a process to adapt, in-process, to experiences within reflection, design consultations or rehearsals?
- What would I change/keep about the director-designer process and outcome?
- What would I change/keep about the rehearsal process?
- How did the audience respond? How did I expect the audience to respond? What does this tell me?
- What have I learned about myself as a director? What are my future challenges?
- What would I advise another director were he/she to choose to direct a similar/ the same piece?

Other

In addition, the written thesis should contain a summary section (reflecting on the production once it is up and running), a public response section (copies of reviews or letters that you receive about the show), and a resource section (bibliography).

The Oral Defense

Normally held shortly after the production closes (within a two-week period), the oral defense is based upon the first two sections of the written thesis and the production itself. The third should be provided asap. Attending are your Thesis Committee (Supervisor, Internal and External examiners and Chair). It is an opportunity to discuss, critique, explain, analyze and defend production choices. A typical format consists of the candidate making an opening statement about the production, then Thesis Committee members asking a series of questions to the candidate. Normally the process takes 90-120 minutes.

Following the defense, the candidate completes revisions as requested. The Committee may request to see these, or they may leave it to the Supervisor to approve the final document.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

The following documents are referred to in this Handbook, and should be obtained, read in detail and referred to throughout the program:

MFA Directing Program Time Line from Directing Coordinator
MFA Directing Faculty List from Directing Coordinator

Department of Drama Rehearsal Guidelines Document from Directing Coordinator

Department of Drama Production Guidelines Online: Google Docs (once revision complete)
See Gerry Van Hezewyk if trouble accessing

Department of Drama Production Calendar: Online: Google Docs
Lists Production meetings, deadlines, set ups and runs
Access obtained at beginning of term from Jonathan Durynek, jdurynek@ualberta.ca. Jonathan can also give you access to the Department's Administrative Calendar, which lists meetings.

Please also check the Department Calendar often for updates.

Quick References on Rights, Posters, Equity from **Theatre Administrator, David Prestley**,
david.prestley@ualberta.ca

Note: Please also follow up with the Theatre Administrator for questions or clarifications.

BLT Director/Designer Collaboration Schedule (for BLT productions) from Directing
Coordinator (TBA)

Department of Drama Graduate Seminars: (published each Spring for the following academic year): from Graduate Program Advisor/Executive Assistant: Liz Ludwig

Contact the Directing Coordinator if you have trouble accessing these documents.