

# Questions



## About a hundred things to ask school representatives

You have questions. So do we. The process of selecting a place to study theatre is a two-way street. The school wants to know if you're the kind of student who will do well in its program, and it seeks to find out by asking you to fill out an application, supply your grade point average and SAT or ACT scores, audition, and interview. Similarly, you need to find out everything you can about the education and training you will receive at a school you're considering. You do that by talking to school representatives and asking penetrating questions.

What should you ask? We asked some of our friends in colleges and universities and others who spend a lot of time helping students make these difficult decisions to give us some questions that will help you focus your investigation of theatre programs.

### First, what do you want?

Your first questions should be ones that you ask of yourself, to help you understand what you are looking for in a college theatre program. Among them:

- What do I want to get out of college theatre training?
- Do I want to learn more to see if it's an area I might want to pursue professionally?
- Or do I already know this is what I'm going to do and want the best training I can get in professional skills?
- What do I want to be doing when I finish school?
- Am I more interested in film and television or in theatre?
- Do I want to teach theatre in schools?
- Do I want to study in a liberal arts or a conservatory setting?
- What size program do I prefer?
- What kind of environment best suits me? Urban setting? Small town? Large state university? Private college?
- How far from home?
- How big of a gap between the total annual cost and the financial aid package can I afford?



# General questions

Here are some general questions to keep in mind as you check out schools that interest you. You'll find the answers to some of these questions in a course catalog or simply by paying attention when you make a campus visit. Others you'll need to put directly to faculty members. They boil down to this single query: What can you do for me, for my career in the field of theatre, that puts you above other schools? Consider the answers to that question closely as you make your final decision.

- What training and education approach do you offer, liberal arts (with a B.A. degree) or conservatory (B.F.A.)?
- What is the mission of the department?
- What is your philosophy of training in theatre?
- What is the ratio of academic study to practical work and production?
- How is the overall program divided among dramatic literature, acting, theatre history, technical theatre, directing, playwriting, theatre education, theatre administration, production (course requirements, number of majors, number of faculty, etc.)?
- What are the professional credits of your faculty and what are they doing professionally now? What are their areas of specialty?
- Where are your recent graduates now, and what are they doing? Were they accepted to grad school?
- What is the ratio of faculty to students? To majors? To minors? What is the size of theatre classes?
- Where do your students come from? Is the student body geographically, ethnically, racially, culturally diverse or limited? What is the percentage of minority students enrolled in the program? What is the male to female ratio of students enrolled in the program?
- Can I double-major in another area? Minor?
- Can I design an independent study if there isn't a course in something I'd like to study? Are there opportunities for studying at nearby colleges? Study abroad?
- What do I get to do? On what level are undergraduates involved with department productions? Do they perform, direct, design these productions? Do freshmen get to perform? What is the educational basis for that policy?
- What are your class, performance, rehearsal, shop, storage, and lounge spaces like?
- Are there mainstage and black box opportunities to stretch one's craft?
- Would there be opportunities for me in various areas of theatre production, or will I be limited to a specialized area? Does the department encourage study of various aspects of theatre?
- Does your school have a theatre space for the staging of student-directed productions?
- What types of plays do you do? Do you produce/provide training in musical theatre?
- Who directs your shows?
- How are shows selected?
- Are there off-campus internship possibilities available through the department that will allow me to obtain hands-on professional experience? Can I do an internship for credit? Do I have to pay tuition to do that?
- Is there community theatre near campus?
- How well does the professional training this department provides fit into a liberal arts life?
- Do you have a retention program? How many theatre majors graduate in four years? How many transfer?
- How do you aid students in making the transition into professional work for internships, summer work, and after graduation? Grad school? Job fairs?
- Does your school have any contacts with professional theatres?
- Does your school have a summer theatre program where I could get experience?

- Do you have a graduate program? May undergraduates enroll in graduate level courses after fulfilling the core requirements?
- Do graduate students teach undergrad courses?
- What are my chances of getting into the department? Does the audition date make a difference?
- What financial help does the department offer?
- Do you foresee any changes in the department over the next few years? For example, are any faculty planning to retire?
- May I speak to some of this year's freshman class, seniors, recent graduates?

## **For acting students**

- What are the performing opportunities for students?
- Do you offer a (New York) senior showcase to help the transition from college into the profession?
- What influences will I experience in the sequence of acting classes? (Meisner, Chekhov, Viewpoint, Suzuki training, Hagen, Method, etc.)
- Is there a voice production component to the training? Will I be taught dialects?
- Is there a movement component to the training?
- Will I have the chance to learn stage combat?
- Is there an auditions class?
- Do you have class in business skills for the actor?
- How much crew work is required of acting students?
- Who auditions for department shows?
- Do acting classes perform scenes or showcases for the department or the public?

## **For theatre education majors**

- How many faculty members are in theatre education?
- How many majors are in theatre education?
- Is there a specific theatre education curriculum?
- Do theatre education majors get to participate in productions and performances?
- Are there specific theatre education productions and if so what is their purpose?
- Are there opportunities to be in the schools prior to and in addition to student teaching? How much will I get to work with students and in the classroom prior to student teaching? If I'm working on a K-12 certificate, will I work with students K-12?
- Are students screened into the program or can anyone be in theatre education?
- Is there adequate opportunity for me to learn technical theatre, acting, and directing in the course and production work?

## **For playwriting students**

- Is it possible to major in playwriting or to have a concentration in playwriting within the theatre major?
- What kind of playwriting classes are taught? Are there independent studies as well as regular offerings?
- Does the program provide exposure for playwriting students through readings and/or productions of student work?
- Does the department enter student playwriting work in competitions such as the American College Theatre Festival or any similar programs?

## **Contributors**

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