



Department Head:

Edward S. Kim

Head, Theater Program

B.A., *summa cum laude*, Amherst College

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Head, Dance Program

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B.A., with honors, Brown University

A shared focus of the theater and dance programs at Pierrepont is to provide students with the opportunity to develop techniques and awareness as performers. Both disciplines fundamentally concern movement through time and space. In exercises and rehearsals, students work to gain mastery over their bodies and, in theater classes, their voices. In this way, students learn to create and manipulate the movement in moments. Through the introduction and exploration of traditional techniques, it is our hope that students will build solid foundations as performers.

In theater, classical models of performance are examined. The staples of the theater class are traditional improvisational activities, in which students learn to listen and work together in a continual present, and repetition exercises, in which students react and respond to the truth in moments. The vocal and gestural reactions that naturally occur in these activities enable students to develop techniques - the use of gesture and variation of rhythms and tones - that add character and color to their performances of text. The dance program, as well, has at its base in traditional techniques; the vocabulary is drawn from the dances of Mali.

In conjunction with the Humanities courses, the theater program focuses on a careful study of dramatic literature. Students learn to examine texts in order to make informed choices about characters and dramatic moments. Text is read for its own merit, its own beauty, and also for its use as material for scene studies, acting exercises, and performance. Advanced classes read plays by classical playwrights, such as Shakespeare and Racine, in order to become accustomed to language outside their daily vernacular. Exposure to such language in rehearsals and scene studies allows students to gain mastery of expression within these forms.

Composition is a primary element of both programs. In dance, while developing their own vocabularies of performance, students are encouraged to express their ideas as choreographers. Successful composition occurs when, having gained an understanding of the relationship between the performer (or what is being performed) and the audience, choices are made based on this understanding. Students use Laban's theory on creative movement to choreograph their own works, which are performed annually. In theater, composition is currently represented in our study of the craft of play righting, in which students explore the dramatic form and the development of character. In the future, studies of directing and design, both scenic and costume, are anticipated.

In both theater and dance classes, students learn to work and create together. They serve as their own critics and audience, collaborators and ensemble. In addition, there are multiple opportunities for performance each year. Some previous productions include Plautus' "Miles Gloriosus," scenes adapted for the stage from Ted Hughes' Tales from Ovid, and scenes from Racine's "Iphigenia."

Additional faculty:

Asha T. Rhodes
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