

**BROWN UNIVERSITY/TRINITY REPERTORY COMPANY**  
**MFA PROGRAM IN ACTING & DIRECTING**  
**STUDENT HANDBOOK**  
**2017-18**

The primary goal of the Brown/Trinity MFA Program is to prepare its graduates for work in the professional theatre. From the beginning, students are expected to conduct themselves as professionals in relation to their work, whether it be attendance at a class, rehearsing scenes and projects, acting in a performance, or working in the studios.

**THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM: ACTORS**

The professional actor training program is based upon a rigorous daily schedule of prescribed classes, required of all students. The single core curriculum is comprised of acting, voice, movement, directing and playwriting classes taught by a resident faculty, and supplemented by frequent workshops in specialty areas led by guest artists from the professional and academic arenas.

Our goal is to provide students with the best possible training, to ensure that they graduate with the skills necessary to act at a professional level. By the end of three years of instruction, students will be experienced in a wide variety of classical, modern, and contemporary styles. Actors should be in confident control of their physical and vocal instruments. They should be intelligent, active collaborators who are responsible as well as responsive. They should have a mature individual method of performance based upon technical skill, intellectual curiosity, and personal artistic vision that will support them as they continue the process of education and exploration that constitutes a life in the theatre.

Although it is Brown/Trinity Rep's goal that all students complete the program, admission to the second and third years are by invitation only.

The course of study for actors is organized as follows:

**YEAR ONE**

- Acting: scene study in modern and contemporary realism
- Movement and Physical Theatre: the juxtaposition of technique and spontaneity through the practice of Clown, Contact Improvisation, and contemporary dance
- Voice: breathing, resonance, and production of sound
- Speech: pitch, articulation, and introduction to the International Phonetic Alphabet and Standard American speech
- Directing: interaction between artists, text analysis, and staging of realism
- Playwriting: an introductory workshop culminating in a festival of one-act plays
- Dramaturgy Course (TAPS 2050)
- One Brown elective in Spring Semester

**YEAR TWO**

- Two Acting courses: scene study in classical verse plays, with an emphasis on Shakespeare and Moliere
- Movement and Physical Theatre: advanced technique and continued ensemble work through contemporary dance, composition and Viewpoints
- Voice: application of vocal technique to classical verse texts, as well as private lessons in Singing and Alexander Technique
- Speech: introduction to dialect work

- Directing: conceptualization of classical plays in verse
- Playwriting: solo work, one-act and full-length plays (elective)

### YEAR THREE

- Acting: problems in style from Greek drama to contemporary non-realistic texts
- Thesis Recital: conceptualization, rehearsal and performance of a twenty-five minute solo piece
- Showcase (Practicum): rehearsal and performance of an end-of-year showcase for industry professionals in Los Angeles and New York, and extended workshops in professional development and on-camera acting
- Movement and Physical Theatre: advanced professional practice in contemporary forms, an exploration of extremes and character, and construction of original pieces
- Voice and Speech: advanced dialect work and application of good vocal usage to performance work, with additional sections of Singing and Alexander Technique
- Directing: Viewpoints and style work
- Playwriting: continued work on one-act and full-length plays (elective)
- One Brown campus-based elective

### **THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM: DIRECTORS**

As creative leaders, directors must possess a broad-based critical foundation, be well-versed in the practical aspects of rehearsal and production, and inspire and synthesize the work of their colleagues in the areas of acting, playwriting and design.

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The directing program is defined thematically in the following manner:

YEAR ONE: Text analysis, Dramatic Action, Story -- Contemporary and Modern Drama

YEAR TWO: Collaboration -- Verse Drama and Design

YEAR THREE: Synthesis and Expanded Forms

Each year, a course of study is developed based on four basic components:

- Participation in studio course work in directing, acting, design, and playwriting
- Participation in academic course work in theatrical theory, history, non-Western theatre, and areas of specific interest to the student
- Directing projects including new plays, contemporary/modern work, and classics
- Professional engagement with Trinity Rep as an Assistant Director

Directors will:

- Enroll in courses in directing, acting, design, and dramaturgy, including TAPS 2050, which is required in year one.
- Register for academic courses designed to introduce a variety of theoretical concerns and methodological approaches
- Participate in collaborative courses, which will combine students and faculty from programs in Playwriting, Acting, Directing and Design
- Assist on two Trinity Rep mainstage productions
- Direct a workshop production of a contemporary/modern play
- Direct two productions with moderate technical support, including one new play and one classical verse play

- Direct a thesis project with full design support and extensive technical support

#### YEAR ONE

- Two Acting courses: scene study in modern and contemporary realism
- Two Movement and Physical Theatre courses: the juxtaposition of technique and spontaneity through the practice of Clown, Contact Improvisation, and contemporary dance
- Two Directing courses: interaction between artists, text analysis, and staging of realism
- Dramaturgy Course (TAPS 2050)
- One Brown elective

#### YEAR TWO

- Two Acting courses: scene study in classical verse plays, with an emphasis on Shakespeare and Moliere
- Movement and Physical Theatre: advanced technique and continued ensemble work through contemporary dance, composition and Viewpoints
- Voice: application of vocal technique to classical verse texts, as well as private lessons in Singing and Alexander Technique
- Two Directing courses: conceptualization of classical plays in verse and critical analysis
- Playwriting: solo work, one-act and full-length plays
- One Brown elective

YEAR THREE is evenly divided among the following courses:

- Two sections of Thesis Workshop to support selection of and research for final play
- Two Directing courses: Design and Practical Applications
- Two Brown-campus based electives
- Two sections of Directed Research under the Director of the Directing Program, Brian Mertes, or TAPS faculty to develop and launch plays

#### CLASSES

- 1) Classes are held five to six days a week. Rehearsals may take place in the evenings and during the weekend.
- 2) Attendance is required at all classes. Three unexcused absences place students at risk of academic warning and could lead to dismissal from the program.
- 3) Lateness for class or unexcused absences will not be tolerated. **IT IS BETTER TO BE FIVE MINUTES EARLY THAN FIVE MINUTES LATE.**
- 4) Excused absences include illness, family crisis, and pre-scheduled and approved appointments. For these absences you should contact the Director of the MFA Programs, Angela Brazil and your instructor should be notified. *For same-day illnesses, please Angela Brazil and your instructor.*
- 5) Admission of a late student is at the discretion of each individual faculty member. If a student is not admitted for any reason it will be considered as an absence.
- 6) If a student is absent for a private session with a faculty member, that student may be denied any additional private appointments. In the case of a legitimate illness on the day of a scheduled private, *it is the responsibility of the student to inform the instructor and Angela Brazil. Students may also wish to contact a classmate, who may be able to use the session.*

## **PERFORMANCES**

A major part of the M.F.A. program consists of performance work outside the classroom, in Brown/Trinity Rep productions and with the Trinity Rep mainstage company. Productions take place throughout the year, and may be directed by students, faculty, members of the Trinity Rep Company and staff, or by invited guests. Performances take place in Brown/Trinity Rep studios, as well as in the Pell Chafee Performance Center. Occasionally student productions are also presented in one of Providence's small non-Equity theatres or in a performance space downtown or on the Brown Campus. Third year directors' thesis projects are presented with full design and production support.

## **BROWN/TRINITY PRODUCTIONS**

Performing and directing full-scale productions outside of the classroom are an essential component of the Brown/Trinity training. Although students do not work on productions in the first semester of the first year, from the second semester of the first year onward, they are expected to be rehearsing and performing on a fairly constant basis. Casting is generally decided by the Program Heads, in consultation with the project directors.

Brown/Trinity productions receive various levels of production support, as determined by the Program Heads. Assistance from the TRC scene, paint, prop, and costume shops is available on a limited basis and only through the assistance of the Production Manager.

Each student using a studio or performance space in any capacity will be held completely responsible for the care of the equipment as well as the cleanliness and integrity of the facility.

*All students will be expected to usher Brown/Trinity studio productions at least once each year. Ushers will be required to arrive at the theatre 45 minutes before curtain and remain until the audience exits at the end of the performance. Signup sheets are posted approximately one week prior to the performance date. Students are permitted and encouraged to watch the show when they usher.*

The upstairs Chace Theatre of Trinity Rep shares a wall with our blackbox studio, and noise is sometimes a problem. In the event that a conflict exists, student productions and rehearsals will be required to lower excessive volumes. Failure to run a production or rehearsal in a completely professional and responsible manner that reflects the high standards of TRC will result in the immediate cancellation of that production or rehearsal.

Brown/Trinity sometimes co-produces productions with other local theatres in order to expand public performance opportunities for students. Students will be expected to respect these facilities and follow the rules of their management.

## **TRINITY REP PRODUCTIONS**

Observation and participation in the life and working process of Trinity Repertory Company is an integral part of the training program. Trinity does not guarantee that every student will have the opportunity to work on or perform in a Mainstage production, but does try to provide as many opportunities as possible. Students who perform in Mainstage productions will be paid \$175 per performance week. Students who work as assistants to Trinity directors will receive a fee of \$350 per production.

In general, students are not considered for mainstage casting until the second semester of their second year.

The number of non - union roles available in a given production depends on the quota of union to non-union actors as defined in the League of Regional Theater's (LORT) contract with Actors' Equity. Students will be considered for all non-union roles which the Artistic Director feels can be performed by any particular student.

Some roles may be offered to students based on consultations with directors, faculty, staff, and / or individual auditions. Since each director will have different needs, the casting procedures for mainstage productions are flexible. On some occasions, union roles will also be cast with a Brown/Trinity student. In such cases, the student will be paid union wages. Casting of students in union and non-union roles is always based on ratio requirements.

Casting is done on the basis of artistic concerns; therefore, some individuals may be cast in numerous productions while others may not be used on the mainstage at all. For students who have been cast, offer letters will be sent from the Artistic Director of TRC before employment begins.

While some conflicts may occur, students cast in mainstage productions will be held accountable for work in their classes. Under certain circumstances, allowances will be made on a case-by-case basis by both faculty and the director.

### **PROGRESS EVALUATION**

Students will receive written evaluations from each faculty member at the end of each fall and spring semester and will meet privately with the appropriate program heads at the end of each semester to discuss their overall progress. All Brown/Trinity courses will be graded S/NC (Satisfactory/No Credit), in accordance with Brown University grading guidelines.

### **WARNING STATUS AND TERMINATION**

Brown/Trinity is committed to the success of every student. As part of that commitment, the program will address situations when students fail to thrive. The faculty will address concerns with students both verbally and in writing throughout the program. The faculty will place students on academic warning when a student is not making sufficient academic progress.

When a student is placed on academic warning, they will receive clear, written explanation of the concerns and instructions detailing the steps to be taken in order to regain good or satisfactory standing, by specific dates. If the deficiencies are not resolved by the specific deadline, then the student on warning will be dismissed. Students will be notified that they have been placed on academic warning in a timely way, and they will have one semester to make the necessary changes. A student placed on warning will not be allowed to participate in any productions with Trinity Rep or Brown/Trinity.

Participation in the second and third year of the Brown/Trinity Rep program is by invitation only. Completion of the first year does not necessarily mean that a student will be invited back for the second year. Only those students who demonstrate a sufficient mastery of the techniques involved and who combine that mastery with a strong sense of discipline towards the work will be allowed to participate in the second year. Although students who have completed the first two years of training are expected to graduate, third year students are nevertheless expected to continue to perform and work at the highest levels.

## ACADEMIC CODE

All students are expected to adhere to Brown's academic code, and the code of student conduct. They are linked below.

### Academic Code:

<https://www.brown.edu/academics/college/degree/sites/brown.edu/academics.college.degree/files/uploads/Academic-Code.pdf>

### Code of Student Conduct:

<http://www.brown.edu/randr>

## HEALTH AND WELLNESS

**The health and well-being of Brown/Trinity MFA students is extremely important. The university offers numerous health and wellness resources for graduate students:**

- Students seeking more information about **Medical Leave** should contact **Associate Dean of Student Support in the Graduate School, Maria Suarez**. Dean Suarez is dedicated to serving graduate students only and is available for any student support needs (Horace Mann 110, maria\_suarez@brown.edu, 401-863-1802).
- Students with any after-hours emergencies should call the Administrator on Call for assistance: 401-863-3322
- Students with Brown Health Insurance should use Brown Health Services (13 Brown Street, 401-863-3953) as their primary healthcare provider.
  - For after-hours advice, students should call the Health Services nursing line: 401-863-1330
- To report and receive assistance with sexual assault (for yourself or a friend), call the Sexual Assault Response Line: 401-863-6000
- **Diversity Initiatives** provides assistance with recording a lived or chosen name change into University systems to support T\* students (Graduate Center, 4<sup>th</sup> floor)
- **Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)** provides free confidential counseling (J. Walter Wilson, Room 516, 401-863-3476).
  - CAPS support is available 24 hours. If you need to contact CAPS after hours, please call the number listed above.
  - CAPS offers Saturday appointments for graduate students from 9 am to 4 pm during the academic year at Health Services, 13 Brown Street. Appointments must be made during regular hours, Monday through Friday.
- **Student and Employee Accessibility Services (SEAS)** coordinates and facilitates services for students with physical, psychological, and learning disabilities, and temporary injuries (20 Benevolent Street, 1<sup>st</sup> floor)
  - **Students should contact SEAS office if they have a disability or other condition that might require accommodation or modification of any course procedures.** As part of this process, they should be registered with Student and Employee Accessibility Services (SEAS) and provide instructors with an academic accommodation letter from them. For more information, contact SEAS at (401) 863-9588 or [SEAS@brown.edu](mailto:SEAS@brown.edu).

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

Students with concerns about the program and/or their experience at Brown should discuss them with Curt Columbus, Artistic Director of Brown/Trinity, Patricia Ybarra, Chair of the Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies ([patricia\\_ybarra@brown.edu](mailto:patricia_ybarra@brown.edu)), and/or Shayna Kessel, Associate Dean of Master's Education in the Graduate School ([shayna\\_kessel@brown.edu](mailto:shayna_kessel@brown.edu)). They can advise students as to the formal grievance policy.

## **REHEARSALS**

The use of the studios for classes and rehearsals requires careful cooperation between all members of Brown/Trinity. The proper spirit of cooperation can only be fostered in an atmosphere where there is mutual respect for each other's work.

- 1) Rehearsal time is scheduled by signing up for available space on the studio sign up sheets that will be posted for the entire week on the preceding Thursday.
- 2) All scheduled rehearsals should begin on time. Any studio that has been signed out but which is not in use 10 minutes after the time it has been signed out may be claimed by another student.
- 3) Acting scene rehearsals are to be scheduled in 1-hour increments, and directing class assignments in no more than 2-hour increments. Rehearsals for approved productions will be listed as part of the weekly schedule. Priority is given to productions that are closest to their opening performance dates. Since space is limited, the Production Manager will determine which rehearsals will take place in which studios.
- 4) Directors with productions that are not regular class assignments are given specific rehearsal times for the coming week. These directors are not allowed to sign up for additional time unless granted special permission.
- 5) Space should not be scheduled unless it is definitely going to be used. Cancellations of rehearsal spaces should be done as far in advance as possible in order to give others the opportunity to use the space. If a rehearsal is cancelled and studio space becomes available, a sign should be posted on the callboard informing other students of the change. This is especially important for individual rehearsals not scheduled by the administration.

## **STUDIOS**

Students should make all reasonable efforts to ensure a clean environment conducive to work. We expect each student to respect all studios, theatre and office spaces. A service is employed to clean the floors on alternative days. However, if the space has not been cleared of furniture, props, chairs and other items, the service will not attempt to clean the studio. Please put all items away following each rehearsal, and especially after the last class or rehearsal of the day.

Trash is to be placed in the proper receptacles.

Props and/or costumes for classes must be stored in a personal locker. Please do not leave props for projects or classes in the studios. The bookcase in the small green room is also available for props storage. **NO SMOKING** is allowed in any part of Trinity Rep. Due to state health regulations, all smoking must take place outside of the buildings and at least 50 feet away from the entranceways. When at the Lederer building, there is a smoking station located in Adrian Hall Way.

During classes **NO FOOD OR BEVERAGES WILL BE ALLOWED IN THE STUDIO SPACES** with the exception of water in plastic bottles. All food is restricted to the Henderson green room and upper theatre lobby. Garbage must be disposed of properly.

During rehearsals and with the director's permission, food may be brought into the studios but ALL GARBAGE MUST BE REMOVED at the end of the rehearsal. Please don't leave leftover food or drink in any studio, in the basement of the PCPC, or at the bottom of the stairs leading to the Toma and ER Studios.

The green room should be kept clean of props, personal belongings, newspapers and ESPECIALLY LEFTOVER FOOD AND DRINK.

Trinity Repertory Company has a large production and administrative staff. Please respect that other people in the building are working. Students must be careful not to interfere with the normal work of theater personnel and performances.

- 1) The studios are to be put in order after each rehearsal during the allotted rehearsal time. *Failure to clean up after the rehearsal will result in losing the right to use the studios for rehearsals. Project directors will be held responsible for studios left in disarray.* This policy will be strictly enforced.
- 2) There is to be no entry into any studio for any reason when a rehearsal or a class is in progress. If you have left personal items in a studio, they may not be retrieved until the ongoing class or rehearsal has ended.
- 3) The ER and Toma are not sound proof and there can be noise bleed into the Chace Theatre. Therefore, if an audience is assembled in the upstairs theatre, students must use a different studio for rehearsals.
- 4) Please be respectful of the Trinity Rep work and public environments. Hallways, stairwells, restrooms, lobbies, etc. are not to be used for rehearsing or performances.

### **OFFICES AND SHOPS**

Items should never be removed from the scene, costume, or prop shops, offices or lobbies for use in scenes or projects. Requests for costumes and props should go through the M.F.A. Production Manager. Costumes and props are not available for class work, except on rare occasions, and only with the cooperation of the Production Manager. When items have been borrowed for projects, it is the student director's responsibility to return them in good condition to the proper location.

Students are not permitted to go directly to Trinity Rep staff to borrow items, even if a cordial and collegial relationship exists. Please go to the M.F.A. Production Manager with your requests.

### **SECURITY**

- 1) The Trinity facility is available for student use Monday - Friday 8:30 am to 10:30pm, and on Saturday and Sunday 9am to 10:30pm. Do not enter any part of Trinity except at these scheduled times or you may set off the alarm. *This includes the PCPC.*
- 2) Never leave personal belongings in the green room, in the hallways, or in any public area of the theatre.
- 3) If you see someone in the theatre or studios that you do not recognize, find a member of the staff or call Brown Public Safety.
- 4) In the event of an injury or medical emergency in one of the studios, Brown Emergency Medical Services should be called at (401) 863-4111. This number is posted in each studio. Please enter it in your phone directory.

### **MISCELLANEOUS**

Brown/Trinity maintains a small library for general use. The plays are filed alphabetically by author, and the anthologies are filed alphabetically by title. We have separate sections for Shakespeare and



non-fiction items (reference, memoirs, technique, business, history, etc).

To sign out a volume: The library is now catalogued on Computer 1 in a spread sheet titled 'Library,' and to check out something one just has to change the location of that play from 'Here' to 'name of person'. Please return volumes as soon as they are no longer needed.

There is a copy machine located on the third floor of the Aborn building. Students may use this machine, but Trinity staff always has priority. Plan to copy larger school related jobs after work hours. The third floor copier is the one you should use most often. The code to use it is posted on the callboard. For small and very quick copy needs, if office staff does not have need of it, there is a copier in the M.F.A. Administrative office. Both Xerox machines are exclusively for school projects and not for personal use. Please understand that Trinity tracks which department is using the third floor machine, and that **Brown/Trinity pays for every copy our department generates**. Do not use the machine for anything not directly related to class work. For private needs, Xerox machines are also located at the Public Library and in Brown libraries. Students should not use any copy machines in other departments.

Bicycles should not be brought into the Aborn Street studios. If you plan to use a bicycle, please speak with Jill Jann to make arrangements.

### **EQUITY MEMBERSHIP CANDIDACY**

Eligible students may become Equity Membership Candidates, defined by Equity as a non-professional who is interested in obtaining training for the theater, intends to make a career in the professional theater and is properly registered with Equity. *Proper registration requires a signed non - professional affidavit and a \$100.00 registration fee, which must be paid to Actor's Equity.*

A membership candidate who completes fifty (50) work weeks with an Equity company will be eligible to join Actor's Equity Association. A candidate who completes forty (40) weeks of work is eligible by taking a written test provided by A.E.A.

It is the goal of Brown/Trinity to award enough Equity points to all graduating acting students to qualify for Equity membership. Mainstage experience leading to Equity membership may take the form of speaking roles, non-speaking roles or understudy positions.

*It is each student's individual responsibility to make sure the proper forms have been filed with Equity and that the correct number of EMC weeks have been recorded.* Neither Jill Jann nor members of the Production Department are required to assist a student with AEA problems. Students who do not follow up on concerns about their union status may not be eligible to receive their cards upon graduating.

Students who are already members of Equity and who wish to participate in mainstage productions will need to apply for an Equity waiver in order to work as non- professionals with the Trinity Repertory Company.

### **ATTENDANCE OF MAINSTAGE PRODUCTION / REHEARSALS**

Students are encouraged to see each of the Trinity Rep productions as often as possible.

- 1) Students will be invited to opening nights, but must sign-up on the student callboard. A list will be posted in advance for each production.
- 2) Each student is entitled to 2 complimentary tickets to each Trinity production by filling out a ticket request form. These forms are located outside of the M.F.A. office. Due to the demand for

tickets, it is advisable for students to secure tickets as soon as they are available. Complimentary tickets are never available for Saturday evening performances at Trinity Rep.

- 3) Each student is entitled to 4 complimentary tickets to each Brown/Trinity production by filling out the same comp request form used for Trinity Rep productions. Saturday evening comps are permitted for student shows. Brown/Trinity studio workshop productions, which have limited seating, do not require tickets, and are usually on a first come, first served, basis.
- 4) Complimentary tickets that are not going to be used by a student must be returned to the box office as soon as possible. Any student who requests a comp and then doesn't use it will not be given any further tickets for the rest of the season. Please release or return tickets in a timely manner so they can be sold.
- 5) In addition, students may attend a production by themselves as often as they wish, subject to that evening's availability. This should be done by following the Staff Standby Policy. Check with Jill for further details.
- 6) Students are encouraged to attend rehearsals for mainstage productions after rehearsals have moved from the rehearsal hall into the theatres. When attending or observing any rehearsals a student is expected to maintain professional courtesy to the actors and other artists who are working.
- 7) You must procure a ticket to see any student production in the Pell Chafee Performance Center via the means outlined above. If you do not have a ticket, speak with the House Manager, who will add you to the wait list.