

MISSION STATEMENT
Valdosta State University
Theatre Program

Within the context of the Mission Statements of Valdosta State University and the Department of Communication Arts, the Theatre Program shares a commitment to exemplary professional and liberal studies in theatrical performance, theatrical production, and dance, fostering programs of excellence within the Program that have an impact within our region and beyond.

The specific mission of the Theatre Program is the education of professionals who are prepared for a diversity of career choices upon graduation from the University. Students in the Theatre Program are exposed to all areas of study including aesthetics, history, literature, management, performance and production and develop a set of skills pertinent to a specific area of emphasis in theatre performance, theatre production, or dance. They are prepared both for careers in the field or for graduate study. The education they participate in develops life skills of self-discipline, personal responsibility and organization.

We share a commitment to:

- Creating a teaching and learning environment that sustains instructional excellence, based on a strong academic curriculum which is rooted in the exploration of a core of liberal arts studies, a senior curriculum which is designed to educate professionals in the disciplines of Theatre or Dance, and a Production Program which serves as an indispensable laboratory for both the core of liberal studies and the intensive professional studies of the senior curriculum.
- Presenting a season which seeks to:
 - Provide students within the Theatre Program with performance and production opportunities which include a variety of literary genres and production styles as well as significant opportunities for participation in order to compile a substantial resume upon completion of degree requirements.
 - Educate the student body at large to respond to and appreciate live theatre and dance performances.
 - Contribute to life long learning opportunities and the cultural development of our region and beyond.
 - Explore cultural diversity through learning about oneself and the human condition and learning about cultures, past and present.
 - Provide touring opportunities, in cooperation with ArtSouth, during the season as an integral part of the professional education of students and as an Outreach activity within and beyond our region.
- Promote faculty development through active participation in state, regional, and national professional organizations and through scholarly, artistic, and creative pursuits.
- Promote the importance of networking within the professional community by encouraging student and faculty participation in professional activities and providing opportunities through the State Musical Theatre of Georgia at Jekyll Island for such involvement.

FACT PROFILE
Valdosta State University
Theatre Program

- Valdosta State University received accreditation for its Theatre Program from the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST) in 1999, making it Georgia's **only** nationally accredited Bachelor of Fine Arts Professional Theatre Training Program. The well-rounded curriculum includes courses in performance, dance, production, design, history and management.
- Valdosta State University Theatre Program is the Producer of the Jekyll Island Musical Theatre Festival in partnership with the Jekyll Island Authority. The Jekyll Island Musical Theatre Festival was designated *The State Musical Theatre of Georgia* by the Georgia legislature in 1993 in recognition of its achievements. The Theatre Festival is a professional extension of the Bachelor of Fine Arts training program at the University and is currently entering its twelfth year of production. This provides both faculty and students with a unique extension of classroom pedagogy through the use of collaborative and experiential learning in a challenging innovative environment.
- The Theatre Program had a student enrollment of over 90 majors during Fall, 2000.
- VSU Theatre boasts a unique Theatre for Youth Touring program, which travels to local and regional communities. It is currently entering its 21st year. Audiences from the last five years totaled over 70,000 young people from South Georgia and North Florida.
- VSU Theatre has an unusually active production program throughout the academic year which is available to both community and university audiences. The seven-production season offers student performers and audience members a wide variety of theatrical experiences encompassing a broad range of performance styles, literary genres, and production concepts. There is a commitment to include a dance production, a period piece, a children's theatre production, an evening of student directed material, original material and recent Broadway and Off-Broadway comedies and dramas. This provides students with a depth and breadth of opportunities where they can translate classroom pedagogy into experiential learning.
- Alumni of the VSU Theatre Program are employed in the theatre, film, and television industries from coast to coast.

STUDENT SUCCESSES
Valdosta State University
Theatre Program

- Graduation Rates:
 - 1996: 8 graduates
 - 1997: 15 graduates
 - 1998: 16 graduates
 - 1999: 18 graduates
 - 2000: 12 graduates

- Increase in Student Enrollment:
 - Fall 1998: 81 majors
 - Fall 2000: 93 majors

- Good Teaching Leads to Student Rewards:
 - For 18 of the last 19 years, students of Valdosta State University's Theatre Program have won more positions during Fall screening auditions at the Georgia Theatre Conference than any other college or university in Georgia, garnering a minimum of 25% of all openings. For four of the last five years, the student auditionee from the state with the highest score has been from the VSU Theatre Program. These students received monetary awards for this honor.

 - Productions from our theatre season have been adjudicated by the American College Theatre Festival during 1998 and 1999 resulting in Irene Ryan Acting Nominations for four of our students in the Theatre Program. The following comment is a reflection of the development of our students through their interaction with faculty:

“When a director attempts to stage a classic piece of theatre with students, he or she takes a major risk with creating the maturity, movement and interpretation of universally known characters. This production was well cast. The actors performed with confidence and with correct historical styles of movement and stance. The language was strictly modern and seemed to motivate the young cast to a stronger sense of realism. The cast was comprised of both seasoned and young actors. However... the ensemble was very strong even with minor characters... *Nora* is one of the finest... actresses I have ever seen on a university stage. Her timing and instincts are flawless. The darker internal motivations permeated every stance, gesture, smile and glance.”

American College Theatre Festival
Adjudication Response to a production of
***A Doll's House*, October, 1999**

Student Success in Summer Employment

- Our students have been employed in summer theatres throughout the country, including:
 - Georgia Shakespeare Festival (Atlanta, GA)
 - Georgia POW Drama (Americus, GA)
 - The Lost Colony (NC)
 - Hershey Park, (PA)
 - Unto These Hills (NC)
 - The Sword of Peace (NC)
 - The Black Hills Passion Play (SD)
 - Legend of Daniel Boone (KY)
 - Young Abe Lincoln (IL)
 - Six Flags over Georgia (Atlanta, GA)
 - The Horn in the West (NC)
 - Seaside Music Theatre (FL)
 - Opryland (TN)
 - Lone Star (TX)
 - Galveston Island Outdoor Musicals (TX)
 - Riverside Theatre (FL)
 - Disneyworld (FL)
 - Allenberry Playhouse (NY)
 - Pennsylvania Renaissance Festival (PA)
 - Mac-Haydn Theatre (NY)
 - Glimmerglass Opera Co. (NY)
 - Barn Theatre (MI)
 - Dollywood (TN)
 - Kaiser Children's Theatre (Atlanta, GA)
 - Beechwood Theatre (RI)
 - Fort Salem Theatre (NY)
 - Lakes Region Playhouse (NH)
 - Merry-Go-Round Playhouse (NY)
 - Trumpet in the Land (OH)
 - Jill Frennd & Co. (United Kingdom)
 - Main Street Theatre (PA)
 - Cal Rep (PA)
 - Theatre West (NE)
 - Starlight Mountain Theatre (ID)
 - Jekyll Island Musical Theatre Festival, (Jekyll Island, GA)

Alumni Success

- Our Alumni have been employed in the following professional theatres and companies:
 - Miss Saigon* (Broadway)
 - Cabaret* (Broadway)
 - Waiting in the Wings* (Broadway)
 - Closer* (Broadway)
 - The King & I* (London)
 - Playwrights Horizons (Off-Broadway)
 - Alabama Shakespeare Festival
 - The Alliance Theatre
 - The Atlanta Center for Puppetry Arts
 - Arena Stage
 - Georgia Shakespeare Festival
 - Theatrical Outfit
 - Atlanta Shakespeare Tavern
 - Theatre in the Square
 - Jomandi Productions
 - Birmingham Children's Theatre
 - The Burt Reynolds Institute
 - Riverside Theatre
 - Patchwork Players
 - Mill Mountain Theatre
 - Theatre Under the Stars
 - Virginia Shakespeare Festival
 - Arkansas Repertory Theatre
 - Cumberland County Playhouse
 - Dallas Children's Theatre
 - Watertower Theatre
 - Children's Musical Theatre
 - Flat Rock Playhouse
 - Encore Dinner Theatre
 - Showboat Dinner Theatre
 - County Dinner Theatre
 - Derby Dinner Theatre
 - Barn Dinner Theatre
 - Naples Dinner Theatre
 - La Comedia Dinner Theatre
 - Beef and Boards Dinner Theatre
 - Show Palace Dinner Theatre

- Our alumni have been involved with the following touring productions:

Miss Saigon (National Tour)
Camelot, starring Robert Goulet (National Tour)
Chita & All That Jazz, starring Chita Rivera (National Tour)
The Great Radio City Spectacular starring the Rockettes (National Tour)
Forever Plaid (National Tour)
Pump Boys & Dinettes (National Tour)
FAME (National Tour)
A Christmas Carol
 Nebraska Theatre Caravan
 Missoula Children's Theatre
 Kaiser Permanente Touring Theatre
 Bravo Productions
 Alpha Omega Players

- Our alumni have appeared in the following films and television series:

<i>Forrest Gump</i>	<i>Ghostbusters II</i>	<i>Hank Aaron Story</i>
<i>Driving Miss Daisy</i>	<i>Men Are Mostly Water</i>	<i>Andersonville</i>
<i>Bugsy</i>	<i>NYPD Blue</i>	<i>Scarlett</i>
<i>Apollo 13</i>	<i>Evening Shade</i>	<i>I'll Fly Away</i>
<i>The Net</i>	<i>The Client</i>	<i>Fly Like an Eagle</i>
	<i>Designing Women</i>	

- Our alumni have been employed in television production for the following:

<i>Murphy Brown</i>	<i>Two Guys and a Girl</i>
<i>Mad About You</i>	Turner Broadcasting

- Our alumni have earned or are currently pursuing graduate degrees at the following institutions:

Northwestern University	University of Houston
Florida State University	University of Illinois – Carbondale
Brooklyn College	University of Louisville
Virginia Commonwealth University	University of North Carolina – Greensboro
Wayne State University	University of Tennessee – Knoxville
University of Alabama	

- Our alumni have achieved certificates from:

Juilliard
 The Burt Reynolds Institute

- One of our students was one of two recipients of the first Alpha Psi Omega Theatre Scholarship for 2000-2001, the result of a nation-wide scholarship competition

**EVIDENCE OF DISTINCTIVE EFFORTS
TO FOSTER STUDENT LEARNING
Valdosta State University
Theatre Program**

Assessment of Student Learning

- Implementation of videotaping to record student performance progress
- Invitation to visiting artists to assess student skill levels as part of a capstone experience in Portfolio/Resume Class
 - In December 1998 and 1999 the Artistic Director of Georgia Shakespeare Festival viewed audition and portfolio presentations giving oral feedback.
 - The Theatre Program has established a relationship with the Georgia Shakespeare Festival for this outside assessment to continue annually.
- Implementation of outside professional assessment through the preparation of the National Association of Schools of Theatre Self-Study document and through participation in adjudication by the American College Theatre Festival.

“In the judgement of the NAST visiting evaluators, students are gaining the required competencies. Student achievement indicators such as acceptance into graduate schools, professional employment and recognition at regional ACTF festivals give some indication of the success of the theatre unit... The program offers opportunities for students to engage in practical work in their respective areas of study. Undergraduates here have many production opportunities, more than at larger institutions.”

**The NAST Visitors Report
October, 1998**

Curricula Review and Reshaping

- An ongoing process of reviewing and reshaping curricula to achieve academic excellence and meet the needs of all students has led to:
 - The Theatre Program completing a comprehensive revision of the entire curriculum reflected in a self-study, which the faculty prepared as part of the NAST review for accreditation.

“We commend the faculty for writing a self study which identifies most of the primary strengths and weaknesses of the theatre unit... Starting with Fall 1998, the entire Georgia University System changed from a quarter to a semester system... It is a credit to the theatre faculty that the students praised the help they received from them to make the transition as smooth as possible.”

**NAST Visitors Report
October, 1998**

- The development of a course in African American Theatre
- The broadening of the production program within the last three years to include plays which address multicultural issues, such as, August Wilson’s *Fences*, an adaptation of Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Good Times Are Killing Me*, an original one-act script which deals with the struggles of an African-

American family and *Tokoloshe* a Zulu folktale which will tour South Georgia and North Florida Spring Semester 2001.

- The signing of performances for the hearing impaired as a regular component of the Jekyll Island Musical Theatre Festival season for the last four years
- The inclusion of a hearing impaired actor within the Festival company

Encouragement of Collaborative Faculty Efforts

- Team Teaching of Arts Perspectives classes with faculty within the College of the Arts creates a collaborative effort among theatre faculty as well as colleagues in Speech and Telecommunications.
- Team Teaching of Opera/Musical Theatre classes and musical theatre technique classes with the Department of Music and joint participation in the production of opera and musical theatre works.
- On-going faculty collaboration in the teaching of departmental acting classes incorporating the element of film and Communication Perspectives classes.
- Mentoring program for junior faculty by senior faculty to assist with transition to the Valdosta State University community and pre-tenure review.
- A strong sense of collegiality among faculty and a willingness on the part of all to present guest lectures in individual areas of expertise not only within the College of the Arts but within the University as a whole.

“There appears to be excellent communication within the theatre unit, between the unit and the department, and with the administrative levels of the university. The NAST Visitors were impressed with the supportive environment created at all levels of VSU... We were impressed especially with the positive relationship which had been established between students and faculty which contributed very much to the overall effectiveness of the classes... The Valdosta State University Theatre unit has a dedicated and excellent faculty, committed to the education and training of theatre undergraduates.”

NAST Visitors Report October, 1998

- In October, 2000, the theatre faculty and students in association with Theatre Guild Valdosta, the local community theatre, collaborated in hosting the Georgia Theatre Conference's annual convention. Faculty and students cooperated in the planning, staffing and execution of the convention. VSU and the Theatre Program welcomed 900 participants in the areas of professional theatre, college/university theatre, secondary theatre, community theatre and theatre for youth; the largest participation in the convention in the history of Georgia Theatre Conference. The three-day convention included 27 performances, auditions for scholarships and summer employment, over 30 workshops and additional meeting and collegial activities for all participants. Workshop leaders and adjudicators represented the best in their craft from across the state and the entire Southeast.
- Discussion Groups
 - Discussion groups with students, focusing on the evaluation of productions, encourages critical thinking skills, professional development and mentoring relationships ultimately strengthening and supporting classroom pedagogy.

- Post performance discussion groups with audience members focusing on controversial issues or previously un-produced works.
- Post performance discussion groups focusing on adjudication comments.

Recruitment

- Recruitment efforts are clearly defined and are seen as the entry point to building a learning community. One faculty member is designated to serve as coordinator of recruitment and scholarship auditions. This person coordinates all recruitment activities and engages other faculty and Alpha Psi Omega members to participate as needed. Requests for information are dealt with in a timely fashion. Visitations are made to high school drama programs and two-year institutions within the University System. The Jekyll Island Musical Theatre Festival attracts a number of students to the program.
- Scholarship auditions are held on campus annually. Faculty also attend auditions at the annual Georgia Thespian Convention and the Georgia Theatre Conference

Mentoring Students

- Mentoring Program
- For the past five years, a student mentoring program, which is a partnership between Alpha Psi Omega and the Theatre Faculty, exists to assist new students as they transition into the BFA program.
- A chapter of Alpha Psi Omega, a national honorary dramatic fraternity, exists on campus and serves as a way of identifying and encouraging students within the program. Students who are members of Alpha Psi Omega voluntarily contribute many hours with student recruitment. This paraprofessional group frequently coordinates events that foster life-long learning, professional development and critical thinking. The students are responsible for a great deal of peer mentoring and help to foster a collaborative learning environment.

Advising Students

- All faculty actively participate as theatrical advisors.
“Academic advising seems excellent. Students were vocal in their praise of faculty.”

**NAST Visitors Report
October, 1998**

- Students transfer into the Theatre Program from other schools within the University System and the Theatre Program is well equipped to serve them.
“The students were very complimentary of the theatre faculty and the guidance they received to make the transition into the program as smooth and trouble free as possible.”

**NAST Visitors Report
October, 1998**

- Regularly scheduled Majors Meetings assist students in advising procedures, audition procedures, job opportunities and securing the necessary information for successfully completing the requirements of the VSU Theatre Program.

“This type of routine contact helps keep open the lines of communication, and students remarked very favorably on this aspect of the program.”

**NAST Visitors Report
October. 1998**

- The “Connections Visiting Artists Program” has been developed to assist students in making the transition from the academic world to world of professional theatre. The following artists have been brought to the campus:
 - A cast member of the Broadway company of *CATS* presented dance, makeup and acting workshops emphasizing the professional employment opportunities in New York City.
 - A Los Angeles executive assistant and writer presented acting and writing for film workshops emphasizing the professional employment opportunities in Los Angeles.
 - An off-Broadway producer and general manager presented lectures and discussions on the dynamic Off-Broadway segment of the theatre industry and real-world experience of theatrical unions and their impact on theatre artisans and the industry.
 - A New York-based playwright will participate in a two-week artist-in-residence program during Spring 2001. This playwright has written plays that have been successfully produced in New York, London and on tour.

FACULTY AND STAFF
Valdosta State University
Theatre Program

WHEELER, Charles Randolph
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Directing, Play Analysis.

NIELSEN, Eric Brandt
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HARBIN, Michael J.
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American Theatre, Oral Interpretation
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RAESS-YOUNG, Kathy
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A search is currently in progress for a second full-time dance position.