



Inclusive Theatre

A History of North Central Theatre from 1955-2008

By Nicholas Guido '09



North Central College Undergraduate Archives Publication
Number Five

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Introduction

Training professional actors in higher education is a relatively new idea in the United States. Over the past one hundred years, colleges and universities have been adding theatre courses to their curriculum, creating comprehensive theatre training programs. Several competing philosophies regarding the place of theatre in collegiate education have developed to decide the best practices and environment for training actors at the collegiate level. Two of the major models that have burgeoned over this century are the conservatory style and the liberal arts style. Both hold their own specific advantages and drawbacks. However, the type of model chosen will dictate the tenor of the ensuing department.

Over the past 50 years, the theatre department at North Central College has offered opportunities to all students who want to perform, whether or not they aspire to become professional actors. To this end, the College has created a curriculum fit for professional actors and maintains five high quality theatrical facilities—three of them opening in 2008. The emphasis at the College from its inception in 1861 until the 1970's was focused on Speech Communication, not the *art* of Theatre. However, in the past 50 years North Central College has developed a competitive professional theatre training program. This change occurred in four phases, marked by the arrival of new faculty: Doc Shanower era (1955-1978), Jack Phend era (1978-1994), Lynch/Palmes era (1994-2007), and the current trends (2007-present). The move towards a professional theatre structure is similar to programs at larger institutions with distinct professional theatre training schools and conservatories. Over the past 50 years, North Central College has created a hybrid theatre program, providing professional theatre training for majors and extracurricular opportunities for the student body at large.

General Theater History

Curriculum

North Central College is constantly striving to provide a strong undergraduate curriculum. However, the perception of what is indicative of academic rigor or the definition of a “strong” undergraduate program is elusive. To move closer to an outline of a quality undergraduate program, the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) released a publication entitled, *Integrity in the College Curriculum*. The authors define a quality baccalaureate degree as one with, “...a minimum required program of study for all students, consisting of the intellectual, aesthetic, and philosophic experiences that should enter into the lives of men and women engaged in baccalaureate education.”¹ They outline the road map to a superior undergraduate program as having students work to fulfill these nine experiences: 1) Inquiry, abstract, logical thinking, critical analysis, 2) Literacy: writing, reading, speaking, listening, 3) Understanding numerical data, 4) Historical consciousness, 5) Science, 6) Values, 7) Art, 8) International and multicultural experiences, 9) Study in depth.² North Central provides this frame work for all students, as they work towards their respective degrees.

Theatre majors enjoy this standard of education because North Central College is a Liberal Arts institution, meaning theatre students are required to fulfill “All College Requirements” and “Core Requirements.”³ These various requirements call upon students to take course work in all departments of the College, from mathematics, to social sciences, to life and physical sciences.⁴ In this regard, the College is fulfilling all nine of the AAC&U’s experiences, creating a strong, quality curriculum. Enrolling in

¹ Association of American Colleges, *Integrity in the College Curriculum: A Report to the Academic Community* (Washington D.C.: Association of American Colleges, 1990), 15.

² *Ibid.*, 15-24.

³ *Undergraduate/Graduate Catalog*, 2004-2006. NCC Publications, College Archives, North Central College Archives, 28.

⁴ *Ibid.*

class work outside of the theatre discipline is a concept widely accepted by the greater theatre community.

Focusing on the structure of curriculum, Franklin J. Himes begins to bridge this gap between the structure of undergraduate education and theatre curriculum. Himes shows the expansion of theatre and its legitimacy in higher education. Many factors influence this issue, but Himes credits the post war boom of college admissions for the growth of theatre curriculum in colleges.⁵ Students looking to “make it” in theatre after the war flocked to colleges, calling for trained actors to educate this growing body of aspiring professionals.⁶ College curriculums augmented to suit the needs of these students. Beyond adopting a theatrical curriculum to fit new actors, Himes notes the integration of theatre training into the liberal arts institution course of study. He uses Edwin Burr Pettet’s ideas on liberal arts education: “...theatre programs could provide students with a holistic, personal experience that is not so internally and externally disconnected from general education that it seems irrelevant.”⁷ The notion here is to include theatre training as a part of a larger educational experience. Students of the stage should not be isolated to the theatrical realm, moored to the fine arts. Closing this disconnect between academia and the arts provides for a rounded education of students in the arts. Indeed, there is a distinct advantage for theatre students to have a well-rounded background in their education, allowing them to call upon a broad swath of experiences to apply to various roles they may encounter.

Supporting Himes’ interpretation of theatre education in the liberal arts setting, Anne Berkeley traces the history of theatrical training at the university level back to the turn of the century showing how theatre fits into

⁵ Franklin J. Himes, *The Janus Paradigm: American Academic Theatre, the Liberal Arts and the “Massacre of Genius”* (New York: University Press of America, Inc., 1998), 29.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

a rigorous curriculum.⁸ Theatre programs were created as the aristocratic elitists in the United States lost their hold over the collegiate curriculum during the Progressive era. Berkeley frames her argument around four distinct eras of theatre curriculum expansion: 1) Turn of the Century, 2) 1925—Department of Drama at Yale University, 3) Post-World War Two, 4) 1980's forward.⁹ Examining these stages, particularly the final two, provides a context for how North Central's theatre program fits into theatre education across the nation. Berkeley observes that:

From 1945 through the 1950s theatre courses doubled with most colleges and universities offering theatre instruction, and a quarter of these offering the Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) by 1960. By the end of the 1960s, undergraduate theatre teachers and majors had tripled and courses grew by 71 percent in an increasingly specialized curriculum.¹⁰

At this juncture, North Central was lagging behind the institutions that Berkley has found in her writing. In 1956, only three courses existed at North Central pertaining to theatre ("Elements of Play Production," "Acting Technique" and "Directing and Producing Plays").¹¹ There would not be a recognized program for theatre students for another twenty years as the focus remained on speech and communications.

While North Central was working on carving out a specific theatre space both in facilities and curriculum, Berkeley goes on to assert that "...by the mid-1960s, graduate and undergraduate theatre curriculums were functioning as instruments of *social efficiency*, fully engaged with the culture of expertise and specialized knowledge."¹² These ideas are specific to the theatre that this time. To create and fulfill the rigorous curriculum Berkeley

⁸ Anne Berkeley, "Changes in Undergraduate Theatre Curriculum," in *Teaching Theatre Today: Pedagogical Views of Theatre in Higher Education*, ed. Anne L. Fliotsos and Gail S. Medford (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 11.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 15.

¹¹ *Undergraduate Catalog*, 1956-1957. NCC Publications, College Archives, North Central College Archives, 103-4.

¹² Berkeley, 18.

finds that during this curricular phase, "...scholars elaborated on the humanist thread with a host of pedagogical innovations from contemporaneous research in cognitive psychology, learning theory, and philosophy."¹³ New styles were invigorating the curriculum, educating the total, well-rounded individual. Theatre training did not live just in the proscenium, but across campuses in every field of learning.

Though North Central was taking strides to provide a quality theatre program, the "culture of expertise and specialized knowledge" was not a reality. The resources were simply not available to students. Most



Professor Shanower

importantly, the vision for a theatre program to train highly qualified, expert actors was not alive at North Central. Now retired professor of Speech Communication/Theatre Dr. Donald T. Shanower made attempts to instill this concept in students. However, they were not concerned so much with the professional stage as much as just being active in theatre. Their interests and passions lay outside of

professional theatre, yet were drawn to the stage.¹⁴ North Central theatre in the 1960's can be seen as a collection of students who loved theatre and arts as an extracurricular activity and wanted an artistic outlet as a part of their collegiate experience.

As students at North Central were content with theatre as their personal artistic outlet while pursuing other academic goals, the rest of the country was moving forward with theatre education as a legitimate academic field and professional development training program. In this fourth era of theatre, Berkeley finds that other institutions, "embrace[d] innovations of Off-Off Broadway theatre, in its genesis at the time...Educators endorsed

¹³ Berkeley, 18.

¹⁴ Dr. Donald T. Shanower, Interview by Nicholas Guido, Naperville, IL, February 11, 2009.

experimental pedagogies—theatre as ‘educational tool,’ as ‘means to an end,’ and as ‘process over product’—to fulfill this vision.”¹⁵ Through the 1970’s and into the modern era, theatre training programs were focusing on increasing the quality of productions, working to give students new styles and types of learning in the art.

Speech Communication v. Theatre

In his study of theatre training, Himes also looks at the distinction of speech and communication programs from theatre training curricula. With a growing student population in theatre arts during the 1950’s, professors across the country made a move to tease apart the two disciplines. Theatre students needed an independent, autonomous major for “theatre history, play criticism and analysis, dramatic literature, acting, playwriting, children’s theatre, costuming, dance, lighting, directing, make-up, technical stagecraft and design, and writing for the electronic media.”¹⁶ A major factor in this argument was the fact that, “these subjects cannot be adequately taught in a speech department which lacks the faculty and facilities for such training.”¹⁷ Though similarities exist, the aims and goals of speech communication and theatre were far enough apart to warrant the schism. Theatre needed more in depth technical training beyond public speaking. There was a clear need for a comprehensive program spanning all aspects of theatre, not just public address training.

Still not on par with other institutions, in 1969 North Central had only six courses offered in relationship to theatre. Though an advanced specialization was offered of “Studies in Theatre,” there was no degree option available for aspiring actors and professionals. Speech and communication appeared to be of greater concern to the College as all theatre classes fell under the guise of “Speech” until 1976 when the

¹⁵ Berkeley, 18-9.

¹⁶ Ibid, 34-5.

¹⁷ Ibid, 35.

department name was changed to “Speech Communication/Theatre.”¹⁸

Clearly, one of the greatest issues with creating a distinct theatre department was parlaying a small collection of theatre oriented courses into an autonomous discipline at North Central. Throughout this time, the struggle aligns itself with a broad academic debate and discussion in regards to Speech Communication and Theatre in higher education.

As the tensions between the two schools of thought within the academic community continued, the liberal arts style of theatre education was conceived. This model calls on the theatre student to delve into various other aspects of academic world, creating a well-rounded student and actor. Liberal arts theatre training develops the total person, sharpening acting dexterity while building a base of knowledge about the world from all angles of academia. However, on the opposite end of the theatre education spectrum is conservatory training. The conceptualization of theatre education is starkly different from that of the liberal arts model.

Conservatory Training

Aside from the liberal arts theatrical training, is conservatory training. John Wilk entertains the notion that conservatory training takes root in seventeenth-century Europe, but does not take hold in the United States until the mid-nineteenth century. The philosophy of this training varies drastically from that of the liberal arts framework discussed by Himes and Berkeley. Wilk finds that conservatory training in the United States is an intense, rigorous program that will only train the highest level of actor.¹⁹ There is no development of the individual as a whole, as found in the liberal arts model. This style of training has its own story and is crucial to the overall picture of theatre training in the United States.

¹⁸ Educational Policies Committee Meeting Minutes, College Archives, North Central College Archives, Oesterle Library, EPC Minutes, March 10, 1976.

¹⁹ John R. Wilk, *The Creation of an Ensemble: The First Years of the American Conservatory Theatre* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), 176.

The mission of the American Conservatory Theatre (ACT) acknowledges the university, or liberal arts, model of training, however, criticizes it by claiming, "...universities and professional schools often suffer from inadequate standards and is often limited by the highly individualistic stamp of one teacher or method."²⁰ ACT wanted to create a training facility that focused on actors and the sole development of the various acting styles available. Adding in mathematics, sciences and history would detract from valuable rehearsal time that is the basis of conservatory training. Wilk finds, "Training will be woven into the rehearsal pattern by stage managers specifically engaged for the purpose of preparing the daily schedule and assignment of personnel."²¹ In this environment, all activities during the day are connected to the stage and play being produced. The emphasis is not on developing a think individual, but rather a versatile actor with only theatrical training. No premium is placed on other academic fields or a rounded education.

The goals of conservatory training are, in a sense, the antithesis of the philosophy imbued in North Central's program. North Central College Professor of Theatre, Dr. Deborah Palmes finds that, "[Conservatories] are very competitive as to who gets into the program in the first place...Their purpose is to wean out the ones that are weaker and keep the ones that are stronger."²² Taking the liberal arts philosophy to heart, the program, to Palmes, chooses not to single out "the good ones." Instead, her philosophy is about cultivating life skill sets such as "leadership, teamwork, [and] self discipline."²³ It is this philosophy that is the bedrock of North Central theatre. These ideals allow the program to grow and flourish by training professionals while including those who just love theatre.

²⁰ Wilk, 31-2.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

²² Dr. Deborah Palmes, Interviewed by Nicholas Guido, Naperville, IL, January 30, 2009.

²³ *Ibid.*

Modeling

In creating a strong fine arts program, there are several ideals and philosophies to which institutions ascribe. To a certain extent, these ideas are transcribed to the current program at North Central, but finding a pure copy of another program is impossible. Jerry G. Gaff and James L. Ratcliff examine arts education and balancing various aspects of program building at the collegiate level. First, they explore the difference between curricular and extracurricular training. They find that, "...appropriately supervised and focused extracurricular programs play a significant role in arts education and help prepare students for lifelong learning."²⁴ The core concept is for students to realize and practice their craft outside of the classroom. At North Central it is an expectation that theatre students participate, in some capacity in productions produced by the College.²⁵ Falling in line with Gaff and Ratcliff, the program at North Central fits what they have deemed a "cocurricular program" in that there is "A well-planned extracurricular program."²⁶ Extracurricular programs are planned and supervised by the trained North Central faculty, allowing them to impart knowledge and build rapport in different environment than in the classroom setting.

A second dichotomy explored is the difference between a professional training school akin to Julliard and that of other liberal arts colleges teaching avocational skill sets. Here, North Central cannot be pigeonholed into either category as it is not a conservatory, yet it is dedicated to delivering a quality and competitive program to aspiring professionals. Gaff and Ratcliff find that, "Full professional training in the arts is sometimes accommodated at liberal arts colleges and universities by the

²⁴ Jerry G. Gaff, James L. Ratcliff, and associates, *Handbook of the Undergraduate Curriculum: A Comprehensive Guide to Purposes, Structures, and Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997), 331.

²⁵ *Undergraduate Course Catalog*, 1984-1986. NCC Publications, College Archives, North Central College Archives, 106.

²⁶ Gaff, 331.

incorporation of professional arts schools.”²⁷ North Central theatre finds itself as an outlier to this notion. The College has a highly trained staff devoted to the overall development of students, while providing exceptional, professional training. North Central has, in affect, cobbled together these differing ideals into a program that caters to every kind of theatre student, whether they are focused on a professional career in theatre or an extroverted student who loves the stage.

One quality program sharing the philosophy that North Central has adopted is the University of Minnesota. Looking at the program from the University of Minnesota affords the opportunity for North Central to learn from another strong program. It is clear that diversity in theatre curriculum is appreciated at Minnesota as the program director, Dr. Kenneth L. Graham wrote, “Our program has been, and will continue to be eclectic, endeavoring to provide superior pre-professional training as well as broadly-based humanistic education essential to the theatre artist.”²⁸ The curriculum expanded over time, providing a comprehensive training program at the institution. Several diverse spaces were built on the campus to foster experimentation and a breadth of theatrical experiences. As a final note, Graham, wrote, “We hope to further develop our relationships with the other disciplines on campus...”²⁹ Participation in the larger campus community is important for the overall growth of the theatre student and is supported by the liberal arts model of theatre training.

All of these ideals have been executed at some level at North Central College. The modern history of North Central theatre is reflective of the lessons learned at the University of Minnesota. North Central’s growth in the theatre program also portrays the overall history of theatre training at the collegiate level in the United States.

²⁷ Gaff, 332.

²⁸ Thomas W. Miller, *Heroes and Clowns: A History of the University Theatre* (Minneapolis: Department of Theatre Arts University of Minnesota, 1973), n.p.

²⁹ Ibid.

NCC Theatre History/Curriculum Growth

Roots

The foundations to North Central College theatre does not lay particularly deep in the overall history of the College. North Central, having been founded in 1861, and the theatre program taking flight in the 1950's is not especially tied to the original goals of the institution. However, the theatre department would not be a reality without the strength of the Speech Department led by Guy Oliver up until 1952.³⁰

Guy Oliver started his career at North Central in 1916.³¹ Under his tutelage, the Speech Department grew strong in curriculum as well as having a competitive Forensics squad winning the Illinois Intercollegiate Tournament in 1953.³² According to Shanower, Oliver was well respected at North Central. He blended drama and interpretation into regular courses. This was an attempt at bringing theatre to the mainstream at North Central, but was not a pure theatre program. People were more interested in and involved in the church, teaching, or other school work.³³ This blending of theatrics, drama and interpretation into class planted the seeds for a future of theatre training, but only through the addition of new faculty could this program come to fruition.

Glenn Reddick joined the North Central staff in 1952. After eight years, he was appointed as chairman of the Speech Department. In this role he continued to coach forensics and debate. In 1963, Reddick moved into another leadership role as Chairman of the Creative Arts Division. It is evident, that Reddick focused on Speech and Debate while at North Central, leaving theatre to the side.³⁴ While this facet of the department was under

³⁰ Clarence N. Roberts, *North Central College: A Century of Liberal Education 1861-1961* (Naperville: North Central College, 1960), 240.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 180-1.

³² *Ibid.*, 240.

³³ Dr. Donald T. Shanower.

³⁴ Cheryl Lacefield, "Dr. Glenn Reddick 1923-1977," *College Chronicle*, April 11, 1977, www.archasearch.com.

quality leadership, the theatre productions and courses needed a leader to build, shape and mold the nonexistent theatre program.

Donald “Doc” Shanower Era

The leadership necessary to create a program from a mere three “theatre” courses into a distinguished, distinct program was found in Dr. Donald “Doc” Shanower. Dr. Shanower started his career at North Central in 1955 after receiving his doctorate degree in theatre from the University of Michigan.³⁵ With a broad base of experience in summer theatre in Ohio, Shanower was brought in to North Central to work with WNOC Radio and



Rehearsal on Smith Hall stage

Theatre. Having a background and passion for theatre, Shanower focused primarily on building that program. However, things did not start smooth as he “was not permitted to direct the Homecoming play that first fall.”³⁶

Plays were produced by students and his expertise was not accepted in 1955.³⁷ This setback would not hinder the progress Shanower would make in the department.

Working closely with the Theatre Guild, an extracurricular student driven activity, Shanower spent his time creating a program from essentially nothing. Shanower remembers that it would be lucky to have at least one theatre production per year.³⁸ Additionally, only Smith Hall in Old Main was allocated for theatre use. Pfeiffer Hall was seldom permitted for use as a theatrical venue.³⁹ A lack of space made productions a challenge because there was no space or capability in Smith Hall to create quality productions.

³⁵ Dr. Donald Shanower.

³⁶ “Curtain Call,” *North Central Now*, NCC Publications, College Archives, North Central College Archives, July 1986, 6.

³⁷ Roberts, 240.

³⁸ Dr. Donald T. Shanower.

³⁹ Ibid.

Working within these unfavorable conditions, Shanower persisted and worked to build a small collection of theatre students and courses by the 1960's. At this point, there was no real intention of starting a theatre program.⁴⁰

After having Shanower at North Central for six years, there was truly an air of strength in the theatre productions. In May 1961, the Theatre Guild put on *Emperor Jones*. *The NC Chronicle*, North Central College's student newspaper, states, "it represents a



The Crucible, 1957

significant challenge both in casting and in staging. 'We are extremely fortunate at North Central in having the talent to do such a play.'⁴¹ Even with a difficult piece of theatre and an undersized program with a small facility, theatre at North Central was alive. Having interest sparked in the program, the stage was set to create and unveil the philosophy that would be the guiding light of the department for the next fifty years.

In "The Casual Critics" portion of the March 1, 1963 *NC Chronicle*, Shanower advertised the department to students and revealed a vision for community involvement. Shanower was quoted in the *NC Chronicle* as saying, "...there is room and opportunity for every student to participate...The students volunteer their services and want to work."⁴² This attitude is one that transcended his tenure at North Central and is still a cornerstone philosophy of the Theatre Department. The same March 1 article suggests that Shanower "would like to have [the] Theatre Guild go beyond the college campus and incorporate the total community, having

⁴⁰ Dr. Donald T. Shanower.

⁴¹ "O'Neill Classic 'Emperor Jones' May 12-13 Theater Guild Offering," *College Chronicle*, April 28, 1961, www.archasearch.com.

⁴² Nancy Saggars, "The Casual Critics," *College Chronicle*, March 1, 1963, www.archasearch.com.

townspeople participate in the plays.”⁴³ To realize this goal, with the help of about a dozen college students, Shanower started “The Summer Place Theatre” in the summer of 1969. The activities of this summer workshop took place in a tent provided by the College and were open to both college students and local residents.⁴⁴ Today, “The Summer Place” is still producing summer musicals, but has moved indoors at Naperville Central High School.⁴⁵

With a commitment to provide opportunities to learn, play, and experiment, Shanower offered Experimental Workshops for *anyone* interested in theatre at North Central. The workshops were set to start at 9:30am on Saturday mornings in the winter 1966. Workshops consisted of experimental lighting, make-up, and acting.⁴⁶ A workshop series of this nature is essential to the growth of the overall program because it is offering training to students that they would not receive at this point in the curriculum at North Central. The curriculum in 1966 was meager and clung to the bare basics of theatre training on just elements of production, theatre history, acting technique and directing (Appendix 1).⁴⁷

Course offerings were not fitting for a program to train professional actors. The utility of the program was in providing secondary teachers a theatre background to direct high school plays. Additionally, North Central’s program was behind the theatre norms across the country, according to Berkeley. It speaks highly to the dedication of the North Central faculty, and Dr. Shanower, to give up Saturdays to improve a very small program. This is no surprise as Shanower said, “The place had a lot of

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Dr. Donald T. Shanower.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ “Experimental Workshop...” *College Chronicle*, February 11, 1966, www.archasearch.com.

⁴⁷ *Undergraduate Course Catalog, 1964-1966*. NCC Publications, College Archives, North Central College Archives, 76.

potential.”⁴⁸ In order to squeeze every bit of potential out of student actors and build the program, extra time was necessary.

A further attempt to engage students in theatre, Alpha Psi Omega was instituted around the time Shanower started at North Central. Alpha Psi Omega is a theatrical fraternity, honoring high quality theatre students. Shanower tried several times to make this group a mainstay at North Central, but students were never dedicated enough to stick to the program.⁴⁹ These efforts were a step in the right direction for creating the program, but student interests did not lie solely with theatre.

Into the 1970’s, theatre started to gain traction both with students



Rehearsal, 1971

and College administration. The advances in theatre at North Central in the 1970’s were in two places. First, was the change of the department name. On March 10, 1976, the Educational Policies Committee voted for the name of the “Department of Speech Communications” to officially become the “Department of Speech Communication/Theatre.”⁵⁰ The rationale had two prongs. The name of the department needed to reflect all of the offerings provided for students. This was especially important for attracting students to North Central who were looking for theatre programs in which they could participate. The other justification was that more specialized course offerings were necessary for students looking for teaching certification and especially students applying to graduate school for theatre.⁵¹ This distinction between speech and theatre, as debated across the country twenty years earlier, opened the door for a more sophisticated, refined, comprehensive theatre training program. The

⁴⁸ Dr. Donald T. Shanower.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Educational Policies Committee, 1976.

⁵¹ Ibid.

second change in the 1970's was the arrival of John "Jack" Phend who would bring theatre at North Central from its roots to a modern age.

From its rocky beginnings into the late 1970's the theatre department grew exponentially. The foundations were set for a program that had *potential* to flourish into a high quality theatre training school. Dr. Donald "Doc" Shanower's leadership and guidance set in motion a theatre movement that has not been extinguished at North Central. On the contrary, the program would continue to grow with the addition of new, specialized staff.

Jack Phend Era

John "Jack" Phend joined the North Central Speech Communication/Theatre Department the year after Glenn Reddick passed away. Additionally, Thomas Dawson had just resigned from the Speech Communication/Theatre Department.



Jack Phend

Jack Phend was trained at Valparaiso University (B.A.) and Northwestern University (M.A.). After having taught at Hollins College in Virginia for five years, he made the move back to the Midwest to North Central College.⁵² Phend's background in theatrical design rounded out the growing program at North Central. At this point, nobody was focused on technical theatre or design. The addition of Jack Phend brought about a new era of theatre at North Central, bolstering more courses, students and quality productions.

A unique aspect Jack brought to Pfeiffer Hall was his experience in technical design. Making an immediate splash at North Central, his work on *Little Mary Sunshine* was a new style of design and scenery for all students

⁵² "The More Things Change... Additions..." *College Chronicle*, September 25, 1978, www.archasearch.com.

involved. Becky Williams who starred as Mary Sunshine commented on the design saying, “There was a change in sets during the show.”⁵³ The dynamics and quality of the shows were increased as Phend could design scenery to accentuate the acting on stage. With an aesthetically pleasing set,



Little Mary Sunshine, 1978

patrons and actors alike would enjoy the production more. Falling in line with Shanower’s philosophy of an inclusive department, more people were brought into this show than ever before. Wayne Morgan, playing Billy Jester found, “This is the first time there has been that many men on that stage. A lot of people got involved in various areas of production.”⁵⁴ Theatre was gaining a reputation with students as an activity in which they could participate. Additionally, the technical aspects of theatre came alive for students. The integration of the technical crew was also crucial in this production as Peg Hoppenrath quipped, “...technically it was perfect. Tech crew really was a big part of the production.”⁵⁵ The addition of a technical aspect in productions started to push the program in a more comprehensive theatre training direction.

As a “generalist” Phend was qualified to teach nearly every class in the Speech Communication/Theatre Department and expected to do so. In his tenure at North Central, Phend taught every class the department offered, except for dance classes.⁵⁶ The advantage to having Jack involved in every aspect of the department was able to see the needs of the curriculum and act accordingly. For example, in 1982, Phend proposed to the Educational

⁵³ John Fortunata, “Little Mary brightens up the stage,” *College Chronicle*, March 12, 1979, www.archasearch.com.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ John “Jack” Phend, Interviewed by Kimberly Butler, Naperville, IL, June 20, 2007.

Policies Committee (EPC) a “Communications Studies” concentration within the discipline.⁵⁷ The utility of the concentration did not lie in strengthening theatre, but rather in creating a further distinction between the two fields. The more theatre could distinguish itself from speech, the greater the opportunities to create an independent theatre department.

Through the 1980’s Phend worked as a director and designer for several shows in addition to acting as Department Chair for much of the 1980’s.⁵⁸ During this time, the department offerings became more complex and offered a range of experience for Speech Communication/Theatre majors using the “Theatre Track”. In 1986, at the time of Dr. Donald Shanower’s retirement, the course offerings were broadening, including more in depth acting, directing and production courses (Appendix 2).⁵⁹

The program had grown from a collection of three courses pertaining to speech to a distinct concentration within the Speech Communication/Theatre Department. These strides are essential for theatre. Having a clear structure of a “Theatre Track” gave the program legitimacy at the college. Theatre was no longer just an extracurricular, but a potential career option taking root at North Central.

After Shanower’s retirement in 1986, Chris Connelly was brought into the department. He was highly revered by students, but did not foster a quality professional relationship with Phend. A lack of communication and teamwork has been cited as the source of tensions.⁶⁰ Between 1986 and 1994, the theatre program did not have a cohesive feel as it did under the skillful leadership of Shanower. However, these tumultuous times did breed a growth in the course offerings for students. In 1990, the “Theatre Track” contained seven core courses and was further divided into specific training

⁵⁷ Educational Policies Committee Meeting Minutes, October 25, 1982.

⁵⁸ John “Jack” Phend.

⁵⁹ *Undergraduate Course Catalog*, 1986-1988. NCC Publications, College Archives, North Central College Archives, 112.

⁶⁰ Brian Lynch, Interviewed by Nicholas Guido, Naperville, IL, December 17, 2008.

for Performance Track, Directing Track, or Design/Technical Theatre Track (Appendix 3).⁶¹

With little cohesion in the department, professors Phend and



The Imaginary Invalid, 1987

Connelly worked in a type of isolation from each other.

Clearly, this did not affect the offerings in the department.

However, there was an imminent rift with the students in the department when

Connelly did not return to

North Central in 1994. Deborah Palmes, filling that role was faced with a challenge as very few students, particularly seniors, turned out to audition for her first North Central College production.

Palmes/Lynch Era

Deborah Palmes joined the North Central faculty in the fall of 1994. Palmes' background as a theatre generalist and experience with Asian theatre opened up new depth to the department it had not experienced before.⁶² Palmes' focus when she arrived at North Central was to create a positive atmosphere and offer a great amount of individual attention and build strong relationships with students.⁶³ This attitude and attention fulfilled both of the present goals of the department: including everyone who wants to be included, while providing quality, professional training. According to Jack Phend, the addition of Deborah Palmes made "theatre fun again."⁶⁴ The department faculty started to meet regularly to talk about the strengths of the students, how to improve the program and what students needed to succeed.

⁶¹ *Undergraduate Course Catalog, 1990-1992*. NCC Publications, College Archives, North Central College Archives, 129.

⁶² Marissa Morrison, "Palmes claims to have taken the right path," *College Chronicle*, October 21, 1994, www.archsearch.com.

⁶³ Dr. Deborah Palmes.

⁶⁴ Brian Lynch.

In order to make sure the department did not grow too fast, there was a cap placed on theatre scholarships, allowing roughly 20 scholarships to be awarded at once.⁶⁵ By doing so, each student received the individual attention that has become a trademark of North Central. This type of individualized attention and care is part of what makes North Central's program distinct from other, larger institutions. This era marks the beginning of a type of "theatre renaissance" at North Central. From this point forward, the program would grow and strengthen annually.



Midsummer Night's Dream, 2004
(photo courtesy of Colin Daly)

While working to include all students, Palmes put a great emphasis on "Acting I," opening courses to all students, creating a course where students from all walks of life could undertake theatre. Palmes remembers, "It grew from about two sections of acting to about five in a couple of years. Student wanted to do it just for the feeling of success."⁶⁶ The department continued to grow, not with straight theatre majors, but with fringe players who took an interest in theatre. This broad stock of students shows that the department remained friendly to non-majors while providing theatre majors with the best possible training.

Around this same time, Palmes created "Studio Theatre."⁶⁷ Studio Theatre was created to afford student the opportunity to direct their own full length shows. At the same time, more roles were created for actors, providing more experience for young actors to apply to main stage productions. This move also made students take responsibility and

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Dr. Deborah Palmes.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

leadership for their training program. Palmes supervised three to five studio productions for eleven years.⁶⁸ In 2008, “Studio Theatre” was renamed “The Student Directed Series” which continues to thrive in number of students participating and quality of productions.

In an effort to keep a positive attitude, Palmes took the stance that no one way of acting or directing is the best.⁶⁹ Several styles exist and are each acceptable and quality in their own right. Thus, different styles of directing have been employed over her tenure to ensure that these varying methods are exposed to students. During Interim 2006, the newly formed “Verandah Courses” provided an excellent opportunity to invigorate students with a fresh directing style. Palmes’ first foray into Interim theatre utilized “Ensemble Theatre.” This technique, mostly practiced in Europe, brings the cast together in an atmosphere similar to a “commune.”⁷⁰ Using *Anatomy of Gray* as the first show to be presented in this style at North Central, the script was analyzed for a full week—of an intensive three-week process—before any blocking or acting was done on stage.⁷¹ Additionally, Palmes brought the cast together in other ways as she showed the cast relevant films of time period, like *Little House on the Prairie* and took fieldtrips to places like Naper Settlement in Naperville and Michigan Avenue in Chicago.⁷² Palmes stated, “The whole purpose was for it to be different.”⁷³ As the department has grown, the diversity in experiences has changed, as well. This creates a well-rounded department, proving the strength of the expanding department.

In creating a professional aspect to the department, Palmes notes the interaction with artists from Chicago. Palmes recognized some challenges with bringing in outside guests as, “We have to make sure that if someone

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Marla Mistic, “Verandah courses make interim unique,” *College Chronicle*, October 27, 2006, www.archasearch.com.

⁷¹ Dr. Deborah Palmes.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

comes out here, that they are impressed.”⁷⁴ The reputation of the department rests on the impression left on professionals coming to the institution. Indeed, the department is moving towards a strong professional reputation. However, under the care of quality professors, like Palmes, it is a controlled growth. Only when the department is at its finest will it expose itself to the professional world. In turn, the prestige and reputation of theatre at North Central College has gained a great amount of respect from the theatre world in professional realm.

Palmes’ entrance into the department opened up new doors for students, majors and simple theatre advocates, alike. However, this era of legitimacy was not complete without the addition of Brian Lynch. Teamed as a theatre trio, the small collection of professors proceeded with a measured and calculated growth of theatre at North Central.

Brian Lynch started at North Central College in the spring of 1995. At this stage in his career he just finished working on the national tour of *Les Miserables*.⁷⁵ In addition to his work with national tours, Lynch also received one “Jeff Award” (similar to Tony Awards) for his work in Chicago as a choreographer.⁷⁶ With his first role at North Central College teaching “Acting II,” Lynch came with a clear goal of “...get[ting] in there at the grass roots and hopefully instill some future actors with my belief of what acting should be.”⁷⁷ This addition fell in line with the atmosphere Palmes and Phend were hoping to create at North Central. Utilizing Lynch created another dimension on the quickly diversifying department.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Brian Lynch.

⁷⁶ Marissa Morrison, “Broadway actor to join NCC faculty,” *College Chronicle*, February 24, 1995, www.arachasearch.com.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Making an impact quickly, Lynch wrote the curriculum for the



Cabaret, 1997

technical aspects.⁷⁹ The strength of the program grew from a single degree to a multifaceted, comprehensive program offering opportunities in theatre, musical theatre, directing, dance and technical theatre and design.

Similar to the experiences of Shanower, Lynch brought summer theatre, again, to North Central. However, the College now supports the summer program, with enrollment run through the Camps and Conferences office. Lynch's first experience with summer theatre took place in Northern Indiana. Lynch saw the potential to create the program again at North Central, getting more people in the community involved in the College and theatre. In 1998, *Brigadoon* was produced at Naperville North High School as Pfeiffer Hall was not yet air conditioned. This program has grown year, after year, after year to the point where in the 2009 season, three musicals will be produced to accommodate all of the interested Naperville community members.⁸⁰ Community involvement in the theatre program has positive effects as they create the audiences for main stage productions during the school year.

⁷⁸ Brian Lynch.

⁷⁹ Dr. Deborah Palmes.

⁸⁰ Brian Lynch.

While establishing a Musical Theatre curriculum and creating a college summer musical program, Lynch has also directed and choreographed two musicals that have appeared at the regional Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF). The first show to travel for this prestigious honor was *The Pirates of Penzance* in 2000. Paul Mashl



was quoted as saying, “It felt like you were being validated in a way.”⁸¹ Mashl’s sentiments were echoed by a department that had been continuously growing since 1955. This was the first time it had received any real credit outside of the campus community. To be honored on the national stage was a milestone, but not a destination for the program. North Central theatre was not done with KCACTF. In January 2008, *Thoroughly Modern Millie* was accepted to perform at the KCACTF in Milwaukee.⁸² This again vindicated the program at North Central. This exposure to the national community of actors has only strengthened the reputation of the North Central theatre program.

Lynch’s impact can also be seen in the opening of the College’s Fine Arts Center in fall 2008. The Fine Arts Center is a state of the art facility used by both the theatre and music departments. Wentz Hall is a new concert hall with cutting edge acoustics. Opened by Wynton Marsalis, it has proved to be a world-class facility. On the theatre end of the spectrum, Madden Theatre, a black box, affords students and faculty the opportunity to produce experimental theatre on a unique canvas. Awarded the College’s “Fine Arts” medal of distinguished service, Lynch was an integral part in making the Fine Arts Center a reality.

⁸¹ John Dougherty, “ ‘Pirates’ raid Milwaukee,” *College Chronicle*, January 14, 2000, www.archasearch.com.

⁸² Christina Bereta, “ ‘Millie’ selected for prestigious theatre festival,” *College Chronicle*, January 11, 2008, www.archasearch.com.

Between 1995 and 2007 the theatre department grew a considerable amount under the trio of Phend, Palmes and Lynch. This was clearly seen as theatre became its own department in 2003.⁸³ As Lynch has stated, If you are accepted at North Central, you are in the theatre program, if you want to be. It is an avocation because you love theatre and you want to work in business for the Chicago Board of Trade and occasionally do theatre, you can get that. If your goal is to work professionally and end up on Broadway, we will give you that, too.⁸⁴

The sentiments of Shanower still resonate in the department today as exemplified by Lynch. Moving forward into the new era of North Central theatre, new leadership would have to guide the department for several reasons. Jack Phend retired in 2007, Deborah Palmes was promoted to Division Chair of Arts and Letters, and Brian Lynch was promoted to Fine Arts Manager, running all five of the performing arts venues available on campus. The vacuum left in their wake was quickly filled by Carin Silkaitis. *Current Times*

Carin Silkaitis started off as an adjunct professor at North Central while also working part time at the Roosevelt University Conservatory in Chicago where she completed her M.F.A. After working for six years as a part time professor, she was offered full time jobs at both Roosevelt and North Central in 2007. Taking the position at North Central Silkaitis was given the title, “Theatre Program Coordinator.” In addition to teaching, Silkaitis keeps busy as a “professional director, sometimes actor...and my own theatre company, Thirteen Pocket Productions.”⁸⁵ Similar to the experience of Lynch, Silkaitis brings professional experience that adds greatly to the professionalism of the program.

⁸³ *Undergraduate Course Catalog*, 2003-2004. NCC Publications, College Archives, North Central College Archives, 221.

⁸⁴ Brian Lynch.

⁸⁵ Carin Silkaitis, Interviewed by Nicholas Guido, Naperville, IL, February 2, 2009.

Unlike the experiences of her colleagues, Silkaitis entered the program and found it to be “pretty good.”⁸⁶ With the division of the Theatre Major into three tracks (Musical Theatre, Design/Technical and Performance) Silkaitis’ was to teach in the Performance Track, as well as teach general courses. The curriculum in the 2006 had grown far beyond anything the previous decade had seen including a Musical Theatre major, a dance minor and a theatre minor (Appendix 4).⁸⁷ The growth and stability gave a form and resilience to the department. A developed curriculum meant that the successes and failure of the department and curriculum did not rest solely on the individuals teaching at any point in time. With a blueprint for the program, any quality professor can step into the department and carry on the legacy of the department.

However, Silkaitis found the curriculum to be incomplete. To remedy this, she provided independent studies and offered workshops, similar to those held by Shanower forty years prior.⁸⁸ This recognition of “holes” in the curriculum has prompted Silkaitis to use her professional contacts and bring in theatre workshops from Chicago. One of these workshops was “500 Clown” specializing in comedy and character. Not a priority on the curriculum list for the near future, Silkaitis notes that students “get a weekend of an intensive training workshop.”⁸⁹ This unique way of filling the curricular void provides contacts to the professional world for students aspiring to be actors and bolsters another level of professionalism in the department as a whole.

Along with creating professional contacts, Silkaitis established an internship program with the Chicago Shakespeare Theatre. Students selected for the program from North Central are elite students looking to enter into

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ *Undergraduate Course Catalog*, 2006-2008. NCC Publications, College Archives, North Central College Archives, 221-3.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Carin Silkaitis.

professional acting. The Chicago Shakespeare Theatre has been impressed with North Central students as Silkaitis related the sentiment of the casting director, Bob Mason “[North Central students] have an excellent work ethic and positive mentality.”⁹⁰ Again, the reputation for quality of North Central theatre beyond the College was enhanced by the professional demeanor, skill, talent and knowledge of those students selected for this prestigious internship.

As another means of connecting students to the professional world, Silkaitis also arranges a Senior Showcase for graduating students and alumni to perform for casting directors from the Chicagoland area. There is a screening process for students and alumni hoping to perform at this event.⁹¹ Again, the professional face of the department has to be as polished as possible to create and maintain a good standing with professional actors and directors. Silkaitis related that the feedback from all casting directors has been positive and the reputation of North Central theatre continues to grow.⁹²

Aside from the work Silkaitis has done with the curriculum and having students poised to step out into the acting profession, she has done remarkable work with main stage productions. *The Laramie Project* stands out as one of these notable

shows directed by Silkaitis for several reasons. First, it is a highly controversial show dealing with homosexuality and the

murder of Matthew Shepherd simply because he was a homosexual. The highly debated theme could have been enough to



The Laramie Project, 2008
(photo courtesy of Nico Nepomuceno)

⁹⁰ Carin Silkaitis.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

close the curtain on this production. Still, Silkaitis took the bold step to create realistic feel by not editing the script, and placing warning signs around the lobby of Pfeiffer Hall.⁹³ For the first time in Pfeiffer Hall, a piece of theatre was performed with no editing of adult language and subject matter.⁹⁴ For better or worse, this judgment call maintains the integrity of the piece and the art form. Here, another value is instilled in aspiring professionals and those who love theatre—stay true to the art and intentions of the play.

Most impressive, however, is Silkaitis' philosophy on theatre education. Her stance on liberal arts theatre training is: "I want to create lifetime theatre goers and a respect for the craft. I want to allow people who want to dabble to dabble. But at the same time, I want to train really great actors...and I believe we can do both."⁹⁵ Students of all walks of life and aspirations are welcome and appreciated members in the department. The attitude Silkaitis brings to her students is reflected in their appreciation for the program. Antonia Jankowski finds that Silkaitis, "...establishes a loving and caring environment both in classes and the shows she directs."⁹⁶ This environment is essential in creating a safe space for students, whether they are looking to be professionals or not, to act and perform free of judgment. From 1955 to 2008, the philosophy of the department has remained steadfast and true.

During this current era, the theatre department has been refreshed with renewed interest and support from the Naperville community and College administration. At the groundbreaking for the Fine Arts Center, President Harold Wilde affirmed the institutional commitment to the arts by stating, "...we gather to inaugurate a wonderful new chapter in the history of

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Danielle Cifonie, "Carin Silkaitis is 'All that Jazz,'" *College Chronicle*, May 9, 2008, www.archasearch.com.

this College and community, reflecting the enduring significance of the fine arts in our lives...⁹⁷ Symbols of this support are found in the new buildings and performance spaces opened in Fall 2008. Meiley-Swallow Hall contains a thrust stage, giving a unique closeness to the audience and a dynamic new view of theatre for students. The Fine Arts Center also opened in Fall 2008, housing the state of the art, acoustically perfect Wentz Concert Hall. Also featured in the Fine Arts Center is Madden Theatre. Madden is a black box theatre, ideal for experimental theatre and student directed productions. The inaugural play produced in the new space was

The Diary of Anne Frank, directed by Dr. Shanower. He remarked that he was, "...touched by the fact that I could be invited to come in and direct a play that would have its premiere performance in that particular facility. It was overwhelming."⁹⁸ With a growing curriculum, top of the line facilities, high quality, committed professors, a talented



Diary of Anne Frank, 2008
(photo by Chuck Savage)

student population and support of College administration, the theatre department will continue to be a superior theatre training program, striving for excellence in all facets of theatre arts.

Conclusion

The road to the current success of the theatre program at North Central has been long and arduous. When looking at the broad scope of theatre training in the United States, North Central has fallen behind several times. The elements of this history are present as the program has taken great strides to catch up. Since its inception in 1955, the department has

⁹⁷ "JFK's vision of the 'arts as truth' recalled at groundbreaking," *North Central Now*, North Central College, Office of Marketing and Communication, December, 2006, 11.

⁹⁸ Dr. Donald T. Shanower.

been a breathing, growing creation. Always looking to improve, neither the faculty nor students, will rest with was a less than superior program.

As North Central College continues to strive for excellence in the arts, it will seek to attract the best, highly talented, motivated actors, while opening the program to any student with a passion for theatre. Blending these two groups of students together creates an interesting mosaic of talent and aspirations anytime the curtain goes up on a North Central College production. The motivations of all students, career actors or theatre enthusiasts have built the department to its current level. This dedication from students and faculty truly makes North Central College one of the premier liberal arts colleges in the Midwest.

Appendix

Theatre Curriculum--1964⁹⁹

- 203 “Elements of Play Production I”
- 204 “Elements of Production II”
- 221 “A History of the Theater From its Beginning to 1660”
- 222 “A History of the Theater from 1660 to Today”
- 312 “Acting Technique”
- 316 “Directing Plays”

Theatre Curriculum--1986¹⁰⁰

“C. Theater Track”—Suited to send graduates into professional theater to graduate school

Category 1: choose at least three of the following:

- 221 “Acting and Directing I”
- 223 “Oral Interpretation I”
- 241 “Play Production I”
- 261 “World Theater”

Category 2: choose at least two of the following:

- 272 “Play Production II”
- 282 “Acting and Directing II”
- 343 “Reader’s Theater”
- 353 “Acting and Directing III”
- 300-Level Seminar or Independent Study

Category 3: choose at least two courses from other tracks

Category 4: choose at least one discipline elective

Theatre Curriculum--1990¹⁰¹

Seven Core Courses for Theater Track major:

- 180 “Techniques of Production”
- 182 “Acting I”
- 255 “Makeup (half-course)”
- 259 “Theater History I” (Ancient to 17th Century French Neoclassicism) –or- 261 “Theater History II” (English Restoration to Present Day)
- ENG 348 “Shakespeare” –or- ENG 450 “Seminar in Drama”
- 399/499 “Internship” –or- 393/493 “Seminar in Theater”

Performance Track

- 270 “Directing”

⁹⁹ *Undergraduate Course Catalog*, 1964-1966, NCC Publications, College Archives, North Central College Archives, 76.

¹⁰⁰ *Undergraduate Course Catalog*, 1986-1988, NCC Publications, College Archives, North Central College Archives, 112.

¹⁰¹ *Undergraduate Course Catalog*, 1990-1992, NCC Publications, College Archives, North Central College Archives, 129.

- 282 “Acting II”
- One course from:
 - o 240 “Voice and Movement”
 - o 282 “Acting III”
 - o 397/497 “Independent Study” –or- 393/493 “Seminar in Text Analysis/Performance”

Directing Track

- 259 “Theater History I”
- 261 “Theater History II”
- ENG 348 “Shakespeare”
- ENG 350 “Seminar in Drama
- 270 “Directing”
- 280 “Stage Lighting”
- 203 “Teaching Creative Drama”
- 397/497 “Independent Study in Directing”

Design/Technical Theater Track

- 280 “Stage Lighting”
- One course from:
 - o ART 120 “Drawing I” –or- ART 130 “Painting I”
- One course from:
 - o ART 270 “Origins of Art,” ART 274 “Renaissance Art,” – or- ART 276 “Modern Art”
- 397/497 “Independent Study in Design”
- Up to three electives in the Arts and Letters Division:
 - o MUS 150 “Listening to Music”
 - o MUS 152 “Opera”
 - o MUS 154 “American Music”
 - o Advanced Studio Art
 - o ENG 241 “Film as Literature”

Theatre Curriculum—2006¹⁰²

Theater Major (3 tracks: Performance, Technical Theater, Musical Theater)

- A. 6 terms of Theater Practicum
- B. Core Requirements 15 credit hours from:
 - o 180 “Techniques of Production”
 - o 182 “Acting I”
 - o 255 “Stage Makeup”
 - o 270 “Directing”
 - o 359 “Theater History and Literature I”
 - o 361 “Theater History and Literature II”
- C. Complete a track

¹⁰² *Undergraduate Course Catalog, 2006-2008*. NCC Publications, College Archives, North Central College Archives, 221-223.

- I. Performance
 - 282 “Acting II”
 - 382 “Acting III”
 - One of:
 - 359 “Theater History and Literature I”
 - 361 “Theater History and Literature II”
 - 265 “American Musical Theater”
 - 363 “Classical Asian Theater”
 - One 300-level or higher theater course
 - 9 additional hours of theater and/or ENG 401 “Seminar in Drama” or other English drama courses
- II. Technical Track
 - THE 280 Stage Lighting
 - THE 397/497 or THE 399/499 Internship or Independent Study in Design (Setting, Costume, Light, or Sound)
 - One additional theatre history course: THE 359, THE 361, THE 265, or THE 363
 - One 300-level or higher theatre course
 - Nine additional hours of theatre and/or ENG 401 Seminar in Drama or other English drama courses
- III. Musical Theatre Track:
 - Musical Theatre majors must achieve at least a C- in MUS 101 and MUS 108 and at least a B- in MUS 211 and 221. Students with a strong music background are strongly encouraged to either minor or double major in music.
 - THE 145 Musical Theatre Dance I
 - THE 245 Musical Theatre Dance II
 - THE 246 Jazz Dance (0.00 or 1.50 hours)
 - THE 248 Tap Dance (0.00 or 1.50 hours)
 - THE 252 Ballet (0.00 or 1.50 hours)
 - THE 254 Choreography
 - THE 265 American Musical Theatre
 - THE 282 Acting II
 - THE 350 Advanced Performance Styles/Musical Theatre
 - THE 355 Business of Theatre
 - THE 450 Senior Musical
 - One additional course from: ENG 401, THE 240, or any 300-level or higher theatre course or English drama course
 - MUS 101 Music Theory I

- MUS 108 Aural Harmony I
- MUS 211 Piano (three terms)
- MUS 221 Voice (six terms)
- MUS 329 Vocal Pedagogy and Techniques
- Two additional music courses from: MUS 102, MUS 109, MUS 201, MUS 208, MUS 205, MUS 250, MUS 251, MUS 328

Theater Minor: A minimum of 18 hours, including:

- A. Three terms of Theatre Practicum (THE 115, THE 116, ARL 207, and/or ARL 208). Practicum credit is given to students participating in the production of faculty-directed main stage plays. Students are expected to take these courses for credit unless they will exceed 12 hours in the term.
- B. 12 credit hours selected from: THE 180, THE 182, THE 255, THE 270, THE 359, THE 361
- C. Six credit hours from any theatre courses and/or ENG 401 or other English drama course. A maximum of three credit hours of dance may count towards the theatre minor.

Dance Minor Requirements: A minimum of 19 credit hours including:

- The completion of a senior recital covering at least two styles of dance.
 - o Students must take each of the courses for credit once; optional repetition of technique courses may be taken for no credit.
- THE 145 Musical Theatre Dance I
- THE 245 Musical Theatre Dance II
- THE 246 Jazz Dance (0.00-1.50)
- THE 248 Tap Dance (0.00-1.50)
- THE 252 Ballet (0.00-1.50)
- THE 254 Choreography
- THE 257 Dance History
- PHL 220 Aesthetics
- THE 399 Independent Study (advanced study in dance)

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