

## ASSESSMENT REPORT

### THEATRE AND DANCE- MAY 2016 (REPORTING ON 2015)

#### 1. Annual Assessment Meeting

Thursday, April 28, 2016, 12:00-2:00PM - Theatre Office, Phipps/Macmillan

Present: Professor of Dance Jeanne Goddard (Major chair), Associate Professor of Theatre Siouxsie Easter, Technical Director and Design/Technology Instructor Patricia Goebel.

#### Additional meeting with music faculty

Monday, May 9, 2016, 10:00-11:15AM - Barler Recital Hall

Present: Lecturer in Music Laura Campbell (Jazz Band, Chamber Orchestra, Music Theory), Choir Director Carl Johengen, Lecturer in Music Russell Posegate (piano, guitar, MUS 112)

Professor of Dance Jeanne Goddard (Major chair), Associate Professor of Theatre Siouxsie Easter, Technical Director and Design/Technology Instructor Patricia Goebel

#### Topics discussed:

##### MUSIC

Theatre and dance faculty continue to be concerned about maintaining contact with music faculty (all of whom are adjuncts), particularly with regard to curricular dialogue and the annual assessment process. Also, there remains a critical need to offer a wider range of music courses, to support a true liberal arts education in the performing arts. Theatre and dance faculty advocate the restoration of courses such as Musical Theatre and World Music, and current music faculty are qualified and willing to teach these. Music faculty in turn feel that the music curriculum needs more weight and visibility under the larger umbrella of "performing arts." The music ensembles enhance the sense of community and bonding among students of diverse backgrounds and disciplinary interests, and may aid in retention.

We noted that this year there has been increased communication concerning the shared teaching facility of Barler Recital Hall/Black Box, thanks largely to Patti Goebel's improved plans for facility management. In addition, Professor Goddard has worked to improve communication with music faculty and regularize procedures concerning academic budget management as it related to curricular support and the student experience.

##### ALUMNI

Alumni connections with the department have been extraordinarily strong in recent years, with alums returning to present formally in classes or to meet informally with current students, to discuss career opportunities. Alumni/ae are offering internships or employment to current students and there is an extensive alumni/ae network in the entertainment business in NYC.

## MAJOR/MINOR STRUCTURE

One of the goals of our current major structure is to insure that, as much as possible in a small program, students gain usable career experience in all areas of theatre and dance and design/technology: dancers should take design courses, actors should take dance, and technology students should try an acting class. Recent revisions to the major have increased enrollment in design/technology courses. We would like to see even greater integration of these disciplines in future, both through curricular offerings and through careful advising of majors and minors. We plan to reevaluate the range of design/technology course offerings in order to bring that curriculum up-to-date, avoid repetition of material, and better utilize the strengths of the new Technical Director. These changes should better prepare students to embark on Senior Thesis projects and careers in the entertainment industry.

Possible revisions to the dance curriculum and the dance minor will depend on the strengths of the new dance faculty member, beginning in 2016-2017. We discussed the possibility of a “movement for actors course” that would better support our acting students’ physical confidence and character work on stage; a revised version of the current Get Moving course might serve this need. Students also need more set-building experience and increased confidence with this hands-on area, either by means of a new course or by integrating that element into redesigned existing courses.

We hope to be able to continue adjunct hires as needed to cover certain foundational courses in the major. Recently these have included “Marginalized Voices” (women playwrights course) and Theatre History.

The Junior Project we had hoped for several years to implement, as preparation for the challenges of the senior thesis project in theatre and dance, has proved impractical to accomplish with so few faculty. Professor Easter has engaged students in a number of smaller, short-rehearsal-period performance projects that do provide students with more and varied production experience in the field, including projects at off campus venues.

Overall, we feel it is time to examine all our course descriptions in the catalogue, to insure that descriptions are as complete, up-to-date, and consistent with current content and pedagogy as possible.

We continue to examine all course syllabi for ways to identify and develop career and life skills. We need to continue to develop rubrics that assess students' self-awareness of their own performance in class projects, including such elements as leadership and collaboration. (This is working most effectively in performance courses)

## CAMPUS-WIDE CONNECTIONS

THDA faculty feel we must try to offer an SC 101 class or find another avenue to connect with the first year class in a broader way (depending on the final structure of the new General Education curriculum). We must also continue and expand our connections with business curriculum in the areas of arts management, non-profit organization, and entrepreneurship. Connections with the Sustainability program are also desirable.

## 2. Examination of Assessment Data

During 2015-2016, we used a variety of rubrics, verbal assessment via classroom discussion and informal surveys, verbal assessment via post-thesis defense meetings, and self-assessment via post mortem surveys and exit interviews.

Copies of these surveys, post-mortem rubrics, and exit interview forms are in an appendix at the end of this document.

Summary of the data used-

Technical Theatre - Introduction to Design: A general assessment was made mid-semester on how the students felt about the way the class was structured and taught. Some found the location of the class, and the lack of technology available prohibited them from learning in a way that would be beneficial to the course. Others felt the need to be less hands on and more visual, via Powerpoint, etc. would make the course better to understanding designs and techniques.

Dance Technique - Modern I and II: Rubrics were used at midterm to determine student progress in areas of strength, flexibility, agility, and musicality. Verbal feedback was given, along with two-way discussion assessing how students perceived their own progress and areas for improvement. Students responded well to this format and had a good sense of their own strengths and weaknesses.

THDA Topics Course - Connecting Body and Earth: Rubrics were used to evaluate participation in class (movement) activities. Projects in movement, sound, and visual presentations were used to assess interdisciplinary learning and a range of skills. Frequent writing assignments kept students engaged in reflection. Visual presentations were the most successful means of assessment, as they required, and demonstrated, multidisciplinary engagement and individual creative abilities.

Dance Theory and Choreography - Dance Composition and Laban Movement Analysis: Standard rubrics, verbal feedback, and peer critiques were used to assess the formal elements and impact of student compositions. LMA knowledge was tested through movement evaluations, written exams, and Laban symbol-writing and reading. Students appreciated and responded best to individual feedback from faculty and peer critiques in class. Written materials were easy and practical for the faculty member to assess. Symbol-writing and reading in LMA was very successful and enjoyable for students, and gave them a good sense of their expertise in the theory.

Dance Performance - Spring Concert and Advanced Repertory: Students kept a journal to track their own progress during rehearsals and performances, and wrote reflective papers to summarize their experience. At the wrap-up session ("post-mortem") students completed a faculty-created survey about the production process and engaged in group discussion. Most criticisms centered on the degree, or lack, of organization and communication during rehearsal scheduling. Papers, surveys, and discussion indicated that, despite some stress and frustration during the production process, most students experienced significant personal growth, exposure to challenging material, new methods, and new ideas, a sense of community and a sense of individual and group accomplishment.

Introduction to Theatre and Dance- This class has the largest variety in projects, from presentations to performances to quizzes to written work to designs. This class is very successful in helping students challenge themselves to explore many areas of theatre and dance. Overall, the data shows that this class is on target.

Stage Management- Students were evaluated in a variety of ways, from standard vocabulary quizzes to a portfolio. The rubrics for the portfolio showed that students were creative in their paperwork, but lacked editing and neatness. These are skills necessary in stage management and more emphasis will be placed on them earlier in the course.

Acting Technique- In Acting One, Acting Two, Acting Styles, and Monologues and Audition Techniques, students were evaluated on written and performance projects. The data from the Acting One rubrics show the need for a slight change in the assignments for reading and presenting reports on plays. Other rubrics showed very successful performance projects and students enjoyed the collaboration on scenes.

Theatre Performance- For both the fall and spring production, students were evaluated on reflective papers, collaboration, and preparation. A “post-mortem” was held for each show and students completed a faculty-created survey about the production process and engaged in group discussion. High marks were given for both productions, with an average of 9 (out of 10) for Communication, Organization, and Professionalism, and an average of 10 (out of 10) for Collaborative Achievement and Aesthetic Attainment. Students remarked that this was “the best thing to happen to me in terms of learning the scope of the world of theater” and, “I learned a lot about myself and this time period (the Civil Rights Movement)...It was completely rewarding.”

#### Interpretation of the results-

The results show the need for the program to continue its commitment to offer many types of projects for the diverse learners in our classrooms. Theatre and Dance, by nature, is a physical art form and therefore much of our assessment takes place instantly as we critique form, movement, voice, and material objects. While students are in motion it is nearly impossible for the faculty member to enter results in a paper rubric. In some dance classes the material is videotaped for later assessment, which requires (a) the requisite technology and (b) double the amount of the instructor’s time. We will continue to shape rubrics for written projects and presentations in order to flesh out the learning goals. In performance courses it will be important to continue or improve support and training for student stage managers and crew who facilitate the entire production process.

### 3. Program Changes

#### Changes in Technical Theatre-

Future technical theatre classes will take place in classrooms with a SMARTBoard projection set up, as opposed to Phipps Auditorium, to allow more Powerpoint-based learning. This will allow students to focus on techniques and styles visually instead of a communicative-only lecture. The use of Phipps as a classroom would only occur once or twice a semester. Also, a written evaluation will be given to students at mid-term to discuss the structure of the course and any improvements, which could be made.

The design courses would undergo multiple changes within the structure of the course. Scenic Design will add computer based learning using the program AutoCad and the 3D Model printing. Lighting design will use the computer program Vectorworks and build student knowledge of electrical wiring and rigging systems. Introduction to Technical Theatre will continue to be an overview of backstage needs for a theatrical production while the course Principles of Design will change altogether. A Materials course would replace Principles of Design for a major requirement course. Materials would teach students hands-on knowledge of woodworking, plastic prop construction, and the basics of welding. The information found in Principles of Design would all be covered in the Scenic Design and Lighting design courses.

#### Changes in Theatre-

Rubrics will be created for the Rehearsal and Performance classes (THEA280 and 350) in order to help the students better understand their academic roles in these courses. Adjustments will also be made to assignments in THEA128 in order to help the students to think more critically about the plays assigned. The desire for special topics classes continues, and the faculty member hopes to make room in Acting One and Acting Two for classes focused on acting for the camera and various physical styles of acting.

#### Changes in Dance-

We cannot predict or impose changes in the dance curriculum, since the major can expect a significant shift in focus with the hiring of a new dance faculty member in the fall of 2016. We would support the consideration of non-Western dance technique classes, the re-examination of the dance history course (pedagogy and resources), and the possibility of new topics courses to enrich the curriculum. Certainly communication will take place about what has worked in the past and where we would like to go in the future in order to maintain the strong interdisciplinary connections, the emphasis on collaborative process, and the balance between theory and practice that have benefitted our majors thus far.

## 4. THDA Action Plan for the Upcoming Year (2016-2017)

What will be done	When it will be done	Who will do it	Proposed methods to accomplish
Improve connections with music faculty	Fall 2016	THDA and MUS faculty	- THDA/MUS brief periodic "newsletter" via email
Improve data collection for assessment	Fall 2016	THDA and MUS faculty	Establish central location for data; establish more regular record-keeping practices
Restructure design/tech curriculum	2016-2017	Patti Goebel and THDA faculty	Revise course content and descriptions; possible deletions
Maintain alumni/ae connections	Perennially	THDA and MUS faculty; students	- Alum visits; productions of alum work (plays, choreog) - Maintain THDA Facebook page
Movement for actors course	Spring 2017	New dance faculty with theatre faculty	-Redesign Get Moving course -Improve advising, market movement and dance courses
THDA faculty participate in SC 101 or other first-year required course(s)	2017-2018	THDA faculty	Redesign current courses or add new course(s); possible deletions
Better prepare students for successful thesis work	Perennially	THDA faculty	Engage students in regular "smaller" production projects as thesis preparation

## PRIORITIZATION CONTEXT:

Improve connections with music faculty:

Sporadic or incomplete communication among THDA-MUS faculty has hindered the work of the department for close to 30 years. With the music program currently staffed entirely by adjuncts, the problem has worsened and negatively affects curricular planning, ongoing support for students, and the assessment process. We feel it is imperative to improve this situation and have already taken steps toward that end.

Improve data collection for assessment:

The annual assessment process is made more onerous than necessary by the need to corral and interpret records at the end of the academic year. We recommend that individual faculty look for manageable ways to keep records and the interpretation of data up-to-date, organized, and readily available for assessment.

Restructure design/tech curriculum:

This is an important task, but redesigning even one area of the curriculum requires time, thought, and discussion. Any significant changes must be submitted for approval to the division, the Curriculum Committee, and the full faculty for approval. We anticipate that this process might require the entire academic year to accomplish.

Maintain alumni/ae connections:

This process is vital but we have already made significant strides in this area. We believe that regular attention to our Facebook page and other personal faculty-student and student-student networks will maintain this connection for the present.

Movement for actors course:

The development of this specific course will likely be led by the new dance faculty member, who is yet to be hired. We expect it will take until at least the Spring 2017 semester to accomplish; meanwhile, the existing curriculum in dance technique will continue to provide movement training for our majors.

THDA faculty participate in SC 101 or other first-year required course(s):

We feel very strongly about this goal; however, until the final version of the new General Education curriculum is implemented it is unclear how THDA faculty might participate. For this reason we have postponed this action until the 2017-2018 academic year.

Better prepare students for successful thesis work:

Professor Easter continues to engage students in a number of smaller-scale, short-rehearsal-period theatre projects that provide ongoing and varied production experience in the field, including projects at off campus venues. We expected these opportunities to continue. Similar opportunities have been offered in the past, and should be continued, for dancers.

**5. The Updated Assessment Plan**

Submitted as a separate document.