

# DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS

MFA in Design

# IOWA



## DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS

In the University of Iowa Department of Theatre Arts, we are committed to the transformative power of experiential learning. As an MFA candidate, you will gain valuable experience across a variety of disciplines, including acting, design, directing, dramaturgy, playwriting, and stage management—and you'll be immersed in a collaborative, creative, interdisciplinary performing arts environment.

The prestigious Iowa New Play Festival, hosted annually by the internationally acclaimed Iowa Playwrights Workshop, offers exceptional opportunities to showcase original, student-written plays, bringing never-before-seen stories to life on our state-of-the-art stages. Our students learn conceptual, interpersonal, and technical skills, building foundational competence necessary for a successful career—all under the attentive mentorship of award-winning faculty who are designers widely recognized as leaders in the profession. Professional playwrights, directors, and producers travel from near and far to participate in our annual celebration of works, engaging with our students in insightful discussions and creative exploration.

At the University of Iowa Department of Theatre Arts, your creative voice is your power.

## THE DESIGN PROGRAM

At Iowa, you will become part of a long-standing legacy of creative learning and innovation. You will be immersed in a dynamic learning environment that develops your unique voice through personalized instruction and real-world professional experience. Our graduate design program nurtures aspiring design visionaries dedicated to the collaborative process.

We are committed to equipping our students with the skills and resources needed to thrive professionally in the dynamic, ever-changing world of the entertainment industry. With access to cutting-edge facilities and state-of-the-art technology, you will collaborate with seasoned professionals to craft your unique story within our innovative artistic community. As a University of Iowa Design MFA graduate, you will enter the next level of your career with a comprehensive portfolio preparing you for success in the entertainment industry.

### PLAN OF STUDY

The design program is built with **three cornerstones of learning**:

- **Course Work:** Immerse yourself in the ideas, concepts and skill-building of design and collaboration through meaningful courses taught by dedicated faculty.
- **Hands-on Learning:** With faculty mentorship, you will either design or assist in designing at least one production each semester. Students can complete up to 8 designs over the course of their three years.
- **Assistantships & Fellowships:** Earn money as you learn! Our funding opportunities include assistantships that offer meaningful employment in our maker spaces and in our classrooms.

Your Plan of Study will be reviewed each semester and tailored to your individual needs. The MFA Design Program accepts new students every fall.





## DESIGN CURRICULUM

MFA Design candidates complete 70 semester hours in four areas.

- **Primary area (3 courses):** Scenic Design, Costume Design or Lighting Design
- **Secondary area (2 courses):** Scenic Design, Costume Design, Lighting Design, Projection/ Media Design, Mask/ Puppetry/ Hair/ Makeup, or Sound Design
- **Design core:** Period Styles, Scenic Art, Dramatic Literature, Graduate Design Seminar
- **Projects in Theatre:** Immersive design learning with one-on-one expert faculty mentorship.

## NETWORKING

- Connect with design professionals through frequent guest artist visits in the department, as well as job and internship placement assistance.
- Build lasting collaborative relationships with MFA Directors and Playwrights through department productions.
- Prepare for a job in higher education through teaching assistantships. Many of our alumni are professors at universities and colleges across the country.
- Establish connections with our alumni working in film, television, Broadway, off-Broadway, regional theatre, national tours, Cirque du Soleil, music tours, and other entertainment or industrial events.

## STATE-OF-THE ART LEARNING SPACES

- 460-seat E.C. Mabie proscenium theatre
- 144-215-seat David Thayer flexible black box theatre
- 144-seat Alan MacVey proscenium theatre
- Motion Capture and Virtual Reality Studio
- Cutting-edge design lab, lighting lab, shops and rehearsal facilities

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

### ASSISTANTSHIPS

Students holding a ¼ time or greater assistantship appointment:

- ¼ time yearly salary: \$11,000+ for 10 hours a week in a production shop and/or classroom
- Full tuition waiver
- Fees scholarship
- Work assignments include the Costume Shop, Electrics, Scene shop, Props & Paint shop, Design TA, Teaching TA, or Technology TA

### SCHOLARSHIPS

- Eligibility for numerous Department of Theatre Arts scholarships annually
- Travel grants and research fellowships are available for conferences, training and summer research through the department, college and University
- Scholarships are available for continuing students, international students & under-represented students

### FELLOWSHIPS

- The Iowa Arts Fellowship: Competitive, one-year award that includes a \$20,000 academic-year fellowship stipend, plus tuition.
- ¼ time assistantship for students in their second & third year.

Fellowships and Assistantships come with comprehensive health and dental insurance.



### SCHEDULE A VISIT

with **Bryon Winn**, MFA, BA  
Professor and Director of Theatre  
[bryon-winn@uiowa.edu](mailto:bryon-winn@uiowa.edu)



### CONNECT WITH US

on social media [@uiowatheatre](#)

→ [THEATRE.UIOWA.EDU](https://theatre.uiowa.edu)

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**WHY IOWA?**

**450+**

ARTS PERFORMANCES AVAILABLE EACH YEAR TO STUDENTS FOR \$5 OR LESS

**#1**

BEST COLLEGE TOWN IN AMERICA - [REVIEWS.ORG](#)

**100+**

RESTAURANTS, CAFÉS, MUSIC VENUES, THEATERS, AND STREET FESTIVALS

**100%**

IOWA CITY RECEIVED A PERFECT SCORE FROM THE HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN'S ANNUAL LGBTQ+ EQUALITY ASSESSMENT (2024)

**IOWA** | Department of Theatre Arts

Photos by: Todd Adamson, Miranda Meyer, Alan Stoker, Jill Tobin, Justin Torner