Art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it.

Bertolt Brecht
Engage in the critical and practical study of Theater

From ancient tragedies to Broadway musicals, Shakespeare plays to modern comedies, immerse yourself in the study of theater history and dramatic literature.

Explore how theater has developed across time and space...while acquiring tools to participate in—and make—theater.

Onstage and backstage, engage with this vibrant art in dynamic courses in which you will learn to act, direct, and design sets, costumes, and lights. Seize the opportunity to collaborate with professional theater artists, engage with students and faculty across disciplines, and learn new technologies.
How does performance emerge as a model that encompasses contemporary culture—from sporting events to political protests, to the organization of the workplace? Why does live performance continue to thrive in the digital age?

*Learn to recognize, observe, and analyze performance—and participate in and design your own, using professional production resources.*

Performance studies takes theater out of its traditional academic setting of text-based literature and investigates its relation to nonconventional performances ranging from rituals to board meetings.

Opportunities include everything from canonical plays and improvisational pieces to experimental solo performances and interdisciplinary collaborative works with visiting artists and scholars.

All TAPS majors complete a capstone project that represents significant, original work in their chosen area of theater or performance. The project can consist of devising a show, choreographing a dance, stage managing a production, designing a large theater work, performing a major role, writing or directing a play, or researching and writing a senior essay. Previous projects have included producing and directing The Color Purple and creating a performance piece exploring identity with university students in Uganda.
Reach across disciplines, forms, and aesthetics—beyond the limits of imagination...through Dance

Dance is a rich, vibrant art through which we experience culture and our place within it. Through sustained and rigorous encounters with dance, gain skills for understanding how the body moves through time and space, navigating the complex factors of identity, culture, and tradition that determine how we perceive our physical existence.

The Dance Division offers broadly diverse approaches to dance as a performance art, social practice, political act, and vehicle of ideology and beliefs.

Experience and critically assess dance techniques. Investigate, choreograph, and perform innovative works. Connect the danced experience to research across disciplines.

...Join projects such as the Chocolate Heads (a movement-driven collective of student poets, musicians, and dancers), faculty-mentored student concerts, guest artist commissions and site-specific work. And connect with other dancers through the Bay Area Dance Exchange and the American College Dance Festival. You can also work with faculty on research and service-learning experiences linked to broad topics in dance education.
Innovative Electives

- Beginning Improvising
- Page to Stage: Playwriting and Solo Performance
- Dance, History, and Conflict
- Progressive Musical Theater
- The Personal Is Political: Art, Activism, and Performance

A Successful Future


Studying theater and performance opens your mind, sharpens your craft, and enriches your awareness of space and everyone—and thing—inhabiting it. Through interpreting and making art, you will learn how to offer and receive meaningful critiques and respond creatively to situations around you—critical skills in today’s rapidly changing world.

Students embark on creative paths ranging from joining respected MFA programs and dance companies to pursuing careers in tech companies and publishing. Whether they become actors or teachers, communication directors or entrepreneurs, alums apply their experiences in theater and performance studies all over the world.
My education in theatre and performance studies helped me to grow and challenge myself both creatively and academically—and, best of all, to understand the ways in which those two experiences could inform each other. I came to the department because I enjoyed putting on plays, and I graduated a more confident and capable artist, writer, scholar, and collaborator. My education transformed a hobby into a lens through which I can view the world. I’ve been thrilled by how often that perspective has proved relevant, practical, and influential, even beyond my career in the theatre.

Zach Chotzen-Freund, BA ’09 TAPS and English Publications Associate, Theatre Communications Group in NYC

Studying dance at Stanford exposed me to a broad range of work I had not previously encountered, forcing me to rethink what I considered to be “dance” and “performance.” I learned that dance can be anything from the simplest pedestrian gesture to the most incredibly articulated full-bodied movement. The dance faculty invited me to view choreography as research and to treat the studio as a laboratory, allowing me to integrate my academic work in the sciences with my passion to move.

Katharine Hawthorne, BS ’10 Physics, minor in Dance with honors Freelance dancer & choreographer, khawthorne.net

Jennifer DeVere Brody Department Chair Professor of Theater and Performance Studies jbrody1@stanford.edu 650-723-2576