

PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – RYERSON THEATRE SCHOOL (BFA)

The Ryerson Theatre School (RTS) offers a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) degree in three Performance programs – Acting, Dance, and Production. RTS' three Performance programs use a conservatory approach that combines intensive practical training within a multidisciplinary liberal arts curriculum. Students are trained as artists, thinkers, and entrepreneurs capable of launching their own businesses. The problem solving, critical thinking, research, and communication skills that students develop are essential to success in the current arts and cultural industries and enrich other facets of their lives.

RTS has a nationally and internationally renowned faculty and staff. The creative activity of faculty and staff within the School – as it relates to the training of students in the studio, theatre, or scene and costume shops – is a key measure of teaching performance, but it too is seen as a contribution to the performing arts field. The Ryerson Theatre School was founded in 1971 as an autonomous department within Ryerson University (then Ryerson Polytechnic Institute), but its roots go back to 1950.

The RTS pedagogical goals focus on developing a versatile performance professional with a strong technical base in dance, acting or production capable of launching and maintaining a career in presentation, performance and/or teaching. RTS is deeply committed to increasing public, institutional and government understanding of the value of the arts to education and social development, and to fostering national interest in contemporary theatre and dance. The reality, however, is that positions for playwrights, directors, actors, dancers, choreographers, and designers are still limited, and RTS is aware of the need to intensify its approach to give its graduates a competitive edge. More specialized courses and greater emphasis on conservatory training are needed to ensure that graduates are equipped to work not only in theatre, musical theatre, dance and film, but also in the fast-paced media industry, and to take on creative roles in the business world.

The combination of intensive practical training with academic courses is a core feature of RTS's Performance programs. While honing skills required for a particular discipline through studio work and performance-related assignments, students also receive a well-rounded education in the humanities and liberal arts. Students are challenged to learn creatively, think critically, and apply their growing performance skills in both traditional and innovative areas, under the guidance of working professionals who are leaders in the arts community.

The Performance Acting and Performance Dance programs are driven by the expressed needs of today's performing arts and live entertainment sector in Canada – a diversified, technologically sophisticated, and labour-intensive industry that has experienced unprecedented growth over the last several decades. Each program is based on 'umbrella' courses that cover the fundamental elements of the two disciplines.

The Performance Acting program gives students the skills to work in theatre, musical theatre, film, television and radio. The curriculum combines academic and dramaturgical training, studio class work in acting, voice, music, dance and movement, and extensive rehearsal and performance experience.

The Performance Dance program offers intensive training with daily classes in ballet, jazz, and modern dance. This program is designed to develop versatile, creative, and interpretive dancers. Related studies in courses such as information technology, media arts, early childhood education, anatomy, musical theatre and singing round out their training. For students with an interest in teaching, the Performance Dance program provides an overview of the coursework and prescribed pedagogical instruction required for internationally recognized certification through the Royal Academy of Dancing.

The Performance Production program provides students with a broad theoretical and practical understanding of all aspects of production work in the performing arts, as well as specialized training in lighting and sound; scenic design; construction; rigging and painting; props design, construction and management; costume design and construction; CAD and other computer skills; and stage management and arts administration. The combination of skill acquisition, enhancement of skills, and practical application through hands-on experience prepares graduates for careers as technical directors, property masters, set/prop/costume designers, audio and lighting engineers, and/or shop supervisors, and managers.

The RTS faculty and senior staff have developed goals and strategies which have been cemented by the program review process. These include:

1. CURRICULUM – The curriculum goals of RTS include:

- including upper level Professional and Professionally Related Electives
- adding new lecture based courses which would be available university wide
- adding up to three new Minors
- including instruction in various critical theories and methodologies in a range of courses
- increasing the number of playwrights, directors, designers, and choreographers engaged each year
- raising the School's profile beyond Canada's borders and to have 50% of the RTS student body engaged in international classes, exchanges, exhibitions, and production opportunities by 2018
- continuing work on a proposal to establish an MFA in dramatic writing along with Image Arts and Radio Television Arts
- supporting new kinds of research and creative activity that support the program's future needs and increase its relevance to the industry and the community
- successfully blending the work that takes place on and off stage and the administration of that process

2. ARTISTIC – The artistic goals of RTS are to:

- Launch a professional resident theatre company in 2018, similar to the Yale Repertory Theatre, the Actors Company at Juilliard, or the Resident Ensemble Players at the University of Delaware.
- Nurture and promote new work by commissioning and developing pieces by emerging and professional playwrights, and staging these works using theatre's most daring directors, innovative designers, and celebrated actors.
- Present dance and theatre productions that celebrate the human experience and transcend cultural differences to foster unity and harmony within communities;
- Present dance and theatre productions at national and international theatres and performance festivals;
- Clearly and regularly articulate and promote the economic benefits such as increased tourism, job creation, hotel and restaurant patronage that RTS may incite to elected and community leaders, key stakeholders and the general public.

Artists-in-Residence – The practice of employing professional guest artists, directors, designers, and stage managers for short-term projects – in particular, fourth-year student productions – has served the School well and will continue. Future plans include the continued engagement of established Canadian playwrights to develop original scripts that are workshopped by senior students.

Professional Performance Company (PPC)

Once established, the goal is to build the PPC into a leading professional North American theatre company that offers patrons artistic excellence, contributes to the development of dance and theatrical art forms, and attracts local, provincial, national, and international audiences. Supported by top-calibre artists, artisans, managers and staff and volunteers, the PPC will be dedicated to producing bold interpretations of the classics and new theatrical, dance and multimedia works that connect

immediately with contemporary audiences. Educational lectures and outreach programs will complement this mix.

Relationship-Building

Over the last 42 years, RTS has established strong relationships with professional dance companies, theatres and associations, artists' unions and associations, cultural organizations, theatre industries and a range of manufacturers. These links play an important role in students' development. It is anticipated that these relationships will continue to grow in the future.

iii) INSTITUTIONAL – The institutional goals of RTS are to:

- Distinguish RTS from other Canadian theatre and dance training programs by promoting the comprehensiveness of its program, including three distinct programs of training: Performance Acting, Performance Dance, and Performance Production a professional artistic/educational team whose members are affiliated with professional unions; fully-staged productions originating from RTS' artistic mission; and a professional resident performance company.

Admissions and Enrolment

- Changes to Admissions/Enrolment procedures were made in 2003 and 2011, to provide additional funding to the School. Minimum admission requirements (OAC/Grade 12) and the Audition/Interview procedure remained the same. Over the next year, the per-applicant audition and portfolio fee – currently set at \$50.00 – may increase slightly.
- In 2011-12, the total student population was 450. With the reappropriation of the Ryerson Theatre -- and more space and faculty resources provided by the University -- this could be increased to 550 by 2018, increasing both the BFA student population and the number of students enrolled in various Minors and the Creative Industries Acting/Dance Studies Module. The School's international outreach is also designed to strengthen student recruitment.

iv) COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT – The goals for community engagement and audience development are to:

- Increase single ticket sales by 25% (an increase of 5% per year over next five years).
- Enhance community understanding of, and support for, the RTS mission.
- Develop, diversify and increase the audience base for all RTS productions.
- Reach populations unable to travel to Ryerson to attend performances by taking performances out into the community.

Audience Development

RTS is currently undertaking a data analysis of ticket sales over the past decade and gathering survey data from existing patrons in order to gain a better understanding of public expectations and to inform future programming. This will be complemented by expanding and improving audience services.

Audience Diversification

Diversifying the audience base for the RTS work and brand will be accomplished in various ways, including entering into co-productions with other regional theatres and dance companies. More Ryerson students can be attracted to RTS productions by forging curricular alliances with all Faculties, and/or making attendance mandatory for students in certain non-RTS courses. To develop off-campus audiences, and build future student recruitment, the School plans to stage matinee productions of literary classics for local and regional students in Grades 7-12 at the 1000-seat Ryerson Theatre. The School also plans to market matinees to seniors.

Internships/Apprenticeships

Over the past few years, senior students have been involved in ad hoc study placements – costume work at the Textile Museum, prop-making at the Canadian Opera Company -- as part of their training. Although many larger theatre and dance companies have their own post-graduate conservatory programs from which they draw apprentices, RTS has approached several organizations about offering undergraduate apprenticeships.

v) **HUMAN RESOURCES** – The goals of RTS for human resources are:

- Attract and retain first-rate faculty and staff to lead RTS through a time of expansion and professional growth.
- Increase the diversity among RTS faculty, staff, students, interns, and members of advisory boards and councils to fully represent the myriad of communities within Toronto.

Staff Recruitment

To achieve its future organizational goals – including an increased student population -- the School must now rebuild and expand its team. Between now and 2018, four key positions must be filled: Evening Technical Director, Public Relations/Marketing Director, and a Wardrobe Assistant.

vi) **FACILITIES**

The facilities goals of RTS are to:

- Upgrade the RTS facilities and equipment to accommodate future growth and become competitive with other post-secondary theatre/dance programs in Canada.
- Expand the number of studio teaching spaces to include a home room for the 4th year acting class;
- Create a performing arts centre that is a vibrant, state-of-the art facility at Ryerson University, and a landmark of Toronto.

Ryerson University administration addressed the dire need for new facilities in Fall 2014. After safety and space analyses, it was decided that academic year 2015/2016 would be the last year RTS would reside in the 44 Gerrard St. building. A phased approach to temporary and permanent facilities was planned. Phase 1 includes temporary space in the Student Learning Centre, leased administrative space, and three additional studio/classrooms in Kerr Hall on campus. Phase 2 involves the design and construction of a new building that will house the new home of RTS with multi-use spaces that can be used as classrooms, rehearsal space, shops, administrative offices and hopefully a performance space. The development work of Phase 2 will begin in 2016.

vii) **FINANCIAL**

The financial goals of RTS are to:

- Maintain and increase financial resources to ensure future expansion and institutional stability.
- Build an endowment fund for the Ryerson Theatre School.

Earned Revenue

The long-term goal is to enroll over five hundred students in the summer camp program (started in 2011) by the summer of 2018. The School hopes eventually offer Saturday classes and matinees for seniors and high school students during the academic year, and rentals of costumes, props, equipment and facilities, all of which will be vigorously promoted to the surrounding community.

Fundraising

To strengthen the School's fundraising capacity, efforts will be made to substantially increase corporate sponsorships and grants from government agencies and foundations. Both an Annual Fund and a Major Gifts program will be established, and new fundraising events will be launched. Finally, an Endowment Fund will be established.