

George Mason University

THEATER OPEN HOUSE



The George Mason University Department of Theater is hosting an
Open House for Prospective Students on
Friday, February 26, 2010

Open House will include:

Information booths

Faculty led workshops in performance and technical theater

Tour of the Performing Arts spaces

An opportunity to see one of our Mainstage productions

Come and see what George Mason has to offer!

For more information email gmutheater@gmail.com

GMU Department of Theater • 4400 University Drive • Fairfax, VA 22030 • 703-993-1120 •
gmutheater@gmail.com • theater.gmu.edu

George Mason University Theater Open House

Schedule of Events

Friday, February 26th, 2010

in the Performing Arts Building
on the Fairfax Campus of George Mason University

3:00pm – *Information Booths Open*

(TheaterSpace. Performing Arts Building Room A105)

Information Booths Include: Theater Department Students, Theater Department Faculty (Performance), Theater Department Faculty (Technical), Theater of the First Amendment, Grey Ghost Theater Company, Acting For Young People.

All information booths will stay open until 7:00pm

3:30pm – 5:15pm – *Q&A with Parents*

(TheaterSpace. Performing Arts Building Room A105)

While these workshops are occurring with the high school students, the GMU students/faculty will hold a Q&A with the parents of the prospective students. There will be a variety of students (different grade level, concentration, and major) as well as one or two faculty to ensure the process runs smoothly and all questions are answered accurately and fully.

3:30pm-4:15pm – *First Workshop*

Stage Combat with Ken Elston (Black Box)

OR

Sound Design with Kevin Dunayer (Sound Design Lab)

Workshops occur simultaneously and students will choose **one of the two** to attend. One performance based, the other technical based, both will be led by Mason Theater Faculty.

4:30pm-5:15pm – *Second Workshop*

Audition Techniques with Lisa Nani-Messengee (Black Box)

OR

Scene Shop Tour with Chris Hershey (Scene Shop)

Workshops occur simultaneously and students will choose **one of the two** to attend. One performance based, the other technical based, both will be led by Mason Theater Faculty.

5:30pm-6:00pm – *Tour of the Performing Arts Spaces*

Students and parents will be broken up into small groups and given a tour of our Performing Arts spaces led by Mason Students. Students will see the first floor of the Performing Arts Building, including Black Box, TheaterSpace, the Design Lab, Dressing Rooms, Scene Shop, Costume Shop, and Theater Lounge. Students will also see our Concert Hall backstage, lobby, and audience seating. Then the tours will continue through the south side of campus, showing the students the Fine Arts Building and the Johnson Center (Student Union Building). The tours will all finish by leading the students into Harris Theater, our 500-seat proscenium space. They will get a tour of the theater's technical areas (booth and loading area) as well as backstage and the dressing rooms.

6:00pm-7:00pm – *Pre-Show Discussion with the Cast of “Orpheus Descending” and Director Kristin Johnsen-Neshati*

(Harris Theater)

Students will get to meet and talk with members of the cast of *Orpheus Descending*, as well as the show's director, Kristin Johnsen-Neshati, on the set prior to that evening's performance.

7:00pm-8:00pm – *Break*

Students will be able to either return to the information areas back in TheaterSpace (PAB A105) or grab a meal or continue to individually tour around the University.

8:00pm – *Production of “Orpheus Descending”*

(Harris Theater)

Students will then be given the opportunity to see one of the GMU Players Mainstage productions, *Orpheus Descending* in Harris Theater. They will be able to see the actors who they just met perform onstage, and to observe the high caliber productions that our department produces.

Students must **confirm their attendance** to the Open House (by filling out the attached form), and once they do they will be given **one** complimentary ticket to the production. Any parents/guests that would like to come with them may purchase their tickets for the low price of \$12 each.

10:30pm – *Post-Show Reception*

(Harris Theater Lobby)

After the performance, the students and parents can enjoy coffee and cookies in the lobby of Harris Theater and will be able to speak with the cast and crew of the production and any other GMU students who are in the audience.

Orpheus Descending

A play by Tennessee Williams

Directed by Professor Kristin Johnsen-Neshati

About the Play:

In *Orpheus Descending*, a young charismatic musician descends on a small, repressive southern town. He forms a relationship with a passionate woman who is trapped in a bad marriage and who has a tragic past. The play exhibits many of the playwright's typical themes: loneliness and desire, sexuality and repression, the longing for freedom. Violence lurks just below the surface, and it bursts into the open at the play's end. The play is also rich in imagery, lyrical language, and symbolism.

About the Playwright:

Thomas Lanier Williams was born in Columbus, Mississippi, on March 26, 1911. Tennessee lived for several years in Clarksdale, Mississippi, before moving to St. Louis in 1918. At the age of 16, he won third prize and received \$5 for an essay, "Can a Good Wife Be a Good Sport?," in *Smart Set*. In 1929, he entered the University of Missouri. His success there was dubious, and in 1931 he began work for a St. Louis shoe company. It was six years later when his first play, *Cairo, Shanghai, Bombay*, was produced in Memphis, in many respects the true beginning of his literary and stage career.

Building upon the experience he gained with his first production, Williams had two of his plays, *Candles to the Sun* and *The Fugitive Kind*, produced by Mummies of St. Louis in 1937. As the WWII loomed over the horizon, Williams found a bit of fame when he won the Group Theater prize of \$100 for *American Blues* and received a \$1,000 grant from the Authors' League of America in 1939. *Battle of Angels* was produced in Boston a year later. Near the close of the war in 1944, what many consider to be his finest play, *The Glass Menagerie*, had a very successful run in Chicago and a year later burst its way onto Broadway. Containing autobiographical elements from both his days in St. Louis as well as from his family's past, the play won the New York Drama Critics' Circle award as the best play of the season.

Following the critical acclaim over *The Glass Menagerie*, over the next eight years he found homes for *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Summer and Smoke*, *A Rose Tattoo*, and *Camino Real* on Broadway. Although his reputation on Broadway continued to zenith, particularly upon receiving his first Pulitzer Prize in 1948 for *Streetcar*, Williams reached a larger world-wide public in 1950 when *The Glass Menagerie* and again in 1951 when *A Streetcar Named Desire* were made into motion pictures. Williams had now achieved a fame few playwrights of his day could equal.

Over the next thirty years, dividing his time between homes in Key West, New Orleans, and New York, his reputation continued to grow and he saw many more of his works produced on Broadway and made into films, including such works as *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (for which he earned a second Pulitzer Prize in 1955), *Orpheus Descending*, and *Night of the Iguana*. There is little doubt that as a playwright, fiction writer, poet, and essayist, Williams helped transform the contemporary idea of the Southern literature. However, as a Southerner he not only helped to pave the way for other writers, but also helped the South find a strong voice in those auspices where before it had only been heard as a whisper. Williams died on February 24, 1983, at the Hotel Elysée in New York City.

Workshop Descriptions

3:30pm – 4:15pm

Movement

(with Professor Ken Elston)

Based on the Tennessee Williams play *Orpheus Descending* students have the opportunity to focus on some basic stage combat techniques and provide insight into the way character movement and staged violence was built for the show. Participants will be asked to move, though observers are welcome

OR

SFX Sound Design

(with Professor Kevin Dunayer)

This workshop will be an introduction to computer controlled sound used by sound designers for the theater using the latest technology SFX 6.0. SFX is the leading live entertainment sound playback software application. The typical venue for SFX is theatre, but it is also used by theme parks, magicians, and other related venues that require the playback of music and sound effects. SFX puts the art back into sound design: instead of worrying about technological limitations, you can now create rich sound designs that can be reliably played back during each performance!

4:30pm – 5:15pm

Audition Techniques

(with Professors Mary Lechter and Lisa Nanni-Messegee)

This interactive workshop will discuss various types of auditions (including high school, college, and local professional) and provide an overview of “the business of the business,” followed by a question and answer session.

OR

Scene Shop Tour

(With Studio Technical Director Chris Hershey)

During this workshop, students will have a chance to tour the Scene Shop, located on the first floor of the Performing Arts Building. The Scene Shop is where all GMU Players Productions’ sets are built, as well as for the GMU Opera and Theater of the First Amendment. Tools will be explained and set pieces from previous productions will be displayed, as well as testimonies from scene shop interns on the process of building for a Studio or a Mainstage show.

Theater Department Faculty Bios

Clayton Austin (M.F.A., Yale School of Drama) Department Chair since 2001 served as Production Manager for the GMU Players from 1999 to 2007. Past experience includes technical direction for Theater of the First Amendment, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Hartford Stage Company, Trinity Square Repertory Theatre, The Barter Theater, and numerous summer stock companies. A faculty member at Mason since 1993, he teaches courses in technical theater, drafting, and the theatrical medium.

Rick Davis (M.F.A., D.F.A, Yale School of Drama) is Associate Provost, Professor of Theater, and co-Artistic Director of Theater of the First Amendment (TFA). Before coming to Mason in 1991, he was dramaturg and associate artistic director at Baltimore's Center Stage. A member of the SSDC, he is an active director in professional theater and opera, a librettist and translator, and an essayist. His translations of Ibsen (with Brian Johnston) have been published as well as performed in leading regional theaters such as DC's Shakespeare Theatre, Berkeley Rep, Center Stage, Alliance Theatre, and the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, and his new book of translations and commentaries, "Calderon de la Barca: Four Great Plays of the Golden Age" was published in January by Smith and Kraus. At Mason he teaches courses in directing, theater history, dramatic literature, dramaturgy, and arts management.

Edward Gero (B.A., Montclair State College) joined the GMU faculty in 1990. He has performed at the Shakespeare Theater at the Folger/Lansburgh since 1983 and has appeared on stage in New York, in regional theater, and on film and television. He is a member of Actor's Equity and the National Committee for Standards in the Arts, and also teaches for the graduate Academy for Classical Acting at the Shakespeare Theatre/GWU.

Howard Vincent Kurtz (M.F.A., Penn State University) is an Associate Professor of Theater teaching costume design, clothing construction, and makeup, as well as an introductory theater course to non-majors. Howard was the recipient of the 2004 Fenwick Fellowship and the 2001 Teaching Excellence Award. Howard has designed sets, costumes, and directed productions for the GMU Players. He is a member of the United Scenic Artists and has designed many productions for the Theater of the First Amendment at George Mason. Outside the University Howard designs for professional theaters throughout the Washington D. C. area. Howard is the resident Costume Designer for Olney Theatre Center in Olney Maryland. He has been nominated for two Helen Hayes Awards, receiving the Outstanding Costume Design Award for TFA's *Dream of a Common Language*.

Heather McDonald (M.F.A, New York University's Tisch School of the Arts)'s work has primarily been in theatre as a playwright and director. Her play *An Almost Holy Picture* was produced on Broadway starring Kevin Bacon and directed by Michael Mayer and nominated for the 2002 Pulitzer Prize. Her other plays include *When Grace Comes In*, *Dream of a Common Language*, *Available Light*, *The Rivers and Ravines*, and *Faulkner's Bicycle* and have been widely produced Off Broadway and at theatres such as Arena Stage, The McCarter Theatre, Signature Theatre, The La Jolla Playhouse, The Actors Theatre of Louisville, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, and Center Stage. Her work as a director has been nominated for 8 Helen Hayes Awards and won four, including Outstanding

Resident Production for her direction of her own play *Dream of a Common Language*. She is an Associate Professor at George Mason University, teaching playwriting and screenwriting.

Tim Chew (B.F.A., Southwest Missouri State University; M.F.A., University of Georgia) teaches courses in Lighting Stagecraft, Lighting Design, Advanced Lighting Design, technical theater, and general theater. He has designed lighting for many GMI Players productions, GMU Opera, several TFA productions, and for other professional theatres in the area, the Southeast, and the Midwest. He is the faculty production manager of the GMU Players Studio Series. Tim also has extensive professional experience as a technical director and master electrician. Tim enjoys being active in the community as a designer and as an adjudicator for amateur and High School Theater.

Ken Elston (B.A., Temple University; M.F.A., Ohio State University) teaches acting with an emphasis in movement and directing. He is a member of Actor's Equity, the Screen Actors Guild, The Association of Television and Radio Artists and the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, and has acted and /or directed professionally in New York, Philadelphia, Kansas City and elsewhere. Ken also sits on the board of the Oberon Theatre Ensemble in New York and is Treasurer for the Association the Theatre Movement Educators.

Kristin Johnsen-Neshati ((B.A. Swarthmore College; M.F.A & D.F.A Yale School of Drama) has taught on the theater faculty of George Mason University since 1993. In addition to her work as a translator, director and writer, Ms. Johnsen-Neshati serves as Resident Dramaturg/Artistic Associate for Theater of the First Amendment, where she has worked on over thirty productions and workshops. Her special interests include nineteenth-century Russian drama, new play development, and non-western theater. Ms. Johnsen-Neshati has translated several of Chekhov's major plays and is currently adapting a collection of Persian folktales for the stage with her collaborator and husband, Amin Neshati. Ms. Johnsen-Neshati is the recipient of the KC/ACFT Criticism Faculty Fellowship to the Critics Conference at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center and George Mason's Fenwick Fellowship. She holds a B.A. in Russian and Theater from Swarthmore College, and M.F.A and D.F.A degrees in Dramaturgy & Dramatic Criticism from the Yale School of Drama.

Kevin Dunayer (M.F.A., California Institute of the Arts). At GMU Kevin Teaches Sound Engineering and Design and is the Events Production Manager. He has Designed Sound for over 300 productions Nationwide. Kevin's Sound Design Credits Include: Alley Theatre (Houston TX), Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Colorado Shakespeare Festival, GeVa Theatre (Rochester, NY), Studio Arena Theatre, Merrimack Repertory Theatre, New American Theatre Company, North Carolina Shakespeare Festival, Syracuse Stage, Dallas Theatre Center, Two River Theatre Company, Virginia Stage Company.

Mary Lechter (B.A., University of Maryland, College Park) joined the Mason adjunct faculty in 1998 and teaches in the Theater and Music Departments. She has appeared in several shows at her artistic home, Theater of the First Amendment, and has worked at Washington area theaters including Arena Stage, Studio Theatre, and Source Theatre. Television, radio and film credits include ABC's *All My Children*, and the upcoming MGM/Lionsgate thriller *Hit and Run*. Mary is a member of Actors' Equity Association, The Screen Actors Guild, The American Federation of Radio & Television Artists, The American Association for Theater Educators, Americans for the Arts, and the Educational Theatre

Association. She is the Founder, President and Director of A Class Act – Acting for Young People & Adults, Inc.

Paul D'Andrea (Ph.D., Harvard University) is a Robinson Professor of Theater and English, as well as an Artistic Associate for Theater of the First Amendment. His plays have been produced across the country in major regional theaters. His body of work includes *The Trouble with Europe*, *A Full Length Portrait of America*, *Bully*, *The Einstein Project*, *Two Bit Taj Mahal*, and *The Wonderful One Hoss Shay*. His adaptation of Lessing's *Nathan the Wise* was premiered by TFA in the Fall 2001.

Kevin Murray (B.A., University of Maryland) teaches Audition Techniques and Theater Management for Mason's Theater Department and serves as the department's Director of Student Advancement. Kevin is also the Managing Director and Casting Director for Theater of the First Amendment (TFA), George Mason University's professional theater company. As an actor, he appeared onstage in TFA's productions of *Three Hotels* and *The Memorandum*, and in films and on television for Paramount Pictures (*Runaway Bride*), HBO (*The Wire*), the Discovery Channel (*A Haunting*), NBC (*Homicide: Life on the Streets*) and TNT (*The Hunley*; *The Day Lincoln Was Shot*). He recently appeared in featured roles in two independent films shot in this region, *Apology* and *Familiar Strangers*.

Lisa Nanni-Messegee (M.A. in Acting from Kansas State University and an M. F. A. in Directing from Minnesota State University in Mankato) is an Adjunct professor at GMU and has also taught at University of Mary Washington and NOVA Manassas. Lisa continues to work professionally as a Director, Playwright, Actor and Voice-over artist and has her own production company, Lucy 8 Productions. Currently she is the Resident Director and Playwright for AFYP Stages, a professional theatre touring company in Fairfax. Lisa has been a guest director for GMU, directing *The Shape of Things* and *An Ideal Husband*. Prior to her teaching at Mason, Lisa lived in Los Angeles and was a Television Producer, producing such shows as *Good Day Live* and *Smart Solutions* for HGTV. While in LA she also acted in the West Coast premiere of Christopher Durang's *Durang/Durang* and won multiple awards for her direction of *Tainted Blood* for The Road Theatre Company.

Kimberley Cetron (M.A., Fordham University) has worked since 1980 as an actor, singer, director, and producer in NYC, Washington DC, Boston, and Chicago. She has a master's degree in early childhood/elementary education (Fordham) and is a doctoral candidate in education at GMU. She taught general music and musical theater in the New York metro area before re-locating to Northern Virginia, where she worked for the Fairfax County Public Schools (elementary/secondary). She is a published writer, and serves on the board of Theater of the First Amendment. She teaches in the theater and education departments of GMU.

George Mason University Theater Open House

Confirmation Form

Please complete this form and mail to the address below postmarked by **Friday, February 12th**:

George Mason University
Department of Theater
Attn: Open House
4400 University Drive, MS 3E6
Fairfax, VA, 22030

If you have any questions, please see the provided packet of information about the Open House or email us at: gmuteater@gmail.com

Please print clearly on form and fill out ALL fields.

Student Name: _____
Street Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____
Phone Number: (____) _____ Email: _____
High School: _____ Grade: _____
Parent/Guardian Name: _____
Parent/Guardian Email: _____

Workshop Selection

~Please circle one workshop from each session~

Session 1 (3:30pm-4:15pm):

Movement

SFX Sound Design

Session 2 (4:30pm-5:15pm):

Audition Techniques

Scene Shop Tour

Production Selection

~Please circle yes or no for both questions~

Will you be attending the GMU Players production of *Orpheus Descending*? Yes No
If Yes, a free ticket will be reserved under your name, available for you at the Open House.

Will you need any additional tickets for guests/parent(s)? Yes No How Many? _____
Additional tickets are available for \$12 each. The required number will be set aside for you to purchase at the door.

Signature of Student

Signature of Parent/Guardian