



# Theatre Studies

## Te Kaupapa Whakakitenga

“You have the chance to learn to be a writer, director, designer, performer, stage and production manager – and gradually you and your peers emerge as actual real life practitioners in these areas.”

Ella Yiannett  
BA Theatre Studies, English

### Step into the light

Theatre explores and represents human experience and imagination in a dynamic, immediate and relevant way. Theatre Studies helps unlock such skills as self-confidence, teamwork, communication and creative expression, as well as giving you the chance to reflect on and inhabit lives vastly different from your own.

Drawing on the rich diversity of theatrical expression across time and cultures, Theatre Studies at Otago offers an exciting, stimulating combination of practical skills and academic training, preparing you to present yourself across a wide variety of careers both within and far beyond theatre and the performing arts.

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## Why study Theatre Studies at Otago?

Theatre Studies is a subject that is easy to become passionate about. It provides an understanding of the nature of performance, allows you access to the tools of a theatre-maker, and looks at performance using critical and analytical skills.

You'll study different times and cultures from a theatre perspective, ranging from Shakespeare to Performance Art. Practice and analytical investigation inform and support one another.

Your lecturers have professional as well as academic expertise in the fields of acting, producing, directing, criticism, stage design, lighting and sound design, playwriting and translation. And then there is our unique weekly Lunchtime Theatre programme at Allen Hall Theatre, which is your testing ground as a performer, director or playwright, and in all aspects of stagecraft.

Otago offers a wide selection of papers in Theatre Studies, drawn from the following areas:

- Performance skills: improvisation; principles of actor training, including Shakespeare, voice and movement.
- Analysis and interpretation of drama on stage and screen.
- Theatre and drama of Aotearoa/New Zealand.
- Directing.
- Writing for stage and screen and the creation of new theatre works.
- Theatre history, contemporary drama and performance art.
- Performance analysis and critical theory.
- Theatre technology and design, especially lighting and stage design.

## Background required

All students are welcome to enrol in Theatre Studies at Otago. A background in theatre is not necessary

## Major or minor in Theatre Studies

Theatre Studies is available as both a major and a minor subject of the Bachelor of Arts (BA) programme. Theatre Studies may be combined with another BA major or form part of a double degree e.g. with Law, Commerce or Science degrees.

The major comprises 10 papers from within Theatre Studies, plus an additional 10 papers either from within the programme and/or from other departments. The minor comprises a total of 5 papers from Theatre Studies.

## Information for first-year students

As a first-year student, you can enrol in THEA 122 Drama on Stage and Screen, THEA 151 Improvisation, THEA 152 Theatre Technology, and THEA 153 Voice and Movement, all of which provide an excellent grounding for higher-level papers. The University's Undergraduate Prospectus and Guide to Enrolment are helpful documents for planning your papers and degree.

## Honours and Postgraduate study

Theatre Studies offers a 4th-year Honours programme for which the entry is a B plus average at 300-level. An Honours degree makes you more employable in the workforce, and it may also be a stepping-stone to a higher degree such as a Master of Arts (MA), a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) (Theatre Studies), or a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). These degrees may all include a significant creative component.

## Class formats

Classes variously involve lectures, tutorials, seminars and practical workshops. Most classes are relatively small, and students have many opportunities to pursue independent projects in groups and individually.

## Career opportunities

Theatre Studies graduates work as actors, directors, publicists, script-writers, TV/radio journalists, film-makers, comedians, designers, teachers, musicians and theatre technicians. Others take up careers in arts administration, advertising and marketing, or undertake further training in theatre-related fields.

Some choose to combine Theatre Studies with another subject (e.g. English, Music, Dance, Anthropology, Film & Media, Psychology, Māori Studies and many more) or with another degree, such as Law, Marketing or Education.

Theatre papers teach personal and professional skills which are widely applicable across a range of careers and disciplines. They include critical analysis, research, creativity, confidence, team-building techniques and the ability to communicate in diverse ways. These attributes are highly valued in many professions, as are cultural sensitivity and the ability to think laterally and independently. They are skills for a career, and skills for life-long learning.

For questions about  
Theatre Studies  
[otago.ac.nz/courses/subjects/thea](https://otago.ac.nz/courses/subjects/thea)



## PROFILE

### Ella Yiannett BA, Theatre Studies, English

"I've had my eyes set on a theatre career from about the age of six, so there was never a doubt in my mind that I'd study theatre in some way. Majoring in Theatre (and English) has turned into the smartest choice for me, and it was immediately clear that Otago has an absolutely thriving Theatre Department.

"The Department makes very lucky people of us all. You make friends very quickly in that environment because it is a constantly interactive, working, mini-microcosm of the theatre world. You have the chance to learn to be a writer, director, designer, performer, stage and production manager – and gradually you and your peers emerge as actual real life practitioners in these areas.

"The staff are all highly successful practitioners in their own rights, and are the most 'above and beyond' educators you could imagine. They are people who still cheer me on, and are invested in my growth as an artist to this day. They, like all theatre people, don't go home until the work is done, and are advocates for

not just their students' creativity, but also their health and wellbeing. I have had lecturers who stayed behind doing tech until midnight with a whole cast and crew of a production, just so we were ready to go. They let me create the way I wanted, while pushing and supporting me.

"The highlights of my studies largely revolved around the Lunchtime Theatre Programme. I loved Theatre Studies because it is one of the most collaborative degrees you undertake, and Lunchtime Theatre is a student-driven programme that produces a large number of shows each semester that are directed and/or written by students, with student casts and crews. It was such an outlet of joy and experimentation, and the reason I felt confidence as a rounded practitioner coming out of study. Working with and depending on your peers in those high-pressure theatre environments creates friends and collaborators for life. I also just felt blessed to be so supported in realizing a creative vision."

