



UNIVERSITY  
of  
**OTAGO**  
Te Whare Wānanga o Otago  
NEW ZEALAND

# Theatre Studies

## Step into the light

"Theatre Studies is not just good for people who love theatre, it's so cross-disciplinary. If you want to learn how to communicate and how to work in a team, then study theatre."

Janis Cheng  
BA (Theatre Studies)

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.

0800 80 80 98 | [otago.ac.nz](http://otago.ac.nz) | txt 866 | [university@otago.ac.nz](mailto:university@otago.ac.nz)



## 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 and all points in-between. 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, 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
- Bicultural theatre; drama and theatre of Aotearoa/New Zealand, the Pacific and Australia
- Directing
- Theatre history, contemporary drama and performance art
- Performance analysis and critical theory
- Theatre technology and design, especially lighting and stage design
- Playwriting and the creation of new theatre works

## 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 *Drama on Stage and Screen*, *Improvisation*, *Theatre Technology*, and *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/theatrestudies](http://otago.ac.nz/theatrestudies)

## PROFILES

### Janis Cheng

BA Theatre Studies

Starting Theatre Studies Janis Cheng was worried her proficiency in English might be an issue. The response from the Theatre Studies Programme: "Don't worry, theatre is for everyone".

"The reason I can speak confidently or write an essay is purely because of Theatre Studies at Otago. I strongly recommend studying theatre to international students."

Janis's involvement in Allen Hall Theatre allowed her to make some great connections that she still continues to benefit from.

"So many well-known theatre practitioners in Wellington and Auckland are actually from Allen Hall. It's like a home base for New Zealand theatre."

After her time at Otago, Janis was accepted into Toi Whakaari for a two-year diploma in entertainment technology. Following that, an internship with Multimedia System Wellington lead to full-time employment as a technician.

"I've worked as a house tech for TSB arena and events such as WOW, Ellie Goulding and Lorde."



### Jackie Shaw

BA (Hons) Theatre Studies

Jackie Shaw has achieved a great many things since completing her Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Theatre Studies. She co-founded her own theatre company and the company's most notable work, MUNTED, a verbatim play about the Christchurch earthquakes, had sell out seasons throughout NZ, a standing ovation in Los Angeles, and even included taking the work into schools and a prison.

Of her time at Otago, creating productions at Allen Hall Theatre was the highlight; "It's such a great way to try new things and experiment without the risk of failure you have in the real world."

Jackie is now contracted in the TV Production industry, at Sticky TV, and is a registered Marriage Celebrant, both of which she says draw on the skills she gained during her degree in one way or another.

"Otago had a great mix of practical skills and theory, and you knew you were getting taught by the best."

