Performing Arts
DANCE MUSICTHEATRE
Performing Arts at VCU

Some universities have a School of Music, a School of Dance, and a School of Theatre. At Virginia Commonwealth University, the performing arts are all under the umbrella of the #1-ranked public university arts and design program – VCUarts – according to U.S. News & World Report.

Performing arts students benefit in many ways from being part of a larger art school. With 15 majors just within VCUarts, students are often exposed to many disciplines through guest artists/lectures and classes. There are endless opportunities throughout the university for exposure to new experiences.

We often hear from students that they appreciate and benefit from VCU’s widely diverse student population and study abroad opportunities. VCU is not only the most diverse university in Virginia, it is one of the nation’s most diverse schools. As far as travel goes, in addition to the university and departmental study abroad programs, students have the chance to travel for performances.

The best way to know if a school is right for you is to visit. VCU and VCUarts tours are held each weekday and no reservation is required. We look forward to seeing you at one of our tours.

CURRENT UNDERGRADUATE ENROLLMENT

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VCU Dance is a community of highly motivated, disciplined and creative dancers who are interested in shaping the future of the field. We are a vital and young department with an established reputation, hot guest artist program and professionally active faculty dedicated to working with students. Dancers intent on preparing for careers in dance thrive in our program.

Our production calendar is full of opportunities for students to perform and choreograph and our facilities include seven dance studios with huge windows and a fully-staffed theater specially designed for dance.

At VCU Dance, students prepare for professional careers in dance, working toward a Bachelor of Fine Arts with equal focus on performance and choreography or toward a BFA with a ballet performance concentration in partnership with the Richmond Ballet. In the energized environment of this program students receive a great deal of individual attention from dedicated faculty members and they experience a strong sense of camaraderie with their peers. Frequent public performances, with opportunities for performance in New York City, and an exciting guest artist program enhance the department’s vibrancy.

At nationally accredited VCU Dance, students train in modern dance and ballet techniques as well as in creative-track courses, which include one semester of improvisation, and two semesters of both composition and choreography before the culminating senior project. The curriculum also includes courses in dance history, music, anatomy and kinesiology and pedagogy. Electives in jazz, tap and hip hop, contact improvisation, video choreography, dance management and lighting design for dancers are also offered.

The VCU Dance/Richmond Ballet Trainee Program offers a unique performance-focused degree that affords accepted students experience with a professional ballet company while enrolled in a degree program.

VCU Dance majors have many opportunities to continue their training through the summer months. Majors most frequently attend the following: American Dance Festival, Bates Dance Festival, Jacob’s Pillow, and the Ailey School’s summer intensive, where academic credits might be earned.

VCU Dance is represented each year at the following conferences: American College Dance Festival, National Association of Schools of Dance, Regional or National High School Dance Festival, Council of Dance Administrators.

**RECENT VCU DANCE HIGHLIGHTS**
- Assistant Professor Christian von Howard is also on the faculty of The Ailey School.
- Summer study abroad opportunities for VCU Dance students have been facilitated by Associate Professor Scott Putman in Costa Rica and Tuscany, Italy and by Professor Martha Curtis in Serbia.
- Professor Martha Curtis serves on the Commission for Accreditation for the National Association of Schools of Dance.
- VCU Dance has been selected through adjudication for participation in the regional Gala performance for the American College Dance Festival for the past seven years. For the four national conferences, VCU Dance was chosen to perform twice to represent the Mid Atlantic Region and once as an alternate for the Southeast region.
- VCU Dance was recently awarded an NEA “American Masterpieces” grant which supported the reconstruction of Shelter, set on dance majors by choreographer Jawole Willa Jo Zollar and Urban Bush Women company members during a series of residencies.

**CAREER OPPORTUNITIES**
Choreographer, performer, dance teacher, artistic director of a dance company, dance therapist, physical therapist, dance writer, arts administrator and advocate.

Photos by Sarah Ferguson
“I have had the great privilege of working with the amazing faculty here at VCU. Because of them, I have learned more than I could have hoped about my own dancing and choreography.

Each and every faculty member has pushed me in a different amazing way. I am so lucky to be a part of their family.”

Allison Day Meyer, Dance & Choreography major
More than 300 students are enrolled in the VCU Department of Music, where they pursue studies as music educators, instrumental soloists, opera singers, chamber musicians and jazz artists. We present more than 200 concerts and recitals each year, ranging from student recitals and ensemble concerts to performances by world-renowned artists.

VCU Music students have won prizes at such national and international organizations as the National Flute Association, the National Trumpet Competition, the Joanna Hodges International Piano Competition, and the National Association for Teachers of Singing. Many of our graduates have gone on to complete advanced degrees at top music schools around the world. Others have won such honors as Educator of the Year, the Edison Fellowship, and the Grammy Award.

Our 60-person faculty is active in many areas of the profession, including orchestral performance, choral work, opera, public school leadership, music scholarship, recording, touring, and composing. Recent faculty activities have included: a lecture-recital at the International College Music Society conference in Seoul, Korea; a Fulbright Specialist award to spearhead a new jazz curriculum in Ankara, Turkey; a research and performance tour of China; and a semester-long residency at Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, England.

Our faculty’s depth of experience combined with the full-scale cultural offerings available in the bustling urban center — the Richmond Ballet, the Richmond Symphony Orchestra, the Virginia Opera, the Richmond Jazz Society — give students an invaluable array of real-world experience.

BACHELOR OF MUSIC
The BM degree is the initial professional degree in music. Its primary emphasis is on development of the skills, concepts and sensitivities essential to the professional life of the musician. Areas of study offered are: guitar; jazz studies; music education; piano; strings; woodwinds/brass/percussion; voice.

BACHELOR OF ARTS IN MUSIC
The BA degree is designed for students who want a degree that combines a major in music with a minor in another field of study.

RECENT VCU MUSIC HIGHLIGHTS
• The VCU Symphonic Wind Ensemble performed at the Kennedy Center and Carnegie Hall.
• The VCU Commonwealth Singers completed a performance tour of China and performed at the Southern Division conference of the American Choral Director’s Association.
• VCU was cited in Jazz Times as “one of the best places in the country to get a jazz education.” VCU’s Jazz Orchestra I performed at the Notre Dame Jazz Festival.
• Now more than 60 years old, VCU Opera is the longest running university opera program in Virginia. Their 2011 production of Hansel and Gretel was awarded second prize in the National Opera Association’s competition.
• VCU Music faculty members and alumni have recorded and produced several dozen CDs in the past year in a wide range of styles from classical to jazz, which have won such honors as Top 10 of the year by National Public Radio’s A Blog Supreme and the Grammy Award.
• VCU Music alumni currently hold positions composing music for the animated series Star Wars: The Clone Wars; touring with rock band Bon Iver; teaching in Oslo with the Norwegian Opera; performing chamber recitals in Japan; performing with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra; and teaching and playing music in Doha, Qatar. Our alumni are also faculty members at such institutions as Northwestern University, The Juilliard School, Manhattan School of Music, and Georgetown University.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES
Solo performer, orchestral performer, music educator, opera singer, music manager, band director, conductor, university professor, musical instrument sales representative, composer/arranger, music critic.
“My work as a musician has progressed since I’ve come to VCU. I can see and hear musicality in ways that formerly eluded me. A piece that previously held one facet for me now holds countless. I can adapt to new musical situations in a much quicker and more versatile fashion. I enter brand new ensembles and find myself meshing with other musicians with speed and thoroughness that I owe purely to my training at VCU.”

Matt Jewell, Music major
Theatre VCU offers the Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Theatre and the Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in Theatre degree with performance emphasis; costume design emphasis, scenic design emphasis, lighting design emphasis; or stage management emphasis. The curriculum provides students an education in theatre as an art form while preparing them to enter the profession or to continue training in an advanced program.

Students who audition successfully are then admitted to Theatre Foundation specializing in one of the five concentrations. Students can choose to pursue a BA, or choose to audition/interview for the BFA after completing two years of coursework. Theatre VCU is the only undergraduate program in the state of Virginia that produces a NYC/Chicago/LA acting showcase-type experience in front of notable professionals. Theatre VCU is rare among college and university training programs in that it provides opportunities for accomplished undergraduate students to actualize their designs on the mainstage. Theatre VCU undergraduate design students frequently win design competitions in all three areas of concentration.

**BACHELOR OF ARTS IN THEATRE**

Designed for those who desire a program with a strong emphasis in theatre, combined with a strong liberal arts component, and a minor (or other course of directed study) in an area other than theatre.

**BFA IN THEATRE (Stage Management emphasis)**

A professionally intense production-oriented program for students serious about entering the field of stage management. Under the supervision of an Equity Stage Manager, students are mentored from the start to become well-organized, efficient and creative leaders.

**DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE BLOG**

theatrevcubackstagepass.blogspot.com

**RECENT THEATRE VCU HIGHLIGHTS**

- During their final semester, selected seniors present an acting showcase performance to casting agents and other invited professionals in Los Angeles, NYC, and Chicago.
- Faculty members frequently organize international study abroad trips for students. Past experiences have included trips to South Africa, England, Greece, the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Scotland, and the Sibiu International Theatre Festival, Sibiu, Romania.
- Two of the four mainstage productions are directed by nationally recognized theatre directors.
- Master teachers visit the campus each year for one week residencies.
- Design/technical students have the opportunity to participate in a prestigious invitation-only event featuring student work from the leading theatre design schools in the nation. They may also enter regional and national competitions at the annual Southeastern Theatre Conference and the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival design competition.

**CAREER OPPORTUNITIES**

Actor, voice over artist, set designer, costume designer, light designer, stage manager, special effects designer, hair/wig/makeup designer, general manager, fight choreographer, stunt artist, producer, projectionist, TV/film artist
“Before becoming a part of Theatre VCU, I believed that acting was all about abandoning one’s self to become another character; I used acting and theatre as my escape. Now I’ve learned that this art requires all of oneself. In order to create a truthful performance I now know that I must invest all of myself. In my opinion, the audience is there to relate, not to be tricked or misguided; a truth has to be told.”

Crystal Johnson, Theatre Performance major
Another great perk to being under the VCUarts umbrella are the undergraduate research grants. Each year, VCUarts supplies funding of $30,000 or more with the purpose of encouraging curiosity, creativity, risk-taking and scholarly investigation into a project or subject of interest relevant to the student’s major. Art schools that invest in their students in this way are few and far between.

We’ve featured a few of these teams here. To see additional projects and proposals, visit arts.vcu.edu/ugrg

THE LEIGH STREET ARMORY PROJECT — UNCOVERY AND REVITALIZATION

Located at the corner of St. Peter and Leigh Streets, the Leigh Street Armory is one of only three such armories ever built in the U.S. for African Americans. A community forum will present a proposal for reuse of the building, a documentary of its history, and a theatrical production.

Brittney Weiss, Isole Ethel-Miller, Remi Jeffrey-Coker, Monina Ingle – Interior Design
Bayly Ogden, Corey Johnson, Joshua Blount – History
Chris Raintree, Cody Richardson – Theatre
Shawn Saharko, Robert Gibson – Communication Arts and Painting & Printmaking
Dennis Williams – Art History

Award: $5,000

SOUND + SILK

This project will produce a series of textiles that convert a piece of music, Olivier Messiaen’s Quatour pour la fin du temps (Quartet for the End of Time), into pieces of fabric so that the relationship between the two can be seen and heard. Ten large textiles pieces will be woven and exist as interpretations of Messiaen’s Quartet for the End of Time as a whole and its divided components. Together, they will communicate the phenomena of synethesia from music into dyed and woven fiber.

Adah Kanter, Catherine Gellatly – Craft/Material Studies
William Weirich – Pre-Health major, Music minor

Award: $3,000
MYTHICOPS
A video will be produced to showcase the world from the perspective of a child’s imagination. The story chronicles a duo of crime fighting scientists’ journey to develop a respectable privatized security agency—The Mythicops. The catch is that they specialize in the apprehension of imaginary creatures/beings. The project is intended to test students’ skills in multimedia collaboration, practice and display their skills in animation and film direction/production.

Ryan Coleman – Cinema
Lauren Stutzriem, Warren Jones – Kinetic Imaging

Award: $2,500

BREATHING IN THE PERFORMING ARTS
Students will coordinate a series of presentations by breathing specialists in the disciplines of Music, Dance and Theatre, as well as a medical specialist in respiratory therapy. The presentations will educate students on the mechanics and development of breathing, and will be video-recorded, produced into DVD form, and housed at the Media Resource Center of Cabell Library to be used as a resource for students.

Greyson Goodenow – Theatre Performance
Pace Short – Dance and Choreography
Joshua Wright – Music Education

Award: $3,000

VISUALIZING SOUND
One Painting & Printmaking student along with one Engineering student will create a piece that combines painting and electrical engineering by converting sound into a visual display. The core of this project will use the fractal patterns detected in sound to convert into fractal images that constantly grow, develop, and change in real time, creating a piece of art that is constantly evolving. The outcome of this project will create art that is solely dependent on its environment.

Nathan Hibish – Graduate Electrical Engineering
Theresa Painter – Painting & Printmaking

Award: $650
VCUarts is ranked the #1 public university school of art & design by *US News & World Report.*