Cyclical Review

Executive Summary

Cyclical Review of the Graduate Program in Theatre

Degree(s):

Master of Arts Theatre
Master of Fine Arts in Theatre Directing

Submitted to:

Graduate Program Evaluation Committee
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

June 8, 2016

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Senate of the University of Ottawa

November 28, 2016
Executive Summary

Graduate Program in Theatre
Cyclical Review Year 2015-2016

Approved by the Graduate Program Evaluation Committee
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
Meeting of June 8, 2016

Name of program reviewed | Theatre
---|---
Degrees | Master of Arts Theatre
| Master of Fine Arts in Theatre Directing
Responsible academic units | Department of Theatre
Fields | • Theatre Theory and Dramaturgy (MA)
| • Directing (MFA)
Final evaluation | Good quality, with report (to be submitted June 30, 2020)

Significant Strengths of the Program

Both the MA and the MFA are aligned with the University of Ottawa’s mission and academic plans, particularly with regard to fostering and promoting bilingualism, biculturalism and La Francophonie. This “co-lingualism” is a distinguishing characteristic of the program within Canada. The program also takes full advantage of its location in the National Capital Region, where it has fostered strong links and collaboration with the arts community.

The faculty members are recognized for their innovation, and many have received awards for excellence. They have a broad and flexible expertise which allows them to support both MA and MFA students, and to customize the programs to each student’s needs and interests to a degree. There is a high level of collegiality and a particularly strong and valuable connection between theory and practice at the graduate level, which is illustrated, for example, through the two core courses common to the programs. This rigorous format prepares students from both the MA and MFA programs to present and defend their ideas and artistic vision.

Members of the academic unit are to be applauded for their creativity and resourcefulness, which allows them to put on a great many shows with limited resources. Construction is already underway on a new theatre building, which is warmly welcomed as it will allow for growth and modernization.

The MA program offers students the exciting option of participating in a collaborative program in Medieval and Renaissance Studies, through which they can undertake in-depth and focused research on this important period in theatre history. We encourage the unit to continue promoting this option among theatre students.

Areas for Improvement and Enhancement

A number of recent retirements, along with the impending departure of the current departmental chair, to take up a prestigious position as director of the Théâtre Français de Toronto, mean that the
Department of Theatre will need to undertake succession planning to ensure that the program can continue to be delivered with the same high degree of quality. For example, as this is a relatively small academic unit, the faculty members are somewhat stretched with regard to internal academic service (such as sitting on committees) and student supervision.

The program benefits from a dedicated and able team of technical support staff; however, team members are operating at full capacity. Opportunities for program growth are limited unless the technical support team is expanded, and unforeseen changes could put the program in a precarious position.

Students are well supported in their academic programs, but would benefit from additional professional development opportunities. Students in the MFA would benefit from having access to a greater number of better trained actors to participate in their productions. In this regard, the department might wish to examine its offerings holistically and explore the creation of a BFA in acting, which could complement and support the graduate program.

Recommendations

1. Develop and implement a staffing plan with a view to hiring at least one additional tenure-track professor and extending the contracts of key technical support staff.
2. Develop and implement a training initiative that will enable students in the MFA in Theatre Directing to gain practical experience before embarking on their first major production project.
3. Increase professional development opportunities for students in the MA and MFA programs.
4. Explore the creation of a BFA in acting to complement and support the MFA in Theatre Directing.

Implementation Plan

Calendar and Deadlines

Recommendations 1 through 3 should be addressed in the report to be submitted by June 30, 2020. Recommendation 4 should be addressed by the time of the next cyclical review, which is to be completed by 2023.

Authorities

The authorities who are responsible for implementing and monitoring the recommendations include the Dean and Vice-Deans of the Faculty of Arts, the Chair of the Department of Theatre, and the Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Theatre.

Implementation and Reporting Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation 1</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Target Completion</th>
<th>Reporting Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop and implement a staffing plan</td>
<td>Departmental Chair, Dean of Arts</td>
<td>June 30, 2018</td>
<td>June 30, 2020</td>
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</tbody>
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Comments
- Owing to recent retirements and the planned departure of experienced faculty members, the unit should consult with the Dean to develop a plan for hiring at least one additional tenure-track faculty member within two years.
- The staffing plan should also address the issue of support staff and ensure that the graduate program is adequately supported.

### Recommendation 2

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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Target Completion</th>
<th>Reporting due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop and implement a training initiative that will enable students in the MFA in Theatre Directing to gain practical experience before embarking on their first major production project.</td>
<td>Graduate Studies Committee</td>
<td>June 30, 2017</td>
<td>June 30, 2020</td>
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### Recommendation 3

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<th>Target Completion</th>
<th>Reporting due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase professional development opportunities for MA and MFA students.</td>
<td>Program Director Departmental Chair</td>
<td>June 30, 2017</td>
<td>June 30, 2020</td>
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### Recommendation 4

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<th>Target Completion</th>
<th>Reporting due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explore the creation of a BFA in acting to complement and support the MFA in Theatre Directing.</td>
<td>Departmental Chair Vice-Dean (Undergraduate Studies), Faculty of Arts</td>
<td>June 30, 2020</td>
<td>Next cyclical review</td>
</tr>
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### Comments

- While evaluating the undergraduate offering is beyond the scope of the graduate program review, it may nevertheless be of interest to the Department of Theatre to evaluate its offerings holistically. The MFA students would benefit from having access to a greater number of better trained actors to participate in their productions. The creation of a BFA in acting could thus complement and support the graduate program, enriching the student experience.