

**Handbook Guide for the  
Master of Fine Arts in Theatre Degree  
2021-2022**

\*

**Live Design and Production Specialization**

\*

**Department of Theatre and Dance  
The University of Texas at Austin**

\*

**Published 26 August, 2021**

**Table of Contents:**

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| <b>I. About Live Design and Production</b>  | <b>p.3</b>  |
| <b>II. Admission to the M.F.A. in Theatre with a specialization in Live Design and Production Program</b> | <b>p. 3</b> |
| <b>III. Organization of Graduate Studies in Theatre and Dance</b>   | <b>p. 4</b> |
| <b>IV. Field of Study</b>   | <b>p. 4</b> |
| <b>V. Advising</b>  | <b>p. 4</b> |
| <b>VI. Coursework</b>   | <b>p. 5</b> |
| <b>VII. Program of Work</b>   | <b>p. 5</b> |
| <b>VIII. Thesis Requirements</b>  | <b>p. 5</b> |
| <b>IX. Continuing in the M.F.A. Degree Program / Probation</b>  | <b>p. 6</b> |
| <b>X. Accommodations and Leaves</b>   | <b>p. 6</b> |

## **Handbook Guide for the M.F.A. in Theatre with a specialization in Live Design and Production**

### **I. About Live Design and Production**

Live Design and Production is a term applied to a specialization of study within the Department of Theatre and Dance that prepares artists in theatrical design and production for careers as inventors and producers of work in all aspects of live theatrical performance and the related fields of film, television, themed attractions, concerts, events and exhibits.

### **II. Admission to the M.F.A. in Theatre with a specialization in Live Design and Production Program**

In addition to your application, the following materials are required for admission.

1. Transcripts and Grade Point Average: Applicants must submit transcripts from all colleges and universities attended at the undergraduate or graduate level. The University specifies a minimum grade point average of 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) on all work taken after the first two years of college-level work (i.e. all upper-division courses), as well as any graduate-level courses already taken. Applicants are expected to have completed an undergraduate degree.

2. Recommendations: A total of three letters of recommendation should be written by those who can speak most authoritatively about your background, training, professional experience and potential for a career in your chosen area of specialization in theatre. Each reference will receive instructions on how to submit his/her letter online to the Graduate School's secured web site. Only one letter is required from each reference.

3. Statement of purpose: A two-page statement of purpose is required that outlines educational and professional goals, philosophy and/or personal theatre aesthetic.

4. Professional Resume of your practical theatre work.

5. Design or Technical Resume.

6. Design or Technical Portfolio: A portfolio is required that includes examples of drawing, painting, drafting or any other manual skills applicable to your discipline, including photos of realized productions or records of realized art work. All portfolios must be submitted in the form of a website link or flash drive (PowerPoint or QuickTime image file) before an interview can be scheduled. Images uploaded as portfolio material (including the website link) must be in PDF format. Applicants should bring an original portfolio to their on-campus interview, should one be scheduled. Résumés, statement of purpose, portfolios and other materials should be submitted [online at the Document Upload System](#). Flash drive portfolios and/or materials that cannot be uploaded in PDF format should be mailed directly to the Department of Theatre and Dance.

Decisions on admission cannot be made until all the required documentation has been received.

### **III. Organization of Graduate Studies in Theatre and Dance**

The Graduate Studies Committee (GSC), consisting of the tenure-track and tenured faculty in the department, establishes the policies and requirements for all graduate programs offered by the department. They have delegated to the Graduate Studies Executive Committee (XCOM) the administration of those policies. Students communicate with the GSC and the XCOM through the Graduate Advisor.

### **IV. Field of Study**

The Department of Theatre and Dance is an artistic destination where students can practice a rigorous and daring exploration of their talent. We are dedicated to adventurous creative thought, critical contemplation and the crafting of meaning through performance.

The program of work for the Master of Fine Arts in Theatre with a specialization in live design and production is rigorous and particularly geared toward students actively pursuing a career in theatre, film and other fields where narrative design principles are applied. We seek committed, focused students who have a realistic knowledge of the business and are ready to make a serious commitment to their education and especially those who seek to cross the traditional boundaries of design, performance and technology and have a strong desire to create original performance work. We believe that the design professional is a generative, rather than an interpretive, artist.

The Master of Fine Arts is a terminal degree that qualifies the student to work in a variety of academic, artistic and professional settings, whether as designer, technician, artisan or as a manager of a production process. The M.F.A. in Theatre (Live Design and Production) permits considerable latitude and activity across disciplines. Students in the program are generally accepted as identifying with a particular focus in scene design, costume design, costume technology, lighting design or integrated media, but are encouraged to explore courses and design activities outside their main area.

It is the goal of the faculty and staff in the Live Design and Production area to prepare students for an active and fulfilling career in the professional performing arts or in a related professional field employing the skills and principles as taught in the program.

### **V. Advising**

Each student enrolled in the M.F.A. in Theatre (Live Design and Production) degree program is assigned to an academic advisor (from among the faculty who teach in the Live Design and Production area of the department). With this advisor, the student plans courses for each semester, prepares the Program of Work that guides coursework and reviews all other requirements for the degree. The academic advisor helps the student decide how to plan for core courses and production practicums, as well as electives that support the student's focus of study. At the end of the student's second year of coursework the student proposes two to three faculty members who would be appropriate to read and supervise the thesis project. The Live Design and Production faculty consult and select one of these faculty members as supervisor. The academic advisor can help with this transition. The Department Graduate Advisor signs off on all the student's paperwork.

## VI. Coursework

The M.F.A. Degree is completed within three years of study, including coursework, thesis preparation and defense. Advisors, with the students, will plan a scheme of courses in a Program of Work upon entry into the degree program. [See Section VI.]

## VII. Program of Work

Before registration in the first week of the first semester in the M.F.A. degree program students must complete a Program of Work together with their academic advisor. The Program of Work must be completed on the form provided by the Graduate Coordinator and submitted to the Graduate Advisor. The M.F.A. Program requires successful completion of 60 hours of coursework and thesis preparation:

1. Studio Courses (18 credits)
2. Skills Courses (18 credits)
3. Electives (12 credits, at least 6 of which are to be outside the department)
4. Applied Practice Courses (6 credits)
5. Thesis Course Hours (6 credits)

Curricula specific to each area of focus within the Program of Work may be found on the department website under Graduate Programs > [Design and Technology](#).

The Office of Graduate Studies allows M.F.A. students to include up to nine hours of upper-division undergraduate courses in their programs of study. Such courses should only be taken after consultation with a faculty advisor.

## VIII. Thesis Requirements

A thesis completed for the Live Design and Production specialization will be reviewed per the standards of the performing arts industries and the university's standards of research. The thesis will consist of three parts:

1. A demonstration of artistry and skill in the candidate's area(s) of focus.
2. A significant original project demonstrating the candidate's ability to generate new work, presented in a public interface.
3. A presentation of the candidate's portfolio.

The graduate thesis serves as the capstone of the candidate's graduate work at The University of Texas at Austin. It is the final opportunity for the M.F.A. candidate to demonstrate her/his aesthetic, artistic, intellectual and technical acumen relative to the standards of the professional model. The thesis is subject to the requirements of the university and the Graduate School. This means that a supervisor, usually the student's primary advisor, and an additional reader will examine the thesis in detail. The thesis will culminate in an oral defense of the work.

## IX. Continuing in the M.F.A. Degree Program / Probation

Each semester the faculty of the Live Design and Production specialization, and through the Graduate Studies Committee Executive Committee, evaluate student progress. Continuing in the M.F.A. program is dependent on the student's satisfactory progress, as determined by the Graduate School policies in its most current bulletin. Live Design and Production faculty expect a consistent grade point average of at least 3.0, no record of lingering incomplete coursework, quality of work at a level appropriate for a graduate student, positive participation in and a clear commitment to the program and satisfactory and timely progress toward academic requirements and the degree.

The Live Design and Production faculty will base an evaluation of a student's unsatisfactory progress on the underlined factors listed in the paragraph above. Unsatisfactory progress may result in a period of probation. Probationary status may include rescinded financial support and cancelled teaching assistant opportunities. If a period of probation is recommended by the XCOM a letter will be sent to the student by the Graduate Advisor outlining the reasons for and the consequences of the probation and detailing the steps the student must take to be returned to non-probationary status. If the Live Design and Production faculty do not see satisfactory progress during and at the close of the period of probation, the student could be dismissed from the program. See the University's [probation and dismissal policies](#) for more information.

## X. Accommodations and Leaves

Accommodations: Students who require accommodations should contact and register with [Services for Students with Disabilities](#) (SSD). It is important for the student to discuss approved accommodations with his/her advisor and professors.

Leaves of Absence: Leaves of absence are strongly discouraged and should only be considered if necessary. Graduate students may apply for a leave of absence of no more than two semesters. A student on leave may not use university facilities nor is the student entitled to receive advice from any member of the faculty. A leave of absence does not alter the time limits for degrees or coursework. For information on requesting a Leave of Absence or Readmission refer to the Graduate School: <https://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/policies/leaves-of-absence> .