

UMBC Theatre Recruitment Video - Why New Plays?

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[Divine Iweha, Theatre Minor, in character, on stage] (0:10 – 0:16)

Understanding power is important, especially for directors, writers, actors even.

[Professor Eve Muson, Department Chair] (0:16 – 0:39)

What I love about UMBC Theatre from the minute I got here was this deep appreciation for new work and for the messiness of making new work. That work doesn't have to be perfect or 400 years old to be really valuable and that you could find your own voice within the work. That has totally changed me as a theatre artist.

[Professor Nigel Semaj] (0:47 – 1:24)

For me personally, I define a devised process as any process that goes against the traditional norms of creating theatre. I don't think all devised shows are the same. I think devised means different things for each production and for each artist.

The whole show doesn't have to be devised, but components of it can be. Everyone has a voice in the space. Every idea gets placed into the room.

It's a way to work more collaboratively. How do we create something, not necessarily that's never been seen, but how do we move away from the traditional stories, like Google top ten plays and let's pick one and do it, but can we make something that's brand new?

[Divine Iweha, Theatre Minor, in character, on stage] (1:27 – 1:35)

And if you don't recognize how insidious it can be in the wrong hands or how it mutates and shifts, you will never see it coming.

[Professor Eve Muson, Department Chair] (1:36 – 2:12)

We all come together to make these beautiful productions four times a year. We very much like to do things that are very imaginative, that are really pushing the edge of what technology can do and what the body can do, what the voice can do. Even when we're doing an old play, like a classical play, we like to do it in a new and contemporary kind of a way.

No matter what plays we choose, it's always student first. What leads us is who our students are right now. How can we showcase them?

How can we challenge them? How can we make sure that the voices of our students right now are being expressed?

[Professor Susan McCully] (2:13 – 2:22)

They are really passionate and eager to learn and they want to look deeper at how to tell stories and tell stories from their own point of view.

[Professor Colette Searls] (2:23 – 2:28)

I've even seen situations where we've expanded the idea of what a show is going to be so that we can include people.

[Professor Gerrad Alex Taylor] (2:28 – 2:40)

Looking at the makeup of our students, we have a large population of queer identifying people and a large population of people of color. How can we give them space in the stories we tell and the theater we produce?

[Professor Nikki Hartman, in character, on stage] (2:41 – 2:47)

I can only talk about what I know to be true. My experience. My truth.

[Professor Nikki Hartman] (2:48 – 3:23)

Shout, the Queer Theater Project, dealt with perspectives of the gender spectrum and how queerness is found in the theater today. Faculty and students worked alongside each other to create the piece and perform it together. Performing in the show alongside my students, it brought the nature of my work back into my art.

That, that's what we do. That's what our mission is really about, working together like that to build something that holds deep meaning for the artists involved, both student and faculty, and deep meaning for the audience because it was received really well. That's how we train our artists.

[Professor Eve Muson, Department Chair] (3:30 – 4:14)

After COVID, our students craved community. They were remarkable in the way they kept the classwork going, the feeling of community going, virtually and in all the ways they could, but when we reemerged, we were so grateful and no longer took for granted what community and collaboration really means, what it really means to be present with other people in real space, in real time. That's what theater does.

It's a study of presence, isn't it? And I think we learned that during COVID, and now that we know it's such a precious elixir, we strive to work ever more empathetically with listening, with kindness, with curiosity.

Transcribed by [TurboScribe.ai](https://www.turbo.scribe.ai). Video by Kiirstn Pagan '11.