

## **Amsterdam School of the Arts. DasArts Master of Theatre (MTh) <sup>1</sup>**

by Victoria Pérez Royo

DasArts is the multidisciplinary masters course in theatre of the Amsterdam School of the Arts (AHK). In 2009 is being transformed into a Master of Theatre programme offered by the Theatre School, one of the six faculties of the Amsterdam School of the Arts.

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**Date of opening:** 1994

**Year the degree course was founded:** 1994.

In 2009 it has been reshaped and accredited as a Master.

### **History:**

DasArts was created in 1994 as a postgraduate course for the performing arts affiliated with the Amsterdam School of the Arts. It has recently been transformed into a Master of Theatre programme.

### **Professions the degree prepares students for:**

Artists from different background are welcome. Nevertheless students are evaluated from a 'theatrical perspective', with a clear reference to the basic notions of theatre like 'representation', "narratives" and 'being live together'. Even though people may still develop the 'theatricality' within general performance work (sometimes even including live art) DasArts focus on theatre - understood in a broad sense, so that students from DasArts are able provide new impulses to the discipline of theatre from other areas.

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<sup>1</sup> We would like to thank Marijke Hoogenboom, Georg Weinand, Miguel Ángel Melgares and Petter Alexander Goldstein for assisting us in the creation of this report.

Written sources: [www.dasarts.nl](http://www.dasarts.nl), <http://www.english.theaterschool.nl/en/theatre-programmes/master-of-theatre-dasarts/>, DasArts Digital Dodge n. 25, deel II. DasArts Content. Inhoudelijk activiteitenverslag 2007.



### **Student's Profile:**

Artists (not necessarily theatre professionals, although this is the majority) with an already existing professional practice who are seeking a new stage of development in their work and who are willing to explore “new avenues in their personal and artistic development.” Moreover, the students go to DasArts to discover and develop their individual artistic signature/handwriting. They should be open-minded towards change and professional renewal.

### **Specificity:**

“If I had to distil the essence of the DasArts philosophy into one little thought, I would say: A place for artistic development that’s continually re-defined by the artist’s needs: as flexible as artistic investigations are various, as solid as concrete experience and knowledge.”<sup>2</sup>

DasArts offers a multidisciplinary masters course, a laboratory with a broad conception of theatre in which the participants are encouraged to critically explore their own work.

### **Aims:**

The course encourages the students’ ability to rethink the limits both of their own work and that of the theatre. This is possible thanks to the critical support they constantly receive, together with the conditions displayed in DasArts, free of the pressure of market production.

**Total number of current students:** 30

**Maximum number of admitted students per year:** The number has been reduced from the previous 25-30 to the actual 15.

### **Admission requirements for regular students:**

Bachelor degree or equivalent experience. Dutch and foreign professionals with higher schooling or who can demonstrate several years of practical experience are eligible for admission.

### **Required Submission materials:**

- curriculum vitae

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<sup>2</sup> Georg Weinand, <http://www.dasarts.nl/html/index.php?pageid=234>



- letter of motivation in which the candidates expose their expectations about DasArts and their artistic goals for these two-three year period of practice-based research.
- portfolio with documentation of at least 3 different performing/time-based arts projects with description. Text describing the own artistic development.
- One letter of recommendation

### **Selection procedure:**

DasArts is currently in the process of reviewing the procedure; this year, the first selection round was based on the evaluation of the applications; the second round will be based on individual interviews (for each candidate two interviews; each with half of the commission), a one day workshop with fulfilment of practical assignments; a visit of a performance in the Holland Festival followed by a feedback session. In that scenario, candidates have much more opportunities to articulate their practice. This is called 'Diving into DasArts' for two days.

### **Evaluation criteria:**

The candidates who demonstrate several years of practical experience and have the abilities to stimulate, support and energise the making of theatre are eligible for admission. The candidates should be open to redirecting their artistic development.

### **Financial aspects:**

- Participants from EC/EEA countries and Switzerland have to pay a tuition fee of 810 Euro per semester
- Participants from outside the EC/EEA/Switzerland have to pay a tuition fee of 1000 Euro per semester

## **PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION**

**Duration of the programme:** four semesters, although it usually takes longer (three or two and a half years), as the participants do not completely abandon their artistic research and production in the professional field while participating in DasArts. Usually they make a break after accomplishing the first two semesters.

**Total number of ECTS:** 120

**ECTS distribution through the academic trajectory:**



Year 1: 60 ECTS

- Block semester. 30 ECTS

(September - February)

- Contextual Semester (Individual trajectory) 30 ECTS

(March - August)

Year 2: 60 ECTS

- Block semester. 30 ECTS

(September - February)

- Contextual Semester (Individual trajectory) 30 ECTS

(March - August)

### **Learning approach**

The curriculum is based on individuality and renewal. Before starting the course of study, each participant portrays his/her individual artistic aims and proposes an individual study plan that serves as permanent reference. This constitutes the basis for the continuous work during the time in DasArts, in which the participant is coached by a wide range of mentors, artistic experts in the different fields that the participant's work requires. The student's study trajectory is focused on the achievement of his/her own artistic ambitions in the context of a flexibility and critical debate.

There are no compulsory subjects, nor teachers imparting classes. As Marijke Hoogenboom defined it, it is a system in which "there is no teaching, but there is learning",<sup>3</sup> an educational environment in which the responsibility of the work is shared.

The study of MTh offers a long period for creation that contrasts with the existing residency programmes and production opportunities.

### **Modules / Structure**

DasArts does not have a fixed curriculum. Instead of it there are two learning frames: Block for collective work and Contextual Semester for individual work. As Hoogenboom explains, "one of the core precepts of DasArts was, and is, that with every new learning period, or 'block', the school would be questioned and reinvented"<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Meeting for the presentation of the re-shaped programme in its Master form, 1st of March 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Hoogenboom, Marijke, "Who's afraid of (art) education? Some indecent proposals", in Ulrike Melzig, Mårten Spångberg, Nina Thielicke (eds.) *Reverse Engineering Education in Dance, Choreography and Performing Arts*, b\_books, Berlin, 2007, p. 71.



## Detailed description:

### 1<sup>st</sup> SEMESTER

#### Block semester

It is composed of:

- Intake, in which the participants present their artistic aims at DasArts.
- Block: “10 weeks programme related to a relevant current subject, designed by (a) or more guest curator(s) and with participation of various (artistic and non-artistic) specialists. The Block is a full-time artistic ‘adventure’, with workshops, lectures, physical and mental voyages and artistic try-outs. Participants immerse into a immense richness of information, challenge and specific expertise.”<sup>5</sup> It is based on the model of bombardment with information, contacts, exchanges, activities and projects. The student must develop skills to find their path within the great amount of information received.
- Personal written and creative responses by the participants to the ‘Block’. After this ten-week programme, the students react with ‘performative responses’ and written reports.
- Oral and written evaluations by the curator, mentor and DasArts educational team. These evaluations are not intended to state the quality of the work, but rather to help the participant develop and achieve his / her artistic goals.

At the end of each semester the student carries out a redefinition of the artistic aims settled at the beginning of the it.

The Blocks are common for all the students: some are in the first, some others in the third semester. Nevertheless, the students never repeat the same experiences, since the contents, activities and formats are different each time.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> SEMESTER

#### Contextual semester.

#### (Individual Trajectory)

It is composed by:

- The ‘Contextual’ bases on the artistic input of the students.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.dasarts.nl/uploads/File/dasarts\\_studyprogramme.pdf](http://www.dasarts.nl/uploads/File/dasarts_studyprogramme.pdf)



It takes place during the first two weeks of the semester. It consists of a collective programme developed by the students and the DasArts team, so that each year is different, according to the projects of the participants.

- Individual Trajectory

In the Contextual Semester the student is dedicated to his / her research work. Individual Trajectory in the second semester, or Master Proof in the fourth, the student is expected to conduct a research based in a personal domain of interest in a particular subject matter.

- This personal research is developed in an ongoing exchange and confrontation with an individual advisor and DasArts and the fellow participants.

- Personal written evaluation by the student.

- Oral and written evaluation by advisor and DasArts educational team.

At the end of each semester the participant redefines the Intake.

If the Contextual semester is the fourth, the study is completed with a Master Proof, in which the participant develops an independent project according to his interests, consistent with the participant's personal motivations as were exposed in the intake and are redefined each semester.

**Compulsory / optional work:**

Students are required to participate in at least three collective components of the study trajectory during their four semesters: two 'Blocks' and one 'Contextual' or one 'Block' and two 'Contextuals'.

**Learning Methodology:**

- Open Lab: The open lab is a context for of the participants' work which are open to colleagues, friends and interested members of the public. In these presentations, participants are asked to give a 'creative response' to the material offered in the semester.

- Presentations (Chips & Dips):

Students involved in the Individual trajectory or in the Master Proof are required to present the state of their work in progress and to discuss this with other students, the staff and advisers. This takes place in a closed, informal setting.

- Workshops:

During the 'Contextual Semester', DasArts offers workshops on a wide range of subjects, according to the proposals of each new curator.

- Reports:



“The participants in each thematic group Block and the IT participants are required to write a report stating their reflections about the semester, including their personal artistic achievements, setbacks and perspectives. The written report is part of the examination process. The main purpose of this assignment is to stimulate the participants’ ability to combine their experiences with artistic and theoretical reflection.”<sup>6</sup>

**Monitoring the student:**

During the Individual Trajectory and the Master Proof, the student receives individual supervision from an advisor (a prominent person in the art world) who closely follows the student’s development and under the guidance of the DasArts educational Team. The participant carries out his / her research also in an continuous exchange with the fellow students

**Frequency of assessment:** Students are expected to have evaluation talks with their advisors at least once a month.

**FINAL PROJECT** (now called ‘Master Proof’)

The student designs an independent project ascertaining his or her artistic ambition. The Master Proof is executed in accordance with the participant’s personal motives as were described in the intake and are redefined each semester.

Up until now the projects were always presented in collaboration with an outside venue.

**Formal requirements:** there are no formal requirements for the final project. In future, DasArts will keep a strong accent on ‘practical articulation’ or ‘materialization’ of the competences during study and at the end of it, but define the Final Project and its form individually in function of the the study intentions. So, it can be a curating program for instance, or a public intervention, etc.

**Evaluation criterion:**

The evaluation does not happen on a basis of the quality of the work. Instead the advisor shows possible lines of development of the participant’s work, opening new possible ways for the artist to re-think and develop their work. Therefore there are no criteria, since each report is exclusively based on the specificity of the work.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.dasarts.nl/html/index.php?pageid=12>



**Examining board:** mixed, composed by internal staff (DasArts Educational Team) and one or more guest advisors.

**Number of Final Projects per semester:** between 3 and 10.

**Financing:**

DasArts provides a budget for the realization of the final project. The maximum amount of the budget, which can vary according to the project; it is determined by the financial director and is facilitated to the participant at the beginning of the semester after the artistic directors of DasArts approve the research plan.

Collaboration with another artistic or cultural centres must be approved. The participant responsible for maintaining a relationship with this institution.

**Competences obtained by the student on completion of the degree:** The MTh programme offered in DasArts is completely focused on the particular interests of each participant, so that there is no standard of competency the student should obtain on completion of the degree. During the research process fulfilled in the context of DasArts, a transformation must occur, a critical revision of the own artistic aims and consistent research must take place.

**TEACHING STAFF**

There is no teaching staff as such. Instead there is an educational team and a production team, which are responsible for the design and the organisation of the school. The 'Educational Team' is composed by a dramaturge focussing on artistic development and a 'study coordinator' or 'study counsellor' and a staffmember for student relations and educational advice focussing on individual development and personal contextualization.

The team work in DasArts on a regular basis. They invite intellectuals, artists, professionals to curate the weeks and advisors to follow and mentor the participant's work and work only for a concrete period of time at DasArts.

**Part-time staff:**

Curator of the Block: 1 person

Advisors pro semester in average: 10 people





Required professional qualifications: The advisors are leading personalities in their artistic field. They can be proposed whether by the DasArts Educational Team or by the Student. They have several years of practical experience.

#### RESEARCH GROUPS:<sup>7</sup>

There are three research groups: “Art Theory and Research”, “Arts Education” and “Arts Practice and Development”. They “provide a strong impulse to the interaction between the state of the art in artistic practice and the teaching and research policy of the school and of the individual faculties.”<sup>8</sup> They contribute towards the development and innovation of education following an alternative model to the traditional academic. They invite a variety of professionals to develop in the context of the AHK their research projects.

They offer in the art academy an artistic equivalent to the doctorates in the university context.

One specific feature of these groups is the continuous relationships between the school and its professional environment.

#### Aims:

- To expand and give new life to current educational practice in art schools with artistic research projects which were going on up until now outside the academy.
- To enlarge interdisciplinary and cross-institutional cooperation between teaching, science and artistic practice
- To operate as an “as an engine for innovation in a dynamic mix of teaching, research and practice”<sup>9</sup>. They were established in order to enrich the arts schools, which, according to Hoogenboom, are too much oriented to the labour market and to educate the students for concrete job-training. The research groups were founded in opposition

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<sup>7</sup> More info: Hoogenboom, Marijke: “Conditions for research”, in Maite Bermúdez (dir.), *Capturing Intention. Documentation, analysis and notation research based on the work of Emio Greco / PC*, Amsterdam, Emio greco / PC and AHK, 2007, pp.80-82; Hoogenboom, Marijke: “Artistic research as an expanded kind of choreography using the example of Emio Greco / PC”, en Sabine Gehm / Pirkko Husemann / Katharina von Wilke (eds.), *Knowledge in Motion. perspectives of Artistic and Scientific Research in Dance*, Bielefeld, Transcript 2007, pp. 81-90; Borgdoff, Henk; “The mode of knowledge production in artistic research”, en Sabine Gehm / Pirkko Husemann / Katharina von Wilke (eds.) *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Amsterdam Master of Choreography. Education Plan (borrador, versión 1.1)

<sup>9</sup> Hoogenboom, Marijke, “Conditions for research”, in *Capturing Intention. Documentation, analysis and notation research based on the work of Emio Greco / PC*, Emio Greco / PC and AHK, Amsterdam, 2007, p.81.

to this job-oriented education which can barely contribute to the innovation in the field of art practice and research.

### **Art Theory and Research**

Subgroup: (ARTI) Artistic Research, Theory and Innovation.

Subject areas: “The Art Theory and Research group focuses on theoretical, interpretive and practice-based research into the creative and performing arts and occupies itself with developing academy-wide and faculty-orientated research policy, including activating promotional opportunities for students for professional training in the arts, and designing an interdisciplinary practice-based Master-level course.”<sup>10</sup> Particular interest in subjects translatable into artistic and educational practice.

Main researcher: Professor Henk Borgdoff

Researches involved: Teacher-researchers, third-cycle students and research fellows work together

Completed projects:

Conferences:

- The Third Cycle: Artistic Research after Bologna (10-11 October 2007) at the Felix Meritis Centre, Amsterdam.
- Philosophy in Arts Education (11 December 2004) at De Balie Centre, Amsterdam
- Art as Research (6 February 2004) at Felix Meritis Centre, Amsterdam

### **Arts Education**

Subject Areas: Research on the relation between social and political developments and the arts and culture heritage specially in the fields of education, arts education and cultural education.

Aims: to create cooperative networks by means of projects and pilots and to develop new instructional material and teaching methods.

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<sup>10</sup> Amsterdam Master of Choreography. Education Plan (draft version 1.1)



Main Researcher: Folkert Haanstra

### **Art Practice and Development**

Subject Areas: The Art Practice and Development research group specializes in artistic interdisciplinary production processes in general and in how knowledge is developed on the basis of expertise, research questions and artists' methods in particular.

Main researcher: Marijke Hoogenboom

Researchers involved: from Amsterdam Conservatory, Academy of Architecture, The Theatre School.

Aims: to foster current developments in various arts disciplines and the processes of artistic production in multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary contexts.

On-going projects:

Artist-in-residence programme (AIR)

Work by associate researchers

Co-productions and projects.

*The old brand new: new knowledge.* Monthly lecture series revolving around the concept “new” in the arts.

Parasitic dissemination forum RTRSRCH

**Financing of research groups:** Ministry of Education and Science.

### **External Networks of DasArts:**

Links to professional context are achieved through the advisors, tutors and mentors of the student's personal work in the IT and Final Work; it is also enlarged through the invited guests who organise, develop and give workshops and laboratories in the Context Blocks.

### **Public events:**

- Final work showings by DasArts students.
- Open Labs: (see ‘Learning methodologies’)



- 'Fresh Fruit': a tour of Open Labs through different theatres in Netherlands and abroad in order to show what DasArts and its artists are busy with.
- DasArts Open Doors (annual). Informative meeting for interested candidate participants
- Annual or biannual festivals: Significant Collision (2008), DasArts meets De Bank (2007), DasArts Daily (2005) and Graduation Marathon (2003) are some examples.
- Presentations of the Block participants.

#### INFRASTRUCTURES

Rooms for individual work, laboratories, participant rooms, studio for sound editing, library. These facilities are not shared with other degrees.

