

**Interdisciplinary master's in Theatre and Live Arts
Faculty of the Arts. National University of Colombia¹**

by Victoria Pérez Royo

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Date of opening: 2007

Professions the degrees prepare students for:

Professionals in the field of performing arts with a high level of competence in incorporating, synthesizing and articulating a wide range of practical experiences as well as technical and theoretic tools in personal projects of artistic research.

Student's Profile:

The programme is oriented towards practitioners and artists in every discipline with an already established professional trajectory. Candidates should be interested in a “rigorous theoretical and practical confrontation with current artistic contemporary practices from a global, local and singular point of view”². The programme offers professionals in theatre and other disciplines the opportunity to carry out creative research activity in their own field of practice and background, through critical reflection on their own activity.

Specificity:

¹ We would like to thank Ximena Vargas for assisting us in the creation of this report.

² In the creation of this report we used different resources, some of them unpublished, such as draft versions of this master programme. Formación interesados en la MITAV, p. 2.



This is a pioneering master's in Latin America, the first to specialise in theatre and live arts, which offers an interdisciplinary treatment of the subject and therefore contributes substantially to the renewal of theatre and the performing arts.

“The MA [...] establishes a space for reflection on the new conditions of conception and production of contemporary theatrical performance by means of a process of creative research”³.

A specific interest in new forms of contemporary theatricality and performativity (postdramatic theatre being among them) and in their interdisciplinarity is evident in this programme. This is especially notable in the integration of live arts within the programme: “the traditional notion of theatre [will be complemented and enriched] with a whole set of artistic ideas and practices that have been the result of multiple hybridisation of performing arts together with other disciplines such as visual and fine arts, music, dance, film, architecture, design, as well as literature, philosophy and anthropology, among others”.⁴

Aims:⁵

Generic aims:

- To enrich theatre practice in the country by means of extending the notion of theatre with new contemporary theories and practices.
- To contribute to the enrichment of the symbolic capital of Bogotá and the country through the consolidation of contemporary artistic production and its projection into the community.

Specific aims:

- To prepare new generations of researchers and artists for the conditions of highest professionalism which are inscribed in the specificity of theatre and live arts and of the research that feeds them.
- To plan and develop an artistic project envisaged as a body of experiences and knowledge which will be then expected to prove its validity in the context of reality.
- To develop new processes of artistic research in the area of theatre and live arts: to question modes, models and practices in theatre and live arts.

Maximum number of students admitted:

An entrance examination takes places every two years with a maximum of 29 students being admitted. The great majority of them are artists with very different backgrounds; only a minority come from bachelor's degrees in the different artistic disciplines offered by the University.

³ <http://www.facartes.unal.edu.co/portal-app/?item=259&ctxparam=pctev>

⁴ *Ibíd.*

⁵ *Ibíd.*



Current number of students: 27

Admission requirements for regular students

BA in any discipline.

Artistic experience.

The candidates should be willing to rethink their praxis from the point of view of the theory and praxis of the contemporary situation of performing arts.

Sufficient knowledge of the English language.

Required Submission materials:

- CV and official certificates of the previous academic and professional itinerary.
- Essay in which the candidates state their motivations for entering the programme; their artistic career path and experience. In this text the students should analyse their artistic work and articulate a critical reflection on their professional path and experience, as well as locating their praxis in a historical-artistic context.
- Research Proposal in which the candidate formulates a proposal for an artistic project which will be carried out in the context of the MA and which will conclude with the final work. This essay should include: precedents, aims, basic conceptual approach, draft proposal of development of the work, as well as artistic references and bibliography.

Selection procedure:

- Evaluation of submitted materials.
- Interview in groups of 5 / 6 people. Each candidate gives a five minutes-presentation of their research plan; teaching staff ask a series of questions on these proposals.

Evaluation criteria:

The interest of the candidate and the articulation of the research proposal will be examined in relation to the interdisciplinary component of the programme, as well as to the motivations and the arguments for carrying out this project in the context of the Interdisciplinary Master's in Theatre and Live Arts.

Evaluation:

- CV: 30%
- Written texts (essay and research proposal): 30%
- Interview. 30%
- Foreign Language. 10%



Financial aspects:

Tuition fees are calculated yearly according to the average minimum wage; in 2009 the approximated value was 4.200.000 pesos (around 1350 euros) per semester.

PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

Duration of the programme: four semesters of 16 weeks each plus 7 weeks more for the final work.

Learning approach:

The educational approach is based on an artistic research model. This is understood as a form of qualitative research,⁶ which gives priority to the logic of discovering over the logic of verification”. It is about the student’s praxis not being subordinated to preestablished knowledge and procedures that he/she has to asimilate in order to pass the final test. On the contrary, the learning process is governed by a process of discovery carried out by the student and in which he/she defines the methodology which is useful for his/her research according to the rhythm of the progression of his/her individual work. This is not a linear, one-way, already established and normalized evolution which has to be reproduced but rather a complex development which is generated as the student questions his/her own practice and creates new ways to advance within it.

On the other hand, the training offered is comprehensive, articulating artistic research work, theoretical discussion as well as technique around the needs of each individual student’s project.

Finally, interdisciplinarity is a fundamental component which should lead to the enrichment of research and its metodologies, as well as to critical questioning of performing arts as a discipline and its boundaries.

Total number of credits: 60

Modules / Structure with credits distribution:

Research Seminar I. 4 credits

Research Seminar II. 4 credits

Research Seminar III. 4 credits

Final work project I. 6 credits

Final work project II. 6 credits

Final work. 24 credits

Free choice component (workshops). 12 credits

⁶ Propuesta para el proyecto de creación de la Maestría Interdisciplinar en Teatro y Artes Vivas, pp. 7-8.



Detailed description:

The programme is structured along three lines: individual work on the final project; seminars in which this work is discussed and reflected upon; practical work as well as workshops (called ‘free choice’ components for academic reasons) in which students acquire the skills that their research requires. Training develops transversally between these three activities articulated around each individual project. During the first three semesters these three lines coexist, while in the fourth phase workshops are replaced by a more intensive dedication to the creative activities of the final work.

- Research Seminar I, II, III.

“This is the academic space in which the student confronts his/her knowledge of the great questions and approaches by the most relevant practitioners and researchers in the field of theatre and live arts of the 20th and 21st centuries. It is a place for theoretical education and research dedicated to the study of theatre *poetics* and *poietics* and of the ways of presentation in contemporary theatre art”⁷.

These classes follow the usual methodology of work in seminars. In groups of 15 students at a maximum a reading list is proposed. These titles are explored by means of presentations and discussions. The special features of this seminar are reliant upon its flexibility: participating teachers also follow the development of the students’ work in the laboratories, so that their work is able to stimulate the discussions in the seminar. In the same way these debates are continuously transferred to the practical work in the laboratory, so that the transversal approach is achieved.

Each semester two seminars are open around two main issues:

- Performance and politics in Colombia
- Contemporary dramaturgy and writing in performing arts

A third seminar ‘Image movement’ will soon be available; it is oriented mainly to working with video and digital technologies.

These seminars are offered every semester, although they vary considerably according to the students’ input and interests. In this way, students develop lines of research extended over four semesters. Given that contents, methodology and debates in the seminars are subject to constant evolution: students are able to select a line in which they will progressively improve or on the contrary, they can approach a different insight each semester.

⁷ <http://www.facartes.unal.edu.co/portal-app/?item=256&ctxparam=pctev>



- Workshops

The same modular evolutive system structures workshop activities; each semester four workshops are offered around different technical tools, technologies and devices which could be useful for the students' projects and to their education as artist-researchers. For example, the workshop 'Body and Image' deals with some physical questions of students' work, but it can also tackle issues related to the construction of the theatrical image or even issues related to the use of some technologies such as photography, film or video. On the other hand, the workshop 'Sound' is organised around the different sound devices and the different audio tools and means by which students can develop in their creative work. Learning methods in the workshops are based on experimentation with the mechanical, dynamic and dramatic elements of the body in time and space.

In a similar way, as seminars, workshops are structured in a modular and progressive way, so that the student is able to navigate and find his/her curricular itinerary through the activities found to be more interesting.

Apart from these workshops, others are organised which are led by prominent artists and which focus on the issues they are currently working on. Examples: Ileana Diéguez organised the workshop 'Exposed bodies. Practices of sorrow (first insights)'; Juan Navarro created the 'Workshop of slaves and masters'. Usually there is a presentation and a publication after finishing the workshop, so that the wider context and the interested community have access to the insights and activities in this programme. These publications usually include a description of the workshops, photographic documentation and interviews with the leaders.

- Final work project

"It constitutes the academic space in which the student poses a question, identifies an issue and develops an intuition, articulating knowledge and experiences previously acquired and discussed in the course of his/her training in the two other academic spaces (workshops and seminars).

This academic space aims at the initial design of the project and the founding of a personal poietic through the formulation of an artistic research project that will be developed during the final work.⁸

This module is present throughout the whole programme; in the first two semesters it is called Final work project, while in the last two it focuses more on the real creation of the final work.

In the first semester, all students work together with all members of the teaching staff in order to create a common language; this is a fundamental activity, especially given the enormous amount of

⁸ *Ibíd.*

different backgrounds, both in the teaching staff as well as in the group of students. In this way, a consensus is reached over the concepts and tools that will lay the ground for dialogues in coming developments. In the second semester, students are gathered in small groups according to thematic affinities, similar questions or shared interests.

In the third semester, the individual work of the students starts and is assessed by a collective guide of all members of the teaching staff participating in the laboratories. In the fourth semester, individual work continues with the additional assessment of one supervisor for each student.

Learning methods are based on student presentations of their work and on discussions on the processes exposed; it constitutes communal work that endures for the first three semesters and which in the fourth is complemented by individual sessions and a much more focused discussion on the specificity of the project. In the third semester the staff decides the most suitable mentor for each work; in the fourth it is the student who selects his/her supervisor.

The three axes that define the curriculum are independent in the way they operate, but are closely linked in the frame of artistic research, so that they define the three main areas which offer access to the symbolic, technical, reflexive and political complexity of artistic praxis.

Frequency of education:

On-site courses take place Tuesdays and Wednesdays on a weekly basis.

Tuesdays: Workshops, four hours.

Wednesdays: Seminars, for hours.

Both days in the afternoon: final work projects.

Additionally, there are intensive workshops which usually last 5 days, from Monday to Friday (5 hours a day) plus the presentation day. Therefore, although the programme is, in principle, only two days on-site, it actually demands more engagement and involvement from the students.

Monitoring / assessment of the student:

At the end of each semester an evaluation takes place. Evaluation and monitoring of the student happen simultaneously with the participation of all members of teaching staff involved in the programme. The process of artistic research (much more than the concrete results) is the object of evaluation for the community of teachers.

FINAL PROJECT



The final project consists of the creation and presentation in public (and before an examination committee) of the project of artistic research developed during the programme.

Accepted formats: Work of theatre acting or directing, scenography, choreography, performance, staging, fine arts work, urban intervention, community-work.

Formal requirements:

Research must lead to work that can be presented before an audience. It should also be complemented by a written text in which the student reflects on the approaches and decisions that determined the development of this work as well as the research process. The text should not interpret the product, but show the process, as well as problematise the practical dimension of the projects and their presentation.

Evaluation criteria:

Evaluation is carried out in an individual way, according to the parameters and particularities of each singular project; elements of assessment: efficacy of the projects, quality of articulation of the production and reflection or of the creative and investigative dimensions as aspects of the same process.

Examining board: external invited examining board.

Financing: The University has a financing programme for final master's works which every student is able to apply for in order to get funds for his/her research.

Skills obtained by the student on completion of the degree:

“Professional graduates are able to incorporate, synthesize and articulate a complexity of practical experiences, technical and theoretical tools for critical analysis, research, development and presentation of personal projects of artistic research”⁹.

TEACHING STAFF

This postgraduate programme has no previous Bachelor's Programme in Theatre and Live Arts in the University, so that there is no established extensive teaching staff; therefore the teaching staff is

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http://www.unal.edu.co/webprogramas/programa.php@are=d50644ce86c9a41f2df998c259301409&lev=mae&cid_prog=441.html



also defined by the transversality and interdisciplinarity that their different backgrounds and areas of expertise determine.

The core staff are 3 or 4 teachers with 7 or 8 more people involved. This staff is completed with 2 or 3 international guests for workshops or seminars every semester; they should have a rich theoretical development or solid artistic and pedagogical experience (choreographers, theatre directors, actors, dramaturges, artists, etc.)

RESEARCH GROUPS

There are two main lines of research. There are a number of people usually working in them, but any other member of the teaching staff or student is able to participate by proposing a new research issue within the frame of these two lines.

These research groups are in a phase of rethinking their own way of operating. In particular, the figure of the artist-researcher is still being defined; in this way there are no pre-established methodologies, but rather the development of new ones according to the specificity of each project is fostered. The findings must include written reflections, but it is also necessary to generate artistic products or activities.

- PERFORMANCE AND POLITICS IN COLOMBIA ¹⁰

Aims:

- The creation of a research platform that allows knowledge production (theory and criticism) on the issue of performance and politics in Colombia, together with the creation of an Observatory of Performance and Politics and a *hotbed* for research in the field of theatre and live arts.
- To make a geographical, historical and political map of productions related to the issue of performance and politics in Colombia in three main fields: field of performance studies, of artistic practices and political activism.
- To problematise theoretical as well as artistic productions in the field of performance and politics in Colombia in the light of Latin American thinking and to generate a frame for theoretical and critical reflection as methodological tools in the Colombian context.

- CONTEMPORARY DRAMATURGY AND WRITING IN PERFORMING ARTS ¹¹

Aims:

¹⁰ Objetivos líneas de investigación Maestría Interdisciplinar en Teatro y Artes Vivas, p. 1.

¹¹ *Ibíd.*



- To found a space of theoretical and critic production around the issue of contemporary dramaturgies.
- To develop theoretical reflection on the existence of new models of performance writing in the field of Latin American artistic creation and in particular in the Colombian context.
- To foster the production of methodological tools for the development of dramaturgy as part of live arts.

Financing:

- University Funds for Research
- Public funds from the Ministry of Culture

CONTEXT

Academic networks:

There are two agreements for teaching staff exchange with the Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha and Paris VIII.

There is an already established international group of professors and artists who follow the shaping process of the programme and who support and assess the core team of the programme.

Visibility.

- Theatre and Live Arts International Meetings

Up to the present there have been two; one the first year of the programme and the second by the end of the two years-cycle. It is a mixed form between the marathon of work presentation and students' work evaluations, which constitutes an event of greater significance.

This last work presentation took place at the Art Museum of the University: the first two days were dedicated to private presentations for the examination committee, while the following three days were assigned for public presentations. Alongside these performances and as a part of the meeting programme a series of lectures were offered; the members of the examination committee (invited international guests), and a group of academics gave papers in which occasionally they tackled a reflection on the final works they had seen during those days. Additionally, some renowned artists (this happened in the first International Meeting) were invited to present their work.

The International Meetings are open to the wider audience, who are able to attend the lectures in the morning and the work presentations in the evening.

- Collection of *Research Books MITAV*.



They are books in which the lectures and the different creative experiences by the international invited guests and the teaching staff are documented.

- After the workshops organised by the international guests a public showing is organised, which can take place at different venues: at the University Hall, Mapa teatro or at the Performance Festival in Cali. Additionally publications are created in which the experiences of the workshop are documented.

INFRAESTRUCTURES

Given that the university does not have a previous undergraduate programme in Theatre and Live Arts, the master's has no specific infrastructures. Nevertheless, students have access to the university facilities provided through contact with the professors involved in the programme and associated to different departments: rooms for theory and practice, library, auditorium, sound laboratory.

