

The Institut for Applied Theatre Studies in Giessen ¹

(Institut für Angewandte Theaterwissenschaft der Justus Liebig Universität Giessen)

by Victoria Pérez Royo

The Institut for Applied Theatre Studies has a long tradition in theatre education and its students play an important role in contemporary theatre discussion as well as in international scene of performing arts.

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Date of opening: 1982

History:

The Institute for applied theatre studies arose at the end of the 1970's based on the initiative of English Literature Studies. It was conceived as an institution offering an alternative educational programme, where work would be based both in the practical and the theoretical. Currently, it is in the process of reshaping the former Diploma to the actual European master's system.

Postgraduate degrees offered:

- MA Applied Theatre
 - Specialization: Praxis of Performing Arts
 - Specialization: Theory and Aesthetic of Performing Arts
- MA Choreography and Performance

¹ We would like to thank Heiner Goebbels and Gerald Siegmund for assisting us in the creation of this report.

MASTER ANGEWANDTE THEATERWISSENSCHAFT (MA AWT)

Professions the degree prepares students for:

There are two possible trajectories within the Master of Applied Theatre:

- Specialization “Praxis of Performing Arts”: professions in the field of artistic praxis, such as theatre director, performance artist.
- Specialization “Theory and Aesthetic of Performing Arts”: professions in the field of dramaturgy, journalistic or editorial activities, scientific research.

The close interrelation of theory and practice of theatre in both specializations leads to the creation of mixed forms in the future professional exercise.

Student’s Profile:

The students are mainly coming from their Bachelor’s programme, although there are some artists too. The programme is conceived as a unity, a single continuous and consecutive trajectory of 5 or 6 years, so that there is no difference among the students in the bachelor’s or in the master’s programmes. Nevertheless, the master’s gives the possibility to admit some students not coming from the bachelor programme offered at its centre.

Specificity:

Education focuses on theatre research both at a scientific and theatrical practical level. It is based, on the one hand, on investigating the basic principles, functions and historic forms of theatre, and on the other hand on the scenic-practical testing of historical and contemporary theatre languages. This master’s fosters a broad conception of the practice of theatre: from traditional stagings of plays, musical theatre to avant-garde forms of theatre work, as well as different mixed forms such as dance theatre and performance or even video installation.

Aims:

To give students the capacity for theoretical and practical reflection on theatre arts and processes, as well as on the cultural, social and historical contexts of theatre. They have to be prepared to deal autonomously with their own creative problems as well as with project assignment both in the praxis and the theory. In the course of the two years they should be able to define their own interests.



Total number of current students: ca. 50

Number of admitted students per year: 25-30

Admission requirements for regular students:

A-Levels or an equivalent in the exams for qualification for university entrance.

Successful completion of the aptitude examination.

The student must be able to speak German; additionally they must prove satisfactory knowledge of two foreign languages, one of which must be English or French.

Required submission materials:

- curriculum vitae
- letter of motivation
- portfolio containing documentation of two or three self-completed artistic pieces (choreographic work, installations or performances but also artistic drafts) and possibly one or two short theatre performance critiques
- BA thesis or equivalent scientific work

Selection procedure:

The examination commission is interested in the most individual examination possible.

The selection procedure is composed of three phases:

- 1) Award and attainment of positive marking of portfolio by the examination commission
- 2) Written examination: an essay will be written regarding a topic which the examination commission proposes, e.g. a video extract of a performed production. This examination is aimed at diagnosing “not literary and theatrical historical knowledge but theatrical sensitivity, ie. the ability to watch and take in combined with one's own subjective judgement.”²
- 3) Oral examination: Personal interview in which the students expose their interests in theatre and other arts.

Evaluation criteria:

The candidate has the necessary abilities and knowledge to successfully complete the programme.

PROGRAMA DESCRIPTION

² http://www.uni-giessen.de/theater/en/studies/study_atw/admissiontest_atw

Duration of the programme: 2 years

Total number of ECTS: 120

Learning approach:

- Integration of theory and praxis: by the expression “applied theatre studies” is meant a relationship between theory and praxis in which the theory grows out of practice and will be enriched by theory. The artistic works developed by the students are usually integrated in the theoretical work of the seminars. Praxis is not only conceived as the transmission of *handicraft* (e.g. how to work with media), but rather as a laboratory for future questions and developments.
- Work in groups in order to foster discussion, reflection and argumentation.
- Interdisciplinary collaboration in order to integrate the multifarious subjects gathered around the term “theatre studies”.

Learning methodologies:

THEORY SEMINARS:

The primary modules for the course are theatre studies subjects: theatre art; types and methods of theatre production; aesthetic and semiotics of theatre; historical development of theatre. The students deal with these topics in the form of lectures and, above all, seminars, in which there is constant student participation in the form of presentations, assignments and debates.

Evaluation: the form of evaluation for these modules is decided by the teacher / professor and the students, but it depends also on the number of participants (if there are 25 students, not everyone is able to give a presentation).

PRACTICAL COURSES

Technical courses, such as introduction to technique in the audio studio, photo or different corporal techniques (voice training, Aikido, etc).

THEATRICAL PROJECTS

Mixed forms of art and science; particularly the theatrical projects have this twofold character: they usually start with a theoretical discourse on a concrete topic (e.g. acoustic art); in the first two months the course is organised like a seminar, although it is always combined with experiences of analysis of already existing pieces. Gradually



the course shifts the orientation to the individual student's project. The students present their projects as the basis for a subsequent discussion, so that the experience of what has been watched (and also learned in the practical courses) goes into the creation of their own work. Theory should not be merely the appliance of certain categories stemming from the theatrical studies to theatre praxis; instead it should arise out of experience, out of the artistic practice and the discussion. "It is not about knowing how to stage Shakespeare, but how to investigate contemporary questions about perception, gaze, to develop experimental research."³

Assessment:

- Public presentation of the work (production) and subsequent dialogue with the audience (critical colloquies), which usually happen in an informal atmosphere in a group of 20 to 30 audience members composed by students and teaching staff. Open discourse with the aim of improving the work critically in a public discussion.
- Presentation of the work processes in seminars as the basis for common discussion in the student's group.

- WORK EXPERIENCE in the theatre or media fields.

- MASTER'S FINAL WORK (see. p.5) practical / theoretical

Modules / structure:

4 theatre studies modules:

Theory and Aesthetic
 Performative praxis
 Theater studies
 Specialisation module

3 shared modules

Literature and Philosophy
 Literature and Culture
 Fine Arts / Musicology

1 external module

1 work experience module

1 thesis module

³ Heiner Goebbels in our interview, 22. April 2009, Frankfurt am Main.

All modules are compulsory.

There is no predefined structure set whereby modules are accomplished, so that the students have the opportunity to decide the order of their trajectory. There are no differences among the students, they all work together in an exchange process (also bachelor's and master's students) independently of the time they have been at the Institute. In the second year the students should orient their research to one of the two possible specialisations.

Detailed description:

THEATRE STUDIES MODULES

Theatre art is not conceived as subordinate to dramatic literature; the performance as autonomous performative text is at the core of theoretical and practical research at the Institut for Applied Theatre Studies.

1) Theory and Aesthetic

Composed of two seminars (in which the students are confronted with the theory and aesthetic of performing arts) as well as one audiovisual exercise (radio play, video documentation of performance, video works) or a lecture.

2) Performative Praxis. Practical investigation and experimentation with contemporary issues. It is composed of one theatrical project and two practical courses.

3) Theatre studies

The student chooses two seminars within Theatre studies that deal with the specific field of their interest. Additionally, the student must take part in the master's colloquium, which focuses on the issues, methods and problems of the students' final work.

4) Specialisation Module:

It is composed of one theatrical project, one practical course and one seminar.

It gives the students the opportunity to take courses (the practical one and the seminar) which may help them with the topic of their final dissertation or final production (for example, they may learn how to work with video).

SHARED MODULES



1) Literature and Philosophy

at the Faculty of German Language and Literature Studies and Faculty of Philosophy.

Two seminars and one exercise / lecture

2) Literature and Culture

At the Faculties of Language and Literature Studies Two seminars and one exercise / lecture

3) Fine Arts / Musicology

The students individually decide in which of these two faculties they take the two seminars.

EXTERNAL MODULE

In this module the students have the opportunity to develop their specific individual interests taking courses at any faculty of the Justus Liebig University of Giessen.

WORK EXPERIENCE MODULE

The students have to do an internship at an accredited cultural or artistic institution in order to acquire professional knowledge and to orientate themselves professionally.

The internship should not happen during the term.

Assessment: The students are supposed to write detailed reports on their internship that will be discussed with the teaching staff.

THESIS MODULE

In the frame of the thesis module the students work on their final thesis under the guidance of Prof. Heiner Goebbels and other invited mentors.

Formal requirements for the final theoretical work:

They follow the usual standards at the university.

Formal requirements for the final practical work:

The student must have already accomplished some other artistic projects before in the course of the studies (not only theoretical works). The student must show continuity in at least 3 practical works.



Viability of the project. The project must be consistent, not only with its particular aesthetic, but also be practically feasible: for example, the project should include a financial plan and a production team.

Formats:

it is composed of two parts

- Practical work. The students decide what kind of production they are interested in: theatrical project, choreography, video, installation, etc.
- Short written text (ca. 40 pages) in which the students reflect on their own artistic work: situation within the contemporary artistic context, possible previous stagings of the piece, reflection on means and instruments used.

Average number of theoretical final works: two thirds

Average number of practical final works: one third. They count for a bigger amount of work in relation to the theoretical dissertation.

Financing:

There are different models of financing:

- If the student creates a piece in collaboration with one of the institutions in the frame of the Hessischen Theaterakademie they receive a budget of 5000 €.
- If the students do not collaborate with one of those institutions, they are responsible for the financing. This is a relevant aspect of the education at the Institute of applied Theatre: the students should achieve the competency of finding sponsors and dealing with this practical part of the realization of the project

Evaluation criteria:

There are two main criteria for evaluation:

- Analysis of the work process: Student's ability to perceive and use the opportunities that materials suggest during the working process ; openness towards new developments of the work which were not previously foreseen. Student's capacity for team work.
- Analysis of the product: Achievement of the goals settled at the beginning; within the public discussions there is a very strong emphasis on determining whether the idea in the creator's mind coincides with the audience's perception. It is important that the works speaks for itself and that no additional explanations are necessary. These should be contained in the very work.

Nevertheless, the criteria change from work to work; each piece creates its own criteria according to which it should be evaluated. There is a continuous revision of the viability of the reception criteria, in accordance with every new work.

Frequency of education:

Courses take usually 18-20 weekly hours per semester

Seminars take place on a weekly basis.

Courses imparted by invited guests happen usually in the form of intensive workshops.

Skills obtained by the student on completion of the degree:

The student should prepare for the transition to professional praxis, and possess the necessary artistic and theoretical and specialised knowledge to work autonomously.

MA Choreography and Performance

Since October 2008 the Institut for Applied Theatre Studies in cooperation with the Contemporary and Classical Dance Department of the University of Music and Performing Arts in Frankfurt/Main have started a new Master's Course: Choreography and Performance (MACUP). The aim of this programme is to educate performers in the field of dance, choreography and performance who are able to critically reflect on their own practice and "who are prepared for the complexity of the demands of contemporary performing art in the field of dance and performance theoretically and practically".⁴

The curriculum is based on the same principles organising the MA in Applied Theatre, with the only difference being that in the MACUP training is a basic element. Nevertheless, according with the strong focus on the freedom of the student, they decide which kind of training (corporal work) they want to practice.

TEACHING STAFF

Required professional qualifications: excellence in their professional field.

Percentage of teaching staff:

- Professors: 3

⁴ http://www.uni-giessen.de/theater/en/studies/study_cup



- Assistents: 3
- Guest professors: 4 per year (each one 4 hours per week, but usually put together in the form of an intensive course) - Teaching assignments: 10

RESEARCH PROJECTS

HEINER MÜLLER SPRECHEN (2008)

In collaboration with: Internationalen Heiner Müller-Gesellschaft, Université de Paris X, Nanterre and Hessische Theaterakademie.

Aims: to reflect on the specificity of Heiner Müller's texts and language from the point of view of the current artistic works and theories.

Activities: Lectures held by experts in Müller's work, reports on individual experience staging Müller's pieces, Workshops, public discussions, artistic works related to his person: Installations, Performances, radioplays, theatre productions)

Financing: Kulturstiftung des Bundes, Hessische Theaterakademie, Kulturstiftung der Stadt Gießen sowie, Zentrum für Medien und Interaktivität (ZMI), Justus Liebig-Universität, Gießen.

THE REAL AND THE (NEW) IMAGES. REPRESENTATIONS OF THE OTHER OR THE TERROR OF THE IMAGES (2005)

In collaboration with: Zentrum für Medien und Interaktivität And Institut für Angewandte Theaterwissenschaft.

Aims: to discuss the issue of the theoretical and aesthetic basis of new images and their relationship to reality in a social context radically transformed after September the 11th.

Financing: Hochschulgesellschaft der Justus Liebig Universität, Giessen

VANISHING POINT ART. (CASE STUDY FRANKFURT AM MAIN) (2004)

In collaboration with: Institut für Angewandte Theaterwissenschaft, Architectural Association London, Schauspiel Frankfurt, Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt am Main, Frankfurter Kunstverein And Städelschule Frankfurt.

Aims: to tackle the issues of definition of the art within the frame of cities in transformation: Does its position, form, content and place change when reacting to a nomadic society?

Activities: Series of workshops in five consecutive weekends.



Financing: Institut für Angewandte Theaterwissenschaft, Architectural Association London, Schauspiel Frankfurt, Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt am Main, Frankfurter Kunstverein and Städelschule Frankfurt.

CONTEXT

Academic network:

- Erasmus / Socrates
- Partner universities / academies: Musikhochschule RITS (Brüssel), Medienlabor La Fabbrica (Treviso), Akademie der Künste (Wien), IUAV (Venedig University) and the Conservatorium in Lyon.
- Periodic contacts: Zaklad Dramatu i Teatru, Katedry Teorii Lieratury, Teatru i Filmu (Lodz), Theaterakademie Warsaw, P.A.R.T.S, Brüssels.
- Exchanges (student, teaching staff): University College Falmouth, incorporating Dartington College of Arts (Cornwall), Université Rennes II, Hochschule der Künste (Bern) and the University of Bergen. Since 2007/08 there is also a bilateral exchange with the Iceland Academy of the Arts in Reykjavik/Island.

Interuniversity master's:

Students may complete part of their degree at partner universities via the University of Giessen's Erasmus / Socrates programme. Achievements abroad can generally be added to the student's studies in Germany.

External network:

- The Hessische Theaterakademie is a student alliance between Hessian colleges and universities. The following institutions are involved: Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst (Frankfurt am Main), Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität (Frankfurt), Justus Liebig Universität Gießen, Hochschule für Gestaltung (Offenbach am Main). Also following theatres are involved: Staatstheater Darmstadt, Künstlerhaus Mousonturm, Schauspiel Frankfurt, Stadttheater Giessen, Staatstheater Kassel, Staatstheater Mainz, Hessische Landestheater Marburg, Staatstheater Wiesbaden.
- Further possible venues for work presentation are Théâtre Le Maillon (Strasbourg), Teatro Due (Parma) and Teatro Stabile (Turin).
- The institute is involved with the Zentrum für Medien und Interaktivität of the JLU Giessen and Tanzlabor 21, since the MACuP Master in Choreography and Performance started.



Public events.

- Die Theatermaschine. Yearly work exhibition of the students' work at the Studiobühne of Stadttheater Gießen.
- The international theatre festival Diskurs. (www.diskursfestival.de). With long tradition of 19 years, organised and performed by the students autonomously.
- Regular work presentations in collaboration with the Giessener Theaterwissenschaft and the Medialab "La Fabrica".
- Instant (2008). Festival at the Probebühne of the Institut showing works by students of Cultural Studies and Performing Arts from Hildesheim and students of Applied Theatre from Giessen.
- Diskurs (25th Anniversary)
Interdisciplinary festival for young artists with the focus on performative arts.

INFRASTRUCTURES

Rooms for theory classes with video and audio facilities, video and recording studios, a stage for student projects, library.

SELF ASSESSMENT

The students usually articulate their dissatisfaction in plenary meetings or directly in the frame of the discussion in the courses. They are very involved in the processes of the institute.

