

PROGRAM PLANNING SUMMARY

PROGRAM DESIGNATION:

Institution:	Coastal Carolina University
Academic Unit Involved:	College of Arts and Humanities
Name of Proposed Program:	<i>Bachelor of Fine Arts in Physical Theatre</i>
Proposed date of implementation:	Fall 2009
New Program or Modification:	New Program
Number of Credit Hours:	120

Justification of Need

The Department of Theatre at Coastal Carolina University currently offers a Bachelor of Arts degree in Theatre with concentrations in Acting/Directing and Design and Technology. The proposed Bachelor of Fine Arts degree will replace the current B.A. Acting/Directing concentration. The proposed Bachelor of Fine Arts will have four new degrees: Design and Technology, Musical Theatre, Acting, and Physical Theatre. The B.A. in Theatre will remain as a general theatre option, without concentrations, for those students seeking a less rigorous approach to theatre training. Directing will be removed as a concentration altogether. Directing is the culmination of all theatrical skills and should only be embarked upon by students at the graduate level. These changes seek to transform Coastal Carolina University as a premier comprehensive undergraduate professional theatre training institution.

Physical Theatre is an ancient art form that encompasses a large variety of performance methods. The term physical theatre is generally used to describe any mode of performance that pursues storytelling through primarily physical means. Physical Theatre may utilize text, but the primary focus is on the physical work of the actors, expressed through the use of their bodies. It is a highly visual form of theatre. The action in physical theatre may have come from a psychological or emotional base, improvisational work, or invented gestural language among other means of creation. However, the means of expression are always primarily physical.

Modern physical theatre has grown from a variety of origins. Mime and theatrical clowning schools such as *L'École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq* in Paris, and *Dell'Arte*, in California had a big influence on many modern expressions of physical theatre. Most physical theatre requires actors to have a level of physical control and flexibility rarely found in those who do not have some sort of movement background. Modern physical theatre also has strong roots in more ancient traditions such as *Commedia dell'arte* and some suggest links to the ancient Greek theatre, particularly the theatre of Aristophanes.

Physical Theatre has recently received a renaissance, primarily in the massive entertainment conglomerate of *Cirque du Soleil*. While *Cirque du Soleil* employs thousands of performers world-wide, many other organizations are enjoying unprecedented success. There are dozens of theatres that now specialize in Physical Theatre Performance. A national search of theatres that claim to employ physical theatre as their primary form of artistic dissemination finds over 30 companies. An international search finds well over 100 companies.

This renaissance has created a need for training programs for the Physical Theatre performer. In 2004 *Dell'Arte* began the only accredited Masters of Fine Arts in Ensemble Based Physical Theatre in the world. The success of that program has suggested a need for undergraduate programs. Internationally there are only a small number of undergraduate training programs for

the physical theatre artist and only one domestic program remains. Naropa University in Arizona, offers a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Performance with a concentration in Lecoq Based Actor Created Theatre, one form of physical theatre training. Prior to the closing of New College of California, a successful Bachelor of Arts in Experimental Performance was run in conjunction with the Circus Center of San Francisco and The Clown Conservatory. The remaining programs are available internationally.

The Bachelor of Fine Arts in Physical Theatre will instruct students in a large variety of applied physical performance methods, including instruction in classic clowning, circus skills, acrobatics, mime, dance, character development, professionalism, and the creation of original material. The program will attract students from a national base interested in further exploring the intersection of clowning, theatre, activism and experimentation in performance. The structured, intensive, studio-based training will prepare them to function in the professional entertainment world.

The first three years of the program will take place on the campus of Coastal Carolina University. The final year of the program will be in residence at the Circus Center of San Francisco, an internationally acclaimed school of physical theatre and the only institution in North America offering comprehensive professional training in physical theatre. Started with a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, many of the graduates are now working professionally in circuses, theaters, and other performing companies around the world, including *Cirque Eloize*, *Cirque du Soleil*, Ringling Bros. Barnum and Bailey Circus, The New Pickle Circus, *Lunitique Fantastique* and *Circus Monti* in Switzerland.

The Circus Center of San Francisco is the only full time professional training program for physical theatre performers in North America. While attending the conservatory, students will earn 30 credits in dance, mime, music, acrobatics, circus skills, acting, improvisation, design, history, business and multiple perspectives and techniques of physical theatre. Because of the unique position of the Circus Center San Francisco, students also have the opportunity to pursue individual interests in a wide range of Circus Arts in a professional context; allowing them to develop highly marketable, idiosyncratic skill sets. The program includes 18 hours of classes every week. Students also spend between 10 and 20 hours per week outside of class rehearsing, training, reading and working on research projects. The Conservatory students give six in-house performances a year plus numerous shows in a variety of venues.

Student demand for the program is expected to be strong. Enrollment in existing Theatre Arts programs at Coastal Carolina University has grown substantially this decade. In 1997 the Department of Theatre had 47 majors; in fall of 2007 72 majors were enrolled showing a 53% increase. Expected enrollment for fall 2008 shows a 65% increase over the 2007 incoming class.

ANTICIPATED PROGRAM DEMAND AND PRODUCTIVITY

Coastal Carolina University completed a survey of 5400 students accepted to Coastal Carolina University for the fall of 2008. Of those that responded to the survey 17.2% stated that they would be interested in pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in Physical Theatre if it were offered by Coastal Carolina University.

Due to the intensive nature of the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Physical Theatre and the residency required, the matriculation rate would need to be directed and controlled. Acceptance would be based on current University standards and an intensive audition process with no student allowed into the program without successfully completing the audition process. Expectations of acceptance rates would be 10-15 students with an anticipated yield of 8-10 students per incoming

class. Total annual enrollment for the proposed program would be expected to be between 32 and 40 students. It is anticipated that this number would easily be reached within four years of opening enrollment for the program.

ASSESSMENT OF EXTENT TO WHICH THE PROPOSED PROGRAM DUPLICATES EXISTING PROGRAMS IN THE STATE

Currently there are no Bachelor of Fine Arts in Physical Theatre programs in South Carolina.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE PROPOSED PROGRAM TO EXISTING PROGRAMS AT THE PROPOSING INSTITUTION

The Department of Theatre currently offers a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre with concentrations in Acting/Directing and Design and Technology. The B.A. provided the curriculum and resources appropriate for students at the beginning of their studies. While there is no specific structure, format or schedule of training which will be effective in every case, performers ready to embark on a professional career must possess a body of knowledge and skills. The B.F.A will provide a comprehensive program expected to produce a professional ready for career entry. The range of skills necessary for the physical performer dictates a more thorough and intensive approach than currently in place. Students who are serious about training in this mode of performance seek the specialized, rigorous training indicative of the B.F.A.

Classes necessary to the training of the physical performer will need to be added to the curriculum. While some classes already are in place the new courses will greatly enhance our offerings and will be used as additional classes for the proposed Bachelor of Fine Arts in Musical Theatre and Bachelor of Fine Arts in Acting.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE PROPOSED PROGRAM TO OTHER INSTITUTIONS VIA INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION

Coastal Carolina University is interested in developing a cooperative relationship with other institutions in the state, particularly as it pertains to sharing specific performance based expertise. Such cooperation could include sharing personnel or technical resources to supplement the production experience.

TOTAL NEW COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH IMPLEMENTING THE PROPOSED PROGRAM

Currently the Department of Theatre has three full-time tenure-track faculty who teach performance. Two of those faculty members have specialties in specific theatre movement and physical theatre disciplines. However the program will require some additional specialized instruction. One part-time faculty member from the Circus Center of San Francisco would come to Coastal Carolina one semester of each academic year and teach a full load of classes. Thus the primary cost of implementing the new program will be salary monies for one half-time guest faculty member (estimated at \$20,000 annually) beginning in the second year after initiating the program.



Dr. David A. DeCenzo, President
Coastal Carolina University

July 28, 2008