

**ISU Theatre and Performing Arts Vivid Vision Document  
2019 – 2021  
Adopted by the ISU Theatre Faculty, December 2018**

The purpose of this document is to describe what we wish our program to look like three years into the future (December 2021). This document will serve as the Theatre program's strategic plan for 2019-2021. A new Vivid Vision will be created at that time.

**Purpose of ISU Theatre:**

To Empower Citizen Artistry through the performing arts

**Mission of ISU Theatre:**

To empower citizen artistry by engaging students and the community in transformative theatre and performing arts experiences which examine the human condition, encourage lifelong learning, teach artistic skills, prepare professionals, inspire empathy, explore creativity, build relationships, and embrace diversity.

**ISU Theatre Vivid Vision**

ISU Theatre is composed of citizen artists, training the next generation of citizen artists and inspiring citizen artistry throughout the community. We radiate an infectious energy creating a culture of radical artistic citizenry fallout. We celebrate horizontal growth like the roots of a tree which spread much and deeper than what's above. And like those roots, we are part of an interconnected system striving toward community activism, artistic engagement, and progressive momentum. We are supportive, nurturing, and curious. We value the process as much as, if not more than, the product because theatre never ends, research never ends, education never ends. We value each other and those with whom we connect not just as collaborators, co-workers and audience members, but as our community.

**Faculty/Staff**

Our classrooms are laboratories of empathy and engagement. Teachers are citizen artists who are curious about the human condition, innovative in the classroom and beyond, and professionally active. Our teaching is experiential, responsive to student needs, and reflective of the diversity of our community. Excellent teaching is bridge-building. We witness the success of our teaching by celebrating innovative, professionally active, bridge-building citizen artists among our alumni (performing arts majors and non-majors as well). We model community engagement in our teaching practices by practicing de-colonized, student centered teaching and curricular management. Our faculty are not *creating* excellent students, but instead empowering them and indeed growing and learning alongside them. Our teaching is interdisciplinary as we are always seeking to incorporate and engage multiple perspectives from within our program, throughout the university, and beyond. We demonstrate our core values through regular performances and presentations at the Empathy Lab.

Our scholarly/creative activity is citizen artistry in practice. Our research projects are not only reflective of our individual curiosities but also responsive to the needs of the campus, local, and greater community. To ensure the excellence and relevance of our scholarship and teaching, ISU Theatre robustly supports faculty and staff professional development and conference travel. Through our Performing Arts Guest Artist in Residence program, we are constantly bringing in new and diverse voices to work with our faculty and students. And through our frequent collaborations with faculty across the campus, we have expanded the pool of perspectives and the diversity of our collective viewpoint.

Our classes, rehearsals, offices, and meetings are always transparent spaces, and our individual roles as faculty are flexible. We are constantly learning from one another, sharing with one another and growing as artists, educators, and scholars. Finally, we value healthy work life balance and we model self-care for our students.

### **Curriculum**

Our curriculum is flexible, interdisciplinary, and dedicated to fostering the citizen artist. Our graduates become curious, well-rounded, literate, life-long learners who are engaged in both their chosen career field and their community. Because of our major's flexibility in course offerings, credit hours, and cross-disciplinary collaboration, students are encouraged to double major. Field trips to see professional theatre and to work with world renowned artists are high impact learning experiences which accentuate ISU Theatre's on campus curriculum. Many of our students study abroad to even further enhance their education.

### **Students**

ISU Theatre and Performing Arts is the destination for undergraduate theatre education in Iowa. We are proud to have 80 passionate and enthusiastic performing arts majors with strong representation in all of our curricular emphases, including Acting/Directing, Theatre Studies, Musical Theatre, Theatrical Design and Technology, Theatre Arts, and Dance. We view every student at ISU as one of our students. In addition to Performing Arts majors, ISU Theatre impacts hundreds of students from majors throughout the university in our classes, productions, and shops. Students are attracted to our program because of the flexibility of our degree, our fun, positive, and welcoming community, focus on undergraduate experiences, extraordinary opportunities for high impact learning, our significant scholarship program, our frequent interdisciplinary and cross-community collaboration, and exceptional professional preparation and training. Our students are compassionate, enthusiastic, aware, ambitious, dependable, dedicated, disciplined, generous. They are engaged leaders who are very involved both in the performing arts and within the broader campus and local community. Though a large majority of our students are from Iowa, our students come from everywhere – rural communities, big cities, suburbs, from neighboring states and from the around the world. And they are diverse in terms of ethnicity, class, race, nationality, ability, gender, sex, sexuality, culture, religion, and politics. Our students love this program because our program is individualized while also ambitious, relevant, and rigorous. They specifically revere their opportunities to work one on one with faculty as assistant directors, assistant designers, dramaturgs, and teaching assistants. Students feel welcomed, included, and supported by their

faculty mentors as well as their fellow students. Our graduates appreciate how prepared they are for their post undergraduate life as citizen artists and how connected they are to our alumni professional networks.

Robust recruiting efforts make us highly visible to prospective students. We have booths and offer workshops at events such as thespian festivals and high school arts events in Iowa and throughout the Midwest. Our Explore ISU Theatre Day attracts over 50 interested High School students to our campus every year. Our High School matinee series not only exposes students to our excellent production work, but also introduces them to our program through preshow talks and take-home recruitment materials. Our partnership with Story Theater Company continues to flourish as a provider of professional development for our students as well as a strong recruitment source due to STC Day performances when STC high school students and their parents receive complimentary tickets to attend a production and participate in a tour of Fisher Theater as well as a discussion about Performing Arts at ISU. Our highly inclusive culture also makes us very attractive to collaborations with diverse groups on campus including many of the multicultural student organizations.

### **Production Season**

The ISU Theatre production season presents our most public and visible testament to who we are and for what we stand. Thus, our programming deeply reflects both the core values of our mission as well as the immediate stories and concerns of community. All of our productions from the production season are chosen by a selection committee that includes representation from the ISU Theatre faculty, performing arts students, non-theatre faculty, student leaders from throughout the university, and community members. Diversity of the committee members ensures that it includes a catholicity of perspectives, world views, and life experiences. The production season includes American and world classics, one to two musicals every year, an opera production every 2-3 years, an ensemble-driven devised play every 2-3 years, as well as regular world premieres either featuring new plays written by our local faculty and students or by nationally recognized playwrights commissioned to write for ISU Theatre. Our primary performance venue is the newly renovated Fisher Theater. However, to satisfy our goal to propel our work out into the community, at least one production per year is produced in a found space, non-traditional theatre, or other alternative venue.

Indeed, ISU Theatre exists everywhere in the community. We are as ubiquitous as cardinal and gold. We are reaching and developing different audiences because we are constantly working in new and diverse spaces. Our primary venue performance venue - Fisher Theater – is on the path toward major renovations in order to address critical needs including:

- making it a safer and healthier working environment.
- providing state of the art technology.
- replacing the audience seating.
- making it more welcoming to the public and our students.
- making it more artistically flexible to allow for less prescriptive theatre making.
- making it more accessible.

Our productions are also our laboratory of innovation for students and faculty to practice our craft and experiment with new forms. One of our pioneering practices is the regular employment of the decolonized production team where rather than playing the traditional roles like actors, stage managers, directors, designers, etc., all of the collaborators are equal contributors to every aspect of the production. This process decentralizes the power and offers more opportunity for robust collaboration and artistic contribution among all members of the cast and production team.

### **Community Outreach**

Because of our excellent work, successful alums, high visibility, inclusive environment, and our collaborative spirit, ISU Theatre has become a keystone of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, a source of pride for the University and a central, necessary, sought out, and vibrant part of the culture fabric of the local community. The impact of our program spreads broadly throughout the university and community because our faculty, staff, and students think like extension agents and actively engage in citizen artistry.

Our signature outreach initiative, the ISU Theatre CoLab has become a flagship program within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the University. The ISU Theatre CoLab Initiative seeks to foster collaboration and engagement between ISU Theatre and other groups both within ISU's campus and throughout the broader community to create citizen artistry, inspire and be inspired by meaningful public discourse and expand opportunities for ISU students, faculty and staff. Our productions always have at least one CoLab partner, and we have established long standing collaborations with many campus and community organizations including Parks Library, the Ames Public Library, ISU Extension and Outreach, the ISU Office of Diversity and Inclusion, ISU Lecture Series, ISU College of Design, the Department of Apparel and Merchandising Design, ISU Museums, Ames Farmer's Market, Octagon Art Center, and more.

Our central effort to empower citizen artistry compels us to engage locally in constant and ubiquitous public outreach. Our very reasonable ticket prices make our productions very accessible to students and the general public. And ticket giveaways bring new audiences to the theatre. And we are combatting elitism and fostering audience diversity by targeting underrepresented and/or under-privileged groups and organizations. Throughout the year we regularly partner with local nonprofits in mercy and social justice work in order to strengthen our commitment to and instill in our students the critical importance of community service. Opening night receptions are vibrant community events for both the public and our students. They serve as a place for cross-cultural and cross-generational fellowship as well as a space for further engagement with the themes and participants of our productions. Specialized talkbacks with cast, production team, or local experts provide curious audience members the opportunity to take even deeper dives into our productions. Lobby exhibits always showcase production designs and dramaturgy as well as relevant connections to current events and local issues. In addition, the lobby of Fisher Theater regularly exhibits the art work of our students, faculty, and local collaborators. Our yearly play reading series engages the community and interested ISU courses in further study of the historical significance, modern relevancy, and cultural

significance of the plays being produced during our production season. And we regularly share previews of our productions at local venues, festivals, and exhibitions.

Our promotional materials are bold, ubiquitous, and utilize cutting edge technology and social media. And our students are the empowered leaders of our marketing initiatives. Our marketing plan is branded, strategic, and efficient. We have well-tested and effective processes for promoting both our productions and our departmental successes, which have greatly increased the visibility of our program.