

## THE JUILLIARD DRAMA DIVISION

### *An Overview*

*Kevin Spacey says that he blossomed in his classes here. Christine Baranski credits the School with giving her the skills and confidence to pursue a serious acting career. Ving Rhames says that the opportunities provided to him as a student here have had a tremendous impact on his work today. Laura Linney calls her education here an intense, wonderful foundation.*

They all attended The Juilliard School, a conservatory renowned for its music program, which has become equally esteemed for providing one of this country's finest educations in the dramatic arts. In fact, Juilliard's Drama Division is the youngest of three divisions (music, dance, and drama) within an institution that provides comprehensive preparation in the arts. Since the first class enrolled in 1968, the Juilliard Drama Division has developed the talents of actors who have gone on to become some of the most distinguished artists of the stage and screen, including Andre Braugher, Frances Conroy, Viola Davis, Lisa Gay Hamilton, Enid Graham, Kelsey Grammer, Michael Hayden, Harriet Harris, William Hurt, Patti LuPone, Val Kilmer, Kevin Kline, Elizabeth Marvel, Kelly McGillis, Mandy Patinkin, Christopher Reeve, David Ogden Stiers, Lorraine Toussaint, Jeanne Tripplehorn, and Robin Williams.

Founded in 1905 as the Institute for Musical Art, the School was the first American academy of music to rival the European conservatories. In 1926, the Institute began a merger with the Juilliard Graduate School that was completed in 1946 under the presidency of composer William Schuman. The combined institutions, then located at 120 Claremont Avenue, became known as The Juilliard School of Music. In 1951, the innovative Schuman created a new division at Juilliard for the study of dance, thereby providing a broader base of arts education and new opportunities for interaction between choreographers and composers, and dancers and musicians. Before leaving Juilliard in 1962 to become president of the newly constructed Lincoln Center, William Schuman committed Juilliard to becoming the Center's sole academic constituent – its educational role to mirror the performing arts institutions resident at Lincoln Center.

That commitment included the establishment of a Drama Division at Juilliard under the guidance of Schuman's successor at the school, Dr. Peter Mennin. Commensurate with the School's broadened scope, it became known more inclusively as The Juilliard School. Noted European conservatory teacher and administrator Michel Saint-Denis was chosen as the new Division's consultant and director actor, director, and administrator John Houseman became its administrative director. Together they formulated a four-year conservatory curriculum for the Juilliard Drama Division. The first class of 35 students, Group 1 (as the classes are designated at Juilliard), was chosen from more than 600 applicants and began classes in a building located near the site of the still-under-construction "new" Juilliard. Official residency in the building at Lincoln Center began with the start of the 1969 school year and Group 2.

Michel Saint-Denis' association with Juilliard continued until his death in 1971, when his wife Suria (who had worked with him closely at Juilliard since the Drama Division's founding) became consultant and director; she continued in that capacity until her death in December 1987. John Houseman was director of the division until 1976, when he left to devote his energies to The Acting Company, a repertory group that he founded in 1972 with many of the actors from the first Juilliard class, including Kevin Kline, Patti LuPone, and David Ogden Stiers. In 1979 Michael Langham, who had been artistic director of the Guthrie Theater, became director of Juilliard's Drama Division, succeeding the late Alan Schneider, director from 1976-1979. Michael Kahn, artistic director of The Shakespeare Theatre in Washington, D.C., was appointed director in 1992 upon Langham's retirement.

Today the Division's enrollment usually numbers about 75 student actors ranging in age from 18 to 26. Each year, approximately 2,000 applications are received and 1,000 actors audition for a maximum of 25 openings in the first-year class, but its remarkable success ratio – more than 80% of the alumni are actively working in their chosen field – makes the high number of applicants understandable.

The Saint-Denis method, still in place, gives actors a disciplined guideline with which to explore the depths of their own creativity. It encourages improvisation in the early parts of their Juilliard experience, while the young actors acquire the necessary tools for dramatic expression—movement, vocalization, and dramatic analysis. Fully-staged performance begins in the third year, and public performance is the goal only in the fourth and final year. Intensive class work in dramatic verse, mask technique, play analysis, speech, voice, movement, singing, comedy techniques, acrobatics, dance, stage combat, make-up, Alexander Technique, and even music studies, are integrated into the daily pursuit of learning and interpreting a wide range of dramatic repertoire.

Students of the program perform in a wide variety of master works from antiquity to contemporary playwrights. Juilliard actors are expected to take on the seminal works of dramatic literature from Sophocles to Shakespeare to Strindberg, but they also are exposed to less traditional and non-Western works. In addition to tackling canonical works such as Shakespeare and Chekhov, recent seasons have featured Juilliard actors in works by Bertolt Brecht, Václav Havel, Federico García Lorca, and Peter Whelan, as well as a new adaptation of the Hindu epic, *Mahabharata*. The 2006-06 season will also include such works as Thomas Gibbons' *Black Russian*, directed by Marion McClinton; and Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II*, directed by Sam Gold – both performed by the fourth-year actors. As further testament to the versatility and skill of these young actors, several authors have scheduled pre-production rehearsal projects of their new plays at Juilliard. In 2001, playwright Paul Rudnick with director Christopher Ashley worked with the fourth-year students on Rudnick's new play *Valhalla*. Tony Kushner's 1993 Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *Angels in America, Part I: Millennium Approaches* was given its first New York production by members of the Juilliard Drama Division in 1992. In recent seasons the actors have had the privilege of working with Eric Bogosian (*subUrbia*), John Guare (*Moon Over Miami*), and Tom Hulce and Peter Parnell (stage adaptation of John Irving's *Cider House Rules*).

Above all, The Juilliard School's Drama Division has remained true to the premise set out in its very first recruitment brochure:

We are trying to form an actor equipped with all possible means of dramatic production, capable of meeting the demands of today's and tomorrow's ever-changing theater—an actor who is capable of participating in those changes and who is, himself, inventive enough to contribute to them. For in the final analysis, whatever experiments may be attempted through fresh forms of writing, on new stages, using the latest technical devices, everything ultimately depends on the human being—the actor.

Under the leadership of Michael Kahn, the Drama Division has expanded to include programs for playwrights and directors in two intensive, graduate-level programs: the Lila Acheson Wallace American Playwrights Program and the Artists Diploma Program for Theater Directors. Providing full-tuition fellowships for young artists accepted to each program, Juilliard fosters a safe haven for the development of their craft. The aim of both programs is to help students make the transition from Juilliard to the professional theater world.

The **Lila Acheson Wallace American Playwrights Program**, created in 1993, has been under the direction of Christopher Durang and Marsha Norman since 1994. Other esteemed playwrights who have led Juilliard's up-and-coming writers include John Guare and Terrence McNally, who co-created the program with the Drama Division's director, Michael Kahn – as well as Jon Robin Baitz, Wendy Wasserstein, and Romulus Linney. Now in its thirteenth season, the program offers one-year, tuition-free, graduate-level fellowships. Purposefully small, Juilliard's Playwrights Program allows the young artists to focus on the practical aspects of dramatic writing, while at the same time, they are encouraged to take advantage of the wealth of resources within Juilliard's walls and – via the School's prime location on Broadway – New York City's greater theater scene. Students are permitted to take any class within the Drama Division and are encouraged to see productions around the city by receiving free or discounted tickets to many events on and Off-Broadway. The essence of this program, however, lies in the weekly workshop/seminars with the playwright heads specifically tailored for the group. In addition, twice-monthly readings of the students' works allow the writers – with the help of Juilliard acting students and alumni – to tackle the practical aspects of creating a new play. The workshops culminate at the year's end, when students in the playwright residency – like their peers in the acting program – present their works to professionals from New York City and around the country as small productions, creating liaisons between Juilliard and the larger theater community for these young artists.

The **Artist Diploma Program for Theater Directors** allows two or three talented young directors to attend a three-year course of advanced studies at Juilliard, under the guidance of Andrei Belgrader. In addition to providing a full range of practical work in the advanced techniques and skills of directing, Juilliard's program immerses its young directors in the common focus and vocabulary necessary for instant communication with actors, as well as giving them numerous opportunities to direct. Directors in the Artist Diploma Program participate in several acting courses alongside Juilliard actors and have the opportunity to attend select design classes at New York University's graduate design program. Ultimately, the students will put these tools to work by directing several

productions while at Juilliard and, as is the goal of the program, by making professional connections and working in New York.

In fall 2003 Juilliard welcomed two new directing fellows, John Farmanesh-Bocca and Sam Gold, to The Artist Diploma Program for Theater Directors. Past directing fellowship recipients included Ian Belton, Roger Benington, and Joanna Settle (1995-1997); Rosemary Address, Michael Barakiva, and Jemma Alix Levy (1997-2000); and Alex Correia and Kirsten Kelly (2000-2003).

## CENTENNIAL SEASON

For its upcoming centennial season, Juilliard has commissioned prize-winning playwright Craig Lucas to create a new ensemble play specifically for the fourth-year graduating class of actors (Group 35), to run Thursday, January 12 – Monday, January 16 in the Juilliard Drama Theater. It is the third of Juilliard Drama Division's regular presentation of four plays throughout the season. Tentatively titled *The Listener*, the play is a science fiction fantasia with songs, dance, and puppets, reflecting the collaborative process between Mr. Lucas and the Group 35 actors. Newly composed songs for *The Listener* are by Michael Torke. Bartlett Sher directs.

The Juilliard Drama Division also presents its fourth-year graduating actors in their first-ever national tour to Los Angeles and Chicago in March 2006, an important part of the Juilliard 2005 –2006 centennial celebration. Performances in each city include presentations of *The Listener* and of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* directed by Joe Dowling, artistic director of Minneapolis' Guthrie Theater. Juilliard's third-year actors (Group 36) have their own world-premiere centennial commissions, and are presented in an evening of ten short (ten-minute) plays by ten alumni writers of the Lila Acheson Wallace American Playwrights Program at The Juilliard School. Entitled *Ten Times Ten* and directed by Will Pomerantz, this extraordinary collection of world premiere short works by playwrights David Auburn (*Proof*), Tanya Barfield (*Pecan Tan*), Stephen Belber (*Match*), Brooke Berman (*The Triple Happiness*), Julia Cho (*The Architecture of Loss*), Noah Haidle (*Mr. Marmalade*), Steve Harper (*The Laundry Channel*), Deborah Laufer (*The Gulf 9*), David-Lindsay Abaire (*Fuddy Meers*), and Ellen Melaver (*The Right Way to Sue or Next Year in Manhattan*), are presented from Wednesday, October 19 – Sunday, October 23, 2005, in Studio 301

Juilliard actors typically mount four works first during the fall semester and perform them again in succession during the spring semester. This year, however, the actors (Group 35) perform their works September through February and take two of their productions – *The Listener* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – on a national tour in March as part of Juilliard's centennial celebration.

Drama Division's New York performances take place in the Drama Theater. All productions are open to the public. Free tickets are required for all performances and are available at the Juilliard Box Office. Check the Juilliard Web site at [www.juilliard.edu](http://www.juilliard.edu) for ticket availability dates and more information.

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