

School of **Performing Arts**



Outstanding progression from PPP to top UK drama schools

RUNSHAW COLLEGE

A Level Drama and Theatre

Drama and Theatre combines both the theoretical and practical study of a wide range of classical and contemporary practitioners. The aim of the course is to expand your knowledge and appreciation of theatre in its entirety, including addressing how historical and social factors impact on performances within contemporary society. You will also study how to interpret a role, and how to use practitioner techniques to devise your own material.



What will I actually study?

Component 1: Drama and theatre

For this you will study two different plays, and interpret these from various perspectives – as a director, a designer, and a performer. You will also get the opportunity to attend a range of live theatre productions, and evaluate the impact of performance elements.

How it's assessed

Written exam: 3 hours

80 marks

40% of A Level

Component 2: Creating original drama (practical)

After undertaking a series of practitioner workshops, you will be given a stimulus, and work with a group to devise a final piece using your chosen performance style.

How it's assessed:

Working notebook (40 marks)

Devised performance (20 marks)

60 marks in total

30% of A Level

Component 3: Making theatre (practical)

This component is a practical exploration of three extracts, taken from plays with different social, cultural and historical contexts. One of these plays will be performed using a given practitioner, and this will be performed as a final assessed piece. You will also write a Reflection Report, evaluating the interpretation of your different roles.

How it's assessed:

Performance of Extract 3 (40 marks)

Reflective report (20 marks)

60 marks in total

30% of A Level

Staff

Adele Leach, Sarah Martin

What qualifications do I need to be able to do the course?

Because the course has a significant theory component, good essay writing skills are essential and you therefore need at least a grade 5 in English Literature or Language.

Do I need to have done Drama at GCSE?

No. All we ask is that you are confident enough to perform in front of your peers and are willing to experiment with various styles of text and acting.

Are there any extra requirements?

Yes. During the course you will be required to attend theatre visits organised by the department, usually between 4 and 6 productions, in order to prepare you for the Component 1 written examination.

What other courses go with Drama and Theatre?

Any other A Level! Theatre Studies is a well-respected and established A level widely recognised as developing not only the course requisite skills but also public speaking, confidence and the ability to communicate effectively in both written and spoken forms.

What do students go on to do with Drama and Theatre?

All sorts of degrees: Law, Acting, Theatre Studies, Psychology, English, Creative Writing to name just a few.



Professional Performance Programme or A Levels?

When you apply to Runshaw, your first main choice involves whether to apply for A Levels or for the Professional Performance Programme (PPP). The main difference between the two is that on the A Level programme, you would normally choose a mixture of different subjects, such as Theatre Studies, English Literature, Psychology and Law, for example. Any combination is possible from the list of A Level subjects as long as you have the right entry requirements.

By contrast, the PPP focuses entirely on Performing Arts and offers the in-depth practical training that you do not receive on the A Level route. It has been specifically designed for those talented students who want to develop their technique and maximise their chances of making a career in the Industry.

If you want to be a performer and are determined to do your utmost to follow this career, then the Professional Performance Programme is by far the best option for you. You will receive the intensive training that you need in order to make yourself a better performer and to extend your range of performance skills. Prestigious dance and drama schools are more interested in performance ability than in grades, and the PPP helps to hone and refine those skills through a series of practical classes and workshops.

If you are not entirely sure that you want to work within the performing arts field as a performer or teacher, or if you want to take a subject because you are as interested in the theory as you are in the practical work, then A Levels would be the better choice. Also, if you do not want to completely commit to a single subject or you prefer a variety of different lessons and teachers, then again A Levels would probably be the better option.

In the Performing Arts Department at Runshaw, the same highly-qualified staff teach on both the PPP and on the A Level programme. There is no status difference between the two options, it is simply that one might be suited to a particular student and their career goal, and the other might be suited to a different student and what they want to do.





A pathway to excellence in the Performing Arts

On the Professional Performance Programme at Runshaw, we take the very best young performers in the North West and help them to improve and develop their skills before they progress to drama school or university. This is a highly-challenging course for the most motivated and committed students who want to pursue a career in the performing arts. Whereas A Levels focus as much on the theoretical side as the practical work, the PPP is a vocational course that teaches hands-on performance skills. The majority of the assessments combine practical performances with written research, analysis and evaluation linking to the performing arts.

One graduate from the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts commented that the PPP was the best preparation for drama school that she had encountered.

It is the students on the PPP who are our elite performers at Runshaw, and it is these students that we use to showcase the high quality of our Performing Arts provision at Open Days and Open Evenings. It is also the PPP students that we take out on tour to deliver professional-standard performances to local primary and secondary schools.

The Professional Performance Programme has three different pathways: Acting, Musical Theatre, and Dance. All three pathways have the same intensive and high quality approach to training, and each one has been carefully designed to prepare students for the relevant career.



PPP: Acting

This is a full-time course for students who want to train as Actors and so most of your classes will focus on different styles of acting. Also, when you audition for drama school, you may be asked to perform a song or to take part in movement workshops and so it is important that you also have some basic training in Singing Skills and Dance. There may be the opportunity to take one of the Performing Arts A Levels alongside this course.



Intensive training in Acting technique

The PPP Acting course provides you with fundamental training in a range of different acting styles. You will be introduced to the techniques involved in creating exaggerated characterisations that link to practitioners such as Berkoff and Brecht and you will also learn how to structure and devise performances in different theatrical genres. For much of the first year, you will focus on naturalistic acting and explore the process of connecting your own emotions to performance work in order to create believable and engaging characterisations.

In the second year of the course, you will learn classical techniques associated with performing Shakespeare's works. You will also be introduced to Physical Theatre as a theatrical style and will be taught how to create performance material that utilises the whole body creatively. Directing is another area that you will explore as you choose an extract from a play and work with your cast to create an effective performance.

During your time on the PPP, you will also take part in a one-week tour, travelling to local schools and performing a piece in a variety of different venues. The course also has a strong focus on audition technique with tailored one-to-one sessions that significantly improve students' chances of progressing to the very best drama schools.

This is one of the reasons why the PPP at Runshaw College is the most successful course in the country for helping students progress to the most prestigious performing arts institutions.

Your two years at Runshaw culminate with a full-scale play written by your course tutor and performed by your whole class. As well as being open to a public audience in the evenings, these shows are also performed as afternoon matinees for high schools. If you have visited Runshaw to see shows like Strings or Looking For Blue then you will have seen the high quality of these productions.

The work-rate is intensive and our expectations are high, but you can be sure that when you complete the course, your skills will have developed to a higher standard than they would anywhere else. There is no other course in the local area that offers this exceptional level of training and so the PPP course is the only real option for anyone who is serious about following a career as an actor. It really is a pathway to excellence in the performing arts.

Staff

Andy Newman, Sarah Martin, Adele Leach, Rebecca Mills, Gemma Anderton

The focus of the PPP Musical Theatre pathway is on allowing you to develop your skills in acting, dance and singing so that you are able to pass the auditions and continue your training at a prestigious institution. On the course, you will also have the opportunity to showcase your skills in a wide range of performances. There may be the opportunity to take one of the Performing Arts A Levels alongside this course.



Triple-threat training in acting, dance and singing

In your singing classes, you will improve your ensemble technique by working on songs from the shows, developing your ability to harmonise in duets, trios and full-group numbers. You will also work on stage presence and performance flair along with the techniques involved in acting through song as you develop a range of solo performances.

In your acting classes, you will develop your skills in exaggerated performance styles that link to practitioners such as Brecht and Berkoff. You will also be taught naturalistic performance techniques that will help you to develop realistic characterisations that include emotional connection with the character being played.

In your dance lessons you will be introduced to basic ballet technique or, if you already have some training in this area, will be given the opportunity to hone and refine your skills whilst other classes will cover Jazz Dance and Tap. It is not necessary for you to have had any previous dance training in order to follow the musical theatre pathway as you will be taught the fundamentals as part of the course.

In January, you will have the opportunity to take part in our annual showcase of musical theatre talent - Showdown - which will be made up of songs and dances from a range of Musical Theatre productions, from Chicago to Wicked to Les Misérables, performed to a public audience.

Your two years at Runshaw culminate with a full scale musical theatre show that is performed by the members of your class for a public audience. The musical theatre productions at Runshaw are always spectacular events and are a great way to round off the year.

The work rate is intensive and our expectations are high, but you can be sure that when you complete the course, your skills will have developed to a higher standard than they would at any other college in the local area. There is nowhere else that offers this level of training and the PPP course is the only real option for anyone who is certain they want a career in musical theatre. It really is a pathway to excellence in the performing arts.

Staff

Rebecca Mills, Andy Newman, Sarah Martin, Lucy Collins, Claire Edmonds

This is a full-time course for students who want to train as Dancers and so most of your classes will focus on different styles of dance. Also, when you audition for dance schools such as Bird or Laine, you are generally asked to perform a song or drama monologue. For this reason, you will also have some classes in Singing and Acting, although the majority of your course will focus on dance. There may be the opportunity to take one of the Performing Arts A Levels alongside this course.



Exceptional dance training

Over the two years of the course, you will train in a range of different dance styles. There will be regular classes in Ballet as this is the basis for most dance technique. Along with this, you will explore different approaches to Contemporary Dance along with other classes in Jazz, Tap and Commercial. In the Urban Dance sessions, you will be introduced to Street and Hip-Hop styles. In your first year, you will also work in small groups when you are choreographed by the second year students for their Choreography project, and in the second year, you will be the one in charge of choreographing others.

Your major production on the Dance pathway will be the PPP Dance show that takes place in May. You will be responsible for choreographing dances in a number of styles: contemporary, jazz, commercial, and so on. Some of the dances will be choreographed by your tutors, some by visiting professionals, and some by the students themselves. There will be a number of performances, evening shows for the public, and matinees for local high schools.

Depending on timetabling, there may also be the opportunity for any students who have not already done so to take their Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards in ISTD Jazz, although there will be an additional fee for the exam entry.

Many of the PPP Dance students also audition for and gain places on the Runshaw Dance Academy, which offers the opportunity to take part in international dance competitions and experience workshops with visiting professionals.

The work-rate is intensive and our expectations are high, but you can be sure that when you complete the course, your skills will have developed your skills to a very high standard. The PPP Dance course really is a pathway to excellence in the performing arts.

Staff

Claire Edmonds, Lucy Collins, Gemma Anderton, Rebecca Mills, Andy Newman

In order to be accepted onto the two-year PPP, applicants must have five GCSEs at grade 4 or higher. One of these GCSEs must be in Maths or English, and if a grade 4 or higher has not been achieved in the other subject, then the grade must be 3. For example: 4 or higher in English and no lower than a 3 in maths, or 4 or higher in maths and at least a 3 in English.

Applicants must also pass an audition as explained below.

The Audition Process

In order to maintain the high quality of the PPP provision, applicants must take part in an audition to ensure that all the students on the course have the necessary level of skill and commitment to succeed.

What you do in the audition will depend on which of the three pathways you opt for.

ACTING

- Perform a monologue that you have learned by heart from a list given by us
- Take part in three drama workshops that explore different dramatic styles – epic theatre, naturalism and physical theatre.
- Work in groups on an extended devising task where you will be given a stimulus and must create a performance based on this. You will then be given specific directions by the tutors to see how you are able to respond to these.

DANCE

- Create and perform a solo dance piece of around two minutes in length
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- Take part in various dance workshops in a range of styles and then perform these back in small groups.
- Work in groups on an extended devising task where you will be given a stimulus and must create a performance based on this. You will then be given specific directions by the tutors to see how you are able to respond to these.

MUSICAL THEATRE

- Perform two monologues that you have learned by heart from a list given by us
- Perform an existing Musical Theatre song of your choice
- Take part in various workshops in acting, dance and singing
- Work in groups on an extended devising task where you will be given a stimulus and must create a performance based on this. You will then be given specific directions by the tutors to see how you are able to respond to these.

We are looking as much for potential as we are for technique. Also, we want to see if, when you find something really hard, you're the kind of person who keeps pushing to improve, however hard it might be, rather than just giving up.

There is no secret as to what we are interested in – here are the main areas:

- Enthusiasm and commitment
- Performance technique
- Performance flair
- Focus and concentration
- Ability to work with others, offering ideas and listening where appropriate
- Ability to take direction





Why should I take this course?

You should take this course if you are determined to follow a career in the performing arts. If this is what you want to do, then the PPP is a much better course than A Levels. This is because most drama schools are less interested in your grades than in how you do in audition and for performance courses at university, you must have both good grades and perform well in audition. The PPP is a course that specifically teaches you the performance skills you need in order to pass those auditions.

Where have PPP students gone after leaving Runshaw?

Our PPP students have progressed to many of the most prestigious dance and drama schools in the UK:

- RADA
- LAMDA
- Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts
- Rose Bruford
- Trinity-Laban
- Guildford School of Acting
- Laine Theatre Arts
- Central School of Speech and Drama

- Bird College
- Northern Ballet
- Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts (LIPA) and many others

Another reason to take this course is the amount of performing you will be doing. Over the two years, you will have the opportunity to take part in many plays, dances, musicals and tours along with a whole series of smaller pieces that will also be performed in front of an audience.

On completion of the course, you will gain an Extended Diploma in Performing and Production Arts. If you achieve the top grade, then this is the equivalent of three A*s at A Level and therefore counts as such towards university entry.

So if you want to take part in exciting projects, and to work with a group of high-achieving students to develop your performance skills in a dynamic and challenging environment whilst working to a professional standard at all times, then apply for the Professional Performance Programme course at Runshaw.



Shows

We have three dance shows a year in which enrichment students can take part. Included in the shows are pieces that students have worked on themselves, ensemble pieces from all the dance classes plus enrichment dances. These are always a highlight on the dance calendar and extremely enjoyable events.

Dance Academy

EXTENSION 12 is our Dance Academy that students can audition for in the first couple of weeks of term. We are looking for 22-24 students who we feel will benefit from extra tuition and can be pushed to do even more with their dance abilities. The Academy group meets twice a week to train and the students involved have the opportunity to dance in competitions in the UK and abroad and to attend extra trips. In 2019, EXTENSION 12 once again swept the boards at the Barcelona International Dance Grand Prix, returning home with three trophies from a range of categories.

Trips

Throughout the year the dance department offer trips to the theatre to watch a variety of styles of shows. Trips to London's West End and to Pineapple Studios are also available.





Runshaw students perform AGAMEMNON at the Edinburgh Fringe

Here at Runshaw, we recognise that there is more to life than studying. We encourage all students to take part in activities outside of class time and Runshaw College offers a huge range of different options.

If you want to take part in our drama enrichment, then you will need to look out for our audition posters and other publicity that regularly appear across college. Every year, the drama department puts on a number of full-length plays as part of our cross-college enrichment programme and all students are encouraged to audition for roles in these. Any student on any course is welcome to audition and those who are successful will have the experience of rehearsing and performing a play to a professional standard.

All the students that have taken part in our drama enrichment have found it a hugely fulfilling and exciting process, and many have commented on how much they enjoyed being challenged to work to professional standards in our state-of-the-art theatre, and how much satisfaction they gained from being part of a high-quality production.

For all the shows, there is also the opportunity to work in the backstage areas, learning about lighting, sound, props, costumes, set and many other areas. Everyone is welcome; just keep an eye out for the audition adverts that appear on Runshaw TV, Runshaw Radio and as posters all across the college.

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