

CASE
WESTERN
RESERVE
UNIVERSITY //

CLEVELAND
PLAY HOUSE

MFA ACTING
PROGRAM



CASE WESTERN RESERVE
UNIVERSITY
College of Arts and Sciences



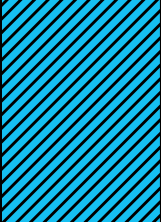
cleveland play house

THINK *BEYOND THE* POSSIBLE



Tim Magee & Tabitha Raiethel in EPIPHANY // 2026

RANKED ONE OF THE TOP 10 MFA ACTING PROGRAMS IN THE USA -*The Hollywood Reporter*, 2026



FROM THE DIRECTOR

Thank you for considering the CWRU/CPH MFA Acting Program, which has been consistently named one of the 25 Best Drama Schools in the World!

If you're looking for an intimate program, that's impossible to experience at schools with larger numbers, if you're seeking professional opportunities with a major regional theatre, if you want to train with a faculty of successful working professionals, we may be your ideal institution!

We're looking for those hard-working, bold, curious, imaginative, collaborative and empathetic artists, who believe that creativity, confidence, and ability are developed by being part of an ensemble. And we hope those are the artists that are looking for us!

The Program is housed at Tony Award-winning Cleveland Play House and the link between training and the professional theatre is established from the moment you begin. Interaction with CPH grows throughout the 3-years of training and all students graduate as full members of AEA.

Each student has the same financial package: a full tuition waiver for three years, a generous yearly living stipend and health insurance. You are not required to be teaching assistants like in many other programs because we want you to be able to put all of your energy into your actor training.

We go through an extensive audition process and work hard to create a dynamic and cohesive ensemble. Our expectations are high, the training demands focus and dedication, and we challenge you to grow in a rigorous yet supportive environment. We want our actors to graduate from this program with confidence, purpose, and the knowledge that they've grown significantly as artists and as people.

I'm always energized recruiting a new class because you are the art makers of the future. After reading this brochure and exploring our website, if you have any questions regarding the training or audition process, please reach out.

We welcome you to Think Beyond the Possible with us!

Donald Carrier
Director, CWRU/CPH MFA Acting Program





PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Three years of rigorous conservatory training includes Acting, Voice, Text Analysis, Speech and Dialects, Movement, Period Styles, Singing, Audition Technique, On-Camera Acting, Voiceover training and Stage Combat.

THE PROGRAM OFFERS:

- Performance and understudy opportunities with CPH in the first two years of training.
- A third-year professional residency at the 2015 Regional Theatre Tony Award Recipient, Cleveland Play House, performing and understudying in their mainstage season.
- Full three-year tuition waiver.
- Healthcare
- A generous yearly living stipend
- MFA Ensemble productions directed by faculty and guest artists.
- Industry Showcases in New York City and Los Angeles.
- Membership in Actors' Equity Association upon successful completion of the program.
- Nationally and internationally recognized faculty and guest instructors

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

We believe in financially supporting the ensemble without adding to the scholastic debt you might already have. Each student has the same financial package: a full tuition waiver for three years, a highly competitive yearly living stipend and health insurance.

THE CWRU/CPH ACTOR

Every two years, we admit a diverse group of committed young artists who possess a love of language, empathy for the human experience, a vivid imagination and the desire to develop the necessary interpretive, movement and vocal skills for a successful and sustained career in the ever-evolving performing arts scene. After three years, you'll be ready to step into a competitive field, confident in your abilities developed through the training, and the opportunities available to you through our professional partnerships. Our graduates have appeared in film and TV, on Broadway, off-Broadway, on tours, and in regional theaters across the country.

LEADERSHIP & FACULTY

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*...like hitting the acting school lottery. If you're one of the eight accepted students... you get a **full three-year tuition waiver**, a generous annual living stipend and experience at the Cleveland Play House. **Mad Men's** Rich Sommer is an alumnus."*

—THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

Our faculty is comprised of working artists who either direct, perform or coach in professional theaters, film and TV, all while committed to the training goals of the CWRU/CPH MFA Acting Program.

Donald Carrier // Program Director

Acting, Professional Development, Text, Speech

Jeffrey Ullom // CWRU Department of Theater Chair
Theatre History

Christopher Bohan // Acting, Audition Technique

Hayley Jannielli // Voice

Darryl Lewis // Singing

Eliza Ladd Schwarz // Movement

Jerrold Scott // Speech, Acting

David Vegh // Acting, Acting For The Camera

Kenya Woods // Dance

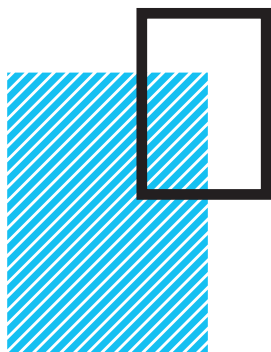
VISITING ARTISTS

- Award winning dramatists Dominique Morisseau, David Henry Hwang, Suzan-Lori Parks, Ayad Akhtar and Tony Kushner.
- Celebrated directors Michael Greif, Austin Pendleton, Kate Bergstrom, Laura Gordon, Melissa Rain Anderson, and Pirronne Yousefzadeh.
- Actors Caroline Stephanie Clay, Maggie Lacey, Michael Kostroff, Satya Chávez, Rob McClure, Karen Robinson, Emily Swallow and Brian Quijada.
- Casting Directors Erica Jensen, Karie Koppel, Michael Cassara, David Caparelliotis, Rob DeCina and Pat Goodwin.
- Play development and readings with playwrights Quiara Alegria Hudes, Kate Hamill, Heidi Schreck, Eleanor Burgess and Meg Miroshnick.
- Recent MFA productions have been directed by Terri McMahon, Eleanor Holdridge, Sara Holdren, Desdemona Chiang, Tony Sias, Sam White and Obie-award winning artist, Taibi Magar.



I've done many workshops with the CWRU/CPH MFA students, and every time I do I am pleasantly surprised by the uniqueness of every actor in the cohort. In addition to being compelling individuals, they are consistently focused, prepared, and highly talented. Having attended their NYC showcases in recent years, they have routinely ranked among the best I've seen. I always feel confident bringing CWRU/CPH graduates in for professional auditions."

— ERICA JENSEN // CASTING DIRECTOR - CALLERI, JENSEN, DAVIS CASTING



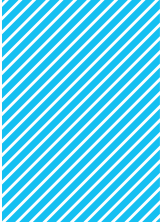
A.J. CEDEÑO MFA '10

AND JUST LIKE THAT, FOR ALL MANKIND, FBI: INTERNATIONAL, THE BLACKLIST, and YOUNGER

11

Since graduating from the CWRU/CPH MFA Acting Program, I've been lucky enough to work in an array of settings - the foundation of training I received in grad school prepared me to succeed at every single one of them."





THE ARC OF TRAINING

FIRST YEAR

The first year involves ensemble building, learning and applying a shared vocabulary, and addressing habits and tensions in body and voice. Improvisational work and devised creations are explored alongside contemporary scene work. The first year culminates in an MFA ensemble performance in the Helen Theatre. Students have possible performance and understudy assignments in CPH's season and New Ground Theatre Festival.

CURRICULUM

- **ACTING:** Contemporary scene study, Viewpoints, improvisation, Michael Chekhov and collective creations
- **MOVEMENT:** Freeing the Instrument, Dynamic Neutral Alignment, Somatics, Le Coq, Viewpoints
- **VOICE:** Vocal freedom and spontaneity. Linklater, Fitzmaurice
- **SPEECH:** Skinner/IPA
- **TEXT ANALYSIS:** How to collectively and individually approach text

SECOND YEAR

As a cohesive ensemble, the second-year class is introduced to a wide range of movement styles and more complex texts. The program moves into the modern era and there is a particular focus on the classics and heightened text. Students are involved in classroom workshop presentations, singing tutorials and possible performance and understudy assignments in CPH's season and New Ground Theatre Festival. The class also performs in fully produced MFA ensemble productions each semester in the Helen Theatre.

CURRICULUM

- **ACTING:** Modernist, Classical and Period Theatre
- **VOICE:** Expressive range and heightened text. Hart, Rodenburg, Berry
- **SPEECH:** Dialects and Classical Text
- **TEXT:** The Modernists as well as Classical and Period plays
- **MOVEMENT:** Dynamics of Composition, Object Work, Clown, Grotowski, Animal
- **SINGING TUTORIALS**
- **AUDITION TECHNIQUE**
- **COMBAT CERTIFICATION**

THIRD YEAR

Performance experiences include a final ensemble production in The Helen Theatre, along with mainstage and understudy work with CPH, leading to full membership with Actors' Equity Association. In conjunction with CPH, the class participates in a New Play Development Workshop with visiting professionals. Depending on the extent of CPH opportunities, other performances are developed, such as workshop productions and/or fully staged presentations. Each student presents a final solo show as an expression of their personal aesthetic and area of interest. At the end of the year, MFA candidates present an Actor's Showcase for agents, managers, casting directors and Industry professionals in New York City. Recent graduates have generated dozens of interviews and signed with major agents and managers.

CURRICULUM

- **ACTING FOR THE CAMERA:** Scene work
- **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** The business of being an actor
- **AUDITION TECHNIQUE:** Film and theatre
- **WORKSHOP INTENSIVES:** On-camera commercial and voice-over work
- **SINGING TUTORIALS**
- **SOLO SHOW**
- **THESIS**





Byron Johnson & Calder Meis in MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING // 2025

MFA Class of 2028 in EPIPHANY // 2026

||

Working with the Case Western MFA Actors when I directed The Tempest was one of the highlights of my year. Inventive, eager, collaborative, and generous, they represent what's best in the future of American Theatre. They are not just practitioners, but artists, continually striving to bring stories to life with abundant creativity and great joy"

—ELEANOR HOLDRIDGE // CINCINNATI PLAYHOUSE, ALLEY THEATRE, FLORIDA REP, SHAKESPEARE THEATRE OF NEW JERSEY



Modelyn Baker & Brianna Miller in THE CHERRY ORCHARD // 2024



DENITRA ISLER MFA '99

TV credits include recurring characters on [THE BONDSMAN](#), [THE RESIDENT](#), and [THE ACT](#). Films include [SIGNING TONY RAYMOND](#), [JUST MERCY](#), [THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD](#), and [THE END OF OAK STREET](#).

|| *The CWRU/CPH Acting Program provided the tools needed for me to sharpen my acting chops and move confidently within the business of stage, TV, and film. The unique relationship between CWRU and CPH arms each student with hands-on experience in professional productions. That is priceless. It definitely was for me."*

CLEVELAND PLAY HOUSE & PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

II

What a gift to work with such game student artists. They shared incredible insight and research, took fabulous risks as actors and enriched the continued articulation of the play. These are the kinds of full-bodied artists a director wants to develop plays with!"

—KATE BERGSTROM
DIRECTOR OF FIRST FLIGHT NEW PLAY
WORKSHOP WITH MFA STUDENTS
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF
THE REPERTORY THEATRE OF ST. LOUIS

Interaction with CPH includes performance opportunities in its mainstage season during the first two years of training, workshops with guest artists, new play readings, and participation in the annual New Ground Theatre Festival. The Program includes a third-year professional internship that includes all students performing in at least one CPH mainstage production on an Actors' Equity Association contract. Recent CPH MFA casting includes leading roles in *Our Town*, *Primary Trust*, *Tartuffe*, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, *The Play That Goes Wrong*, *Amadeus*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Fat Ham*, and *Fiddler on the Roof*.



Brendan Lowry & Christina McSheffrey in TARTUFFE // 2026



Byron Johnson & Madalyn Baker in OUR TOWN // 2025

RICH SOMMER MFA '04

Co-star of award-winning series *MAD MEN*, *GLOW*, *SUITS LA*, and *CLIPPED*



II

I have not had a single day of acting work in which I have not somehow accessed the training I received at CWRU/CPH. It's an integral part of who I am as an actor."



Brianna Miller & Debo Balogun in PRIMARY TRUST // 2026



Shunté Lofton in FAT HAM // 2025



Josh Bates, Madeline Colais-King & Gavin Michaels in MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN // 2023

"

*I was impressed with the rigor and the energy of the CWRU/CPH MFA acting students and working with them (on CPH's **Antigone**) was a joy."*

—LAUREN KEATING
THE GUTHRIE THEATER, McCARTER THEATRE
CENTER, THE JUNGLE THEATER, ARS NOVA

"

I had a wonderful time working with the MFA students. They are professional and very easy to work with. They offer a wonderful buoyancy and spark to the room! I would gladly work with them again and will look for opportunities to hire them- in fact I did hire one of them for my summer show at Alabama Shakespeare Festival!

—MELISSA RAIN ANDERSON
DIRECTOR, THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG
AT CLEVELAND PLAY HOUSE

"

The CWRU/Cleveland Playhouse MFA program has produced some of my favorite performers. Although there are many fine graduate acting programs in the United States, I am constantly taken by the skilled and well-informed work I see from Case grads. I've enjoyed watching them in their NYC showcase, as well as working with them on campus in Cleveland, and I always look forward to seeing what's in store from the next graduating class."

—MICHAEL CASSARA
CASTING DIRECTOR



MFA Class of 2028 in EPIPHANY // 2026



Meredith Nelson & Adam Ortega in TARTUFFE // 2026

II

*Working with the CWRU/CPH MFA students on **12th Night**, was a pure delight. I found the actors to be insightful, dedicated and talented, and I look forward to working with them in the future as I am sure they are going to light up many professional spaces for years to come."*

—SAM WHITE
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF SHAKESPEARE IN DETROIT, STRATFORD
FESTIVAL, UTAH SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

II

I have worked with several graduating classes from Case Western Reserve University. I am always impressed by how well prepared they are and how they handle whatever sides they are given. It is clear they are being taught the proper ways to approach material and are being given the skills they will need to navigate and succeed in this business.

—KARIE KOPPEL
CASTING DIRECTOR, KOPPEL CASTING

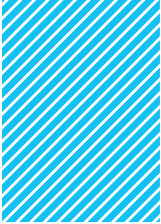
RECENT ALUMNI CREDITS

Abingdon Theatre Company
The Acting Company
Actors Theatre of Louisville
The Ahmanson Theatre
Alabama Shakespeare Festival
The Alliance Theatre
American Players Theatre
American Repertory Theatre
And Just Like That
Arena Stage
Bedlam Theatre
The Blacklist
Blindspot
Blue Bloods
The Bondsman
Bones
Broadway and Off Broadway
Bucks County Playhouse
Bull
Cape Playhouse
Chautauqua Theatre Company
Chicago Med
Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park
Cleveland Play House
Clipped

Clue - National Tour
Colorado Shakespeare Festival
Curb Your Enthusiasm
Denver Center Theatre Company
Dexter
Dexter: Original Sin
Dorset Theatre Festival
Elementary
Ensemble Theatre
Fairplay
FBI
Florida Repertory Theatre
Florida Studio Theatre
Fringe
Geva Theatre
Girls5eva
Glow
The Good Wife
Goodspeed Opera House
Great Lakes Theatre
Grey's Anatomy
Gulfshore Playhouse
Harry Potter and the Cursed Child
- National Tour
Hartford Stage Company

Hunting Wives
The Huntsman
Idaho Shakespeare Festival
In The Dark
Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival
Law and Order
Law and Order: SVU
Limitless
Lincoln Center
The Lion King - National Tour
The Long Wharf Theatre
Love
The Lowdown
Mad Men
Madam Secretary
Masters of Sex
The McCarter Theatre
The Mint Theatre
Minx
Mr. Robot
NCIS
NCIS: New Orleans
Next Act Theatre
The Old Globe
Oregon Shakespeare Festival

Palm Beach Frameworks
Peninsula Players
Pennsylvania
Shakespeare Festival
Portland Stage Company
Repertory Theatre of St. Louis
Royal Alexandra Theatre
Royal Manitoba Theatre Center
Run
Shakespeare Santa Cruz
Shakespeare Theatre
of New Jersey
Signing Tony Raymond
Syracuse Stage
Theatre For A New Audience
Wet Hot American Summer:
Ten Years Later
The White House Plumbers
Utah Shakespeare Festival
White Collar
Younger
Z: The Beginning of Everything



APPLY

THE AUDITION PROCESS

The CWRU/CPH MFA Acting Program sees candidates through the University/Resident Theatre Association's (U/RTA) National Unified Auditions as well as conducting direct private auditions by appointment. We take a new class every other year and our next intake is Fall, 2027. Auditions will be held December 2026 - February 2027.

PRIVATE AUDITIONS & INTERVIEWS

Private auditions are 15 minutes and guarantee an opportunity for the applicant to present two contrasting monologues: one classical and one contemporary as well as interviewing with MFA Program leadership. Private Auditions will be held in Cleveland, New York, Chicago and Los Angeles.

For more information or to schedule an audition, please visit:
clevelandplayhouse.com/auditions

URTA

URTA auditions allow students to audition for more than 40 different universities and drama training programs at one time for one fee. URTA auditions are held in person in Philadelphia, Chicago, Atlanta and the Los Angeles area along with online options.

In order to guarantee anyone a private callback and interview, we encourage any URTA candidate that is specifically interested in the CWRU/CPH MFA Acting Program to register for a private audition at one of our audition sites: Cleveland, New York, Chicago or Los Angeles. For more information about URTA's National Unified Auditions and Interviews (NUAI) and their audition requirements, please go to urta.com.



MORE INFORMATION AND AUDITION DETAILS AVAILABLE AT
CLEVELANDPLAYHOUSE.COM/MFA

