

CASE
WESTERN
RESERVE
UNIVERSITY //

CLEVELAND
PLAY HOUSE
**MFA ACTING
PROGRAM**

30TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON!



CASE WESTERN RESERVE
UNIVERSITY
College of Arts and Sciences



cleveland play house



**THINK
BEYOND THE
POSSIBLE**

THE CHERRY ORCHARD, 2024

RANKED ONE OF THE TOP 10 MFA ACTING PROGRAMS IN THE WORLD *-The Hollywood Reporter, 2025*

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

In this our 30th anniversary season, we take time to celebrate our alumni community, our faculty, our Cleveland Play House partners and the tremendous support given to us by Case Western Reserve University.

Since 1996, Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) has partnered with Cleveland Play House (CPH), recipient of the 2015 Regional Theatre Tony Award, to offer a Master of Fine Arts degree in Acting.

Over the past number of years, there have been major shifts in repertoire, style, markets and technology, but at the heart of it remains the artist: curious, imaginative, collaborative, empathetic, bold and passionate. Those are the artists we look for. And we hope those are the artists that are looking for us!

If the information in this brochure speaks to you, we strongly encourage you to learn more about us at clevelandplayhouse.com/mfa and to apply to the CWRU/CPH MFA Acting Program.

Donald Carrier
Director,
CWRU/CPH MFA Acting Program



THE CWRU/CPH ACTOR

We seek out artists who embrace the power of the ensemble, who understand how creativity, confidence and ability are nurtured and developed by being part of a company. If you're looking for an intimate program, where you can get the kind of personal attention that's challenging to get at schools with larger numbers, this may be the ideal institution, as we only take eight students every other year.

You'll be in the company of some of the strongest, most dedicated and talented young actors drawn from across the country and beyond. Our expectations are high, and we challenge you to grow in a compassionate yet rigorous environment. After three years, we want you to leave the program with the knowledge that you have grown significantly as actors and as people. You'll be ready to step into a competitive field, confident in your abilities developed through the training, and the professional opportunities available to you through our partnership with CPH. Our graduates have appeared in film and TV, on Broadway, off-Broadway, on tours, and in regional theatres across the country.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The CWRU/CPH MFA Acting Program believes 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. If you successfully complete the program, you will graduate with an Equity Card by working on an AEA contract with Cleveland Play House during your time here.

*...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



“

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



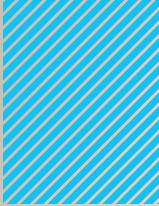
“A.J. CEDEÑO MFA '10

AND JUST LIKE THAT, FBI: INTERNATIONAL, THE BLACKLIST, GIRLS 5EVA, and YOUNGER

“

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**



THE CHERRY ORCHARD, 2024

“

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



MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING, 2025



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 [WHAT MEN WANT](#).

“

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

"

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

CPH's acclaimed history as America's first regional theatre and its deep roots in the nation's artistic landscape provide the program's actors with a tangible example of creative excellence and invaluable practical experience. 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*, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, *The Play That Goes Wrong*, *Amadeus*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Fat Ham*, and *Fiddler on the Roof*.



RICH SOMMER MFA '04

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

"

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."



*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

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



AMADEUS, 2024



SEASON'S GREETINGS, 2025



GRADUATE CLASS OF 2026

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

Actors Theatre of Louisville
The Ahmanson Theatre
The Alliance Theatre
American Repertory Theatre
And Just Like That
Arena Stage
Blackberry
The Blacklist
Blindspot
Blue Bloods
Bones
Broadway and Off Broadway
Bull
Cape Playhouse
Chautauqua Theatre Company
Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park
Cleveland Play House
Clipped
Clue - National Tour
Colorado Shakespeare Festival

Curb Your Enthusiasm
Denver Center Theatre Company
Dexter
Elementary
Ensemble Theatre
Fairplay
FBI
Florida Repertory Theatre
Florida Studio Theatre
Fringe
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

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

Oregon Shakespeare Festival
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
Theatre For A New Audience
Wet Hot American Summer: Ten Years Later
The White House Plumbers
White Collar
Younger
Z: The Beginning of Everything

APPLY

FACULTY

The faculty is comprised of artists who maintain professional careers as actors, directors and coaches in theatre, film and TV, while committed to the training goals of the CWRU/CPH MFA Acting Program. The faculty works as a team using opportunities to intersect training disciplines so that students have a holistic experience.

LEADERSHIP

DONALD CARRIER

Director,
CWRU/CPH MFA Acting Program //
Acting, Text, Audition Technique,
Professional Development

JEFFREY ULOM

Chair, CWRU Department of Theater //
Theatre History, Dramaturgy

VISITING ARTISTS

Through our associations with both CPH and CWRU, we have hosted acclaimed visiting artists for short term intensives and lectures, as well as for longer workshops. Over the last few years we've welcomed such artists as award winning dramatists Dominique Morisseau, David Henry Hwang, Suzan-Lori Parks, Ayad Akhtar and Tony Kushner for intimate lectures. Celebrated directors Michael Greif, Austin Pendleton, Kate Bergstrom, Laura Gordon, Melissa Rain Anderson and Pirronne Yousefzadeh have delivered dynamic lectures and workshops. Recent MFA productions have been directed by Terri McMahon, Eleanor Holdridge, Sara Holdren, Desdemona Chiang, Sam White and Obie-award winning artist, Taibi Magar. Actors who have given workshops in the last few years include Caroline Stephanie Clay, Michael Kostroff, Satya Chávez, Rob McClure, Karen Robinson, Emily Swallow, Vanessa Morosco, Brian Quijada and Lelund Durond Thompson. Prominent Casting Directors Erica Jensen, Karie Koppel, Michael Cassara, David Caparelliotti, Rob DeCina and Pat Goodwin have shared their expertise with the MFA Program.



THE CHERRY ORCHARD, 2024

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 private auditions by appointment. We take a new class every other year. Our next intake is Fall 2027.

For information about U/RTA's National Unified Auditions and Interviews (NUAI) and their audition requirements, please go to urta.com. For actors who are not participating in the U/RTA auditions, you can learn about our audition process at clevelandplayhouse.com/auditions. In 2026-27, we will be seeing candidates in Cleveland, Philadelphia, New York, Chicago and Los Angeles.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- Three years of rigorous conservatory training including Acting, Voice, Text Analysis, Speech and Dialects, Movement, Period Styles, Singing, Audition Technique, On-Camera Acting and Stage Combat.
- 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
- Generous yearly living stipend
- MFA Ensemble productions with faculty and guest directors
- New York City Industry Showcase
- Membership in Actors' Equity Association upon successful completion of the program
- Nationally and internationally recognized faculty and guest instructors

MORE INFORMATION AND AUDITION DETAILS AVAILABLE AT

CLEVELANDPLAYHOUSE.COM/MFA



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