

CMU Drama Precollege Stagecraft

Some Interview Stuff

Make an impression:

Your presence, appearance, and demeanor will make every bit as much a contribution to your interview as your specific statements, answers, or portfolio. Make sure you are on time. Dress nicely, at least one step above what you would wear every day. Try to make eye contact, be open and friendly and SPEAK UP. The School of Drama is a very rigorous program. More than anything else, the interviewers are trying to get a read on your personality, energy, and enthusiasm.

Prepare:

Being unprepared is a double whammy, on the one hand you won't have the information or you'll appear awkward, and on the other the level of preparedness will speak loudly as a trait on its own.

- ✓ Go through what you're going to say ahead of time – it shouldn't sound too practiced, but you really don't want it to sound like it's your first time through
- ✓ Know your class rank, GPA, ACT/SAT & Achievement scores. Not knowing them, while you're in the process of multiple interviews seems odd.
- ✓ Work with your portfolio items so you'll know what's coming next and are able to show items effectively. Remember there will likely be several people in the room.
- ✓ Be conversant about the school. This is a big commitment; you should look like you know something about it.
- ✓ Be ready for questions (see below)

Ten questions you ought to be able to answer (and like your answers):

These questions don't have right or wrong answers, but a candidate for a CMU level program should have thought about these issues.

1. What is it you like about theatre?
2. Is there a specific part of the process in which you find yourself specializing?
3. What has drawn you to your particular specialty in theatre?
4. What is the strongest part of your process?
5. What is the weakest part of your process?
6. What is the thing you most want to learn?
7. What is the difference between a liberal arts education and a conservatory education?
8. Why do you think a conservatory program will work well for you?
9. What are your short-term educational & professional goals?
10. What are your long-term educational & professional goals?

Have questions of your own:

This interview is a chance you likely won't have again to be in the room with people that can answer any question you might have about the program. Come with questions about process, classes, campus, Pittsburgh – you will appear much more engaged if you have questions of your own. If nothing else, this will give you a chance to let someone else do the talking for a few minutes.

Accentuate the positive/eliminate the negative:

Don't badmouth other people you've worked with, productions you've worked on, or other programs you've talked to. Keep your tone positive. Stick to your own achievements and what you like about your options, theatre, education, & CMU.

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Drama Portfolios

The portfolio is a career communication tool that creates a narrative about your work and artistic philosophy. It is a showcase of what you have to offer as an employment, exhibition, or academic candidate and is a compilation of your best and most recent work. Your portfolio is a piece that is always in progress and always evolving as you in turn evolve as a creative professional.

There are five steps to creating a successful portfolio:

1. Self-assessment- Decide who you are as an artist and where you want this portfolio to take you
2. Organization- Decide what you will include
3. Design- Arrange your work based on size, portability, cost, durability, maintenance, and additions
4. Review- Collect and consider feedback
5. Production- Select a format and finalize the presentation of your work

Self-Assessment:

- Articulate your vision. Your portfolio should not only highlight your technical competence, but also reflect your artistic philosophy.
- Learn about the gallery, employer, or institution that will review your work. Ask yourself if that organization's vision is consistent with your own, and tailor your portfolio reflect your compatibility.

Organizing a Portfolio

- Remember that the quality of your work is more important than the quantity.
- Group your pieces by type, rather than placing them in chronological order. This will allow your interview to flow better (put pieces in chronological order by section if appropriate).
- Show your process. Employers, judges, and faculty love to see sketches, drafts, and works in progress.
- Include a publications section. You may include work published in a student publication.
- Provide your contact information in your portfolio^{3/4} it could become separated from your cover letter and resume. If you have any loose pages, be sure that they are clearly labeled as well.

Designing a Portfolio

- Develop a coherent image. Use similar design elements for your resume, cover letter and portfolio.
- Present all of your samples in the same manner. Inconsistency is perceived as lack of taste or lack of focus.
- Strive for simplicity and clarity. Use line, alignment, font, and font size to organize your information.
- Consider the angle from which you shoot 3-D work. Try to capture the project in a single image as too many images of a single project will clutter your portfolio and dilute its potency.
- Be ethical. Remember to take credit for only what you did in a group, ensemble or firm project.
- Be prepared to USE your portfolio in an interview. Do not include any pages that you would not feel comfortable explaining. Use your pages as visual references to your verbal ideas.

Production of a Portfolio

- Invest in quality reproductions. Your portfolio is only as strong as your weakest image or lowest resolution.
- Laminate your pages. Plastic laminating saturates the color of your images and protects samples.
- Be sure that your first page is particularly sturdy; it will be subject to the most wear and tear.
- Proofread, proofread, proofread, and then have someone else proofread. Then proofread one more time!!!
- Consider many possible viewers or readers^{3/4}a portfolio should wow any reviewer, whether she thumbs through it in thirty seconds or pours over it for a half-hour.

Review

- Solicit feedback before showing your portfolio to an employer, gallery owner, or admissions committee.
- Register for the annual Make Your Living, Living Your Dream conference on campus. This event provides many opportunities for portfolio reviews by professionals in your field.
- Approach your faculty advisor, or contact the Career Center to schedule a portfolio review with your school's consultant.

Drama Portfolios

Like all artists, dramatic artists of all kinds need a portfolio that showcases their talents in a neat, professional and visually compelling manner. For drama students, a portfolio must meet the additional challenge of bringing performances to life in a two-dimensional medium. Therefore, students should consider the following content guidelines in addition to the general tips outlined at the beginning of this handout.

Technical Directors Portfolios should include:

- Resume and cover letter
- Photographs of completed projects
- In process photos from the shop and pictures from the rear showing assembly
- Copies of production paperwork (budgets, schedules, estimates)
- Developmental Drawings (sketches or schematics to show process)
- Shop drawings, drafting (hand drafting and CAD)
- Awards or certificates
- Published articles
- Programs of performances you have worked on (as titles for pages of photos- do not include the entire program unless you designed it or else it will be seen as filler)
- Favorable reviews or excerpts of reviews
- Newspaper and magazine articles and photographs describing your work
- It is best to include a complete set of the items above for a project. Presenting an estimate, schedules, drafts, and photographs of the finished set are better than including bits and pieces of several different projects.

Production Managers and Stage Managers should include:

- Resume and cover letter
- Copies of production paperwork (contact sheets, calendars, memos, daily schedules)
- Any awards or certificates
- Any published articles
- Photographs are not as useful, but they fill out your presentation and present the framework for discussion of your other documents

In addition, a Stage Manager might include:

- Copies of portions of a prompt script
- Examples of rehearsal notes

- Examples of blocking notation
- Examples of performance reports
- References (what directors you have worked for, stage managers you've assisted)

In addition, a Production Manager should include:

- Copies of production budgets (projections, adjustments, and actuals)
- Copies of seasonal/annual production budgets
- Production meeting summaries/minutes
- Writing samples
- Production schedules/calendars
- Seasonal/annual calendars

Scenic Designer Portfolios should include:

- Models or renderings of design
- Photographs of completed work
- Sketches of process work in design phase
- Floor plans for each set
- Construction documents for one or more productions
- Working drawings, cross sections and details
- Property drawings or renderings

Costume Design Portfolios should include:

- A series of sketches indicating familiarity with historical periods and the principle types of costume for those periods
- A series of color renderings, swatches showing costumes for entire small cast play or one scene of a large cast play. Indicate details such as cut, trim, fastenings, accessories, etc.
- Detail drawings of wigs, hats, jewelry, etc. and indicate construction technique
- Scale drawings of patterns
- Process drawings for a costume plot
- Photographs of above completed work

Lighting Design Portfolios should include:

- Scaled light plots with lighting instruments placed in proper location and the lighting areas outlined and identified
- Instrument schedules for the above plots
- Sample cue sheets for at least the major cues of one production
- Color photographs illustrating the effect of the light at selected moments in the play (include actors in the photographs)