

# DANCE - MASTER OF FINE ARTS (MFA)

## Curriculum

The primary core MFA curriculum focuses on the development of the individual artistic voice in performance, choreography, teaching, research and writing. The presentation of new creative work is bolstered, augmented and enriched by the study of theory, history and many diverse artists of all dance genres and movement disciplines. The program is designed to be responsive to individual areas of interest and to ensure effective preparation for careers in academics, not-for-profit organizations, and the professional arenas.

Students are encouraged to think outside of the box in terms of course choices, creative pursuits and scholarly activities. A considerable number of the required credits consists of student-selected courses and electives, allowing for a great deal of freedom and individualized study. It is critical that a student work closely with their advisor in selecting courses in the dance curriculum, courses outside of the department and creating independent studies that will support the student's goals and secondary area of emphasis.

The Graduate School requires a minimum of 30 credits at the 5000 or 6000 level for a Masters Degree. The 50 or 60-credit requirement for the MFA in dance degree exceeds the Graduate School requirement for two reasons:

- This approach acknowledges the importance of physical practice along with theoretical exploration and formally recognizes the necessity of both types of work in students' degree requirements.
- The MFA is considered a "terminal degree" in the field of choreography and teaching. Our program is designed to meet academic standards commensurate with our Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee (<https://www.colorado.edu/facultyaffairs/academic-review-and-planning-advisory-committee-arpac/>) certification and national licensing.

### Choose your own adventure -- flexibility with elective credits

- With 42 credit hours of core coursework, that leaves 18 credit hours for electives.
- The 18 elective credits may be used in a variety of ways that support the MFA Candidate's research. Choices may include but are not limited to: additional creative practice, movement and seminars both inside and outside the dance program.
- Flexibility in designing your program is possible and should be carefully discussed and planned with your advisor.
- Your secondary emphasis will be crafted using elective credit hours.

## Performance and Production

All MFA students are expected to present choreographic work each semester, either as part of course-related events or in other departmentally produced events. It is expected that you will seek not only to deepen your established artistic practices, but also assiduously expand your artistic self into less familiar movement, choreographic, aesthetic and expressive modes. Evaluation of your artistic output will

be based on articulateness, sophistication, theatrical and conceptual completeness and on the extent to which you have deeply sought discovery, reconsideration and analysis of your art-making methods. We hope this encourages you to savor the rhythm of creative cycles in your life, and enduringly keeps you inspired to discover your own art-making from new vantage points.

You are urged to seek a variety of performance opportunities with fellow students, faculty and guest artists. Produced performances are presented multiple times each year and informal showings occur regularly during the year. Extensive work with off-campus groups is often extremely difficult to schedule and tends to distract and overwhelm students with multi-tasking and juggling of priorities (see "performance opportunities" for off-campus procedures approval). We intend to support your primary effort of completing your graduate studies on a timely basis with as little debt as possible.

Every year, the dance program produces multiple concerts on their main season with CU Presents (CU campus office responsible for ticketing/marketing).

There are also less formal choreographer showcases and non-major showings for showing work. The full production schedule necessitates early planning, team communication and reliable management of department resources and personnel. Our aim is to support the full creativity of our students while balancing the many needs of the department.

## Modified MFA Program for Professionals

Those students entering our program with significant professional backgrounds including teaching, choreography and/or performance may be able to request a modified degree plan. For such students, an interview with the Director of Dance and the Director of Graduate Studies for Dance during the application/audition process is necessary. The interview will help determine if there is a good match between the student's goals and the MFA program.

The goal of the modified program for professionals is to provide flexibility in the pursuit of individual goals and the fortification of specific educational gaps. In close consultation with the faculty and graduate advisor, the student will be able to propose and develop new areas of research and creative work. All modifications to the MFA program must receive the approval of program directors and the CU Boulder Graduate School. The number of required credits and semesters will be determined based on the individual's exceptional professional experiences.

## Teaching Requirement

Graduate Part-Time Teaching Instructors (GPTI), Teaching Assistants (TA), Graduate Assistants (GA) and Research Assistant (RA)

The department is committed to providing full funding for all our admitted MFA students.

This funding comes through appointments that include: teaching assistants (TA), graduate assistants (GA), research assistants (RA) and graduate part-time instructors (GPTI). The percentage of these appointments vary, but do not exceed 50% (or 20 hours of work per week). These assignments are awarded and evaluated for one semester at a time. Although we cannot guarantee "full" funding, we have taken the initiative to reduce cohort sizes which allows us to consistently provide appointments that cover tuition, medical insurance and salary.

The availability of appointments is driven by the department's enrollment and curricular needs. We do our best to offer our students a variety of teaching and professional experiences, but we cannot always guarantee MFA candidates' first choice.

## Types of Appointments

Graduate Part-Time Teaching Instructors (GPTI)- Teaches undergrad classes.

Graduate Assistants (GAs) serve in roles that assist the functioning of the department's production season. These roles provide professional training while providing an essential service to the department.

GA positions include (varies based on availability): dance events coordinator, assistant director of dance production, video archivist and communications.

Research Assistants (RAs) assist a faculty member or department on a substantial research or production project. The department prioritizes instructional needs of the department as a first priority before identifying research appointments.

Teaching Assistants (TAs) serve as class assistants under the guidance of a particular instructor who assists and encourages the TA to develop excellence in teaching. TAs are not placed in overall charge of courses. Selection of TAs is based on teaching experience, previous experience (including coursework) in history and the contemporary arts, the ability to guide recitations and grade written work. TAs must attend all lectures.

## Requirements

### Admission Requirements

Applicants are expected to show a high level of proficiency in dance performance, pedagogy and choreography. All applicants must submit the Teaching Application (<https://www.colorado.edu/theatredance/dance/graduates/graduate-assistantships-teaching-application/>) portion of the application. Funding (<https://www.colorado.edu/theatredance/financial-information/>) for the MFA is contingent upon teaching within our program.

The deadline for all applications is December 1. Select applicants will be invited to an initial Zoom interview in January. The faculty will then invite a small number of applicants for an in-person campus audition in February. International students may request to audition in digital format. The dance program does not accept applications or transfer requests for spring semester admission.

The specific audition dates and detailed information about the on-campus audition can be found on the department's Dance MFA Application (<https://www.colorado.edu/theatredance/dance/graduates/mfa-dance-application/>) webpage.

Graduate Record Exam (GRE) scores are not required for the MFA in dance application.

### Prerequisites

- Hold a baccalaureate degree in dance or equivalent dance proficiency, and experience with a degree in another field.
- Have an undergraduate GPA of at least 2.75 and meet the Graduate School's minimum Admission Requirements (<https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/admissions/prepare-apply/>).

- Demonstrate a deep commitment to the field of dance with proficiency in practice, performance, choreography and teaching.

## Program Requirements

### Required Courses and Credits

The three-year program requires a minimum of 60 credit hours, at least 50 of which must be completed on campus at CU Boulder. At this time there is no low-residency option for the MFA program. The curriculum focuses on performance, choreography, scholarship, pedagogy and a secondary area of specialization. Grades lower than a B- cannot be applied towards graduation; a 3.0 GPA is needed to graduate.

Code	Title	Credit Hours
<b>Required Courses</b>		
THDN 6009	Research and Teaching in Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies	2
DNCE 5001	Graduate Technique	6 (2 credits taken 3X)
DNCE 5901	Somatic Applications to Dance	2
Varied Additional Technique Classes (DNCE)		4
DNCE 5012	Concert Production <sup>1</sup>	1
DNCE 5053	Advanced Dance Composition <sup>1</sup>	3
DNCE 5056	Graduate Teaching Seminar	2
DNCE 5064	Music and Dance Seminar: Collaboration	2
DNCE 6073	Choreography (taken twice with different instructors) <sup>1</sup>	6 (3 credits taken 2X)
DNCE 6969	The Graduate Project	8
The following courses will fulfill the Seminar in Dance requirement		
DNCE 6047	Seminar: Dance	3
THDN 5010	Introduction to Performance Studies	
DNCE 6017	Cultural Collisions and Ethics in Dance and Movement Performance	3
THTR 5049	Topics in Theatre Studies	3
THDN 5051	Topics in Performance Studies	3
THDN 5099	Live Performance: Critical Curation	
THTR 6011	Theatre and Performance Histories 1	3

**Electives With 42 credit hours of core coursework, that leaves 18 credit hours for electives (including independent studies). Your secondary emphasis will be crafted using elective credit hours. Common electives in the Theatre and Dance Department include: <sup>2</sup>**

DNCE 5048	Performance and Community Engagement
THTR 5071	Advanced Directing
THTR 5213	Improvisation I: Thinking On Your Feet
THTR 5033	Advanced Movement for the Stage
THTR 5025	Costume Patterning and Construction
THTR 5113	Comedy Matters
THTR 5065	Theatrical Tailoring
THTR 5105	Theatre Make-Up Design

THTR 5175	Conceptualization	
THTR 5125	Watercolor Illustration and Rendering Techniques	
THTR 5085	Theatre Management	
Secondary Emphasis		9-6
Additional Electives		12-9
<b>Total Credit Hours</b>		<b>60-66</b>

- <sup>1</sup> Students must complete Advanced Composition, both Choreography courses, and Concert Production prior to the semester in which their choreographic/creative project is presented.
- <sup>2</sup> Students who do the Aerial Dance or Somatic Secondary Emphases will complete fewer credit hours of electives.

### MFA Project and Project Paper

The culmination of graduate study is the MFA Project and Project Paper. The MFA Project is based on creative work: a choreographic/creative project usually presented in a live performance or digital format, followed by a paper and an oral defense of the project and paper. We celebrate many varieties of creative projects and we offer the support and imaginative expertise of an outstanding production team.

### Graduate Comprehensive Portfolio

Prior to graduation, MFA candidates submit a collection of scholarly, pedagogical and creative work. The portfolio is intended to document and synthesize the graduate's personal practice, philosophies, choreography and academic investigations. It includes creative and pedagogical statements, scholarly essays, a CV and digital documentation of teaching, performance and choreography.

## Plan(s) of Study

Please contact with your GPA or advisor for specific need for a semester, before registering for any class.

## Secondary Emphasis

We wholeheartedly assert that a liberal arts education cultivates a healthy balance of critical thinking, creativity and communal excellence. In this spirit, MFA candidates choose at least one secondary area of study to give variety and dimension to their training.

### Secondary Emphases Within Our Campus

Students may choose an emphasis that can be fulfilled by courses taken within the department and/or in other campus departments. Secondary emphases vary between two and five courses, depending on the choice of subject. The university setting is particularly well-suited to broad educational goals, given the wide assortment of subjects available at the CU Boulder campus. We encourage students to search far and wide through the course catalog to discover courses and areas of study that are particularly suited to their individual interests and goals.

Students may also choose to complete a graduate certificate as their secondary emphasis. The most common certificates earned by MFA students are:

- Women & Gender Studies Certificate (<https://www.colorado.edu/wgst/graduates/>)
- Hip-hop Studies Certificate (<https://www.colorado.edu/theatredance/dance/hip-hop-studies-certificate/>)
- Critical Ethnic Studies Certificate (<https://www.colorado.edu/ethnicstudies/graduate/graduate-certificate/>)

- Emergent Technologies and Media Arts Practices (<https://www.colorado.edu/cmci/dcmp/cert-etmap/>)
- Critical Theory Certificate (<https://catalog.colorado.edu/graduate/colleges-schools/arts-sciences/programs-study/germanic-slavic-languages-literatures/critical-theory-graduate-certificate/>)
- Digital Humanities Certificate (<https://www.colorado.edu/crdds/dhgc/>)
- Arts Administration Certificate (<https://www.colorado.edu/music/academics/graduate-advising/graduate-certificate-arts-administration/>)

## Aerial Dance Emphasis

The aerial dance emphasis is available to students who have a serious interest in aerial dance and its application to dance training, performance and/or teacher training. Students can work towards the completion of the Professional Training Program at Frequent Flyers Aerial Dance Studio (<http://www.frequentflyers.org/>)® (located in Boulder) while simultaneously pursuing their MFA degree. The Professional Training Program must be successfully completed before the MFA degree will be awarded. Before a student is eligible to begin work in the aerial dance emphasis, they must be officially accepted by Frequent Flyers® Professional Training Program and have been approved by the Director of Graduate Studies for Dance to follow the aerial dance emphasis.

The aerial emphases is sponsored by the program, but requires students to take off-campus training. Because of this, the number of CU Boulder credit hours required for the MFA is reduced from 60 to 50 credit hours.

## Somatic Emphasis

The somatic emphasis is social justice oriented. It is intended for students with a strong devotion to intersectional practice-based research. Designed as a connective tissue within the MFA in Dance, the somatic emphasis fosters the artist-citizen to be accountable, embodied and aware through dancing, dance making, performance, critical discourse, collaboration, wellness and activism. Students are supported in accumulating broad experiential knowing through diverse somatic approaches.

We prioritize the development of skills and strategies toward cultivating radical aliveness. How we inhabit our living bodies/minds, and relate to others, impacts our identities, our communities, and the structures we participate in. We consider how somatic decolonizing will deepen collective movements toward justice, equity, diversity, inclusivity, and responsive global citizenship.

The MFA in dance honors the complexity of somatic lineages and practices. We place value on knowing the global roots of somatics and strongly assert that Eurocentric certified somatic systems are not the only traditions to hold valuable somatic knowledge. Our program supports innovative research into somatic practices of every origin. We aim for a collaborative re-imagining of the potential applications for culturally informed and politically engaged somatic practice; depth of inquiry, integration of theory and practice, and queering of perspectives is encouraged. This emphasis calls for investment in the power of our anatomical, energetic, cultural bodies/minds in the face of converging crises, shifting human demographics, emerging realities and potential futures.

The somatic emphasis consists of an individualized course of study worth 12 credits. The specific course of study will be developed by each student in collaboration with Dance faculty Anya Cloud.

Course of study will be developed from the following:

- Graduate level Dance courses in somatics
- One approved course in anatomy, physiology and/or kinesiology
- Peer-to-peer somatic lab practice
- Cumulative somatic research documentation and bibliography
- Intensive off-campus somatic training<sup>1</sup>
- One approved course outside of the department from the following areas: Ethnic Studies, Women and Gender Studies, LGBTQ Studies, Disability Studies, Native American and Indigenous Studies, Peace and Conflict Studies, Environmental Justice and Eco-Social Justice, or a related and relevant course approved by faculty

<sup>1</sup> Students can apply for CU Boulder grant funding (<https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/funding/awards-grants/>) to pursue off-campus somatic training. MFA in Dance grant options are listed within the MFA Handbook (<https://www.colorado.edu/theatredance/graduate-student-resources/>). Current local partners include the Renée Crown Wellness Institute at CU Boulder and community practitioners of Feldenkrais®, Alexander Technique, Body-Mind Centering®, Gyrotonic®/Gyrokinesis®, and Pilates. Current international remote partner includes a practitioner of Kung Fu.

Students must declare the somatic emphasis by the end of the first year. Given the nature of the Somatic Emphasis, the number of CU Boulder credit hours required for the MFA with a Somatic Emphasis is reduced from 60 to 50 credit hours. All requirements must be successfully completed before the MFA degree will be awarded. The Dance faculty advisor for the somatic emphasis is Anya Cloud.

## Learning Outcomes

By the completion of the program, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate a clear and individuated artistic voice.
- Demonstrate preparation and empowerment for fulfilling their chosen career paths, both in their graduate studies and in the professional world.
- Investigate traditional and innovative approaches to movement invention, choreography and performance.
- Demonstrate somatic awareness and fluency in dance technique, including but not limited to improvisation, jazz, African Caribbean, aerial, hip-hop, Transnational fusion, north and west African dance, ballet and contemporary.
- Actively engage in dance research, with particular attention to discovering relationships between scholarship and creative work.
- Examine and practice pedagogical goals and strategies from aesthetic, cultural and anatomical perspectives.
- Present choreography/creative work on a regular basis and perform in the creative work of faculty, peers and guest artists working in a variety of aesthetic and technical styles.