



Title III Theatre Arts Program

Message from the Director

There is a moment in every production when a group of students stops being a collection of individuals and becomes a company. I watched it happen twice this year. It usually arrives late, well past the point where everyone is tired, and it changes the way our students speak to one another for the rest of the run. That moment is why I do this work.

Everything we built this year was meant to bring students to that point. Our workshops, rehearsals, and performances placed them in real working conditions, with real responsibility and real deadlines, because that is where confidence comes from. What they carry out of this program reaches far past the stage. They learn to collaborate, solve problems on their feet, speak in front of people, and finish something to a standard that someone else will see. I am grateful to Title III for making this year possible, and to our students for everything they gave it. I am already looking forward to what this next season asks of them.

Tianee Eiland, Activities Director

Section I

A Year of Programming and Student Growth

This year our students learned from working professionals, worked with immersive technology, and carried out two mainstage productions from an empty stage to a finished performance. What follows is less about what we scheduled and more about what our students walked away



Professional Workshops

We brought professionals from the performance and production industries onto our campus so students could learn from people currently doing the work. Sessions covered immersive and digital performance alongside the physical craft of building and staging a show. Our students asked their own questions, watched demonstrations as they happened, and then tried the techniques themselves. It is hard to overstate what that access means for a student who has never met anyone working in this field.



Immersive Learning Technology

We continued bringing virtual reality headsets into instruction, giving our students hands-on access to virtual and augmented performance spaces. They used the technology to study spatial design, test staging choices before committing to them, and experiment freely without the cost or risk of a physical build. Every participant had access regardless of what they had used before, which matters more than it may sound. Students often hold back from new tools when they assume everyone else already knows how to use them. Our aim is to strengthen traditional theatre practice with this technology, never to replace it.



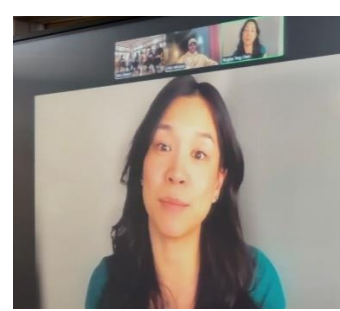
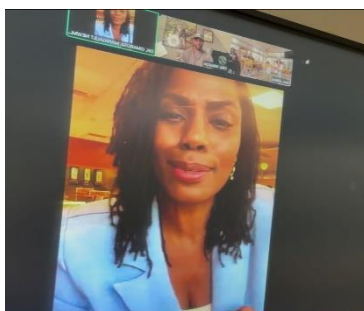
Mainstage Productions

We presented two mainstage productions this year. The first placed our students inside the story of the first Black theatre company in America, work that carried real weight for an HBCU community and gave them a historical frame for their own artistic choices. Our spring production, *Black University*, continued that thread. Students filled roles across the entire production cycle, on stage and behind it, in performance, set construction and design, costume, stage management, and promotion. Both shows drew warm audiences and strong attendance. What mattered more is that both gave our students the experience of taking a production from an empty stage to opening night and knowing they were the ones who built it.



Conversations with Working Artists

While preparing for *Black University*, our students sat in on a series of video calls with three working artists who generously gave their time.





Omarosa Manigault Newman joined us as one of our own. She is a Central State alum and a Marauder, as well as a graduate of Howard University and the Southern University Law Center. She holds seven degrees, among them a JD, an MBA, and a doctorate, and she is an award-winning producer and director and a number-one New York Times and Wall Street Journal bestselling author. Welcoming her home meant a great deal to our students, who could hear their own campus inside her story.

Otis Winston, co-writer of *Black University*, coordinated the series and then spoke with the very students preparing to perform his work, which is a rare thing for any young artist to experience. He has appeared in all three *Venom* films along with other blockbuster productions, and he is currently filming, yet he still made the time for us.

Regina Ting Chen, known to our students as Ms. Kelly in season four of Netflix's *Stranger Things*, with further credits including *NCIS*, *Queen of the South*, *Red One*, and *Thunderbolts*, talked with them about her path from the University of Texas at Austin to the screen and everything in between.



What our students carried out of these conversations was not only craft. It was evidence that the distance between this campus and that work is shorter than they had believed.

What Our Students Gained

- Direct instruction from professionals working in performance, design, and production today.
- Conversation with nationally recognized actors and producers, including a Central State alum.
- Hands-on experience with virtual reality tools for spatial design and staging.
- Exposure to the full production cycle, from audition and build through opening night.
- Real technical skills in set construction, lighting, sound, costume, and stage management.
- Habits that travel with them, including collaboration, time management, public speaking, and accountability to a team.
- A welcoming way into the arts for students with no prior theatre experience.

Section II

Looking Ahead

The coming season keeps the same promise, pairing every production with workshops so our students learn the craft before and while they perform it. Both mainstage shows and the season



kickoff draw on African American life from the 1920s through the early 1960s, which gives students a shared historical thread to hold onto across the whole year.

Workshops and Skill Building

We open with a meet and greet, an easy first step for anyone who is curious but not yet sure. Students can ask questions, read from the season's material, and audition the same evening. A set-building workshop follows, where students build and paint a working stage set alongside a professional and discover that construction and design carry a show as much as anything that happens under the lights. In the spring, our Pen to Performance series pairs students with a music industry professional to develop and perform their own writing, showcased on campus as part of a Black History Month tribute.

Mainstage Productions

Murder at The Sugar Hill Room is an interactive murder mystery set in a Harlem Renaissance speakeasy, a format that asks our students to hold character while responding to a live audience in real time. Little Shop of Horrors is a full musical, which asks still more of them, with vocal work, choreography, puppetry, and a far larger technical build. Together the two give our students remarkable range inside a single year. Both are free and open to the campus, and we would love to see you there.

How to Get Involved

Actors, crew, musicians, writers, and students who are simply curious are all welcome here, and no experience is required. If you have been thinking about it, consider this your invitation. Reach the Theatre Arts Program at TEILAND@CENTRALSTATE.EDU, or join our Discord to hear from us directly.

**CENTRAL**
STATE UNIVERSITY

THEATRE ARTS PROGRAM

2026 • 2027 ACTIVITIES

Productions & Workshops ALL STUDENTS ARE WELCOME!

WORKSHOP SEASON KICKOFF FALL PROGRAM	Theatre Arts Meet & Greet and Murder Mystery Auditions Introduce yourself, ask questions, and get more info about our Theatre program. Discover 1920s–1950s African American life, the focus of this year's productions. Read excerpts from <i>Little Shop of Horrors</i> and audition for the fall Murder Mystery.	TUESDAY, AUG. 25 5–7 P.M. ROBESON HALL, AUDITORIUM
WORKSHOP FALL PROGRAM	Set Building Workshop Set building and design are essential for a good production. Learn to build & paint a stage set alongside a professional.	SUNDAY, OCT. 4 BUILD 5–9 P.M. TUESDAY, OCT. 6 PAINT 6–10 P.M. ROBESON HALL, AUDITORIUM
MAINSTAGE FALL PRODUCTION	Murder at The Sugar Hill Room – Murder Mystery Step into a 1920s Harlem Renaissance speakeasy and team up with the cast to crack a murder. Period concessions served. 1920s dress encouraged.	AUDITIONS • TUESDAY, AUG. 25 5–7 P.M. SHOW • FRIDAY, NOV. 13 7 P.M. ROBESON HALL, AUDITORIUM FREE ADMISSION
WORKSHOP SERIES SPRING PROGRAM	Pen to Performance Write & perform your own song, rap, spoken word, or poem with a music-industry exec — twice a week for 4 weeks. Collab with WCSU to create your piece and, as a Black History Month tribute, get showcased at CSU's R&B Night.	KICKOFF IN JANUARY/POSTED ON DISCORD SHOW • SATURDAY FEB. 13, 2027 R&B NIGHT UNIVERSITY STUDENT CENTER, BALLROOM
MAINSTAGE SPRING MUSICAL	Little Shop of Horrors Feed the plant, if you dare! Want to be on stage or work behind the scenes? Come to the audition and informational in January. We need stagehands, production team members, including building, set design, choreography, media/communications, and costume.	AUDITIONS IN JANUARY/POSTED ON DISCORD SHOW • FRIDAY, APR. 2 7 P.M. & SATURDAY, APR. 3 5 P.M. ROBESON HALL, AUDITORIUM FREE ADMISSION

Join Us – HOW TO GET INVOLVED

actors • crew • musicians • writers, or just interested? No experience required.

Contact: Tianeé Eiland, Activities Director/Theatre Arts
Send an email for more information or to sign up: TEILAND@CENTRALSTATE.EDU

We use Discord to communicate. Discord Theatre Group link – <https://discord.gg/tkrdFWHqXm>
or SCAN THE QR CODE



SCAN TO JOIN DISCORD