P. Theatre Historian

The Theatre Historian researches, presents, and publishes studies of theatre performance, production, dramatic literature, and theatre theory. Theatre Historians organize and evaluate data from primary and secondary sources to trace past events within social, political, geographic, racial/ethnic, and performative contexts. They also analyze and interpret classical and contemporary playscripts in these contexts. Theatre Historians may also translate plays or other written resources on the theatre, curate or archive theatre collections, or work towards historical preservation. Sometimes the Theatre Historian explores theories on the nature of theatre in both contemporary and historical frameworks. Theatre Historians may or may not be involved in theatre production.

When evaluating documentation in a tenure dossier, external reviewers, administrators, and the tenure and promotion committee may ask themselves whether the candidate’s tenure portfolio demonstrates the ability to teach and use their practice to explore:

Production Expertise

- A historical and cultural understanding of theatre production (including acting, directing, theatre architecture, theatre management, and the visual elements of theatrical production applied in context
- Expert skill in analyzing playscripts as they function in performance
- Ability to effectively communicate with theatre practitioners, members of the scholarly community, and the general public
- Training in Mental Health First Aid, Bystander Intervention, Anti-Racism, LGBTQ+ support, and DEIJE work

Historical Context

- Extensive knowledge and understanding of theatre history across geographical periods and time
- Knowledge of the political and socio-cultural roles and world views that theatre performs historically and in the contemporary moment
- Knowledge and understanding of the theories and cultural contexts that have shaped theatre and performance throughout history and in the contemporary moment
- Knowledge of dramatic literature across the globe from classic to contemporary genres.
- Knowledge of art history, architecture and décor as they relate to the Theatre Historian’s areas of study
- Knowledge of music history as they relate to the Theatre Historian’s areas of study
- Knowledge of economic, political and social history as they relate to the Theatre Historian’s areas of study

Collaborative Skills

- In depth understanding of archival research practices
- Expertise in identifying and using information and bibliographic resources appropriate to critical, theoretical, historical, and empirical research in theatre
- Understanding of curatorial practices as they relate to displaying ephemera from theatre history.
- An understanding of how DEIJE is considered when selecting research projects for students
- An understanding of how DEIJE informs the recruitment of students, in cases where that is part of the candidate’s labor
  An understanding of how DEIJE issues impact their life at the university and an ability to think about their own implicit biases

**P.1. Theatre Historians Specializing in Culturally-Specific Scholarship**

Many PhDs in theater or performance specialized in theatre and performance cultures centered on Peoples of the Global Majority’s artistic experiences and worldview. Institutions evaluating tenure and/or promotion for scholars in these areas will need to turn to professional organizations such as BTN, LTC, CAATA, and others to provide the expertise needed to adjudicate faculty for promotion and tenure. ATHE encourages chairs, deans, and committee members to consider the unique training, knowledge, skills, and qualities that their faculty with theatre and performance training bring to the job.

These faculty members have adapted to their new fields, but their theatre and performance background, expertise, and training remains paramount to their work. Faculty members in myriad departments research and write and teach, but those with theatre and performance degrees bring further skills such as creating content, working collaboratively, putting on events, managing projects, and perfecting interpersonal communication, among other skills.

In addition to the skills listed for theatre history professors generally, external reviewers, administrators, and the tenure and promotion committee may ask themselves whether the candidate’s tenure portfolio demonstrates the ability to teach and use their creative practice to explore:

- Expert skill in strategies for decentering whiteness in the theatre history curriculum, centering the craft and cultural worldview of People of the Global Majority
- Knowledge of contemporary theatre artists who are working in the culturally specific contexts that the scholar studies
- In-depth knowledge of theatre and performance history within the cultural contexts of the races/ethnicities of people whom the scholar studies

**P.2. Theatre Historians /Dramatic Literature Specialists in Adjacent Fields**

Many PhDs in theater or performance work outside the field in adjacent departments. While many of these adjacent fields will turn to their own professional associations (i.e., American Studies Association, Communication Studies Association, etc.) to adjudicate faculty for promotion and tenure, ATHE encourages chairs, deans, and committee members to consider the unique training, knowledge, skills, and qualities that their faculty with theatre and performance training bring to the job.

Research on PhDs in Theatre or Performance studies between 2008 and 2020 shows that many no longer work in theatre departments. Instead, a growing number of PhDs in our field serve in departments and programs including, but not limited to Anthropology, Communications, Ethnic Studies, English Literature, World Languages and Literatures, Women’s Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and Writing

These faculty members have adapted to their new fields, but their theatre and performance background, expertise, and training remains paramount to their work. Faculty members in myriad departments research and write and teach, but those with theatre and performance degrees bring
further skills such as creating content, working collaboratively, putting on events, managing projects, and perfecting interpersonal communication, among other skills.

In addition to the skills listed for theatre history professors generally, external reviewers, administrators, and the tenure and promotion committee may ask themselves whether the candidate’s tenure portfolio demonstrates the ability to teach and use their creative practice to explore:

- Expertise in close reading analysis and the role of drama in larger literary canons
- Expert skill in analyzing playscripts as they function in performance and in literary history