

## K-State 2025 Spotlights The Purple Masque Theatre

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Taking a stroll through K-State's campus in the year 2016 would be hard to do without passing by at least one "work in progress." Through [campus master planning](#), [space migration](#), and [infrastructure upgrades](#), new and repurposed spaces all across campus have provided needed facilities improvements and expanded learning environments for K-State students. Though the physical space on campus has been transformed through [K-State 2025's visionary goals](#), the true story of transformation is written every day by the students, faculty, and staff who utilize these spaces to elevate their impact on the communities they serve.



The new Purple Masque Theatre opened in 2015 below the West stands of Memorial Stadium. For more images and information, including "before and after" pictures, view the [Renovation Gallery](#).

Nestled within the iconic limestone exterior of Memorial Stadium is the new home of the Purple Masque Theatre. After making a move from the east side of

the stadium, which currently houses the recently-opened [Berney Family Welcome Center](#), to the west side, the Purple Masque brings its historic purpose dating back to 1974 into a state of the art new facility. In addition to providing an expanded space for experimental theatre and student learning (through showcases, workshops, stage readings, Ebony Theatre productions, and more), the Purple Masque and its new studio and rehearsal space is utilized by K-State's [Drama Therapy graduate program](#).

As the only program of its kind in the Midwest, Drama Therapy now has a space that is as unique and transformational as the work taking place within this emerging field of study. "I want to use theatre to make a change in the world, and drama therapy is the perfect way for me to do so," said Sally Bailey, Director of Graduate Studies in Theatre and Director of the Drama Therapy Program. K-State-trained Drama Therapists have engaged a number of different populations within the Manhattan community and across the state through the power of self-expression and play. "The level of trust and communication that you use in theatre, that feeling of belonging, is very useful," Bailey said, especially to those who may feel left out or excluded by society. [Barrier-Free Theatre](#) is one example of this engagement that has become a fixture of the K-State and Manhattan communities.

Every year, K-State undergraduate and graduate students help to facilitate Barrier-Free Theatre, a program that brings together adults with or without disabilities to collaboratively create and perform an original, one-of-a-kind production. The program provides participants with the opportunity to channel their thoughts and emotions through different expressive forms. It helps instill self-awareness and social skills that can last long after the curtain drops on the annual performance. "Barrier Free Theatre gives the participants an opportunity to set goals and accomplish them, and this in turn gives them a sense of fulfillment," said Fummi Cole, a graduate student in Theatre.



**Sally Bailey, Director of Graduate Programs in Theatre in the K-State School of Music, Theatre, and Dance, facilitates a group of students in her Drama Therapy course that took place in the old Purple Masque Theatre in East Stadium. For more on how the department is utilizing the new home of the Purple Masque, check out this [Feature](#) on the renovations from the College of Arts and Sciences.**

The new space within the Purple Masque has elevated the Barrier-Free Theatre experience for students, participants, and community members alike. "The opportunity to use the Purple Masque Theatre for rehearsals contributed to the success of the performance," Cole said, "the actors were able to get well acquainted to a standard theatre space with all the technical equipment in place." People travel from far and wide to attend Barrier-Free Theatre performances, so having a space like the Purple Masque to welcome audience members and community partners has been a great asset to the program. From the new lobby area to the increased space available backstage, "it's really opened things up," said Bailey, "it's been wonderful to be in the new theatre."





**Manhattan's Barrier-Free Theatre group rehearsing in advance of their performance in 2014. Prior to the Purple Masque renovations, Barrier-Free Theatre took place at the Manhattan Arts Center. The new space has provided opportunities to more fully engage community members with campus and host guests of the university in a state of the art facility.**

The actors rehearse weekly throughout the fall and spring semesters, all leading up to the premiere of their show each April. This year's original play will be performed on April 21, 22, and 23 in the Purple Masque Theatre. "We have performed plays on space adventures, zombie apocalypses, and even Robin Hood," Bailey said, "And this year will be something completely different."

Kansas State University's achievements around facilities and infrastructure help meet its evolving needs and recruit and retain quality students, faculty, researchers, and staff to carry out its important mission. And, similar to this year's Barrier-Free Theatre production, K-State 2025 is a work in progress that represents an ongoing engagement, which will transform a university, and the many lives it touches, for the better.