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Philanthropy & Nonprofits

Bigger than the 'Hollywood of the South,' says Trilith Institute CEO about Georgia’s future



To help grow Georgia's entertainment industry, Trilith Institute has released semester-long courses for Spring 2025, including a sketch comedy writing course with Dad’s Garage to begin on Jan. 16, 2025.

TRILITH INSTITUTE

By Anna Haas – Contributing Writer, Atlanta Business Chronicle
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Editor's Note: This is a preview of Atlanta Business Chronicle's Business of Entertainment event, spotlighting the business behind Georgia's entertainment industry. The event will be held on Dec. 12. To purchase tickets, visit the Chronicle's events website.

The Trilith Institute, a nonprofit sector of Trilith Studios in Fayetteville, announced its eight semester-long courses for Spring 2025. This expansion of course offerings adds to its overall effort to create a permanent and sustainable entertainment industry where aspiring writers and creators can flourish in Georgia, says its president and CEO, Jeffrey Stepakoff.

Trilith Institute serves as an alternative to the "Hollywood system" in North America, says Stepakoff. But he envisions more, where Georgia exists outside of Hollywood's shadow.

Film and television productions spent $2.6 billion in Georgia during fiscal year 2024 and a total of $11 billion over the last three fiscal years, according to the Georgia Film Office, an office within the Georgia Department of Economic Development.

"We [will] stop calling ourselves the 'Hollywood of the South.'" In fact, my vision is that Hollywood becomes the Georgia of the West," he said.

Trilith Institute aims to create a complete ecosystem in the entertainment industry

Stepakoff said Georgia's film business is a three-legged stool, which is supported by the state's tax credit, infrastructure – like studios and sound stages – and production crew. He helped build the third leg through his work at the Georgia Film Academy, but he felt his work wasn't done yet. He wanted to build the fourth leg, ultimately leading him to Trilith Institute.

"That [fourth leg] is telling the stories of Georgians, not just serving as a film factory and making the movies and television shows that come to us from other regions," Stepakoff said.

One key facet of that is writer's rooms, which are plentiful in Los Angeles but rare in Georgia, despite the state ranking number three in the country for film and television production, said Stepakoff.

As a way to sustain Georgia's entertainment industry, he's working to bring professionals to the state to train and keep the next generation of writers, directors and creators in Georgia.

A new project under development is a semester on set program, which will offer college students an opportunity to live in residence at the institute and earn class credit, similar to how students can study abroad. Trilith Institute also plans to establish a nonprofit film fund to support the work of up-and-coming Georgians.

Trilith Institute has semester-long courses and partnerships

The courses at Trilith Institute offer a professional setting, connecting students with internships, apprenticeships, fellowships and mentors. Its initial professional courses began earlier this year.

Beginning Jan. 13, Trilith will offer eight semester-long classes, including Narrative Directing for Screen; Cinematic Storyboarding; Foundations of Filmmaking; Acting for Camera with Alliance Theatre; Introduction to VFX and Animation; Screenwriting Essentials; The Business of Independent Filmmaking; and Sketch Comedy Writing with Dad's Garage.

The sketch comedy writing course will be led by Tim Stoltenberg, artistic director, and Eve Krueger, associate artistic director, at Dad's Garage Theatre, a long-established Atlanta institution.

"I think what aligned us with Trilith is that we both want to have more resources for artists in Atlanta to get support and experience in creating their own content for their artistic voice," Stoltenberg said.

Dad's Garage offers its own classes, teaching improv in eight-week-long sessions. The courses differ from ones at Trilith Institute because improv is not the final product, he said. Instead, students will learn the skills of improv to create content, like sketches or scripts.

Trilith Institute's courses will be available virtually, in hybrid formats and in person at Trilith Studios Production Centre, located at 461 Sandy Creek Road in Fayetteville. Prices range from about $350 to $1,500 per class. Enrollment is already open, according to a press release.

THE LIST

2024 Largest 25 Conventions and Events

Estimated or expected attendance

Rank	Prior Rank	Convention or organization
1	1	MODEX 2024
2	2	2024 Anime Weekend Atlanta
3	3	International Production & Processing Expo (IPPE)

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