Shaw Theater is an instructional facility which provides an environment for curricular and co-curricular programs in the Theater area of the Department of Speech. In addition to serving as a "classroom," the theater provides our talented students with an opportunity to rehearse and perform dramatic works of all types in a theater that is among the finest on university campuses. The theater has a convertible proscenium-thrust stage with related facilities including an experimental theater, seating 150; a scene shop; a costume shop and storage room; an attractive Green Room; two dressing rooms; a make-up room; and three large storage areas. The Shaw Theater has continental style seating for 600.

Theater that is most significant to man speaks the language of truth. Such theater is rooted in moral integrity springing from a sense of values, high standards and strong convictions. Laura V. Shaw believed in such a theater and for thirty-five years worked with students at Western proving its worth. It is fitting that the new university theater bears her name.

Laura V. Shaw was born in Clarksville, Michigan on April 8, 1891, of parents who were educators and also were ordained Methodist ministers. She was the fifth child of a family of ten, six of whom were boys. While Laura was still a child, the family moved to Chicago and then to Grand Rapids where she graduated from Central High School in 1909.

Miss Shaw had as her teachers two pioneers in speech education: Robert Fulton at Ohio Wesleyan where she earned her Bachelor's degree and Thomas Trueblood at the University of Michigan where she received her Master's degree. Later she did advanced study in theatre at Provincetown, Breadloaf and Oxford University. She early became converted to the doctrines of Constantin Stanislavsky and his Method, and she studied under Madam Maria Ouspenskaya, Madam Tamara Daykharkina and Ivan Lazareff (Chicago Art Theatre) all from the Moscow Art Theatre.

Her first teaching experience was at Illinois Women's College, later renamed McMurray College, where she taught speech for two years. After receiving her Master's Degree, Miss Shaw had taught one year at South East Missouri State Teachers' College when, in 1918, she was invited by Shaw Theatre

Shaw Theatre