

M Manhattan School of Music **MUSICAL THEATRE**

Student Handbook 2019-20

This handbook covers many of the things specific to the experience in the Musical Theatre BM. It is not designed to be comprehensive to your Manhattan School of Music student experience. It should be used in conjunction with any other handbooks, guidelines, rules, and procedures set forward to you from Manhattan School of Music faculty/ staff/ administrators.

Philosophy

Manhattan School of Music BM in Musical Theatre aims to develop versatile performers who excel in the classic musical theatre canon as well as in cutting-edge contemporary musicals. Our mission is to produce professional musical theatre artists whose voice, acting and dance training empowers them to be nimble performers in a diverse and changing profession.

Manhattan School of Music students are exposed to all facets of musical theatre production via student stage productions, independent studies, master classes with New York casting directors, agents and theatre artists, and new works development.

The Manhattan School of Music faculty of artist-educators encourages the development of intellectually curious, well-rounded artists. Our students think beyond the triple-threat, following their own individual artistic paths and inventing new models and cross-pollinations. It is our goal to ground our students in the realities of a competitive industry while encouraging them to act on their dreams.

Our program seeks to identify and nurture the unique gifts of every student. Students receive intensive training in voice, acting and dance throughout their four years, and they are encouraged to follow their own interests in independent projects.

Core objectives of the program are:

To train performers in music skills, voice, dance and acting as well as expose and offer students opportunities that extend beyond performance:

- Choreography
- Directing
- Musical Direction
- Composing
- Writing
- Musical Instrument

This policy handbook is intended as a guide to creating the habits and attitudes students will need as musical theatre professionals.

- a love for the process of creating performances
- a habit of daily practice, to build techniques they can depend on
- a curiosity to understand and a desire to communicate
- a workable method for organizing time and responsibilities
- an awareness of the history of musical theatre, and a knowledge of the artists who helped create, develop, and refine the art form
- audition experience, and an understanding of the detailed preparation auditions require
- the ability to learn music, dance styles, monologues and dialogue quickly and effectively

- how to be a good colleague, on stage and off
- Development of healthy life habits that enable you to perform with the high-level energy demanded of musical theatre performers.

MSM Student Handbook

Musical Theatre students are required to adhere to the institutional policies and procedures of Manhattan School of Music in addition to the policies of the Musical Theatre program. The school-wide policies and procedures can be found in the Student Handbook.

<https://www.msmnyc.edu/campus/student-affairs/student-handbook/>

Musical Theatre Program Student Guidelines

Manhattan School of Music Musical Theatre students are expected to uphold the highest level of commitment to their training and to conduct themselves in accordance with MSM Musical Theatre guidelines.

Class Attendance: Musical Theatre majors are expected to attend **ALL classes**. Class meetings, and your attendance, should be treated as rehearsals for a professional production. This means that you are warmed up, present, and ready to work at every scheduled class meeting time.

Violation of the following rules can result in Program Sanctions:

Two excused absences are permitted for illness with a doctor's note or a conflict that you have discussed with your instructor at least two weeks prior to the absence.

More than two excused absences will result in grade drop as follows: A to A-, A- to B+, B+-B, etc.

Participating in shows as cast and crew is part of your degree requirement. In addition to two excused absences as described above you will be excused from class for MSM MT Production Technical Rehearsals. As soon as you have your tech schedule share it with your instructors so that they may plan accordingly.

Observing class due to injury or illness: Two session limit. Requests to observe beyond two sessions must be discussed with the instructor and Associate Dean and Director of Musical Theatre.

Illness: If you are too ill to attend class, please notify the instructor in writing (via email) prior to the class meeting. If there are multiple instructors in the course, please email all of them. Indicate any specifics of your illness. Fatigue or not being able to sing is not necessarily a reason to excuse you from class. If you follow this protocol, you will likely find compassionate faculty who are willing to excuse an absence for illness. You may also visit the School Nurse in room 107.

Personal Emergency: If you have a personal emergency, please notify the instructor in writing (via email) prior to the class meeting. If there are multiple instructors in the course, please email all of them. If you are unable to get a note to your instructors before the class, please do so at your first available moment.

Professional Auditions: Absence due to professional auditions for jobs that occur during the academic year are not excused. One absence due to a professional summer-stock audition will be excused. More than one absence due to a professional summer-stock audition must be approved by the Associate Dean and Director of Musical Theatre.

If you plan to audition for Summer Stock please provide the Associate Dean and Director of Musical Theatre as well as your instructors with at least 3 days advance notification that you will be absent and arrange to makeup missed work.

In the case of MSM production rehearsals, please provide the Director and Stage Manager at least two weeks-notice for any approved absences.

MSM MT Production Audition Policy

Manhattan School of Music's Musical Theatre Program is committed to racial, cultural and individual diversity. Casting for all school sponsored productions is open to any Manhattan School of Music Musical Theatre student regardless of race, ethnic origin, sexual orientation or disability. Inclusive casting is embraced as standard practice.

Musical Theatre students are required to audition for all musicals and to accept the roles in which they are cast.

Although we believe auditioning and working outside of MSM in professional settings is valuable for your development, Manhattan School of Music productions take precedence over **ALL** other performance opportunities. If you are planning an independent production it **must not** conflict with MSM rehearsals and performances.

Students are cautioned that overextension may hinder their creative and academic growth.

Physical and Mental Health: A career in musical theatre requires you to work at the optimum level of physical and mental health possibilities. Physical health will dictate (to a degree) how capable you are at meeting the requirements and rigors of the program. Sleep, rest, and nutrition are key components of your training. If you are under the weather, you will not be able to achieve the best possible results from your coursework and rehearsals/ performances.

Take advantage of the Andersen Hall gym if you live on-campus, the Columbia University gym (for a fee) and the services of our Campus Health Nurse in room 107.

Mental Health is a key component to your success. If you find yourself having issues related to mental health, you are encouraged to seek some assistance from MSM's Counseling Center (rooms 104 and 106).

Leave of Absence (LOA): In the event that a Musical Theatre student has reason to request a Leave of Absence (LOA) from the Manhattan School of Music, they must speak to the Associate Dean and Director of Musical Theatre, Liza Gennaro or Dean of Students, Monica C. Christensen. If it is agreed that an LOA should be granted, the student will be directed to the Registrar for finalizing the LOA arrangements.

Musical Theatre students seeking an LOA will be required to take a full year LOA. Students who take an LOA will not return to their original class cohort but rather join the subsequent class cohort. If an LOA extends beyond one year, students will be required to re-audition for the Musical Theatre program.

Concert Attendance: Attending School concerts and master classes is the perfect opportunity to integrate all aspects of the artistic and academic curriculum of the School: private lessons, performance classes, theory, music history, and aural skills. In our great array of musical events at Manhattan School of Music, a student may critically analyze and absorb a variety of styles and traditions of music from the whole world of music: Classical and jazz, instrumental and vocal, ensemble and solo. School concert attendance is the great opportunity to hear music brought to life by the entire community as well as distinguished visiting artists.

Musical Theatre students registered for CA1000 are required to attend 7 major concerts and/or master classes per semester for the first three years of student (freshman, sophomore, and junior year). Performance in any portion of an approved concert does not count toward fulfilling the Concert Attendance requirement.

Bullying: Musical Theatre is a collaborative art form in which professionals come together, share ideas and create art. There is no place for intimidation or bullying in musical theatre and bullying will not be tolerated in the MSM Musical Theatre program. Incidents of bullying will be dealt with swiftly and Program Sanctions will assigned.

You might be aware of a recent tragic incident that occurred on Broadway in the CHICAGO cast. The theatrical community is no longer tolerating abusive behavior.

<http://www.foxnews.com/entertainment/2018/07/07/chicago-cast-members-suicide-probed-after-backstage-bullying-allegations.html>

Intellectual Property/Plagiarism: Theatre is a collaborative art form - the whole is comprised of a diverse multitude of parts. It is the responsibility of the artist to acknowledge and respect the property, ideas, works, words, etc., of their fellow artists. Within the indefinite realm of what intellectual property means, it is better to err on the side of caution by properly and clearly citing all sources within the body of your papers as well as in the bibliography, and to encourage your fellow theatre students to do the same.

Master Class and Guest Visits: MSM will welcome several guests from the industry throughout the academic year. Prompt arrival and focused, attentive, respectful behavior is required. Arrive prepared to work and/or observe. You will be given advance notice of visits and as with any other class attendance is required. Electronics are PROHIBITED.

Meeting with Faculty: All faculty are available for meetings with students in the Musical Theatre BM. Some faculty keep regular weekly office hours. Others prefer that you send an email to request a meeting (please provide your blocks of availability when you send the email request). Please note that faculty keep very busy schedules and may have to meet with you a few days or even a week after your request. If your request is urgent and you need immediate attention, please specify that and we will make the best effort to accommodate you.

Private Voice Teacher: Upon entry to the Musical Theatre program at MSM, you will be assigned a private voice teacher for your college career. MSM MT believes that a 4 year voice teacher assignment provides continuity and is the best approach to voice training. However, we acknowledge that in rare occasions, a change may be beneficial. Your private voice teacher is among the most vital sources in your Musical Theatre training. As in any relationship, issues may arise which require discussion and/or resolution. You are encouraged to discuss problems as they occur directly with your teacher. Unresolved issues and/or the sense that you cannot discuss problems with your teacher should be addressed with the Associate Dean and Director of Musical Theatre. Changing your voice teacher is an important decision to be considered carefully and thoroughly and will only be considered after two years of study. In the event of a change request the following must occur: 1) Discuss the request for a change with your voice teacher 2) Discuss the request for change with the Associate Dean and Director of Musical Theatre. 3) If your teacher and the Associate Dean and Director of Musical Theatre agree that change is beneficial to your training you will be assigned a new teacher. 4) At this point you must obtain a Change of Teacher Request Form from the Provost's office. Complete instructions are on the form. School policy prohibits any action against a student by a former teacher.

Program Sanctions

Manhattan School of Music's Musical Theatre Program is not a "cut" program, however lack of commitment to Musical Theatre training and adherence to Musical Theatre Handbook guidelines is cause for Program Sanctions.

In situations involving significant or repeated violations of program policies as stated in this Handbook the program may administer official Program Sanctions.

These may include:

- Student will be prohibited from performing in program productions for a full semester.
- Student will be removed from a program production for the duration of the production.
- Other consequences as appropriate.

During the Program Sanction period, the student is expected to focus their energies on weaknesses identified and communicated to student by Liza Gennaro, Associate Dean and Director of Musical Theatre. Programs Sanction remain in place until the next end-of-semester review, and the student is required to seek guidance from Liza Gennaro and/or relevant faculty on a regular basis.

Rehearsal Etiquette and Practice

You will be in many performance classes, rehearsals and performances in which you will be expected to maintain a sense of etiquette surrounding the artistic process.

- Keep quiet and stay as focused as possible. The process takes the collective concentration of everyone involved. Talking, chatting, giggling is extremely distracting. Stay focused on the person conducting the rehearsal or class. Cell phone, iPad, laptop use restricted to use related to rehearsal i.e.: recording music and/or blocking.
- Read ahead on the rehearsal schedules - know exactly what will be worked on within upcoming rehearsals. Full memorization isn't necessary, but knowing the material is expected before staging/singing rehearsals.
- Blocking, staging, choreography, and lyrics should be learned by the next rehearsal after it's been taught.
- Arrive at all classes and rehearsal calls early, and be ready to work. It is impossible to begin working at the scheduled time if that is also the arrival time. Give yourself time to arrive, warm-up and focus.
- Respect your creative teams and instructors – faculty, directors, music directors, choreographers, designers, stage managers. They are highly skilled professionals and should be treated as such.

- Respect your fellow cast, crew and musicians. Embrace behavior that celebrates and supports your fellow artists.
- The personal photography, video recording, or audio recording of any portion of any rehearsal is strictly prohibited, except for these specific instances: 1) Actor is recording their melody/harmony in music rehearsal; 2) Stage management is recording a particular piece of choreography or staging for designers or for swings and understudies, in which case, the video/audio file will only be uploaded for viewing and shared only with said designers and/or swings and understudies. No one else may view these files, and under no circumstance may they be uploaded to any social media platform.

An actor’s demonstration of anguish, impatience, or frustration (even at self) will negatively impact everyone involved. More importantly, an actor’s energy, joy and enthusiasm will positively impact everyone involved. The rehearsal hall/theater/classroom is a sacred place where artists gather to explore the process of searching for the truth. Every person’s actions have the potential to impact the process.

The Performance Agreement on the next page will be reviewed and signed by each cast member at the start of every program production rehearsal. Failure to adhere to the agreement will result in removal from production. To prepare you for a career in the theatre, productions at MSM try to operate under similar guidelines to Actors’ Equity.

**MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC
MUSICAL THEATRE STUDENT PERFORMANCE AGREEMENT**

Performance Agreement made this _____ day of _____,
20_____, by and between

Manhattan School of Music Musical Theatre BM
and _____

(Performer’s Name as listed in the program)

The Actor shall play: (specify role(s), chorus, or understudy)

Part: _____ Part:

Part: _____ Part:

Production: _____ at the
_____ Theatre.

I. REHEARSAL and PERFORMANCE CALLS.

Rehearsal shall begin on _____, 20____ at _____ am/pm.

Final performance is scheduled for _____, 20____, beginning at _____ am/pm.

Actor acknowledges that he/she:

- has reviewed the Rehearsal and Production Calendar
- agrees to check MSM email daily for updates on calls, costume fittings, and other scheduled events
- agrees to attend each rehearsal and performance as called, on time and ready to work
- has reported any existing schedule conflicts to the Stage Manager
- agrees to give priority to his/her participation in this production when scheduling any other events or activities not already reported as conflicts
- will notify the Stage Management team immediately via phone call or text if he/she is running late

II. REHEARSAL PROTOCOL.

Actor will adhere to the rehearsal protocol as established in the rehearsal room and in the theatre.

This includes but is not limited to:

- complying with all safety requirements as outlined by the Stage Manager
- being warmed-up and prepared for each day's rehearsal
- adhering to the off-book deadline as noted in the Rehearsal Calendar
- being attentive in notes sessions following rehearsals
- replacing props carefully in the designated place, and handling your props only
- being respectful of other artists' work at all times

III. ELECTRONICS and FOOD/DRINK POLICY.

All actors and crew members are expected to abide by the following guidelines:

- Cell phones must be silenced and put away during rehearsals and performances unless required for recording vocal rehearsals.
- Do not keep your phone on your person during a rehearsal or performance.
- You are permitted to use electronic devices **ONLY** during breaks and at intermission, and **ONLY** in designated areas unless you are using your phone to record vocal rehearsals or if while serving as Understudy/Cover/Swing/Dance Captain/Assistant Choreographer or Assistant Director you are using your phone, iPad or laptop to record blocking and choreography.
- If you are dealing with an emergency situation, please speak to the Stage Manager about having your phone available.

- Food is not allowed in the theatre, backstage, nor in the dressing rooms. You may eat in the hallways or lobby areas.
- Food is never to be eaten in costume.
- Only drinks in a sealed container are permitted in the theatres. Anything that might be knocked over and spilled is not permitted.

IV. BILLING and PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS.

Actor agrees to:

- provide his/her photo and bio to be used for promotional purposes
- participate in Photo Call for archival purposes
- allow recording, taping or filming portions of his/her performance for use in promotional materials
- participate in other promotional opportunities, when available

V. APPEARANCE.

Actor agrees to:

- consult the Costume Designer before altering his/her appearance in any notable way, including but not limited to: cutting, growing out or coloring hair (including facial hair), piercing, tattooing, or plastic surgery
- make him/herself available for costume fittings at reasonable and timely intervals as requested by the Costume Shop

VI. PHYSICAL SAFETY.

- If necessary, Actor agrees to participate in stage fighting and/or violence that will be responsibly choreographed and safely taught.
- Moments of intimacy that are required by the production will be staged with sensitivity and input from the participants, and must be executed consistently throughout rehearsals and runs.
- Any member of the cast or crew who feels unsafe or uncomfortable with moments of violence or intimacy onstage should voice their concerns immediately to the Director, Stage Management or an MSM Staff Member.

VII. DRUG & ALCOHOL POLICIES.

- Alcohol and Illegal Drugs Policy Manhattan School of Music requires the observance of all New York State and Federal laws and regulations pertaining to alcoholic beverages and illegal drugs. Manhattan School of Music maintains an environment free of illegal drugs and drug paraphernalia.
- No person under 21 may possess, consume, manufacture, or distribute alcoholic beverages within School property.

- Students who are suspected of being intoxicated and/or under the influence of drugs and/or a danger to themselves or the community may be placed in protective custody.
- No one may distribute alcohol to anyone under the age of 21.
- Possession, distribution or use of illegal drugs within School property is prohibited.

VIII. ACTOR’S RIGHTS.

- Each actor may reasonably expect to be treated respectfully during their participation in this production. All rules and standards of behavior that apply to any MSM activity or class shall be abided by and enforced. Actors will elect a Deputy Representative, who may represent the actors in any issues that may arise.
- Actor agrees to inform the Deputy Representative and/or Stage Management team of any issues he/she may be experiencing which may interfere with the safe, creative, and timely performance of his/her duties.
- Actor understands that this Agreement may be terminated at the discretion of the Director and/or Department should the Actor not adhere to the Agreement.

Acceptance of Agreement is indicated by signatures of each party:

Student Signature

Stage Manager’s Signature

Associate Dean and Director’s Signature

_____/_____/_____ (date)

PERFORMANCE AGREEMENT RIDER

BACKSTAGE/TECH REHEARSAL/RUN ETIQUETTE:

- When moving into the theatre for technical rehearsals and the run of the show, maintain the highest respect for fellow cast members, stage managers, musicians, and all crew.

- Obey stage managers without question.
- Continue to take notes from the production team with respect and without any defense.
- Giving any notes to a fellow actor is absolutely prohibited under any and all circumstances. Give any notes or concerns to the stage manager *only*. Do not accept any notes from a fellow actor under any and all circumstances. If you are receiving notes from a fellow actor, immediately thank said actor, and approach a stage manager at your next opportunity and tell them. Do not ever engage the other actor in an argument.
- Keep conversations in the dressing room at a very low volume from half-hour call through the final moment of the performance
- All vocal warm-ups must be completed before the half-hour call - any vocalizing backstage after half-hour is not permitted.
- Phone use is only permitted during official breaks called by the stage manager. This includes texting, checking email, games, social media, or any sort of activity on the device.
- Be aware of your dressing room surroundings and keep a neat and clean dressing table space.
- Observe smart personal hygiene in the dressing room: use deodorant, mouthwash, wear clean socks, shoes, and underwear.
- Be mindful of your surroundings when applying hairspray, spray deodorant, or any other aerosol product. Avoid using perfume, cologne, as they can be irritants to many people.
- Costumes will be treated with care and respect. Neatly hang up all costume pieces and place show shoes in their proper locations after taking them off. Obey the wardrobe crew/dressers. They are not there to pick up after you at all, unless they specifically tell you otherwise.
- There is zero tolerance for touching or wearing anyone else's costumes or wigs.
- There is zero tolerance for touching any props that you do not actually use during the performance, and you should only handle your props at appropriate times.
- Any music playing, even on headphones, is not tolerated backstage at any moment.
- Turning down/off the backstage PA system speakers is not allowed for any reason.
- Pay attention to the PA system backstage and be aware of your upcoming entrance cues. Only you are responsible for your entrances.
- The burning of candles and incense is prohibited backstage at all times.
- No eating, smoking, or drinking in costume/wigs. Water is tolerated, but keep a towel nearby for any spills or drips.
- All foods and liquids are banned from dressing rooms, aside from water.
- If there are any body microphones used in the show, be mindful: anything you say or anyone you listen to can and *will* be heard.
- Strictly obey the sound crew's directions on how to remove your microphone and where to place it at the end of a performance.

ON THE DECK/ON STAGE

- Absolutely no liquid or food is allowed on the deck at any time.
- Playing games during rehearsals or performances (i.e. “Pass the [Insert Object Name Here],” “Make Faces at Everyone Upstage of You,” “Do Funny Things in the Wings,” “Unexpected Objects in the Props,” any “I’ll Make You Laugh” game, etc.) is not tolerated at any time.
- Respect the backstage traffic and choreography as much as its onstage equivalent. Check with stage management before watching any of the show from the wings.
- No talking at all in the wings while waiting to enter or after exiting, unless it’s an emergency. In that case, find a stage manager and whisper your concern to them.
- Treat your curtain call as part of your performance. Underdressing costumes with street clothing in order to make a speedier exit after the curtain call is absolutely prohibited.
- There is zero tolerance for any photographing, audio recording, or video recording of the performance from the wings.

Acceptance of Agreement is indicated by signatures of each party:

Student Signature

Stage Manager’s Signature

Associate Dean and Director’s Signature

_____/_____/_____ (date)

Stage Management will collect Contract and Riders.