



Jury Handbook for the BFA – Performing Arts: Musical Theatre

Contents

Purposes of the Jury Process	2
NAST Standards.....	2
Eligibility to Apply	3
Continuation in the BFA	3
Appeals.....	4
Switching Concentrations.....	4
Jury Scheduling	4
Jury Recordkeeping.....	5
Semester by Semester Jury Requirements	5
Specific Areas for Feedback/Discussion	5
BFA: Musical Theatre Jury Schedule and Instructions....	6
1. Welcome Interview	6
2. Baseline Skills	7
3. BFA Application	8
4. Pre-professional	10
5. Professional Readiness	11
6. Exit Interview	12

Purposes of the Jury Process

“Juries” is our term for the process in which you meet with faculty on a recurring basis to present your work for feedback. It is intended to:

- Help you determine if the BFA is the appropriate degree for your aspirations.
- Assure there is a baseline of skills, maturity, and determination sufficient to suggest you will be able to successfully complete the program.
- Support your step-by-step growth by providing continuing feedback, suggestions for next steps, and career guidance.
- Open a dialogue with you. We want to hear from you how we can best support you and your changing needs and goals.
- Provide regular opportunities for you to prepare career supporting materials (portfolios, monologues, songs, résumés, scripts, etc.) and practice presenting yourself and your materials in a professional setting.
- Help the faculty to assess the overall outcomes and effectiveness of the BFA – Performing Arts degree.

NAST Standards

Western Kentucky University is an accredited institution member of the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST). Regarding the purpose of a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, NAST standards state:

“Students enrolled in professional undergraduate degrees in theatre are expected to develop the knowledge, skills, concepts, and sensitivities essential to the life of the theatre professional. In any of many possible roles, the theatre professional must exhibit not only technical competence, but also broad knowledge of theatre, sensitivity to artistic style, and an insight into the role of theatre in the life of humankind.” (NAST *Handbook 2021-2022*, Standards for Accreditation, VIII.A.2.)

Evidence of these characteristics and potential for their continuing development is essential for the awarding of the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. The jury process is one way in which the Department of Theatre & Dance monitors the program’s success in developing these characteristics in each student. Upon completion of the Western Kentucky University BFA – Performing Arts degree:

- Students must demonstrate achievement of professional, entry-level competence in the area of specialization including significant technical mastery, the capability to produce work and solve professional problems independently, and a coherent set of artistic/intellectual goals that are evident in their work.
- Students must demonstrate their competence by developing a body of work for evaluation in the major area of study.

- Students must have the ability to communicate ideas, concepts, and requirements to theatre professionals and laypersons related to the practice of the major field.

(The above competencies reference NAST *Handbook 2021-22*, Standards for Accreditation, VIII.C.1-3.)

Eligibility to Apply

All students who state an intention to pursue the BFA – Performing Arts will initially be enrolled under the status “seeking admission” to the major. To be eligible to apply for full admission into the degree you must:

- Have earned at least 30 credit hours, 15 of which must be at WKU.
- Have a cumulative GPA of 2.5 or above.
- Have participated in at least one previous jury. Most students will have participated in two or more juries prior to admission.

Most students will audition or interview for admission into the BFA in the third semester. Student transferring into the program may be able to audition or interview in their second semester. The appropriate semester to audition or interview will be determined in consultation with your advisor.

Continuation in the BFA

Once admitted, retention in the Western Kentucky University BFA – Performing Arts degree program requires that you:

- Maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 2.5 and earn a grade of C or better in all classes required in the BFA.
- Maintain an exceptional level of commitment, self-discipline, reliability, and demonstrate consistent artistic growth and development appropriate to the chosen area of concentration, as assessed through the jury process.

Should your cumulative GPA fall below 2.5 in any given semester, or should you fail to earn a C or better in any class required of you within the BFA, your continuation in the BFA may be placed in question. The same is also true if you fail to participate in juries without a suitable excuse, or if the faculty perceive a recurring inability on your part to maintain the commitment, self-discipline, reliability, and consistent artistic growth necessary for success in the program. Should one or more of these occur, you will be informed at, or after, your jury and your status in the BFA will be marked as “insufficient progress” on your Jury Progress Form. Typically, you will be given one semester to make significant improvements.

During this remedial semester, you must meet early with your advisor to develop a plan for improvement. This plan will be documented and list clear and concrete actions you will need to undertake to demonstrate your improvement. The plan may include additional jury preparations, new or repeated coursework, additional meeting with faculty, or other goals, as appropriate. Your advisor may ask that you restrict your production activities or other projects during this semester to ensure you have the time and energy to achieve these goals.

At the end of this remedial semester, the faculty will review your efforts at your jury. At this point, should their concerns not be addressed, they may extend the process for another semester, or they may move to disenroll you from the BFA – Performing Arts degree. The final decision to remove a student from the degree program will be made by majority vote of the department full-time faculty. This vote will be by secret ballot, administered by the department chair.

The faculty may also choose, by majority vote of full-time faculty, to disenroll a student from the BFA – Performing Arts for violating the WKU Student Code of Conduct. This vote will also be by secret ballot, administered by the department chair. This vote would happen only after the Office of Student Conduct has confirmed the violation. Any recommendations made by that office will also be shared with the faculty prior to this vote.

Appeals

A student not accepted into the BFA may reapply the following semester. A student denied entrance the second time may appeal to the department faculty in writing for permission to reapply for a third and final time.

A student who has been dis-enrolled from the BFA program may request permission to re-apply from the department faculty after discussing the matter with their advisor. Students in this situation should work closely with their advisor to prepare their appeal.

Switching Concentrations

A student is allowed to be enrolled in only one concentration within the degree. Occasionally, a student may wish to switch concentrations once admitted into the degree. Such decisions should be made thoughtfully in conversation with an advisor and/or other faculty members. If a switch is desired, the student must complete the eligibility criteria and reapply for the new concentration at their next jury. What the student must present or perform at this new application jury will be determined by the faculty in the new area of concentration. Students cannot apply to switch concentrations in their senior year. Keep in mind, switching concentrations may require additional semesters to complete the degree.

Jury Scheduling

In November of the fall semester, or in April of the spring semester, announcements regarding the details of jury scheduling will be sent out on the *td.students* list. All department majors must be subscribed to this list. If you are required to do a jury that semester, you will be assigned a day and time and told which type of jury you must do. Juries occur during finals week. It is your responsibility to check that your jury does not conflict with any final you might have. If there is a conflict, or if you feel some other error has been made in the scheduling of your jury, you must report this to someone in the Theatre & Dance Office as soon as possible. The jury announcement will have detailed instructions about the sign-up process.

Jury Recordkeeping

You will have a individual BFA Progress Form which will be filled out by you and/or the faculty each semester. This will be a OneDrive document that will be viewable only to you and the faculty. It will record your production activities throughout the semester, your participation in juries, your progress, faculty feedback, and other pertinent information.

Piano Accompaniment

Piano accompaniment will be provided during juries. For Application Juries, the department will also provide you one free practice session with an accompanist in the week prior to your jury. It will be your responsibility to book this session. Missing a scheduled practice session may reflect negatively on the preparation aspect of your jury.

Semester by Semester Jury Requirements: Musical Theatre

All BFA – Performing Arts: Musical Theatre students will participate in the following juries.

1. Welcome Interview (First semester)
2. Baseline Skills (Second semester) part of THEA 203 AUDITION WORKSHOP
3. BFA Application (Third semester)
4. Pre-professional (Fifth semester) part of THEA 385 APPLIED MT STYLES II
5. Professional Readiness (Semester before graduation semester) part of PACS
6. Exit Interview (Graduation semester)

What is required of you at each jury, and the timeline of your jury progress may vary, depending on your particular situation and needs. You should always consult with your advisor as the final authority on what is required of you at any given jury.

Specific Areas for Feedback/Discussion: Musical Theatre

After each jury, you may receive feedback in any of the following areas. These are things to think about as you work toward improving your performance and people skills throughout your time here.

Citizenship/Engagement

- Teamwork (crew responsibilities, rehearsal behavior, etc.)
- Ambassadorship (representing the Department on campus and off)
- Mentorship (being a supportive role model)
- Participation in department auditions, master classes, area meetings
- Attendance at department productions and special events

Dance

Here you will be evaluated primarily on technique from dance classes, but also on the quality of your work in your performance coursework and engagement with our departmental productions.

Here are areas that faculty may mention in their feedback:

- Professional appearance
- Reproduction of movement patterns and sequence
- Ability to complete clean body lines with strength and flexibility

- Alignment, Placement
- Articulation of feet
- Movement integration and effective use of the core
- Spatial awareness, rhythmic accuracy, use of energy
- Performance quality and facial expressions

Monologues and Songs

You will be expected to draw on the skills you've acquired in your coursework so far, as well as knowledge gained from watching or participating in productions and master classes at WKU.

Here are things faculty may mention in their feedback:

- Professional appearance (clothing/makeup/hair/shoes)
- Level of personal energy and confidence
- Eye focus
- Ability to sustain accurate pitch
- Diction and/or quality of speech (including specific challenges for the field)
- Depth of memorization, sustained concentration, characterization consistency
- Quality of vocal production and voice technique
- Physical presence: postural alignment, stability, and groundedness
- Vocal presence and "fit" to the room
- Quality of movement
- Comprehension of the text and context of the songs and monologues (know the show)
- Quality of song/monologue cut
- Clarity and dramatic value of your acting choices (goals, tactics, stakes, etc.)
- Attention to musical detail and how it informs dramatic choices
- Musical phrasing and style

BFA: Musical Theatre Jury Schedule and Instructions

Jury 1: Welcome Interview

This usually occurs at the end of your first semester as a major in the department, and is actually not a performance, but an informal "get to know you" interview that gives us an opportunity to discuss your overall educational and career goals. You may also ask any questions you have about the department and/or the BFA program. Think of it as a practice job interview (except you already have the job).

Preparation

- Fill out the first portion of your **Jury Progress Form** by the published deadline. Your advisor or your program coordinator will provide you with a personalized link to your form for your first jury. It is comprised of questions to help the faculty get to know you and your goals. It also helps us chart your overall involvement in our department productions over time, both onstage and off. Don't worry if you don't have much to report this first time around. Fill it out and submit it anyway. It will grow over time.

Presentation

- Show up on time, dressed as you would for an audition or job interview,
- Discuss your educational and career goals with the faculty. (Don't worry if you don't know exactly what you want to do with your life yet, or even with your college education; it's fine to have more questions than answers at this point). We just want to get to know how we can help you while you're here.

Feedback

You may get some very informal feedback during this jury, but it's mostly just an open discussion about how your first semester went and how we can help keep or get you on track for success.

Jury 2: Baseline Skills

Usually completed as part of THEA 203: AUDITION WORKSHOP

This usually occurs at the end of your second semester, or the semester following your Welcome Interview semester. It is part of the class, Acting Audition Workshop (THEA 203). If you are not in this class, you should begin preparing for this jury early in the semester with your advisor.

The feedback you get from this jury will give you some idea of what the faculty expects of you, and how to best prepare for a successful BFA Application jury, which usually happens at the end of the next semester (typically at the end of your 3rd semester at WKU).

Your feedback will be based on your potential for success in the BFA program, as well as your current ability to demonstrate competence and mastery of skills gained in the acting, music, and dance classes you have taken, so far. You will also be evaluated for the quality of your work in your other theatre courses and your engagement with our departmental productions, and on department citizenship.

Preparation

- Update your **Jury Progress Form** by the published deadline.
- Submit a completed Monologue/Song Analysis Form for each of your pieces as required in the THEA 203 syllabus, or directly to your advisor (if you are not in the class) by the published deadline. The Monologue/Song Analysis Form can be found on the department website and the department Blackboard site.
- Monologue: Prepare one 30 second modern monologue (1960 or later). You should consult with your advisor, or follow the directions discussed in THEA 203 about how to look for appropriate material. However, you are ultimately responsible for finding and preparing this monologue.
- Song: Prepare a 30 second cut of one Musical Theatre song. You are advised to present a song you have worked on with your voice teacher.

Presentation

Juries from this point forward will consist of two parts: the Dance Call, and the Acting/Singing Audition.

Dance Call

This session is separate and in addition to your Acting/Singing audition, and usually takes place during finals week.

- Wear dance audition attire: that means leotard/tights or form fitting shirt/jazz pants/dance belt. Unless advised otherwise, please bring all dance shoes (jazz, character, ballet, tap).
- Ensure your hair is secured neatly (no ponytails or swinging braids) and you are not wearing any jewelry.
- You will be expected to warm-up on your own in the dance studio, so arrive early and warm yourself up.
- Learn and perform a dance audition combination, along with all the other MT students with juries that semester. Do the best you can with a positive attitude.

Please Note: If you have a conflict with this dance call, such as a final exam, please let your advisor know immediately so other arrangements can be made. If you fail to attend the dance class, your Jury Progress Form will show Insufficient Progress for the semester. See Continuation in the BFA, pages 3 & 4, for more details.

Acting/Singing Audition

This session will happen during one of the final class sessions of THEA 203, or during finals week in the time slot where your name is listed on the jury schedule (if you are not doing it as part of the class). You will be in the room with all the other people in your class or listed in your time slot. Decide beforehand if you want to do your song or monologue first. (It's your choice.)

- Arrive early, properly warmed up, dressed as you would for an audition in a big city.
- Bring well-marked sheet music in a 3-ring binder for the accompanist, and some means of taking notes during the feedback session that will follow your presentation.

We will give you instructions once you're in the room there, but here's what happens when it's your turn to share:

- You will have a moment to speak with the accompanist.
- Then you'll take your place on stage and wait for the "go ahead" from the faculty.
- When given that nod, slate*:
- Say your name and your pieces in the order you want to do them (your choice.)
- For the monologue, say the name of the play, the playwright, and your character. For the song, say the title of the song, the name of the musical, and the composer and lyricist.
- Then perform your pieces.

*Sample Slate:

"My name is Pat Actor. Today I'll be performing one of Biff's monologues from Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, and "Ten Minutes Ago" from Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella*).

Feedback

You may receive written and/or verbal feedback immediately after your group dance call, and again after your acting/singing audition, so bring a pen and paper to take notes on any verbal feedback you get. (Someone will take notes for you in the dance call.) After you receive feedback, you will have the opportunity to ask questions or discuss your education.

Jury 3: BFA Application

This is your audition for full admission into the BFA: Musical Theatre concentration, and usually takes place in the 3rd semester, or the semester immediately following your Baseline Skills jury.

You should begin preparing your application materials early in the semester, starting with a discussion with your advisor about finding and preparing your songs and monologues.

The faculty will base their assessment on the following criteria:

- The quality and timeliness of your application documents.
- The level of self-reflective insight expressed in your application essay.
- The quality of your dance, song, and monologue performances.
- The level and quality of your engagement in the department, so far.
- The discipline, artistic growth, and maturity you've demonstrated, so far.
- Your GPA (A minimum 2.5 GPA is required for admission into the BFA program).

You will also be assessed on your improvement in specific areas recommended by the faculty after your Baseline Skills Jury, as well as in your work in classes and productions. Please see the criteria for Specific Areas of Feedback section of this document for details about technical skills being assessed, pages 5 & 6.

Preparation

- Review your notes from the previous semester and update your **Jury Progress Form** by the published deadline. Be sure to answer the BFA application questions in the form.
- Submit a completed Monologue/Song Analysis Form for each of your pieces to your faculty mentor by the published deadline.
- Monologue: Prepare one 60 second monologue. Do not repeat monologues you've used in other juries.
- Songs: Prepare two *contrasting musical theatre songs. The songs combined must not exceed five minutes. Applicants may present cuts in order to meet the time limitation. Do not repeat songs used in other juries. You should present at least one song you have worked on with your voice teacher. The other song may be something you have worked on with your voice teacher or by yourself or in another class.
- You will have the opportunity to rehearse both songs with an accompanist prior to your audition. Consider this practice session part of this jury. Failure to meet with the accompanist will be discussed at your audition and could affect your jury outcome.

*Examples of contrasts might be:

One song is up-tempo, one song is ballad tempo

One song is legit, one song is belt/mix

One song is dramatic, one song is comic

One song is newer (written after 1980), one song is older (before 1980)

Presentation

Do the Dance Call and an Acting/Singing Audition.

Dance Call

- Follow guidelines outlined in the Baseline Skills description, p. 7.
- Barring exceptional circumstances, failure to attend will result in an assessment of Insufficient Progress for this jury.

Acting/Singing Audition

- Arrive early, properly warmed up, dressed as you would for an audition in a big city
- Bring well-marked sheet music in a 3-ring binder for the accompanist.
- Someone will invite you in when we're ready for you.
- You will have a moment to speak with the accompanist.
- Then you'll take your place on stage and wait for the "go ahead" from the faculty.
- When given that nod, slate your name and pieces in the order you will present them. (For details about how to slate see the Baseline Skills description, p.8.)
- Then you will perform your pieces and join us for a brief discussion about why you feel the BFA is for you and how you will approach your study if admitted.

Feedback

There will be no immediate feedback regarding your actual performance. You are encouraged to do a self-assessment in writing that you can review with your advisor later. You will be notified by email of your admission status in the BFA within 2 weeks. After you receive your notification, make an appointment with your advisor at the beginning of the next semester to discuss your audition in more detail and receive feedback. You are also then welcome to seek out feedback from individual faculty members.

Jury 4: Pre-Professional Jury

Usually completed as part of THEA 385: Applied Musical Theatre Styles II

Usually, this jury is first undertaken in the 5th semester and is combined with the final recital/showcase for THEA 385: Applied Musical Theatre Styles II. The goal is to demonstrate ongoing academic/artistic growth and maturity commensurate with BFA Program goals. Use this opportunity to practice a professional audition performance. You are exploring how to present yourself in terms of song and monologue choices, preparation, and professional presentation. Also, think in terms of building your “book” with material that represents you and your strengths.

The quality of your citizenship as a member of the department will also be taken into account when assessing your progress. At this stage in your growth, things like how you handle your crew responsibilities, your behavior in rehearsal, and/or your role as a mentor to incoming students may be taken into account.

Preparation

- Review your notes from the previous semester and update your **Jury Progress Form** by the published deadline.
- Submit a completed Monologue/Song Analysis Form for each of your pieces to your voice teacher.
- Bring two copies of your professional résumé with you to your jury.
- Prepare one 60-second monologue. Do not repeat monologues you’ve used in other juries, unless expressly asked to do so.
- Prepare two songs. You may present cuts on the advice of your voice teacher. Do not repeat songs you’ve used in other juries, unless expressly requested to do so.
- Submit your sheet music to the piano accompanist in the manner they request by the deadline they set forth.

Presentation

Do the Dance Call and an Acting/Singing Audition.

Dance Call

- Follow guidelines outlined in the Baseline Skills description, p. 7.
- Barring exceptional circumstances, failure to attend will result in an assessment of Insufficient Progress for this jury.

Acting/Singing Audition

- Arrive early, properly warmed up, dressed as you would for an audition in a big city.
- Bring well-marked sheet music in a 3-ring binder for the accompanist, and 2 copies of your professional résumé.
- This jury will be presented as a showcase. When it is your turn to present your materials, you may have a moment with the pianist if you need it before beginning.
- Slate your name and pieces in the order you will present them. (For details about how to slate see the Baseline Skills description, p. 8.
- Next, you will perform your pieces and return to the audience to watch your colleagues.

Feedback

Your voice teacher will book a feedback session with you to discuss this jury. You are also encouraged to seek out feedback from any other faculty members who were in attendance. Feedback

from the faculty may cover areas/issues you were advised to address in your last jury and things you are working on in classes and lessons, in addition to professional considerations. The faculty may also discuss your overall performance in the program including your classes, productions, auditions, etc., as well as department citizenship.

Jury 5: Professional Readiness Demonstration

Usually completed as part of PERF 451: Career Seminar Workshop

This typically happens in your 7th semester or the semester immediately preceding your last planned semester as a student in the department. This jury gives you the opportunity to demonstrate your readiness to compete as an early career musical theatre practitioner in the field. Treat this as a professional audition. You will receive feedback on the material you choose, and how well-suited that material is to you at this point in your career. You will be evaluated on how well you have prepared your pieces, how well you present yourself, and whether you have gained mastery of the skills being taught in the classes you've taken. Your work will be measured against your previous juries, productions, and classes, but you will also be measured against your potential. In other words, have you fulfilled the promise of your talent? Have you done your best to become the best performer you can be at this time?

Preparation

- Review your notes from the previous semester and update your **Jury Progress Form** by the published deadline.
- Professional Résumé: Bring two copies of your professional résumé with you.
- Song/Monologue List: Prepare a neatly typed list of all the songs and monologues you've prepared for this audition. For monologues, include the name of the play, playwright, and character. For songs, include the title of the song, the musical or larger work it is from, and the composer and lyricist. Upload this list to your jury folder on Microsoft 365. (If you like, you may assign a title to your monologues for clarity, for example, "The Dog Speech")
- Monologues: Prepare two contrasting monologues. At least one of these must be new, not used in any previous jury. You will pick the first monologue. The faculty may ask to hear the second. The traditional contrast is comic/serious, but you may also use contemporary/classic.
- Songs: Prepare five songs, at least two of which must be "new" – not used in any previous jury. You will pick the first song and the faculty will choose the second one. You may be asked to sing all or part of a third and/or fourth song. Each of the songs must also have an 8-bar, 16-bar, and 32-bar cut well notated for the pianist and ready to sing.

Presentation

Do the Dance Call and an Acting/Singing Audition.

Dance Call

- Follow guidelines outlined in the Baseline Skills description, p. 7.
- Barring exceptional circumstances, failure to attend will result in an assessment of Insufficient Progress for this jury.

Acting/Singing Audition

- Arrive early, properly warmed up, dressed as you would for an audition for an agency.
- Bring well-marked sheet music in a 3-ring binder for the accompanist, 2 copies of your professional résumé, 8 copies of your list of songs and monologues, and a means for taking notes if we have time for feedback.
- Someone will invite you in when we're ready for you.
- You will have a moment to speak with the accompanist.
- Next, you'll take your place on stage and wait for the "go ahead" from the faculty.

- When given that nod, slate your name and choice of song and monologue in the order you will present them. (For details about how to slate see the BASELINE SKILLS description, p.8.)

Feedback

Feedback from the faculty will continue to focus on the bulleted lists introduced in the Specific Areas of Feedback section of this book, as well as areas/issues you were advised to address in your last jury, things you are working on in classes and lessons, in addition to professional considerations. The faculty may also discuss your overall performance in the program including your classes, productions, auditions, citizenship, etc.

An unsatisfactory performance of this Professional Readiness jury will result in your being required to repeat it the following semester in addition to any other regularly scheduled jury requirement, such as an Exit Interview.

Jury 6: The Exit Interview

The Exit Interview usually happens at the end of your last planned semester in residence. This does not include any performance by you, but rather a conversation with the faculty. However, you are welcome to attend the Dance Call for practice if you wish.

Preparation

- Review your notes from the previous semester and update your **Jury Progress Form** by the published deadline.
- Bring one copy of your professional résumé. The department will keep this copy.
- Complete the Exit Survey by the published deadline.

Presentation

- Show up as scheduled with time to spare, all required paperwork in hand, ready to discuss your “next step” plans as a graduate of WKU Department of Theatre & Dance.
- We will discuss ways you can stay connected with the department.

Feedback

This session is a conversation that is meant to reflect on your time at WKU as well as your plans post-graduation (vague though they may be.) At this time, the faculty may offer comments or observations about your progress over the years, and we encourage you to share your thoughts about your growth as a creative artist. As always, you can ask for specific feedback or critique from the faculty, and/or ask any questions you have. We also welcome any constructive comments you would be willing to offer about your overall educational experience at WKU, should you choose to share those with us.

Easy Overview of Requirements, Semester by Semester

BFA-MT Jury Overview		1: WELCOME	2: BASELINE	3: APPLICATION	4: PRE-PROFESSIONAL	5: PROFESSIONAL READINESS	6: EXIT
		1 st sem	2 nd sem	3 rd sem	5 th sem	7 th sem	8 th sem
Fill Out	Jury Progress Form Questions	√	√	√	√	√	√
Complete	Monologue / Song Forms		√	√	√		
Bring with you	Sheet music in binder		√	√	√	√	
	Professional résumé (2 copies)				√	√	√
	List of Songs & Monologues					√	
In Person	Interview only	√					√
	Dance Call		√	√	√	√	
	Singing / Acting Audition		√	√	√	√	

Version 11-7-22