

MUSICAL THEATRE SPECIALISTS

The area of musical theatre is a prime example of an area where “blended” specialties predominate, requiring a unique combination of expertise. Job descriptions for musical theatre faculty may fall into several categories. The most common ones are: musical theatre director/actor, choreographer/dance, or voice coach/conductor or music director. Faculty teaching musical theatre will necessarily understand all three areas of music, voice and dance and there will often be some crossover in proficiency. It is the rare individual who will have equal expertise in all three areas. Furthermore, a faculty member who specializes in musical theatre needs to have a solid background in musical theatre performance and be skilled at curricular organization, assessment (academic and creative) and constructive mentorship of students.

MUSICAL THEATRE DIRECTOR/ACTOR

The musical theatre stage director is an artist who is responsible for preparing a musical theatre production for public performance by researching, casting, rehearsing, staging, collaborating with designers and the production team, and managing the time and budget. The musical theatre director develops the stylistic interpretation of the performance unique to the production in collaboration with the acting and production ensemble. The production should illuminate the work of the playwright/librettist and composer and be accessible to the audience. The musical theatre actor is an actor with specialized training and expertise for performance in the musical theatre genre.

The specialist pages for Actor and Director outline the fundamental production expertise, knowledge base and administrative skills expected of the musical theatre actor and director. For faculty who are specialists in musical theatre, the range of proficiency typically required includes additional proficiencies such as:

A. Production Expertise

1. The ability to perform and/or direct and teach the acting style found in traditional musical theatre as well as the evolving performance styles of the contemporary musical theatre.
2. The ability to connect scenes of spoken word, music expression and dance/movement illustration into an integrated coherent storytelling performance.

B. Literature and History

1. The unique history and development of the musical theatre genre including the contributions of opera, operetta, ballad opera, vaudeville etc.
2. An understanding of music theory, song structure, story through song, vocal capabilities, instrumentation, and music genres
3. Knowledge of historical and stylistic dance genres.
4. Knowledge of vocal repertoire for all ranges of singers.
5. Information literacy (the ability to research and vet information from appropriate sources).

C. Administration

1. Understand the professional musical theatre market and maintain connections to the professional world to prepare students to perform in a myriad of professional avenues.
2. Overall excellence from the musical stage director and actor requires the ability to integrate knowledge consistently in the areas noted above (along with the knowledge outlined in the director and actor specialist pages). Such expertise is demonstrated by participation in realized production, both on and off campus.
3. An understanding of professional ethics and practice associated with theatre and performance.

Additional information about the expertise and skills expected of the musical theatre actor/ director may be available through the ATHE focus groups in Acting, Directing, and Musical Theatre/Dance.

MUSICAL THEATRE CHOREOGRAPHER

The musical theatre choreographer is an artist who is responsible for collaborating with the stage director and ensemble in preparing a theatre production for public performance in casting, rehearsing, and staging the dance and movement aspects of the musical theatre production. The choreographer must understand the special requirements of dance in the musical theatre context.

A. Production Expertise

1. Significant competency in performing in all areas of dance, including but not limited to: ballet, tap, jazz, modern, folk and contemporary forms.
2. Dance and movement notation.
3. Social and formal dance techniques (Waltz, Country, Swing, etc.)
4. The ability to incorporate traditional forms of dance into the storytelling format of musical theatre.
5. The ability to choreograph for, teach, train and adapt to performers at various levels of expertise, including those with little or no dance training and of all ages.

B. Literature and History

1. Knowledge of the history and development of the musical theatre genre including the contributions of opera, operetta, ballad opera, vaudeville etc.
2. The history of all forms of dance utilized in traditional and contemporary musical theatre genres.
3. Knowledge of major musical theatre choreographers and their unique styles.

C. Administration

1. Ability to effectively work and collaborate with the director, musical director, designers and performers in a variety of professional and academic settings.

2. Understand the professional musical theatre market and maintain connections to the professional world to prepare students to perform in a myriad of professional avenues.
3. An understanding of professional ethics and practice associated with theatre and performance.

Overall excellence from the musical stage choreographer requires the ability to integrate knowledge consistently in the areas noted above. Choreographers must have the ability to direct and teach the performance style found in traditional musical theatre as well as to push boundaries of the form toward unique expression. Musical theatre choreographers must work with an understanding of the conceptual requirements of any given production to collaborate in creating stage productions that are artistically unified. Such expertise is demonstrated by participation in realized production, both on and off campus.

Additional information about the expertise and skills expected of the musical theatre choreographer may be available through the ATHE focus groups in Acting, Directing, and Musical Theatre/Dance and SDC (Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers).

MUSICAL THEATRE VOCAL COACH/CONDUCTOR or MUSIC DIRECTOR

The musical theatre vocal coach/conductor or music director is an artist who is responsible for collaborating with the stage director and ensemble in preparing a theatre production for public performance in casting and rehearsing the music and vocal aspects of the musical theatre production. The vocal coach trains vocalists and coaches them to sing the musical score. The conductor prepares and conducts the musicians of the orchestra. The Music Director may be responsible for training the vocalists and conducting the orchestra. These artists must understand the special requirements of music in the musical theatre context. These individuals must bring music expertise to this theatrical genre, remaining open to the styles and performance demands of musical theatre.

A. Production Expertise

1. The ability to train and coach vocalists as well as to prepare and conduct the orchestra.
2. Expert ability to train singers in styles from legit to pop/rock in ways that promote vocal health, longevity, and authenticity.
3. The ability to teach basic music theory, musicianship, sight-singing, ear-training and basic keyboard skills.
4. The ability to prepare the accompanying instrumentalists in a fashion that balances with the voices and covers all of the sounds required of the production.
5. Competency in working with electronic sound, instruments and microphone use.
6. The ability to prepare performers who have limited vocal ability or unique vocal qualities.

B. Literature and Theatre History

1. Knowledge of and appreciation for the repertoire of musical theatre, from opera to rock.
2. Knowledge of major musical theatre performers and their unique styles.

C. Administration

1. Ability to effectively work and collaborate with the director, choreographer, and performers in a variety of professional and academic settings.
2. Understand the professional musical theatre market and maintain connections to the professional world to prepare students to perform in a myriad of professional avenues.

Overall excellence from the musical theatre vocal coach/conductor/music director requires the ability to integrate knowledge consistently in the areas noted above. The vocal coach/conductor/music director must have the ability to direct and teach the performance style found in traditional musical theatre as well as to push boundaries of the form toward unique expression. The vocal coach/conductor/music director must work with an understanding of the conceptual requirements of any given production to collaborate in creating stage productions that are both artistically unified. Such expertise is demonstrated by participation in realized production, both on and off campus.

Additional information about the expertise and skills expected of the musical theatre vocal coach, conductor or music director may be available through the ATHE focus groups in Acting, Directing, and Musical Theatre/Dance.

PLAYWRIGHT

The playwright is the artist who writes the play, which serves as the foundation for the exploration and performance by the creative ensemble. Playwrights may also collaborate with the stage director, dramaturg, designers and actors in developing the playscript.

Though individuals vary greatly in their depth of knowledge and ability in any one area, the range of proficiencies typically required of a playwright includes:

A. Production Expertise

1. Advanced technical skills in dramatic construction.
2. A deep understanding and demonstrated ability to use theories and methods of script analysis, criticism, and dramaturgy in the development of theatrical and dramatic works.
3. Possessing careful and insightful observation of human behavior and interaction.
4. Skills in researching and expertise in storytelling.
5. Ability to write illuminating dialogue and effective action.
6. Ability to develop engaging characters and complex character interactions.