

**MUSICAL
THEATRE
STUDENT
HANDBOOK
2025–2026**

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
- Stage Management

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
- 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.
- Embrace Diversity, Equity, Access, Inclusion, Belonging (DEAIB)

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 Academic Catalog and Student Handbook.

<https://www.msmnyc.edu/campus/registrar/academic-catalog/>

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** class meeting sessions. MT rehearsals occur outside of class time and are not accepted as an excuse for missing classes. Participating in shows as cast and crew is part of your degree requirement and you will be excused from classes for MSM MT Production Technical Rehearsals that conflict with class sessions. You are not excused from classes that occur outside of Tech rehearsal hours.

As soon as you have your tech schedule share it with your instructors so that they may plan accordingly.

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.

Any students found under the influence of alcohol, marijuana or illegal substances will be removed from the class immediately. This applies at any point during the academic year.

Violation of the following rules can result in Program Sanctions (see p. 10).

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 or any unexcused absences will result in grade drops as follows: A to A-, A- to B+, B+-B, etc.

We understand that occasionally unexcused absences occur. If you have an unavoidable unexcused absence you must discuss it with your instructor and they will determine if they choose to count it as an excused absence. If the unexcused absence is due to illness a doctor's note is required.

After 2 excused absences with a doctor's note you will be required to meet with Dean Gennaro to discuss how to remain healthy while fulfilling your MT studies, rehearsals and productions.

If you have excessive absences/lateness faculty will send you a midterm email and inform you of your mid-term grade. If you are at risk of failing the course it is up to you to meet with your instructor and discuss how you can improve your grade. Please check your course syllabi for the lateness policy.

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

Professional Leave

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 Dean of Musical Theatre.

If you plan to audition for Summer Stock please provide the Dean 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.

No student may be absent from the school for professional engagements unless permission for such absence is granted by the Office of the Provost well in advance of all such engagements. Students may request to be excused from school for professional engagements for periods not longer than two weeks. A planned limited leave of absence requires that the Limited Leave of Absence Form be submitted at least four weeks in advance of the requested limited leave unless opportunities or situations are truly unforeseen. The form requires review and approval by the Dean of Academic Affairs, the Academic Division Dean, Office of the Provost, and approval from each of the student's instructors. International students also require the approval of International Student Services.

Electronic Devices

IPhones, iPads, Apple watches and laptops are only permitted in classes/rehearsals at faculty/creative team discretion. Please see syllabi for course policy.

MSM MT PRODUCTION AUDITION POLICY

Casting for all MT sponsored productions is open to all Manhattan School of Music Musical Theatre students regardless of race, ethnicity, class, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity/ expression, and disability status.

Inclusive casting is embraced as standard practice.

Musical Theatre students are required to audition for all MSM MT musicals.

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 capacities. 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 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 Dean 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 proceed with the LOA process initiated by the Dean of Students. An LOA is not approved until processed and confirmed by the Office of the Registrar.

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

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.

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.

Electronic Devices are PROHIBITED.

Underrepresented Creators

MSM MT is committed to DEIAB and including underrepresented creators in teaching repertoire, assignments, and stage productions.

African American

Latinx

AAIP

Women

LGBTQ+

Non-Binary

People with Disabilities

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 Dean 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 Dean of Musical Theatre. 3) If your teacher and the Dean 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 Dean of Musical Theatre. Complete instructions are on the form. School policy prohibits any action against a student by a former teacher.

Please see voice studio syllabus for attendance policy.

MSM MT Vocal Health Policy

One of our goals is to support healthy singing. If your voice teacher hears undue strain in your singing or suspects an underlying problem they will recommend seeing an ENT doctor for evaluation before resuming lessons.

PROGRAM SANCTIONS

Manhattan School of Music's Musical Theatre Program is not a "cut" program, however lack of commitment to Musical Theatre training and/or lack of adherence to Musical Theatre Handbook guidelines are 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 year (fall term/spring term).
- 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, Dean 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.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

Your musical theatre classes provide the foundation for your professional careers. The theatre industry is highly competitive and we are preparing you for professional expectations regarding comportment and attire.

- Arrive to classes on time and ready to work. This means warmed-up vocally and physically, being prepared with assignments, knowing your blocking, choreography, lines and lyrics.
- Adhere to course syllabi electronic device directives.
- Dress in a manner that demonstrates your seriousness about your art form:
- Shoes – no slip-ons as they are unstable when performing blocking/movement, appropriate dance shoes required for dance classes (see: dance class syllabi).
- NO pajamas, NO slippers, NO socks.
- Attire for classes that assign period play scene work. All students must have mid-length/floor length skirt, fitted slacks, fitted button shirt, fitted suit jacket (corset if available). Period appropriate hard sole shoes for acting classes that assign period play scene work.
- Read and follow ALL syllabus requirements.

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 and respect surrounding the artistic process.

- Arrive to rehearsals on time and ready to work. This means warmed-up vocally and physically, being prepared with assignments, knowing your blocking, choreography, lines and lyrics.
- Dress in a manner that demonstrates your seriousness about your art form
- Production designers will supply your show shoes but until they do you are responsible for the following:
- Shoes – no slip-ons as they are unstable when performing blocking/movement, shoes that are appropriate to the period of the play, appropriate dance shoes.
- NO slip-ons, NO slippers, NO socks.
- Costumes will supply clothing items as necessary. Check with your stage manager regarding what you need. If costumes cannot supply items at start of rehearsal you will supply what you require.
- 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.
- Respect your classmates and their artistry.
- Read ahead on the rehearsal schedules - know exactly what will be worked on within upcoming rehearsals.
- Memorize lyrics and dialogue prior to staging/blocking rehearsals.
- 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) Artist 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 artist's demonstration of anguish, impatience, or frustration (even at self) will negatively impact everyone involved. More importantly, an artist'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 making art. 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 operate under similar guidelines to Actors' Equity Association.

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 _____
(Artist's Name as listed in the program)

The Artist 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.

Artist acknowledges that he/she/they:

- has reviewed the Rehearsal and Production Calendar
- agrees to check MSM email daily for updates on calls, costume fittings, and other scheduled events
- understand that Stage Managers and Creative Teams do their best to create an efficient rehearsal schedule. Sometimes rehearsals run long and you might be required to wait. This is a great opportunity for you to review your lines, choreography, and blocking in the hall
- agrees to attend each rehearsal and performance as called, on time and ready to work
- has reported any known conflicts to Dean Gennaro on their audition form and have received written confirmation whether the conflict has been approved or not
- If a conflict arises at any point in the school year, you are required to email Dean Gennaro at **lgennaro@msmnyc.edu** in order to receive approval. You must receive Dean Gennaro's approval for any conflict with production rehearsals that arises
- will notify the Stage Management team immediately via phone call or text if he/she/they is running late
- Understands that if they arrive to rehearsal under the influence of alcohol, marijuana, or an illegal substance they will be removed from the production immediately.

II. REHEARSAL PROTOCOL.

Artist 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 Stage Management, Intimacy Director, and/or Fight Choreographer.
- being warmed-up and prepared for each day's rehearsal
- adhering to the off-book deadline as determined by the Director.
- 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 artist 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.
- Any and all recordings may only be shared by stage management. Under **NO CIRCUMSTANCES** may you share rehearsal video or rehearsal audio on any social media platform.
- 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.

Artist agrees to:

- provide photo and bio to be used for promotional purposes
 - You will receive an email from a member of the Theatrical Production Office requesting your bio for the program. If you do not turn in a bio by the date and time listed in the email, your bio will include only your name, role, hometown, and year in school.
- allow photography of his/her/their performance for use in promotional materials
- allow recording, taping or filming portions of his/her/their performance for use in promotional materials
- participate in other promotional opportunities, when available

V. APPEARANCE.

Artist agrees to:

- Consult the Theatrical Production Office before altering your appearance in any notable way, including but not limited to: cutting, growing out or coloring hair (including facial hair), piercing or tattooing.
 - Please email **omt@msmnyc.edu** with a brief description of what you would like to do. The Theatrical Production Office will reach out to the creative team on your behalf and reply to let you know if your request was approved or denied.
 - If you do not follow this protocol, you risk being removed from the production.
- You must arrive on time for all costume fittings. One missed fitting is permitted with a doctor's note. Any missed fittings without a doctor's note will result in removal from production. Rescheduled fittings are not guaranteed.

VI. PHYSICAL SAFETY.

- If necessary, Artist 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 by an Intimacy Director with sensitivity and input from the participants.
- All staging and choreography 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, Choreographer, Intimacy Director, Fight Director, Stage Management, or Deputy Representative.

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 of Marijuana
Persons over age 21 may possess up to 3 oz of marijuana and may smoke it anywhere that smoking is permitted (note: MSM is a smoke-free campus).
Procurement of Alcohol and Serving Alcohol to those under 21
Fine—up to \$200
Imprisonment—up to 5 days
Suspension of liquor sales license and/or \$1000 fine

- Possession, distribution or use of illegal drugs within School property is prohibited.
- Any students found under the influence of alcohol, marijuana or illegal substances will be removed from the production immediately. This applies at any point during the rehearsal, tech and performance periods.

VIII. ARTIST'S RIGHTS.

- Each artist 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. Artists will elect a Deputy Representative, who may represent the artists in any issues that may arise. For a description of the Deputy role, [please click here](#).
- Any issues, besides those listed above, should be reported immediately to Stage Management and/or the Deputy Representative. If you are not sure who to talk to, please refer to the Essential Contacts for MT Students. You can see the live document [here](#).
- Lack of adherence to this agreement will result in termination of contract.

Acceptance of Agreement is indicated by signatures of each party:

Student Signature

Christina Teichroew, Assistant Dean for Theatrical Production

Liza Gennaro, Dean of Musical Theatre

_____/_____/_____ (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.
- Continue to take notes from the production team with respect.
- Giving any notes to a fellow artist 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 artist under any and all circumstances. If you are receiving notes from a fellow artist please report the incident to stage management or Deputy Representative.
- 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.
- Be aware of your dressing room surroundings and keep a neat and clean dressing table space.
- Observe personal hygiene in the dressing room.
- Be mindful of your surroundings when applying hairspray, spray deodorant, or any other aerosol product. You may not use talcum powder, perfume, or cologne as they can be irritants.
- 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. Follow instructions and directions from the wardrobe crew/dressers.
- There is zero tolerance for touching or wearing anyone else's costumes or wigs unless directed by the Costume Designer or Wardrobe Supervisor.
- 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 backstage or onstage.

Acceptance of Agreement is indicated by signatures of each party:

Student Signature

Christina Teichroew, Assistant Dean for Theatrical Production

Liza Gennaro, Dean of Musical Theatre

_____/_____/_____ (date)