

General Guidelines

These guidelines apply to both classical voice auditions and musical theatre auditions:

- Schedule auditions in 3 categories. Reach schools, Hopefuls, and Safe schools. Reach schools accept very few students annually, Hopefuls accept a larger number, but are still competitive. Safe schools accept large numbers of applicants, but don't be deceived. These schools often weed students out of the program later if they do not meet a certain standard.
- Consider the difference between degree programs. We can discuss the finer points together, but your basic degree program choices are Bachelor of the Arts, or Bachelor of Music.
 1. A Bachelor of the Arts is acquired from a college or university which is not an accredited school of music, but is instead a department of music. More general education coursework is required for a BA, which can be an advantage if you later choose to pursue graduate work in another field.
 2. A Bachelor of Music can only be acquired from a conservatory program. Colleges or universities with a school of music will be conservatory programs. For a BM, music related coursework is the stronger focus. Often, no math or science coursework is required for a bachelor of music, although some humanities coursework is. Because of the intensity of this program, acquiring a BM can be an advantage if you are fully committed to pursuing a career in performance. It can also be advantageous for music education, since music ed is a stable career choice.
- Do NOT schedule your first audition at your top choice school. You will need time to feel acclimated to the audition process, and you will not want that learning curve to be at the expense of your most important audition.
- Do memorize your material a full month ahead of your first scheduled audition.
- Do NOT change your audition material immediately before auditions.
- Each school's requirements will be different, so it is important to organize that information early. Ultimately, you should prepare a spread sheet which clearly shows the school, the audition date and requirements specific to that audition. Please share that spreadsheet with your voice teacher.

Classical:

Audition Material

We will select and prepare your audition material in your voice lessons. If you receive advice from friends, accompanists, or instructors in class, be gracious and respectful, but remember that the ultimate decisions must be made here in the voice studio. By the time you are auditioning for college, I will have the advantage of knowing your voice intimately. We have had 20 years of success in this arena, and while no one can offer a guarantee, we have had students accepted to many top conservatories in the country.

- Most classical programs require 2 to 3 contrasting pieces. Some have specific language and time period requirements; perhaps an early Italian piece and an English piece. In classical music, contrast is achieved not through tempi, but through time period and language. For example, pieces by Cesti, Schubert, and Barber might all be lyrical, but they would still be considered contrasting by virtue of those qualifications.
- As a Voice Performance major, you are studying a discipline that hopefully results in a career in opera. You will be assessed in terms of vocal potential. In this particular situation, dynamics are far less important than they are in the choral setting. It is more important to demonstrate your full voice than to show dynamic range. This makes sense when you consider that opera is performed live in a hall over a full orchestra with no amplification.
- As a Choral Arts major, you will be assessed in terms of musicianship skills and potential within your major instrument. Piano skills are also important to a career in choral arts, so it is advisable to begin as early as possible.

Broadway:

Audition Material

We will select and prepare your audition material in your voice lessons. If you receive advice from friends, accompanists, or instructors in class, be gracious and respectful, but remember that the ultimate decisions must be made here in the voice studio. By the time you are auditioning for college, I will have the advantage of knowing your voice intimately. We have had 20 years of success in this arena, and while no one can offer a guarantee, each year we do have students accepted to some of the most prestigious theatre schools in the country.

- Your audition material should be age appropriate. In other words, the character who would sing your piece should be approximately your age.
- If you are a female who can belt/mix and sing soprano repertoire, it is to your benefit to demonstrate each of these skills clearly.
- Your piece must not be from a musical which is currently on Broadway, was recently made into a movie, or which recently did a national tour. Never sing from *Les Miserables*, *Wicked*, or *Grease*. We will be looking for repertoire that suits your “type” and your performance skills. The pieces we select should be recognizable to the adjudicators, but not overdone.
- Most schools will ask for 2 contrasting pieces, an up-tempo and a ballad. Some will want the full song, but most will want 16 to 32 bars. The combinations will vary, so you must be well organized. Some schools will require that one of the pieces be before a specific year, often the early 1960s, but sometimes earlier. Certain programs emphasize classical training and may request a third piece from classical repertoire.
- There is a growing trend among musical theatre programs to require their freshmen and sophomores to work exclusively on early era musical theatre in order to gain more solid singing technique with a foundation in classical vocal production. Successful audition results are reflecting this trend. It is advisable to include at least one early Broadway piece in your audition selections whether it is required or not.

The Sondheim Rules:

- Generally you can take Sondheim to a college audition. You will be in a music school environment, which means your pianist will be more than competent. Remember, the same people are usually playing for the classical voice auditions. That being said, only use Sondheim for a college audition if the character is your age, you understand and can deliver the text effectively, and you can handle the intonation and phrasing.
- Do not take Sondheim to amateur or semi-professional level auditions. The accompanist will not be able to play it.

Your Accompanist and Your Notebook

Most college auditions will take place in established music school environments, which means your pianist is likely to be of the highest professional caliber. However, it is important to take any steps you can to ensure that your audition goes well. See the list below for specific pointers on this subject.

- Do prepare an audition notebook. Today’s standard for both classical and musical theatre college auditions is a 3-ring binder with clean copies of your music arranged back to back in book fashion. You can accomplish this by using non-glare sheet protectors, but some pianists prefer music that is taped at the corners. You will need a 3-hole punch and scotch tape. The corners should be taped in both directions so that the entire corners top and bottom are covered with tape. You can also “dog-ear” the corners ahead of time for easy page turning.
- Do prepare your various musical theatre cuts as “cut & paste” copies. It is important that they be prepared as cleanly and concisely as possible. If there are measures that need to be blacked out, use a sharpie pen and completely cover the cut measures. The fewer pages you need, the better. If a page turn is necessary and is going to be awkward due to blacked out measures, you might consider attaching your individual music pages to pieces of card stock so that they are stiff and supported. You can offer your accompanist the option of using the notebook, or laying the music out on the cardstock sheets.
- Do discuss any tempo changes and cuts with your audition accompanist. Keep this discussion respectful and brief by planning ahead of time exactly what you’ll need to say.
- Do arrange to rehearse your audition pieces with one of the professional accompanists on our list prior to your first audition. In voice lessons, we are working with pre-recorded accompaniments which we alter to provide you with a custom fit. These accompaniments are wonderful tools, but they do not entirely prepare you for working with a live pianist. Your piece will feel slightly different with each pianist at each school so rehearsing with at least one professional will help prepare you. Allow the pianist to use the notebook you will be giving to your audition accompanists so that they can give you feedback. This will help ensure that your audition notebook is prepared in a pianist friendly fashion.

Your Appearance

Musical Theatre

The following tips are published on the Southeastern Theatre Conference Site. You can refer to that site for advice on other aspects of your audition as well. The link is: <http://www.setc.org/auditions/index.asp>

- Keep your hair off your face during your audition-wear it tied or neatly pulled back.
- Dress in solid and neutral colors
- Ladies, keep your skirts at knee length or below.
- Dress in clothes that are neat, not overly formal, and most of all, flattering to your physique.
- If there is a dance audition, you should consider a second outfit that allows for greater movement.

Classical Voice

Ladies: A dress or dress suit is most appropriate. The skirt or dress should reach your knee. Jewelry and shoes should be classic, not chunky or trendy. Pumps or dress sandals are fine. Remember to rehearse your audition material in the shoes you intend to wear for your audition. The change in stance can affect your support. Wear your hair neatly back from your face.

Men: A suit is most appropriate, but dress slacks, collared shirt and tie are also fine. If your hair is long, be sure to wear it in such a way that it is not falling into your eyes.

While it may seem overwhelming to consider all of the details involved in a well prepared series of college auditions, the rewards can be enormous. Remember, you are not alone. We will be here to assist you every step of the way toward your goals for college and beyond.