

OTTERBEIN UNIVERSITY BFA AUDITION GUIDELINES For On-Campus Auditions

First of all, thank you for choosing to audition for us. We recognize the tremendous effort involved in putting together auditions for Acting and Musical Theatre programs. Our intention with these guidelines is to help you have a good experience with us and with other schools. Please read them carefully. If you have questions, ask.

OUR MISSION

In our desire to develop theatre artists and artisans of the highest ability, our program provides a select number of undergraduate students with the training, education and experiences necessary for the successful pursuit of careers in the American professional theatre. In support of the liberal arts goals of the University, we also seek to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to live full, rewarding and productive lives.

(From the Mission Statement of the Otterbein University Department of Theatre and Dance.)

Because we define our mission this way, we are looking for students who want actor-training and a liberal arts education, students who are interested in other human beings and who want to learn everything about them, students who love the theatre and want to spend their lives doing it.

Because we define ourselves as a school that trains actors and educates human beings, Acting is at the root of our training programs. Of course we are interested in the student who can sing coloratura or do three pirouettes. It is essential, but it's not enough. We need students who want to use their acting, singing and dancing skills to tell stories to audiences hungry to hear them.

THE BASICS

YOUR TOTAL AUDITION TIME IS 3 MINUTES.

In fairness to all students attending the audition, we must limit you to **three minutes total**. Time your selections before you come to the audition.

Bring a **typed one-page resume** with your theatre/music/dance experience only. It will be copied for the faculty at the audition. We cannot make copies of multiple pages. If you have a more traditional academic resume that you wish to submit, bring one copy and we will put it in your file for later consideration.

Bring a **photo**. An 8x10 headshot is recommended. If you do not have a headshot, please bring a recent, accurate photo focusing on your face. It should be at least 4x6 in size. Please **do not staple** the photo and resume together. Although this is standard professional practice, we need to make copies of all the resumes for the faculty and staples make it difficult and time-

consuming. **Make sure your name is on the photograph**, even if it's just handwritten on the back.

For the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Acting

- Prepare **two** contrasting monologues, approximately **1½** minutes each. At least one monologue must be from a play; you may use one monologue from a film script. Do not use a monologue written specifically for auditions. Total audition time is 3 minutes.

For the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Musical Theatre and Musical Theatre/Dance

- Prepare **one** up-tempo song, **one** ballad, and **one** short monologue, approximately **one** minute each. The songs should be from musical theatre repertoire, and the monologue from a play. Since we only have time to hear one monologue from MT majors, you may not use one from a film script. Total audition time is 3 minutes.
- Bring dance clothes and jazz shoes and be prepared to learn a dance combination. Tap shoes and pointe shoes are not needed.

WHAT WE WANT TO SEE

We want to see you.

We **can** see you if you play...

- characters that you understand,
- caught in situations that you understand,
- who are asking for things that they need from the other characters in the scene,
- using the words (and, in songs, the music) as tactics to achieve their objectives.

If you make all the characters' desires your own, we *will* be able to see you.

We **can't** see you if you...

- do a piece in an accent that isn't yours, in order to show us that you can do accents,
- yell or cry hysterically in order to show us that you can be emotional,
- try to sing very high notes to show us what a great range you have,
- use props,
- choose a piece with words designed by the playwright to be shocking, or
- wear clothing that calls attention to parts of your body other than your face.

In other words, don't **show** us what you can do. Don't push an image of yourself at us. Rather, **share yourself** and the pieces **with** us. It's a subtle mental shift, but it has enormous positive consequences.

AUDITIONING: THE MONOLOGUES

It may surprise you to know that casting directors don't use monologues. Instead, they typically ask actors to read scenes with someone from their office (including Otterbein interns.) Acting is about relationships, and it's very difficult to act with an imaginary partner. But we don't have the luxury of an hour with each of you, and so we use monologues instead. It's not ideal, but almost all professional training programs use them.

Here are some tips that should help:

- Because we want to see you, it is better to do pieces written for younger characters, rather than characters who have much more life experience than you do.
- Choose monologues written about characters in situations that you understand in your gut, because you've been in similar situations, or you have friends or siblings or parents who have lived through them. Maybe a play moved you to tears when you first read it. Maybe you couldn't stop laughing. Both are good signs of connecting with the material. You need to feel a connection.
- Choose (at least) one piece that has humor. That may seem to be a contradiction to the previous suggestion, but it isn't. Much comedy comes from tragedy retold in a humorous way, and there's humor in tragedy as well. One of the funniest things some characters do is rage and wail. (That's also a reason you should not rage and wail in a piece that you want us to take seriously.) For musical theatre auditions, the humor can be in the monologue or in one of the songs. Up-tempo songs tend to be funnier than ballads.
- Generally, it's safer to do more contemporary material that doesn't demand an in-depth understanding of acting styles. But we don't rule out anything that works for you. You may choose to do a piece from Sophocles, Shakespeare, Chekhov, O'Neill, etc. All of them wrote wonderful young characters. But be careful: sometimes the words in poetic drama become so thick that we can't get past them. We watch you "doing Shakespeare" instead of watching you using Shakespeare's words to accomplish your character's goals.
- Make sure that you're playing characters in high-stakes situations, characters using strong tactics to get something they desperately need from the other characters in the scene.

AUDITIONING: THE SONGS

We want to hear you.

The same guidelines apply to songs as to monologues. Do songs that you connect with. Choose songs written for younger characters. Choose songs about characters in situations that you understand in your gut. Choose at least one song or monologue that has some humor. Remember: singing is ***acting with music***, not just making beautiful sounds.

But musical values are still essential. Effective audition songs let us hear the range, quality, and size of your voice, your sense of style and command of technique, as well as your ability to act the song:

- **Range:** It's better not to try to show us your very highest notes, or how loud you can sing. Again, it's about sharing, not showing. Songs should live within the range you are comfortable singing. But do make sure that the song has more than a five- or six-note range. We don't learn very much from such songs.
- **Style and Technique:** We listen for good diction, accuracy in pitch and rhythm, support and control of the breath, and the ability of the voice to "ring" throughout the vocal registers used by the singer. Many of you have worked diligently on these issues with your voice teacher. But don't do any of these things for their own sake. Practice the songs long enough so that your technique becomes a part of the way you sing. That way you will be able to focus on acting the song. The best way to think about technique is to view it as part of the constellation of tactics that your characters are using to achieve their objectives.
- **Quality:** We've asked for a ballad and an up-tempo, which typically require different vocal qualities. Let us hear your best sound first, whether that's legitimate, belt, mix, pop, rock, character, or whatever. You will be much more successful leading with the song you are most comfortable with, love singing the most, and have the most confidence in. That said, one of your songs should be in the classical musical theatre style. You can find examples in shows by Rodgers & Hammerstein and Lerner & Loewe, but also in shows currently running on Broadway like *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*.

AUDITION ATTIRE

Remember what we said before about not wearing clothes or jewelry or shoes that distract us from your face and what you're saying or singing? While you may normally sport lots of rings or military boots or long hair falling across your eyes, those things can be so distracting that it's all we see. Same for too much exposed skin, or flip-flops, sandals, and most athletic shoes.

At the same time, an audition is not a business interview, so please do not wear a suit and tie, or a suit and pumps. The intent of those clothes in a business interview is to prove that you can fit into a business environment. That's not helpful to us.

But an audition isn't a picnic or a party, either, where you might wear torn jeans or cargo pants or shorts or t-shirts with cute logos. Don't wear those. And it's not a prom, so please don't wear cocktail or prom dresses. And don't wear spike heels. If you're comfortable in heels, and think they make you look good, wear character shoes or something with a similar heel. So what can you wear? Clothes that fit well, that you feel comfortable in, that you look good in (and feel that you look good in), and that draw our eyes to your face and hands. Shirts and pants work for men and women alike. Skirts are fine for some women, and for some, a dress can work very well. So can classy jeans. ***We want to watch you, not your clothes.***

OTHER GUIDELINES FOR SINGERS

PREPARING SHEET MUSIC

Your sheet music is a critical component of your audition. Good accompanists can play from almost anything, but you'll be much happier with your audition if you prepare your sheet music the way each school wants it done. Because accompanists have different preferences, schools have different rules, and you need to follow them. Yes, they are inconsistent and that may seem perverse. But all of them are designed to help the accompanists follow you better and to allow you to do your best.

Here's how we want it done:

- Make sure that **your name is on your binder**. We collect your binders when you check in and our accompanist goes over your music while you're in the dance audition. We want to be able to return it to you quickly. Address labels work fine.
- Make sure the **name of the song and the lyrics are printed on the sheet music**. Many computer-generated types of sheet music do not include lyrics. If the lyrics are not there, please print or write them under the vocal line. Without the lyrics, it's very difficult for an accompanist to find where you are in the music if you accidentally skip a bar.
- **Mark all cuts in bold red ink.** Again, this is so that our accompanist can follow you.
- If you start your selection in the middle of the song, make sure the **song title is printed in bold capital letters** on the page where you will be starting your cut.
- **Photocopy or tape** your music **back-to-back** so that you have **two-sided pages**. **Punch holes** in the music. Then place the pages in a **3-ring binder that will open flat on a music stand**. Because this binder will only have two songs in it, a typical 1" binder should be large enough.
- **Please don't do the following:**
 - Don't bring music with single-sided pages. It requires too many page turns.
 - Don't tape your music end-to-end on one long chart. Some accompanists like this approach but ours do not.
 - Don't put your music in plastic sheet protectors. They are hard to turn, and worse, the reflection can make it difficult to read the page.
 - Don't use staples. If you can't create two-sided pages with a photocopier, use tape. Staples can cut accompanists' fingers.
 - Don't copy your music on colored paper; it's hard to read. White only, please.
 - Don't put extra music or pictures in this binder. This binder is for the accompanist only, and should have only your two audition songs.

BRING YOUR BOOK

Experienced singers have a book that includes representative songs that they have studied and know well enough to be able to sing on request. At your afternoon interview, you may be asked to sing something other than your audition pieces. So please bring additional pieces in a separate 3-ring binder from your audition binder. You can organize them in any way you want, but it is very helpful to have a table of contents in the front. It's also a good idea to have the full-length versions of your audition songs in your book.

THE DO-NOT-SING LIST

We used to have such a list. But we have dropped it because every time we put a song on it, someone comes along and finds a way to make it their own.

However, we recommend that you make sure that piano part is written in such a way that the accompanist can follow you. Some songs are extremely difficult to follow on the page, even for professional accompanists.

The choice of material is yours. If you have any specific questions or concerns about your audition material, please write to us at audition@otterbein.edu.

LAST THOUGHTS

Lead with your best piece. You may be tempted to do your weakest piece first to get it out of the way, and save your best for last. It's not an effective strategy. Remember the old adage: ***you only have one chance to make a first impression.***

Remember that your ***time limit is 3 minutes.***

Don't yell, either in the monologue or the songs, unless it's for comic effect.

Share yourself and your work with everyone in the room. We are your audience, and we all want you to do well.

We look forward to seeing you soon.

Christina Kirk
Chair, Department of Theatre and Dance
Otterbein University
audition@otterbein.edu
Facebook: Otterbein University Theatre and Dance
Instagram: otterbein_theatreanddance
Twitter: @otterbeintheatr
Flickr: otterbeintheatre