

TO: 2021-22 Chair of Senate Executive Committee  
FROM: Sarah S. LeBlanc, Chair, Curriculum Review Subcommittee (20-21)  
DATE: April 15, 2021  
SUBJECT: Theater Department Musical Theater BFA

The Curriculum Review Subcommittee supports the proposal from the Theater Department on their proposal for Musical Theater Bachelor of Fine Arts. We find that the proposal requires no Senate review.

Approving

Not Approving

Absent

Jaiyanth Daniel  
Behin Elahi  
Laurel Campbell  
Shannon Johnson  
Carol Lawton  
Sarah LeBlanc  
Haowen Luo

Teresa Hogg  
Sierra Miller

Terri Swim, exofficio (non-voting member)



## Degree/Certificate/Major/Minor/Concentration Cover Sheet

Date:

Institution: Purdue

Campus: Fort Wayne

School or College:

Department:

Location:                      80% or more online: Yes      No

County:

Type:

Program name:

Graduate/Undergraduate:

Degree Code:

Brief Description:

Rationale for new or terminated program:

CIP Code:

Name of Person who Submitted Proposal:

Contact Information (phone or email):

## **Request for a New Major or Concentration**

**I. Name of proposed major, or concentration:**

Bachelor of Fine Arts, Musical Theatre

**II. Title of degree to be conferred:**

BFA Musical Theatre

**III. Field of study, department, and college involved**

Musical Theatre

Department of Theatre (including its dance offerings)

College of Visual and Performing Arts

**IV. Objectives of the proposed major or concentration**

The BFA, Musical Theatre is an interdisciplinary degree that combines curricula of Theatre, Music and Dance. A Musical Theatre performer must be proficient in all three performing arts areas. The program proposed will prepare students for careers in the professional areas of the performing arts, specifically in professional theatre venues that offer Musical Theatre productions in the major urban markets nationally and internationally, as well as employment with professional touring companies, cruise ships, summer stock, and amusement parks.

**V. Proposed Date of Initiation**

Academic Year 2021-2022

**VI. Describe the relationship of the proposed major or concentration to the mission of the campus or the department**

**Relationship to Campus Mission:**

The BFA in Musical Theatre will provide Theatre Majors the opportunity for an even greater sense of purposeful study, and “education with purpose” is a central part of Purdue Fort Wayne’s campus-wide mission. While the students pursuing the new major will continue to learn the foundational components of theatre arts, by taking an only slightly revised and condensed Theatre Core with the BA Theatre students, they will also take a sequence of classes that will focus their studies in a particular area of theatre arts, the American Musical. This balance of foundational core with specialization in Musical Theatre will focus the students’ studies, giving them the tools to continue in either additional graduate level endeavors or entry-level professional work in the field. The overall quality of the Department, therefore, will improve with this additional degree.

**Relationship to Department Mission:**

The stated mission of the Department of Theatre is to:

- educate its students within a broad liberal arts framework in the art, craft and discipline of theatre, through programs offering both classroom study and experiential production activities.
- serve the University Community through its productions and general education offerings.
- provide culturally enriching activities to the greater Northeastern Indiana Region.

The BFA in Musical Theatre will retain attention to the breadth of study in both the liberal arts and theatre arts because the theatre core changes very little with the new degree. This core still requires that all BFA Musical Theatre Majors both understand the totality of theatre professions, consisting of scholars, designers, directors, and actors, and that they know how those professions collaborate to form productions. The new degree should also uplift the quality of the productions prepared for and presented to both the University community and the Greater Northeast Indiana region by featuring the work of more precisely trained performers.

**VII. Describe any relationship to existing programs within the campus**

We already have a relationship with the School of Music. This is due to our development of the BA Theatre Degree with a concentration in Musical Theatre. This concentration already requires students to take a minimum of three terms studying Private Voice, and it also requires our students to take the School of Music's course, Rudiments of Music (the BFA would require six terms of voice lessons). With positive responses and expression of willingness to collaborate, the new Director of the School of Music supports this proposal for the BFA Theatre Degree in Musical Theatre.

PFW's Dance offerings are housed within the Department of Theatre. We do anticipate some changes in the Dance offerings, namely more frequent technique classes offered at Intermediate and Advanced levels. As the program grows, we may need to consider the hire of a faculty member that holds dance or acting advanced dance training, as well as professional credits as a choreographer of Musical Theatre Dance.

**VIII. Describe any cooperative endeavors explored and/or intended with other institutions or organizations**

The Department of Theatre intends to encourage strongly that all BFA Musical Theatre Students to complete an Independent Learning Experience (ILE) before graduation. This could be accomplished in a variety of ways, such as: an internship with a professional theatre company, performing in summer stock or amusement park entertainment venues, preferably in performance of Musical Theatre but other areas

of interest may be considered; theatre study abroad for any length of time; a summer research assistantship with a faculty member; a significant workshop with a professional company. The faculty are unanimously in favor of helping students gain an experience in the field at least once before graduation through careful mentorship, believing that it increases the likelihood they will seek further experiences post-graduation. However, the faculty understands that not all students are ready for such an endeavor during their undergraduate education. If the faculty and student decides to pursue placement in an outside learning experience, these experiences will be determined based on the students' interests and a personalized assessment by the faculty of the student's abilities and possibilities at the time.

**IX. Describe the need for the major or concentration**

The Department of Theatre decided to add this program because we recognize that our strongest BA Theatre Majors typically train in all three areas: Music, Dance and Theatre. They frequently tell us that they crave more advanced training in these areas. This Department-level anecdotal information, collected over the years and combined with our investigation of the popularity of the BFA in Musical Theatre at competing peer institutions, such as Ball State University or Indiana University, Bloomington, tells us that we should also offer this degree. Furthermore, there is work in the performing arts industry for musical theatre graduates of Bachelor's level work nationally. Several of our own students who completed our Concentration in Musical Theatre over the past 5 years have been hired for summer stock festivals and amusement parks, such as Cedar Point and Disney World. In fact, one such student, Brady Shrock, remains employed for 4+ years by Disney Shanghai, achieving fame in China's performing arts market as a Disney character.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average hourly rate for a person graduating with a Theatre Degree in the USA is \$20.43, with the field of Theatre slated to grow by 3% nationally between 2019 and 2029 (<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/entertainment-and-sports/actors.htm>). Furthermore, the percentage of arts graduates in the workforce has been growing at a rate of 5.42%, from 2.04M in 2017 to 2.15M in 2018. The average median income for Musical Theatre graduates, in particular, in 2017 was listed at \$58,627.00 with 2.15 million of these in the workforce (<https://datausa.io/profile/cip/musical-theatre>). This data, along with the awareness of how many students we lose in our recruitment efforts annually because they seek a BFA program in Musical Theatre, leads us to see that the addition of this degree is a necessity for us. Over the past four years, we attended the scholarship auditions at the State Thespian Festivals in Indiana, Ohio and Michigan, where the majority of students express an interest in a college or university with a strong Musical Theatre program. While we regularly establish relationships with talented Musical Theatre Performers at these festivals, peeking their interest in our Concentration in the field, every prospect with whom we have negotiated from these recruiting events has ultimately decided to attend another school where they will be able to pursue a BFA in Musical Theatre.

A recent conversation with the recruitment coordinator at Ball State University confirmed that there is interest and there is need for additional BFA degrees in Musical Theatre in Indiana. She explained that on an average year, since developing the BFA degrees in Acting and Musical Theatre, the typical number of students that audition for each of these degree areas is 1500 students. The department at Ball State University accepts, on average, 160-180 students total in ten areas of theatre training annually, with the largest interest in the BFAs in Musical Theatre and Acting. Even though Ball State is not typically listed as one of the USA's top 30 Musical Theatre programs (<https://www.onstageblog.com/editorials/2019/11/3/the-top-30-college-musical-theatre-programs-for-2019-2020>), of the 1500 young people that audition each year for a spot in an incoming BFA Musical Theatre class, only 18-22 students are accepted. Those hundreds and hundreds of students not accepted to Ball State University's program nevertheless still want to pursue a Musical Theatre degree. We would like to meet the needs of at least a tiny portion of those students.

We believe we will stand apart from our competition because we intend to remain moderate in size, as compared to programs that have adopted the degree and favored financial gains over quality. We strongly believe that theatre students only realize their fullest potential with close mentorship and several opportunities to participate in the mounting of live productions throughout their undergraduate career. Too often, BFA training sacrifices the foundations of theatre for the sake of specialization. We believe we have struck the right balance, retaining the foundational knowledge of the theatre core while adding specialization training in Acting, Dance and Music.

The estimated full-time enrollment in the initial year is from 6-8 new majors, with the peak growth established at 30-40 BFA majors, once the BFA Musical Theatre Degree is fully established in 5-7 years. As compared to the aforementioned statistics from Ball State University, which accepts 18-22 students annually into their program and carries an average of 72-88 BFA Musical Theatre students at any given time, we hope to remain small enough to give all of our students the chance to work on our theatre productions and to benefit from our close personal mentoring. Furthermore, their total population in the theatre department, according to their recruiter, falls between 600-800 students. We believe this is far too many students to mentor closely, and hope to convince our prospective students that with us, in a department that will never exceed 120 majors, education will never be cookie cutter and assembly line in nature.

**X. Describe the resources required over and above current levels to implement the proposed major or concentration**

We hosted a consultant, Dr. Kenn Stilson, from our national accreditor, National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST) to provide guidance on the development of the BFA. He recommended a renovation of the Kettler Hall Studio Theatre for the sake of upgrading it to accommodate Musical Theatre productions and to create a fully equipped additional rehearsal hall. The Dean of the College, John O'Connell, and the Associate Vice Chancellor of Facilities Management (AVCF), Greg Justice, have received our proposal for a renovation. The Dean is currently helping to raise

funds by working with Advancement while AVCF Justice is reviewing the proposal for the sake of obtaining bids.

Our consultant also suggested that our accreditor, NAST, will likely call for the eventual hire of a Dance Professor who holds either a terminal degree or extensive tested experience in professional theatre and/or choreography.

Finally, the new Director of the School of Music, David Steffens, has also consulted with our Department of Theatre and suggests that a voice teacher specializing in musical theatre style be considered as, perhaps, a joint Theatre and Music appointment in the future.

**XI. A Liaison Library Memo**

This memo will be sent by Denise Buhr under a separate cover.

**XII. Proposed curriculum BFA Musical Theatre Curriculum, Total credits = 120**

BFA	Degree Curriculum (all classes 3 credits unless otherwise noted)
General Education Core (33 Credits)	Gen Ed Category A Math, STAT 125, MA 153, or MA 168 Gen Ed Category A ENG W131 Gen Ed Category A COM 11400 or THTR11400 Gen Ed Category A or B ENG W233 Intermediate Expository Writing Gen Ed Category B Scientific Ways of Knowing Gen Ed Category B Social/Behavioral Gen Ed Category B Interdisciplinary Gen Ed Category B Humanistic/Artistic Gen Ed Category C Capstone Gen Ed Category B Elective
Theatre Core (28 Credits)	THTR 13800-Acting I  THTR 15800-Stagecraft  THTR 16800-Theatre Production I (1x2 = 2 cr.)  THTR 20201-Introduction to Theatre + Theatre Freshman Community Hour  THTR 21300-Voice for the Actor-2 cr.  THTR 26500-Intro to Stage Management <b>or</b>  THTR 35100-Costume Techniques <b>or</b>  THTR 26200-Lighting Technology  THTR 28400-Textual Analysis  THTR 44000-Directing: Page to Stage  THTR 47000-Theatre and Society I  THTR 47100-Theatre and Society II



<p>BFA Specialization Theatre (29 credits)</p>	<p>THTR 23800-Acting II</p> <p>THTR 23900-Musical Theatre Performance I</p> <p>THTR 32300-Acting: Movement for the Actor</p> <p>THTR 33800-Acting III</p> <p>THTR 33900-Musical Theatre Performance II</p> <p>THTR 35500-American Musical Theatre History</p> <p>THTR 39000-BFA Project 1 cr.—consists of a major role in a production</p> <p>THTR 39000-Musical Theatre Vocal Styles and Repertoire 1 cr.</p> <p>THTR41300-Advanced Voice for the Actor</p> <p>THTR 43800-Acting IV</p> <p>THTR 39000—Shakespeare Performance</p>
<p>BFA Specialization Dance (8 credits)</p>	<p>DANC 20200 Ballet II 2 cr. or</p> <p>DANC 22100-Tap II 2 cr. or</p> <p>DANC 20300-Jazz II 2 cr. or</p> <p>DANC 20100-Modern II 2 cr.</p> <p>DANC 39000-Musical Theatre Dance I 2 cr.</p> <p>DANC 39000-Musical Theatre Dance II 2 cr.</p>
<p>BFA Specialization Music (22 Credits)</p>	<p>MUSC 10900-Rudiments of Music <b>or</b></p> <p>THTR 39000-Introduction to Musical Theatre</p> <p>MUSC 11300-Music Theory I</p> <p>MUSC 11400-Music Theory II</p> <p>MUSC 11100-Class Piano I 2 cr.</p> <p>MUSC 12100-Class Piano II 2 cr.</p> <p>MUSC 11500-Sight Singing/Aural Skills I 1 cr.</p> <p>MUSC 11600-Sight Singing/Aural Skills II 1 cr.</p> <p>MUSC 40004-Voice Lessons (taken for a minimum of 5 semesters—1 cr. x 3 semesters at lower division and taken for 2 cr. X 2 semesters at upper division for 7 cr.)</p>

In addition to the course work listed above, each student’s progress in the BFA Musical Theatre degree program is determined by an annual spring term jury, in which the performance faculty review written feedback from the students’ professors on progress, review the student’s grades earned thus far and evaluate a 2-4 minute presentation of a live song and monologue performance.

The BFA in Musical Theatre includes all course requirements not listed as part of the Theatre Core, the annual juries, the Independent Learning Experience, and the completion of one major BFA role in a musical theatre production in the Department, referred to as the BFA Project. Students will have many opportunities leading up to the BFA Project to perform in musicals and non-musicals, since the Department regularly produces 5-6 productions annually (4 mainstage shows, 1 to 2 of which are musicals; 1 Freshman/Sophomore workshop production; and 1 cabaret). The Department will require BFA Musical Theatre students to audition for all productions and expect them to accept all roles offered as a part of their degree requirements, whether in a musical production, straight play or cabaret.

## Liaison Librarian Memo

Date: 12/01/20

From: Denise Buhr

To: Terri Swim

Re: New degree – BFA in Musical Theatre

Describe availability of library resources to support proposed new program:

Helmke Library subscribes to a number of theatre- and music-related databases that provide access to current and historical research, newspaper archives, scores and sheet music, audio and video streaming, and play scripts. The library also has a substantial collection of print and e-books covering a wide range of theatre and music topics, as well as journals, DVDs, videos, CDs, and LPs. A search on the subject “musicals” showed 191 books, 189 CDs, 138 scores, 118 LPs, and 28 DVDs available in the library. As a part of its annual collection development, the library purchases scripts, librettos, and/or CDs of award-winning or nominated musicals as available.

Comments:

According to the proposal, the majority of the degree’s coursework pre-exists and is supported by current library resources in both theatre and music subjects. One concern would be the need for additional resources for new courses that do not yet exist. While the library adds new materials in theatre each year, a substantial need beyond normal expenditures is not doable. Given the library’s current financial situation, including a cut to the library’s monograph budget and the ongoing “cut to add” philosophy for subscription resources such as databases, the library cannot support extensive materials requests for new courses without additional funding. In the short term, the library has the resources to support a BFA in Musical Theatre and the liaison librarian will prioritize small single-item purchase requests for current or new courses related to this degree.

*Denise Buhr*

12/01/20

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Liaison Librarian Signature Date