

Questions to Ask in Understanding Theatre and Musical Theatre Programs and Evaluating Personal Preferences

1. What kind of degree is offered? Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA)? Bachelor of Arts (BA)? These degrees are philosophically quite different. Understand the differences and recognize that each program is unique. Is the degree designed specifically for Acting or Musical Theatre or Production, or for theatre in general?
2. What is the program's philosophical approach to education?
3. Curriculum
 - a) What is the balance between liberal arts academics and professional training classes?
 - b) What is the range of courses offered within the curriculum? In addition to classes in the techniques of acting, voice, movement, dance, what other courses are required? Are there opportunities to study sight-singing, music reading skills (piano), film work, theatre and musical theatre history, dialects, rock music and contemporary singing and non-performance theater (producing, stage management, crew, playwriting).
 - c) How much flexibility is built into the curriculum? How is flexibility supervised for each student?
4. How large is the program? When did it begin? What is the male/female ratio? How diverse is the student body? What is the retention rate?
5. What are the opportunities at the college/university apart from the theatre program? Is there a student theatre scene? Is there interaction with students in other majors?
6. How large are the classes, especially those that are performance related? What is the atmosphere in the classes—professional, creative, stimulating, competitive or non-competitive, focused, engaging?
7. Can the students study abroad for a semester? If so will this delay graduation beyond 4 years? Are the students allowed to work professionally?
8. Is the relationship between students and faculty professional, comfortable, stimulating? How accessible are faculty for meetings outside of class?

9. How many faculty-directed, departmental plays and musicals are presented each year? Are there limits on non-majors participating in plays and musicals? Is there an active student theatre scene? How many student productions on campus? What are examples of past productions?
10. Does the school/department promote new works? Do they encourage student created works
11. Do musical theatre students participate in plays and visa versa? What about films, dance concerts, operas and or/recitals?
12. What is the relationship between the music, dance and theatre departments
13. Does the faculty work professionally away from school and, if so how does that benefit the students?
14. How often does the school bring in professional artists to work with or speak with students? Do graduates return to interact with students?
15. Are the students taught about the field as a profession and how to make a living if they choose to pursue a career in the arts? (agents, casting, audition techniques, business aspect)?
16. Where are the graduates working and what do they say about their experience at the school? What is the opinion of current students, especially seniors?
17. Does the school help with the transition to a professional career, such as a senior showcase, internships, other career guidance?
20. How is the department regarded by people in the profession, including casting directors, agents, directors, conductors?

IF YOU DECIDE TO APPLY TO THEATRE AND MUSIC THEATRE PROGRAMS:

1. What are the application requirements and deadlines?
**Note: many performing arts programs, particularly BFA programs, have earlier deadlines than the college or university as a whole.
2. Are there pre-screening requirements? If so what are they? These differ from school to school. Are there auditions? What is required?
3. What are the academic standards for admission (GPA, test scores, high school curriculum)?
4. Which test scores are accepted (ACT, SAT) and what is the recommended timeline for taking these tests?
5. What are the required essay topics, if any?
6. What are the school's recommendations for high school academic curriculum?
7. Historically, how many MT or Acting applications did the school receive and how many applicants did the school accept? What is the gender balance for each question?
8. What is the goal size or the expected size of the incoming freshman class? Does the school maintain a wait-list?
9. When are admission decisions made and communicated to applicants?
10. What is the total cost of attending the school?
11. If the school offers need based or merit based financial aid, what are the deadlines and application requirements?
12. Is there financial support available? On what criteria are scholarship decisions made?