

Musical Theater Collaboration MFA

Center for the Performing and Cinematic Arts / SCHOOL OF THEATER, FILM AND MEDIA ARTS

Learn more about the Master of Fine Arts in Musical Theater Collaboration.

This program is not accepting applications for the 2025-2026 academic year.

About the Program

The George Abbott Master of Fine Arts in Musical Theater Collaboration is designed to prepare candidates for a career in the musical theater industry as collaborating creative team members and as independent artists engaged in the creation of new musical theater works for the commercial and nonprofit sectors, as well as educational programs. The program emphasizes intensive graduate-level craft-based training that includes abundant studio, workshop and production experience opportunities. Rather than the usual isolated pedagogical separation of the various craft and artistic disciplines within the field, the program places primary emphasis on the inherent collaborative nature of this most integrated of performing art forms.

The innovative degree in Musical Theater Collaboration is the only MFA graduate training program in the nation designed to collectively train, mentor and develop new book writers, choreographers, composers, directors, lyricists and playwrights together as a cohort in a comprehensive collaborative program. The broad scope of the program includes a comprehensive overview and history of the field, a deep understanding of the aesthetics of the form, as well as knowledge of the business side of the industry. The program seeks to mirror the actual field-based creative process of generating new musical theater works by teaching fundamental craft and collaboration skills within a world of access to the necessary mentoring and talent resources vital to the process of creating a new musical.

The three-year curriculum includes:

- In Year 1, a focus primarily on building creative collaboration skills in concert with studies based in students' respective disciplinary areas of emphasis.
- In Year 2, a continuation of disciplinary studies and division of the cohort into groups of collaborative teams focused on the creation of new musical theater thesis pieces.
- In Year 3, a focus on bringing thesis projects to fruition, culminating in a fully realized workshop production. The productions are presented in New York City in an industry showcase of excerpts of students' work for consideration by an invited roster of field and industry professionals.

Time Limit for Degree Completion: 3 years

Campus Location: Main

Full-Time/Part-Time Status: Students complete the degree program as part of a cohort on a full-time basis.

Interdisciplinary Study: The program is interdisciplinary in nature, given that book writers and playwrights, composers and composer/lyricists, and directors and director/choreographers learn and create together.

Accreditation: The Theater Department is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST).

Areas of Specialization: Within the cohort, students concentrate in one of three areas:

- Bookwriting
- Composing/Lyricist
- Directing

Job Prospects: The program prepares candidates for careers in the musical theater industry or academy as collaborating creative team members and as independent artists engaged in the creation of new musical theater works.

Non-Matriculated Student Policy: Coursework may not be taken on a non-matriculated basis.

Financing Opportunities: Lab, studio and classroom teaching opportunities are available for Teaching Assistants. Duties include assisting in grading papers for survey and literature classes. Assistantships carry a stipend and full tuition remission. Academic Internships are also available in production work, including rehearsal and performance of plays for the theater season.

Admission Requirements and Deadlines

Application Deadline:

Fall: February 1

This program is not accepting applications for the 2025-2026 academic year.

Applications are accepted from applicants through the University/Resident Theatre Association (URTA) audition/interview process as well as local auditions in Philadelphia. Auditions are held every three years (e.g., 2025, 2028, 2031). We visit all three sites: New York City, Chicago and San Francisco. We also recruit through the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC) and with several prominent musical theater development companies such as the National Alliance for Musical Theatre (NAMT). After candidates have auditioned and been interviewed, those accepted are notified by letter on or before April 15. Late applications may be considered for admission.

APPLY ONLINE to this graduate program.

Letters of Reference:

Number Required: 3

From Whom: Letters of recommendation should be obtained from college/university professors and/or professionals in the field who are familiar with the applicant's work.

Coursework Required for Admission Consideration: Applicants must have completed a bachelor's degree or equivalent and ideally have professional experience in their discipline.

Bachelor's Degree in Discipline/Related Discipline: All applicants must present credentials that are the equivalent of the baccalaureate degree at Temple University.

Statement of Goals: Introduce yourself in approximately 500 words by relaying your relevant experience, values and areas of interest. Proper essay form should be used, but it may be in a personal style.

Standardized Test Scores: No standardized test is used for admission to the MFA in Musical Theater Collaboration program.

Resume: Current resume required.

Interview: Interviews are generally conducted in March and April through URTA, with audition sites in New York, Chicago and San Francisco, as well as locally on the Temple University campus. Applicants called back for an interview are required to bring transcripts, a headshot and a resume.

Other Requirements:

- Bookwriting: Via Acceptd, submit a writing sample that is either one full-length manuscript or two one-act scripts.
- Composing/Lyricist: Via Acceptd, submit samples of creative work, portfolio, reviews and/or website.
- Directing: Via Acceptd, submit a reel of creative work, production photos, reviews and/or website.

Program Requirements

General Program Requirements:

Number of Credits Required Beyond the Baccalaureate: 60

Required Courses:

In Year 1, foundation coursework is taken. In Year 2, thesis project teams are formed and collaboration begins. In Year 3, the thesis projects are completed, presented and showcased for industry.

All students enrolled in a cohort of the Musical Theater Collaboration MFA program take the following core courses together:

Code	Title	Credit Hours
THTR 5012	American Musical Theater	2
THTR 5287	Rehearsal/Performance	2
THTR 5392	The Business of the Business in Theater	2
THTR 5804	Dramaturgy	2
THTR 5873	Adaptation ¹	1-2
THTR 5892	Script and Score Analysis	2
THTR 8001	Seminar in Dramatic Literature	2
THTR 8002	Seminar in Dramatic Literature	2
THTR 8985	Teach in Higher Education	3
THTR 9487	Musical Theater Practicum III	1
THTR 9587	Musical Theater Practicum IV ²	2-3
THTR 9995	Thesis	6

General Electives ³ 12

Total Credit Hours 39-41

- ¹ Students in the Bookwriting concentration take THTR 5873 for 1 credit; students in the Composing/Lyricist and Directing concentrations take this course for 2 credits.
- ² Students in the Directing concentration take THTR 9587 for 2 credits; students in the Bookwriting and Composing/Lyricist concentrations take this course for 3 credits.
- ³ Consult with the program director to ensure selection of appropriate electives.

The balance of coursework annually is taken by students in their respective areas of concentration:

Bookwriting Concentration

Code	Title	Credit Hours
THTR 5487	Musical Theater Practicum I	1
THTR 5587	Musical Theater Practicum II	1
THTR 5871	Playwriting I	1
THTR 5872	Playwriting II	2
THTR 5893	Lyric Seminar I	3
THTR 5894	Lyric Seminar II	4
THTR 8881	Playwriting III	2
THTR 8882	Playwriting IV	2
THTR 9882	Projects in Playwriting	2
Select one Design Area course from the following:		2
THTR 5613	History of Decor	
THTR 5625	History of Fashion	
THTR 5741	Design for TV and Film	
THTR 8511	Lighting Design II	
THTR 8611	Costume Design II	
THTR 8711	Scene Design II	
Total Credit Hours		20

Composing/Lyricist Concentration

Code	Title	Credit Hours
MUST 8715	Composition I	3
MUST 8717	Composition II	4
THTR 5487	Musical Theater Practicum I	1
THTR 5587	Musical Theater Practicum II	1
THTR 5893	Lyric Seminar I	3
THTR 5894	Lyric Seminar II	4
General Elective ¹		3
Total Credit Hours		19

- ¹ Consult with the program director to ensure selection of an appropriate elective.

Directing Concentration

Code	Title	Credit Hours
THTR 5134	Directing for the Musical Stage	4
THTR 5387	Directing Practicum I	2
THTR 5388	Directing Practicum II	3
THTR 9382	Projects in Directing I	2

THTR 9387	Directing Practicum III	2
Select one Design Area course from the following or a general elective: ¹		3
THTR 5613	History of Decor	
THTR 5625	History of Fashion	
THTR 5741	Design for TV and Film	
THTR 8511	Lighting Design II	
THTR 8611	Costume Design II	
THTR 8711	Scene Design II	
General Elective		
Film Course ²		4
Total Credit Hours		20

¹ Consult with the program director in choosing an elective if a Design Area course is not selected.

² Consult with the program director to ensure selection of an appropriate film course.

Culminating Events:

Thesis Project:

The cohort creates a complete new musical culminating in a fully rehearsed workshop production. It is written by MFA candidate book writers and composers/lyricists, with subsequent direction by MFA candidate directors.

Showcase:

An industry showcase of students' selected work is presented in New York City to an invited roster of industry and field professionals. Funded in part by the George and Joy Abbott Center for Musical Theater at Temple University, the showcase consists of a short concert-style presentation featuring selected performed excerpts from the candidates' body of original work.

Contacts

Program Web Address:

<https://www.temple.edu/academics/degree-programs/musical-theater-collaboration-mfa-ca-mtc-mfa>

Department Information:

Musical Theater Collaboration Graduate Admissions
 Center for the Performing and Cinematic Arts/School of Theater, Film and Media Arts
 2001 N. 13th Street, 127 Presser Hall
 Philadelphia, PA 19122-6016
 tfma@temple.edu
 215-204-8598
 Fax: 215-204-4957

Submission Address for Application Materials:

<https://apply.temple.edu/TFMA/>

Department Contacts:

Admissions:

James Short
 Recruitment Coordinator
 jshort@temple.edu

Head of Musical Theater:

Peter Reynolds
 peterr@temple.edu

Chair:

Fred Duer
 fmduer@temple.edu