



RADNOR TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Course Overview

AMERICAN MUSICAL THEATER  
Course #0943



### General Information

Credits: 0.5

Weighted: Unweighted

Prerequisite: **Recommended: THEATER  
ARTS, CHOIR and/or INSTRUMENTAL**

Repeating the Course: No

Total Students: 20

Length: Full Year

Format: Cycle Days

Grade: 9-12

Audition Required? **NO**

### Course Description

“Think of musical theater – the two most glorious words in the English language!” – *Julian Marsh*, from *42<sup>nd</sup> Street*. America is the birthplace of the Broadway musical, and this course will be focused on the birth of Broadway, its development, its reflection of American history as it unfolds, its unique style of storytelling and character, and the many diverse qualities that make it uniquely American Musical Theater. Students will analyze librettos and lyrics, listen to musical scores, view clips and videos of performances, as well as attend a live performances. Students will write their own songs and scenes, as well as create an audition binder of musical theater clips of “16 bars” for future auditions. Utilizing technology, students will record their own performances of their songs. By the end of the course, students will have a deeper understanding and appreciation for the Broadway Musical. Participation in the school musical is highly encouraged, onstage or off.

Participation in this course will encourage a cross-curricular understanding of the arts and their reflection of historical issues and occurrences. Students will be able to relate topics across differing subjects, such as music, theatre, social studies, English, and psychology. This is advantageous to the student as it enriches a student’s familiarity with Common Core and Keystone Exam related topics.

*This course is open to students in grades 9-12. Recommend a Theater course as a concurrent or future course of study.*

### Course Objectives:

- Why does song, lyric, music, and choreography enhance the expression and understanding of character emotion, traits, and motivations, as well as enhance plot complexity and development?
- How does the analysis, study, theorization, and discussion regarding song, lyric, music, and choreography lead to deeper understandings within the artist?
- Why is it important for artists to intellectually critique and internalize other artists and performances?
- How is it beneficial to the artist to create, collaborate on, rehearse, and perform an original work of musical theater?
- Why is it important to synthesize an understanding of the artistic necessity of collaboration?
- Why is audition practice essential to the success of an actor? How is the individual actor’s success in auditions enhanced by practice, repetition, and refinement?
- How does an actor’s analysis, interpretation, and performance of established canon of musical theater enhance their own understanding of the art form?
- Why does the actor participate as audience for video or live performance enhance their own artistry, outside of aesthetic enjoyment of said performances?

## Common Assessments:

- ~ **VOCAL LESSONS** - Ongoing authentic assessment (*At least twice per quarter*) in which each student will meet with the instructor for personalized vocal lessons in which growth will be measured regarding proficient practice of both the singing mechanism (*actor as performer*) and the Character Expression (*actor as actor*).
- ~ **MOCK AUDITIONS** - Students will each audition for a panel of professionals. Professionals will comment on student actor's preparation, repertoire, poise, and professionalism. (*3rd Quarter Authentic Assessment*).
- ~ **MIDTERM CABARET PERFORMANCE and PRESENTATION** - 2 formative and 2 authentic assessments. Students will choose a song, and create a research and opinion essay, multimedia presentation, and performance of the song. Lastly, they will critique their peers' work as well.
- ~ **FINAL EXAMINATION - CREATION and PERFORMANCE of an ORIGINAL MUSICAL** - Students will collaborate on the creation of an original, one-act musical, to be presented to the public, as a final grade, a grade based upon effort, participation, and performance of duties.

## Major Units of Study:

- **UNIT of MUSICAL THEATRICAL ARTISTRY** - Ongoing throughout the course's term, based upon each individual student's experience levels and aptitude.
- **Strand One - CALM MIND (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4)**
  - WARMUP / RELAXATION / CONCENTRATION - Students will discover, innovate, and create methods, activities, and games that will focus upon the preparation of the mind for performance.
- **Strand Two - THE SINGING VOICE (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4)**
  - WARMUP / MECHANISM / TECHNIQUE - Students will develop, nurture, and properly utilize their voices as an instrument of expression through: focused warm up exercises; anatomical and functional knowledge of the vocal mechanism; and demonstration of correct technique in vocal support.
  - MUSICAL ACCURACY / INTERPRETATION / EXPRESSION - Students will demonstrate technical accuracy in pitch, rhythm, tempo, and lyrical recitation; Students will successfully create a unique but honest interpretation of the song; Students will demonstrate artistic expression of the music beyond the technical elements of music and create the distinct character of the song through theatrical means.
- **Strand Three - PLEASING SPEECH (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4)**
  - PROJECTION / DICTION and ENUNCIATION / ARTICULATION / INFLECTION - The student will continually develop and become self aware of their spoken speech and sung lyric through technically supported volume of the voice; clarity of consonant, vowel, and combination sounds, as well as resonance within the same; variety of vocal pitch within phrasing.
  - MEMORIZATION - Students will be expected to complete any and all necessary mechanical memorization of vocal character expressions, in song and spoken word, and therefore develop appreciation for the liberation provided the artist when a material is memorized.
- **Strand Four - ARTISTICALLY ENGAGED and EXPRESSIVE BODY (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4)**
  - BODY LANGUAGE and POSTURE / POISE - Students will recognize and artistically utilize the expressive effect of the body as an essential, organic, and default ingredient of a character. Students will develop confidence in poise and posture (*feigned or real in emotional feeling for the actor*) of the character they are presenting or writing.
  - SPATIAL AWARENESS - Students will imaginatively engage their five senses to create the environment surrounding their character, and release their body to react to the environment as naturally as possible.
  - CHOREOGRAPHY / STAGING - Students will engage in planned movements based upon and inspired by the character's emotional, technical, and/or outwardly influenced needs and wants. These movements will be executed either as an organic part of the music, or independent of music, present or absent.
- **Strand Five - REALISTIC, GROUNDED, and BELIEVABLE CHARACTER (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4)**
  - SUBSTITUTION / TRANSFER - Students will be able to analyze a character and establish similarities and contrasts between the character and themselves in personality, past experiences, and/or habit, and apply their own experiences to supplement the character's experiences, thereby creating increased realism and cohesiveness to the character.
  - WHAT IF - Students will identify aspects of their character with which they have no commonality whatsoever, and make efforts to create a fictional-yet-factual facsimile they can utilize in performance.
- **Strand Six - TECHNICAL STORYTELLING (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4)**
  - COSTUME - Students will create and/or articulate the artistic choices for a character's wardrobe, makeup, etc. with a specific focus on color, pattern, texture, fabric, and its psychological or symbolic meanings to the character.
  - LIGHTING / SETS / PROPS / SOUND - Students will create and/or articulate the reasoning of the artistic choices for a setting's design and appearance with regards to color, light, arrangement, design, soundscape, and placement.

## UNITS of HISTORICAL STUDY and MUSICAL THEATER CANON

- UNIT ONE - A Real Live Nephew of My Uncle Sam's (1893-1919) - Q1
- UNIT TWO - Syncopated City (1919-1942) - Q1
- UNIT THREE - Oh What a Beautiful Mornin' (1943-1959) - Q2
- UNIT FOUR - Tradition (1960-1979) - Q3
- UNIT FIVE - The Lullaby of Broadway (1960-1979) - Q4

### Materials & Texts

- Journal (any type), 3 ring binder, loose leaf paper, writing utensil(s), blank CDs and DVDs
- Google Account
- Flash Drive
- Yola-based website login
- Prezi Website login
- Grooveshark.com
- Broadway: The American Musical – M. Kantor and L. Maslon, Bulfinch Press c 2004
- Multimedia Presentations – PBS “Great Performances”; Insight Media Theater Master Classes (DVDs)
- Scores and librettos from select shows
- Film performances from select shows (DVDs and online sources)
  - *Broadway: The American Musical* (3 DVD set and CD set)
  - *Broadway's Lost Treasures* (DVD set, all volumes)
  - Numerous other DVDs, as indicated in specific units below
- Basic Drama Projects – Textbook – Dr. F. A. Tanner, University of Southern Idaho
- Theatre Arts: The Dynamics of Acting - National Textbook Company
- Theatre: Art in Action - National Textbook Company

### NCCAS ARTS STANDARDS

- CREATING - Content Standard #1** - Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
- CREATING - Content Standard #2** - Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.
- CREATING - Content Standard #3** - Refine and complete artistic work.
- PERFORMING - Content Standard #4**- Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.
- PERFORMING - Content Standard #5**- Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.
- PERFORMING - Content Standard #6** - Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.
- RESPONDING - Content Standard #7** - Perceive and analyze artistic work.
- RESPONDING - Content Standard #8** - Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- RESPONDING - Content Standard #9** - Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work
- CONNECTING - Content Standard #10** - Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.
- CONNECTING - Content Standard #11** - Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding