

# What is musical theatre

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Musical Theatre is a fusion of both music and drama. Musical Theatre derived from a group called the Florentine Camerata, this group was a group of men who decided that they wanted to combine two arts forms, in order to create the art of music. Basically they wanted to tell a story through music. This was influenced by Greek Theatre, which we are also studying.

I have been studying musical theatre throughout this term and have gained a wide selection of skills, even though there is still a lot to learn I feel that if I was to walk away today I would have gained a wider knowledge of musical theatre that I already had.

When studying musical theatre there are a number of skills which are essential these include;

Vocal Skills - Which are obviously a key element to Musical Theatre, this doesn't necessarily mean that you have to be a fantastic singer. I have learnt that everyone can sing, maybe not as well as someone like Mariah Carey, but with the right commitment, focus and training, anything is possible.

Posture is important; in order to get the best of your voice, also breathing correctly enhances your projection and quality of sound. Opening your mouth to produce a clear sound. Using diction, so that an audience can understand you.

Acting skills - Also another important skill, being able to express oneself through their body language and expression, helps to create the story in which the music is telling.

Movement - Again it's not essential that you are the world's greatest dancer, but it is essential that you are committed to learn the movement contained in musical theatre and take it seriously. The movement is what brings it all together, in a sense the glue.

Musicianship- Not everyone has a wide knowledge of Musicianship, but this is a needed skill. We are all musical in one way or another. Having musical knowledge will help everyone to progress. For instance, on ones score you will find words such as; *accelerando* (getting steadily faster) or *Crescendo* (increasing the volume). These words need to be understood.

So far my BTEC group have studied two songs, the first, The Ballad of Sweeny Todd, from the musical Sweeny Todd. And secondly Oklahoma, Which is the grand finale in Oklahoma. There is a huge contrast between these two songs; they differ very much in style, and also the way in which they are expressed.

Sweeny Todd is about a man, who owns a barber shop and whilst. " Shaving the faces of gentlemen." He would cut their throats, and leave them dead. Where as Oklahoma, has a totally different vibe to it. It's the grand Finale in a show, it is more upbeat and happy, and the music is full of major chords which brings a good jolly atmosphere, to the end of a show. Both of the songs however use the skills mentioned above.

I have learnt throughout the course that is very important to prepare mentally, this enables us to focus efficiently and progress. It also helps us to relate to the songs in which we are studying. There are various ways in

which you can mentally prepare yourself, and I believe that everybody prepares differently. One way in which we mentally prepared this morning was to close our eyes and listen to the sounds around us.

This had no effect on me, but then when we were asked to find one of the sounds we had heard and only concentrate on that sound, all the other sounds disappeared, and for me it helped me to focus. Another way in which I find effective to mentally warm up is to use mental imagery. Also by using relaxation methods such as deep heavy breathing helps me to release all negative energy inside of me. This all helps one to focus and move on with the classes. It also reduces stage fright.

Focus is also a part of mental preparation. So to focus effectively you must mentally prepare yourself. Focus is needed whilst being directed. As its not only one thing you're concentrated on it's both the music, the vocals and also the movement. I believe that it is important that we advance on these performance disciplines, in order to excel in this part of Performing Arts. I must admit I have found it hard to take direction all the time. There are tendencies to loose concentration.

Which again comes down to focus, if I were focused effectively this might not have happened. I think that learning a song and having it choreographed, helps one to appreciate just how hard it is. When you see a musical, you often take the show for granted, it's not until you actually perform one yourself, that you realise just how much effort and concentration has to be put into the whole piece. Also co-ordination is needed to put the moves together and still sing to the best of your ability. In musical theatre you

shouldn't let anything hold you back, put everything into it. When you are asked to do something you do it.

Rehearsal discipline is something which I believe I have greatly improved since starting this course. In musical theatre we are treated like professionals, and with a great deal of respect, therefore it is imperative that we behave like a professional would. By mentally preparing it helps to discipline oneself. Its not only you must discipline yourself in the lesson, but also outside of the lesson, when working with a group or by yourself, for example learning the songs which you have been taught. Rehearsing, in your own time. All this hard work pays off in performance.

As well as disciplining yourself, it is also vital that you manage your time well. Being punctual, ready to warm up, come prepared with your music which you are studying. Not only mentally warming up but physically warming up as well, it is crucial that you enter a rehearsal with a positive attitude and leave other negative issues outside.

As well as the above I have learnt that energy levels should be kept high, keeping levels high. Eating well, drinking plenty of fluids and getting sufficient rest. Help to keep energy levels high. Even though rest is an important part of keeping up energy levels, doing more also increases energy level. When feeling tired, getting up running around gives you energy. Also by putting your all into it will give you an adrenaline rush, which makes you want to carry on.

I have already spoken about my response to the choreography. And how that concentrating on not just the music but also the moves is hard. And I believe not only myself but the whole group have experienced this. To respond to the choreography again you have to focus.

Overall I believe I have gained an effective and wide knowledge of the basics about musical theatre. I have learnt how to breathe correctly when singing. Learnt about using my diaphragm. I have learnt it is important not to strain your vocal chords. I feel that I have gained not only skills in singing and drama, but also overall skills in the whole performance. Like letting go of everything, don't hold back those spontaneous moments. I have learnt to connect with the music and lyrics, which enables me to really get into the feel of the piece and give it my all. Being confident about what you are doing, forget about those around you to a certain extent. I have learnt that improving my strengths makes my weaknesses smaller.

Another very important ingredient to musical theatre is ensemble work. Working as a group, bring together the life of a piece of movement. And focus within the group is important. If someone is not concentrating, that is when things start to go wrong.

Having said all of this, I don't believe that I could walk of to the west end now and be a part of a massive show. There is a lot of learning still to be done, and I believe that one of my weaknesses is staying focused. Sometimes if the songs we are singing is something which I don't enjoy, then I tend to loose interest, this is a big let down. It is significant that I stay focused, even if I don't enjoy what I'm doing. This is unprofessional, and I feel to improve

on this I must effectively, mentally prepare myself. I shouldn't hold back if I don't enjoy what I'm doing. I should focus on the positive things in the song, and not the fact that I don't like it. By telling myself that, it all a part of performing arts, and knowing that this is what I love, I believe I can stay focused and work well throughout this course.