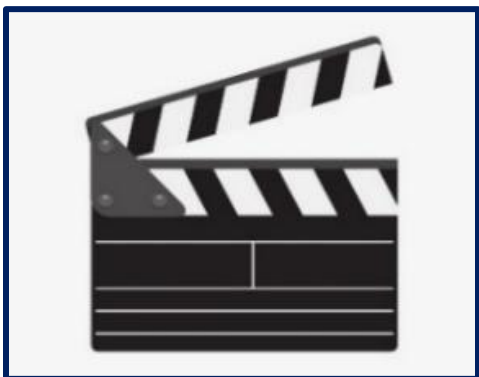


THE DIRECTOR'S CUT

THE MUSICAL THEATRE & ACTORS STUDIO



Director's Notes

While there may have only officially been eleven days of school this month, that doesn't mean they weren't still jam-packed. This fifth issue of *The Director's Cut* features our collaboration with our peers and colleagues in the Dance Academy as well a check-in on our upcoming production of *Cry-Baby: The Musical*. It also highlights the upcoming recruitment season and how you may be able to help spread the word about the good things that happen here at the Musical Theatre & Actors Studio.

In the classroom, students have presented their final performances of Broadway's Golden Age song cuts and have now begun their dissection of "The Changing Times," the era of Broadway [1965-1979] that solidified such legends as Bob Fosse and Stephen Sondheim, and that produced such shows as *Company*, *Chicago*, and Michael Bennett's *A Chorus Line*.

As you and your family's gear up to celebrate break and the holiday season, I wish you the very best and hope that you'll find time to enjoy the opportunities to rest and connect. Personally, I'll be spending part of the break in Arizona, enjoying some much-needed sunshine and warm weather. When we return, we'll be reaching the peak of our "busy season". I hope that you'll find the opportunity to volunteer. We'll be looking for an all-hands on deck approach as we get closer and closer to our production of *Cry-Baby*. Until then...cheers!

With Gratitude,

Erich DiCenzo

DIRECTOR OF THE MUSICAL THEATRE &
ACTORS STUDIO



SPREAD THE WORD



The Musical Theatre & Actors Studio welcomes students from just about every one of our FCPS high schools and centers. This year, the Musical Theatre & Actors Studio experienced a third consecutive year of growth, with more than a 25% increase in enrollment, and we are looking to do it again...*with your help!*

Believe it or not, when we return from Winter Break, we'll be entering the height of recruitment season for the 2024-2025 school year. While our outreach efforts include everything from attending base high school's Curriculum Nights to hosting our own Academy Open House, our attention will be primarily focused on welcoming prospective students into the studio to experience, first-hand, what a day in the life of an MTAS Academy student is like. Every Wednesday/Thursday from January 31st until February 29th, perspective students may choose to visit any AM, MID-Day, or PM Block. A special event is also being arranged for rising freshmen.

What is proven year after year is this: There is no stronger outreach than word of mouth. Current students and families are encouraged to reach out to friends who may be interested in [or better yet, may not even know about] the Musical Theatre & Actor's Studio. Help us spread the word about the Fairfax Academy and let's boost enrollment another 25% for the fourth consecutive year in a row!

A CREATIVE COLLABORATION

In some classrooms, the days leading to Winter Break can feel like an endless slog towards the finish line, filled with last minute testing or group projects. In other classrooms, perhaps it's the other end of the spectrum: Lazy, boring days watching a movie to fill the empty time. But here in the Academy, we find creative ways to keep things fresh for our students...like holding "Teacher Swaps." Students in both the Pre-Professional Musical Theatre class and the 6th Musical Theatre Workshop class got to experience learning choreography from Mrs. Barnes, our Academy Dance teacher, who led students through a modern/contemporary dance class.



Our Pre-Professional Musical Theatre class joins the Advanced Dancers for a Modern Dance Class hosted by Mrs. Barnes, our Dance Academy Teacher.

❄️ *What's On Your Wishlist?* ❄️

Every day before class officially begins, we ground ourselves with a “Check-In Question.” It sometimes takes the form of “favorite vs. least favorite” or “best vs. worst”. Other times, we’ll ask an open-ended question or find creative inquiry that will spark larger discussion. In the spirit of this holiday season, students were asked to share a role on their Wishlist. In other words, “What is a dream role that you someday hope to play, and why?”

“A dream role of mine is Natalie in Next to Normal because the character has a lot of emotions under the surface. I think it’s an acting challenge I haven’t had a chance to play yet, and I’d like to.”

Michelle Stein [Robinson SS]

“Mine is Sally in Cabaret because it’s an intense role that calls for singing, dancing, and acting. I’d love a challenge like that...a role that calls for all our training to come together at once.”

Saniya Desai [Marshall HS]

“One show that has always resonated with me is West Side Story. I love how the characters are all forced to come to places they’ve never been to before. They experience prejudices and challenges I can relate too. While I’ve done the show before, I’d love the chance to tackle it again.”

Grace Lopez [Westfield HS]

“One of the reasons I’ve joined the Academy is to be able to answer this question more confidently. I’ve always had roles I’ve liked, or been attracted to playing, but I don’t know that I know Musical Theatre content enough to answer yet. If I had to say: Little Red from Into the Woods or Christine from Be More Chill.”

Elizabeth Cha [Madison HS]

Catching Up with Cry-Baby!

With three weeks under our belt, we’ve already made a lot of great progress on the production. This is thanks in large part to not only our fabulous cast and stage management team, but the several adult professionals who are supporting our work. Once break is over, things will truly kick into high gear and we’ll be looking for several volunteers to help with everything from scenic painting to hemming, from set construction to cooking delicious tech week meals. I hope you’ll consider stepping up and becoming involved. Until then, we checked in with our two leads from the show to hear how the process has been so far. Luckily, no *tears* have been shed!

“It’s been really great learning the content of the show, but also taking a deeper approach this year with building the ensemble and constructing our characters as well. We’ve frontloaded music, of course, but we’ve also dived headfirst into choreography and staging, which has made the whole process so energetic and fun. It’s also been great making friends in other classes.”

Sammy Hayes (Allison) [Fairfax HS]

“Something that has been really helpful that I haven’t experienced in other shows is the fact that we have had the opportunity to work – in rehearsal – to characterize. We took two rehearsals for each of the show’s specific ensembles (who have to interact with one another) to community build within those groups. This has strengthened the chemistry not only on stage, but off as well. But the coolest thing of all? Being in a room with some of the most talented peers I’ve ever met!”

Jonah Uffelman (Cry-Baby) [Madison HS]

Sondheim Speaks

Below are the Top 6 quotes from Stephen Sondheim, according to AmericanSongwriter.com.

Which resonates with you most?

1. “The dumbing down of the country reflects itself on Broadway. The shows get dumber, and the public gets used to them.”

2. “The fact is popular art dates. It grows quaint. How many people feel strongly about Gilbert and Sullivan today compared to those who felt strongly in 1890?”

3. “I’m always conscious of what I’m writing, conscious of what the actor may ask me. I have a defense for nearly every line in the song.”

4. “My personal life and my artistic life do not interfere with each other.”

5. “I was essentially trained by Oscar Hammerstein to think of songs as one-act plays, to move a song from point A to point B dramatically.”

6. “I happen to like movies and plays about dislikeable people as long as I get to know why they are what they are.”

A LOOK AHEAD

Monday, January 1st
NO SCHOOL
New Years Day

Saturdays, January 6, 13, 20, & 27th
Tech Rehearsals and/or Build Days

Monday, January 15th
NO SCHOOL
MLK Day

Monday, January 25th
EARLY RELEASE
End of Quarter #2

Monday, January 26th
NO SCHOOL
Teacher Workday

Mon., January 29th–Thurs., February 1st
Cry-Baby Dress Rehearsals

Friday, February 2nd
Cry-Baby: The Musical Opening Night