

MUSICAL THEATRE VOICE CLASS

with kabrie galo

Building a Repertoire Book

Choosing Cuts

What is an audition cut? It is a section of music you will perform for an audition. Casting directors vary in what they ask to see for your audition, but here are a few common formats you should become familiar with to prepare your cuts.

1. Prepare one piece of music

They typically ask for a cut between 16-32 bars of music or 30-90 seconds. They may ask for a specific number of bars/seconds or give you a larger window to choose from. You should choose a piece *not* from the show you are auditioning for unless the casting director specifically asks for it or says it is allowed. You should choose a piece that is similar in style to the show you are auditioning for. If you are hoping to land a certain role, consider singing a song similar to one your goal character sings.

2. Prepare two contrasting pieces

Casting directors may want to see you portray different characters or perform in different styles, so they may ask you to sing two contrasting pieces. They could ask for 30 seconds of each piece, one minute of each piece, 90 seconds total allowing you to split the pieces however you'd like, or some other variation.

A few examples of qualities to look for in contrasting pieces:

Slow vs. fast

Hopeful or longing character vs. animated and lively character

Classic vs. modern

Serious character vs. ditsy character

Specific examples:

On My Own - *Les Miserables* & Let it Go - *Frozen*

Burn - *Hamilton* & Popular - *Wicked*

Think of Me - *The Phantom of the Opera* & Don't Rain on My Parade - *Funny Girl*

Note- I am using popular musical theatre songs to present easily recognizable contrasting songs, but unless specified otherwise, it is generally wise to look for songs that are not so well-known in order to set yourself apart from others. It is harder to stand out performing the same song that 100 other auditioners (or even two or three others) have performed than to choose one no one else has. You may have to do a deep dive on musical theatre pieces, but you can find some obscure gems if you look hard enough! This is not a hard and fast rule, just something to consider.

Finding Sheet Music

Find the piece and arrangement you are looking for. If you don't read music well, consider having someone who can read music for you, because not all accompaniments are the same. First, make sure that you find sheet music that has a piano accompaniment.

Example of melody only ❌ →

A piano accompaniment will have an additional line of music underneath the melody with a treble and bass clef, as shown in the next example.

ON MY OWN
 - CLAUDE-MICHEL SCHONBERG/ALAIN BOUBLIL/JEAN-MARC NATTEL/
 HERBERT KRETZMER/JOHN CAIRD/TREVOR NUUN

Secondly, look for an accompaniment that doesn't double the melody you'll be singing. Sometimes accompanists leave that line off so you can sing with whatever inflection and personal rhythmic/melodic choices you'd like, but others don't, leaving your cut feeling a bit like you're singing with the training wheels on. Either way, it either creates more work for the accompanist, or less freedom for you.

Example of a doubled melody ❌ →

Notice how the melody of the right hand on the piano matches the melody of the vocal part. This is what we want to watch out for and avoid.

This isn't something you can always find, so if you can't find something without a doubled melody, don't sweat it.

Example of a great score ✅

Score definition- the written notation of a composition of music

The blue words are my additions.

Marking Your Sheet Music

At the very least, you should mark your audition cut with clear start and ending measures.

Examples of notes you may need to write in for the accompanist-

Clear beginning and ending measures - mark these with highlighters and write START and END clearly.

Expression markings (freely, sweetly, with passion, etc.)

Vamp - a section you'd like the accompanist to repeat until you move to the next measure

Fermatas - to indicate you'd like to hold a note longer than written. This symbol \frown is written above the note.

Resolve to x chord - when the cut is over and you need to resolve in a way that isn't written in the piano score

Cross out measures - To skip measures, usually used to skip the first ending in a repeat section. Make sure to keep it looking clean but clear that you are skipping a section of the music

Some examples:

A handwritten musical score for a vocal piece. The top staff is the vocal line with lyrics in German and French. The bottom staff is the piano accompaniment. A yellow highlighter is used to mark the beginning of the piece, with the word "START" written in blue ink above it. The tempo marking "Ritardando" is written in blue ink above the first few measures.

A printed musical score for a vocal piece. The top staff is the vocal line with lyrics in English. The bottom staff is the piano accompaniment. The score includes several markings: "rit." (ritardando) above the piano part, "Colla voce" above the vocal part, and blue diagonal lines crossing out measures in both parts. The lyrics include "Come to the sea", "I used to have a girl friend known as", and "mind up, back in the sea when I got my girl".

A printed musical score for a vocal piece. The top staff is the vocal line with lyrics in English. The bottom staff is the piano accompaniment. A red box highlights a section of the piano part, with the word "VAMP" written in red above it. The tempo marking "Slower" is written above the first few measures. The lyrics include "in your face" and "I see a life-time".

Giving Your Cut to the Accompanist

Usually, you will present your music to your accompanist right before your audition.

Quietly sing a short section for your accompanist before beginning so they can get a feel for the tempo and style of the music. Remember- they may not have ever read this music before!

Treat your accompanist as if they are running on no sleep, have played 100 songs before yours (they might have), and got divorced this morning. In other words, be extremely clear, kind, and gracious to your accompanist!

Rounding Out Your Repertoire book

What should your finished repertoire book contain?

Binder

You should have a 3-ring binder to keep all of your music organized. It can be any color, but aim for professionalism.

Music

This is the most obvious category, but it can be broken down into 7 categories. Finding a song or two for each of the categories will prepare you for nearly any musical theatre audition.

1. Golden Age
2. Contemporary musical theatre up-tempo
3. Contemporary musical theatre ballad
4. Disney
5. Pop/Rock
6. 1950s/60s R&B/Pop/Rock
7. Sondheim

What is the Sondheim category? Stephen Sondheim is a musical composer and lyricist who wrote shows like Sunday in the Park With George, Into the Woods, and A Little Night Music.

Each of these styles is distinct and, although you could, for example, use a contemporary musical theatre up-tempo piece for a Sondheim audition, his writing style is very unique and it would be best to audition a song from another of his shows.

If you put your music in sheet protectors, make sure they are anti-glare so the accompanist can easily read it.

Headshot & Resume

If you have a headshot, print it as an 8x10 image with your name on it and put it in the front cover so it is easy to identify. Make sure to have headshots and resumes printed to give to casting directors as well. If you don't have a headshot or any experience to put on a resume, that's okay! Especially for community theatre productions, you still could be cast without those things.

Tabs

Use tabs to easily find each piece of music in your binder.

Credits-

Repertoire book category breakdown- Deanna Elise Beaucher