SEPTEMBER 2026 / MUSICAL THEATRE & ACTOR'S STUDIO // ISSUE 2

THE DIRECTOR'S CUT

THE MUSICAL THEATRE & ACTORS STUDIO

Director's Notes

Welcome to the second issue of *The Director's Cut*, our monthly newsletter where I – along with the students in the Musical Theatre & Actors Studio [MTAS] – offer a behind the scenes look into our classroom and onto our stages.

It has certainly been a busy start to our school year. With six weeks under our belts, students in all MTAS courses have already performed solo song cuts, collaborated in a Professional Critique & Feedback workshop, participated in dance class...all while establishing professional procedures and protocols committed to elevating standards and expectations. I hope you have found these first several weeks enjoyable and that you feel you have made the right decision by joining the Fairfax Academy!

With October around the corner, we won't push the brakes, but instead accelerate faster toward meaningful connections, both in and out of the classroom! Our Curriculum Calendar serves as a pacing guide for each course's focus and has now been drafted out through at least the beginning of November. Please refer to this resource to see the exciting content we'll soon cover. Stay organized and proactively plan to ensure confidence and success.

Finally, thank you to those of you who made it out to our first co-curricular MTAS Showcase of the year. Be sure to save-the-date for our next showcase – featuring our Advanced Musical Theatre Workshop students – on Wednesday, November 18th. [Title and Theme TBA!]

With Gratitude,

Erich DiCenzo

DIRECTOR OF THE MUSICAL THEATRE & ACTORS STUDIO

PIONEERING PARTNERSHIPS

Kiesha Lalama

PITTSBURGH PLAYHOUSE
POINT PARK UNIVERSITY

Michael Campayno

On Monday, September 21st and Tuesday, September 22nd, I had the privilege of visiting my alma mater, Point Park University, in my hometown of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This visit served as a professional development opportunity. The purpose of the trip? Continue strengthening our partnership with the institution to bridge a direct pathway for students from the Musical Theatre & Actors Studio to Point Park. For those that don't know, last year Kiesha Lalama – Dean of the School of Theatre Film & Animation – visited MTAS in-person to audition students directly for their newest program *Performance & Creative Industries*, an accelerated three-year BFA for the "multi-talented and uniquely curious student who wants to do it all." Four of our seniors are now a part of that program, while two others are in their traditional BFA Musical Theatre program. If that wasn't exciting enough, several of our underclassmen were accepted into and attended Point Park's intensive training program this past summer.

In addition to my efforts in strengthening our existing partnership, it was also important for me to get into classrooms and observe professors teaching. I am constantly reflecting on my own practices to ensure what I teach students remains relevant and up to date with industry and collegiate standards. I was fortunate enough to watch the first freshmen Voice Lab, where the entire class of 2030 sang for faculty and upperclassmen Musical Theatre majors. I was also able to work side-by-side with Michael Campayno, Chair of the Musical Theatre program, in an Acting Through Song class with current seniors who are preparing for their class showcase in New York City.

Needless to say, the visit was highly advantageous, and I look forward to building similar partnerships with other top performing arts colleges and universities!

Signature Workshop Series

Tony Award®-winning Signature Theatre is thrilled to partner for a sixth consecutive year with the Musical Theatre & Actors Studio during this 2026/27 school year! Our partnership is focused on giving Fairfax Academy's students access to Signature's staff and affiliated artists in an unprecedented manner.

Each semester, MTAS classes will receive multiple customized workshops that aim to address each class's skill levels and artistic development goals. This year's workshop series has officially kicked off with guest artist, and skilled dancer/choreographer, Connor James Reilly.

DIRECTOR'S CUT

Congratulations, Sweet Sixteen!

Congratulations to our sixteen seniors on the first performance of our year with the *God, I Hope I Get It: The Sweet Sixteen Showcase*! Next up, students enrolled in Advanced Musical Theatre Workshop will have their turn. Save the date – Wednesday, November 18th – for another great night of musical entertainment. They are already geared-up and ready to go, thanks to the inspiration they took their peers!

"The Pre-Pro showcase was so fun and engaging! The storyline really added to the entire experience and gave lots of funny moments. The senior class did an excellent job on all of their pieces and really showed off the strength of their class! This showcase has made me beyond exited to take a stab at a showcase for all of our peers and see how far our class has come!"

Mae Sunderman Sylianteng; *Adv. MT Workshop*; South Lakes HS

"From the moment each Sweet Sixteen performer stepped out to perform their piece, the energy was infectious, the choices were bold, and the character was clear, precise, and truthful. The professionalism and individualism of each actor was evident and exciting to see, and I can't wait to emulate that in our Advanced Workshop showcase."

Angela Gray; *Adv. MT Workshop*; Hayfield HS

"Seeing the level of dedication and talent in the pre-pro showcase was so inspiring and made me really excited to see where our own showcase takes us!"

Dahlia Cohen; *Adv. MT Workshop*; Robinson SS

"The Pre-Pro Showcase was an awesome experience to watch. Getting to see each of the 'Sweet Sixteen' be themselves on stage and showcase their abilities as actors and vocalists was amazing. After watching the showcase and knowing my class will be next to perform, I cannot wait to get to work on our material for the Advanced Workshop showcase!!"

Shane Gibson; *Adv. MT Workshop;* Oakton HS

A Fitness-Focused FUNdraiser

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Get ready to swap the stage for the studio! "Coach Erich" is opening the doors of Orangetheory Fitness Dunn Loring for a special MTAS-only private class on **Sunday, October 11th, from 12:30 - 2:00pm**. This high-energy workout is open to all MTAS students and their families - whether you're a seasoned athlete or just curious to try something new. Spots are limited to 39 participants, first-come, first-served. Minimum donation is $30, with the option to give more to support the MTAS Boosters. Come sweat, smile, and support the MTAS community in Mr. D's *other* home studio. More information, including age-based waiver requirements, can be found **HERE!**

MTAS BOOSTERS MEETING + COLLEGE SEMINAR

Please save the date. Our next MTAS Boosters Meeting will take place on Wednesday, October 14th in the Black Box Studio at Fairfax High School [Main Entrace; Door #1].

The traditional meeting and agenda items [old and new business] will take place from 6:30-7:00pm. Then, I will host a College Seminar session from 7:00-8:00pm for any parents/guardians who are interested in learning more about the college audition process. With so many of our students looking to pursue a career in the performing arts, this session will give you a great idea of the timeline, expectations, and best practices associated with the

I encourage you to arrive with any and all questions you have as I will tailor the information session for what is most relevant. I look forward to helping you navigate this process

A LOOK AHEAD

Sunday, October 4th
Virtual Audition Materials Due By 10p

Sunday, October 7th
PSAT Day = NO Academy

Thursday, October 8th & Friday October 9th
Dance Auditions In-Class

Sunday, October 11th
Orangetheory Fitness Fundraiser Class 12:30-2:00p

Monday, October 12th
Student Holiday
School Planning Day

Tuesday, October 13th
Callback Auditions 3:30-6:30p

Wednesday, October 14th
MTAS Boosters Meeting + College Seminar 6:30-8:00p

Friday, October 30th
End of Qtr. = Early Release
NO Mid or PM Block

Saturday, October 31st
Happy Halloween