

THE DIRECTOR'S CUT

THE MUSICAL THEATRE & ACTORS STUDIO



Director's Notes

Happy New Year!

As I reflect on our first four and a half months together, I'm amazed at how much we've packed in to such a relatively short amount of time. We've hosted two stellar showcases, embarked on our first field trip, welcomed countless guest artists into the studio, taken part in a professional headshot session, and so much more! I'm reminded how truly privileged we are to work and live in a school district that appreciates, values, and supports arts education. It also makes me look forward to everything we have left to accomplish in our next five and a half months together!

No doubt about it, January kicks off our "busy season". Not only will we open *How to Succeed...* at the end of the month, but we'll also be focusing heavily on course registration and the 2026-2027 audition season. With both just around the corner, we'll be looking for an all-hands on deck approach. I hope that you'll find the opportunity to volunteer. After all, it takes a village!

As we ring in the new year, I am excited to continue creating new and exciting opportunities for our MTAS community. I'm personally looking forward to announcing two brand new partnerships in greater detail soon...one with Point Park University, the other with Tony Award Winning Arena Stage!

Until then, I wish you a happy and healthy start to your new year. See you in 2026!

With Gratitude,

Erich DiCenzo

DIRECTOR OF THE MUSICAL THEATRE
& ACTORS STUDIO

SIGNATURE'S SAL SECKA



Awa Sal Secka is a first generation Gambian American multi-hyphenate, multi award-winning artist working all over the country. Her latest stop? Right here in the Musical Theatre & Actors Studio, where she worked with students from all courses on acting-through-song. Not only did Ms. Sal Secka bring a fresh perspective, but also an energy and presence that uplifted student voice and encouraged risk-taking and new discoveries.

Students who were enrolled in Academy last year remembered Awa from our field trip to Signature Theatre to see *Ragtime*, in which she starred as Sarah. However, Awa's connection to theatre in Washington D.C spreads far and wide. Coming up, Awa will be starring in Arena Stage's *Chez Joey* [and adaptation of Golden Age classic, *Pal Joey*], choreographed by Savion Glover and co-directed by Tony Goldwyn and Savion Glover.

"I was in awe at the caliber of talent in that room. Class after class, level after level, I found myself so often moved by the elevated craft, dedication and care in their performances. I could feel in them a palpable gravity for what it meant to be able to explore the fullest extents of their artistry, and an openness to all the rigor that comes with artistic metamorphosis. In not so many words, they care, profoundly so, and in shows in their work. These students were so collaborative, prepared, receptive and professional; qualities that surely reflect the learning environment Erich DiCenzo has so perfectly curated for them. It was my first time ever doing a master class, and because of this experience, and the joy I felt in process with "Mr. D's" students, it certainly will not be the last. Any person would be so lucky to share space with he and his students, and to be able to say, "I knew them when".

Awa Sal Secka

"I was absolutely star-struck to have Awa in the space. My favorite part of working with her was how human and genuine she was. I love how she took time with each performer and was so passionate about every piece."

Madelyn Regan; Pre-Professional Musical Theatre [Centreville HS]

"Awa's positivity radiated throughout the room and was an incredible confidence-builder for me with the piece I brought into her. She had this fierce energy that made you want to make her proud, and she always met you wherever you were."

Silas Blocker; Pre-Professional Musical Theatre [Woodson HS]

❄️ Winter Wish List ❄️

It's that time of year when many students are considering what to add to their holiday lists. Whether it be the newest gadgets or gizmos, latest fashion trends, or anything in between, students are buzzing about what they hope to find in their stockings or under the tree. Here in MTAS, students were asked:

If you could wish for tickets to see any Broadway show [past, present, or future], which would you choose and why?

"I wish I had tickets to see the revival of Sunset Boulevard, starring Nicole Scherzinger, because I kept seeing the live walk-through in Times Square, and wanted to see what that looked like on the inside."

Izzy Moreno; MT Fundamentals [Madison HS]

"The show we would want to see is one we already saw but seeing it the second time would be even more amazing. The special effects of Stranger Things: The First Shadow were so advanced and insane!"

Lia Palmer & Natalie Trillet; MT Fundamentals [Oakton HS & Madison HS]

"I have two: Spiderman: Turn Off the Dark and Jessica Vosk starring as Elphaba in Wicked! Both are iconic."

Brayden Saitta; MT Fundamentals [Oakton HS]

"Mine is technically off-Broadway, but it would have to be Heathers. Period!"

Zara Nieves; Pre-Professional Musical Theatre [Fairfax HS]

"I'd say either Bring it On or Bandstand. They're both just so intriguing with their dance numbers, and I'd want to see what a Broadway budget would do with them."

JoJo Barber; Pre-Professional Musical Theatre [West Springfield HS]

"I would love to see the original Broadway company of Cabaret because I feel every rendition of that show has had its own unique interpretation. I think it would be very special to see where it all started."

Kira Gilligan; Pre-Professional Musical Theatre [Robinson SS]

"I'd have to say Newsies. The Disney+ pro-shot makes me really wish I could have seen it live."

Alex Beam; Musical Theatre Workshop [Marshall HS]

"I have two! My first one would be the 2016 revival of Falsettos because it's got an incredible cast and I've only been able to see the pro-shot. I've already seen my second choice, but I'd want to see it again...the 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee. I would love to be a guest speller!"

Kate Walsh; Musical Theatre Workshop [Langley HS]

"If I could see any one show and I didn't know anything about it going in, I would see the original cast of Next to Normal because that seems like a show you'd want to go in blind."

Daniel Plummer; Musical Theatre Workshop [Fairfax HS]

"Oh gosh, this is a really hard question! Honestly, I think I would have to say the original company of Just in Time, especially for Jonathan Groff and Gracie Lawrence."

Lucy Ishaq; Advanced Musical Theatre Workshop [South Lakes HS]

"I'd love to see Legally Blonde, but if we're talking non-Broadway...let's go to the West End's production of Next to Normal. There are just so many intricacies that they play with in that specific production that would be cool to see in person."

Madison Schiffer; Advanced Musical Theatre Workshop [West Springfield HS]

"I would go see the original Broadway cast of Come from Away. I've seen it four times on tour!"

Jagger Grove; Advanced Musical Theatre Workshop [Robinson SS]

Recruitment Season

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 at-capacity enrollment with waitlists for each section, 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 2026-2027 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 February 4th -26th, prospective students may choose to visit any AM, MID-Day, or PM Block.

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 reach full capacity for the another consecutive year in a row!

A LOOK AHEAD

Monday, January 5th

Back from Winter Break

Thursday, January 15th & Friday, January 16th

Point Park University Visit

Monday, January 18th

NO SCHOOL

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Wednesday, January 28th

2nd Quarter Ends

Thursday, January 29th

Staff Development/Student Holiday

Friday, January 30th

Teacher Workday/Student Holiday

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H2\$ Opening Night!