



# **Jury Handbook**

for the

## **BFA – Performing Arts: Theatre**

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## **Purposes of the Jury Process**

“Juries” is our term for the process in which you meet with faculty on a recurring basis to present your work for feedback. It is intended to:

- Help you determine if the BFA is the appropriate degree for your aspirations.
- Assure there is a baseline of skills, maturity, and determination sufficient to suggest you will be able to successfully complete the program.
- Support your step-by-step growth by providing continuing feedback, suggestions for next steps, and career guidance.
- Open a dialogue with you. We want to hear from you how we can best support you and your changing needs and goals.
- Provide regular opportunities for you to prepare career supporting materials (portfolios, monologues, songs, résumés, scripts, etc.) and practice presenting yourself and your materials in a professional setting.
- Help the faculty to assess the overall outcomes and effectiveness of the BFA – Performing Arts degree.

## **NAST Standards**

Western Kentucky University is an accredited institution member of the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST). Regarding the purpose of a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, NAST standards state:

“Students enrolled in professional undergraduate degrees in theatre are expected to develop the knowledge, skills, concepts, and sensitivities essential to the life of the theatre professional. In any of many possible roles, the theatre professional must exhibit not only technical competence, but also broad knowledge of theatre, sensitivity to artistic style, and an insight into the role of theatre in the life of humankind.” (NAST *Handbook 2021-2022*, Standards for Accreditation, VIII.A.2.)

Evidence of these characteristics and potential for their continuing development is essential for the awarding of the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. The jury process is one way in which the Department of Theatre & Dance monitors the program’s success in developing these characteristics in each student. Upon completion of the Western Kentucky University BFA – Performing Arts degree:

- Students must demonstrate achievement of professional, entry-level competence in the area of specialization including significant technical mastery, the capability to produce work and solve professional problems independently, and a coherent set of artistic/intellectual goals that are evident in their work.
- Students must demonstrate their competence by developing a body of work for evaluation in the major area of study.
- Students must have the ability to communicate ideas, concepts, and requirements to theatre professionals and laypersons related to the practice of the major field.

(The above competencies reference NAST *Handbook 2021-22*, Standards for Accreditation, VIII.C.1-3.)

## **Eligibility to Apply**

All students who state an intention to pursue the BFA – Performing Arts will initially be enrolled under the status “seeking admission” to the major. To be eligible to apply for full admission into the degree you must:

- Have earned at least 30 credit hours, 15 of which must be at WKU.
- Have a cumulative GPA of 2.5 or above.
- Have participated in at least one previous jury. Most students will have participated in two or more juries prior to admission.

Most students will audition or interview for admission into the BFA in the third semester. Student transferring into the program may be able to audition or interview in their second semester. The appropriate semester to audition or interview will be determined in consultation with your advisor.

## **Continuation in the BFA**

Once admitted, retention in the Western Kentucky University BFA – Performing Arts degree program requires that you:

- Maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 2.5 and earn a grade of C or better in all classes required in the BFA.
- Maintain an exceptional level of commitment, self-discipline, reliability, and demonstrate consistent artistic growth and development appropriate to the chosen area of concentration, as assessed through the jury process.

Should your cumulative GPA fall below 2.5 in any given semester, or should you fail to earn a C or better in any class required of you within the BFA, your continuation in the BFA may be placed in question. The same is also true if you fail to participate in juries without a suitable excuse, or if the faculty perceive a recurring inability on your part to maintain the commitment, self-discipline, reliability, and consistent artistic growth necessary for success in the program. Should one or more of these occur, you will be informed at, or after, your jury and your status in the BFA will be marked as “insufficient progress” on your Jury Progress Form. Typically, you will be given one semester to make significant improvements.

During this remedial semester, you must meet early with your advisor to develop a plan for improvement. This plan will be documented and list clear and concrete actions you will need to undertake to demonstrate your improvement. The plan may include additional jury preparations, new or repeated coursework, additional meeting with faculty, or other goals, as appropriate. Your advisor may ask that you restrict your production activities or other projects during this semester to ensure you have the time and energy to achieve these goals.

At the end of this remedial semester, the faculty will review your efforts at your jury. At this point, should their concerns not be addressed, they may extend the process for another semester, or they may move to disenroll you from the BFA – Performing Arts degree. The final decision to remove a student from the degree program will be made by majority vote of the department full-time faculty. This vote will be by secret ballot, administered by the department chair.

The faculty may also choose, by majority vote of full-time faculty, to disenroll a student from the BFA – Performing Arts for violating the WKU Student Code of Conduct. This vote will also be by secret

ballot, administered by the department chair. This vote would happen only after the Office of Student Conduct has confirmed the violation. Any recommendations made by that office will also be shared with the faculty prior to this vote.

### **Appeals**

A student not accepted into the BFA may reapply the following semester. A student denied entrance the second time may appeal to the department faculty in writing for permission to reapply for a third and final time.

A student who has been dis-enrolled from the BFA program may request permission to re-apply from the department faculty after discussing the matter with their advisor. Students in this situation should work closely with their advisor to prepare their appeal.

### **Switching Concentrations**

A student is allowed to be enrolled in only one concentration within the degree. Occasionally, a student may wish to switch concentrations once admitted into the degree. Such decisions should be made thoughtfully in conversation with an advisor and/or other faculty members. If a switch is desired, the student must complete the eligibility criteria and reapply for the new concentration at their next jury. What the student must present or perform at this new application jury will be determined by the faculty in the new area of concentration. Students cannot apply to switch concentrations in their senior year. Keep in mind, switching concentrations may require additional semesters to complete the degree.

### **Jury Scheduling**

In November of the fall semester, or in April of the spring semester, announcements regarding the details of jury scheduling will be sent out on the *td.students* list. All department majors must be subscribed to this list. If you are required to do a jury that semester, you will be assigned a day and time and told which type of jury you must do. Juries occur during finals week. It is your responsibility to check that your jury does not conflict with any final you might have. If there is a conflict, or if you feel some other error has been made in the scheduling of your jury, you must report this to someone in the Theatre & Dance Office as soon as possible. The jury announcement will have detailed instructions about the signup process.

### **Jury Recordkeeping**

You will have a individual BFA Progress Form which will be filled out by you and/or the faculty each semester. This will be a OneDrive document that will be viewable only to you and the faculty. It will record your production activities throughout the semester, your participation in juries, your progress, faculty feedback, and other pertinent information.

## **Semester by Semester Jury Requirements: BFA Theatre**

All BFA – Performing Arts: Theatre students will participate in the following juries.

1. Welcome Interview (First semester)
2. Baseline Skills (Second semester)
3. BFA Application (Third semester)
4. Pre-Professional Interview (Fifth semester)
5. Professional Readiness (Semester before graduation semester)
6. Exit Interview (Graduation semester)

What is required of you at each jury, and the timeline of your jury progress may vary, depending on your particular situation and needs. You should always consult with your advisor as the final authority on what is required of you at any given jury.

## **Specific Areas for Feedback/Discussion: Theatre**

The BFA Theatre track is designed for students who either have wide ranging interests in multiple areas of theatre or who wish to focus on directing, theatre education, dramaturgy, playwriting or similar fields that require a broad knowledge of theatrical practice. Therefore, the specific areas of feedback may vary depending on your specific interests and professional goals. However, after each jury, you may receive feedback in one or more of the following areas. These are things to think about as you work toward improving your skills throughout your time here.

### **Citizenship/Engagement**

- Teamwork (crew responsibilities, rehearsal behavior, etc.)
- Ambassadorship (representing the Department on campus and off)
- Mentorship (being a supportive role model)
- Attendance at and participation in department productions and special events

### **Analysis & Research**

Here you will be evaluated primarily on your ability to discuss dramatic texts in a thoughtful, artistically engaged manner and to use research as appropriate to support your conclusions. Specific things that we will be looking for may include:

- Ability to back up claims about a dramatic work with evidence from the text
- Ability to find and use scholarly sources to augment your understanding of dramatic works, conventions and time periods
- Ability to identify key themes, conflicts, and ideas in dramatic works
- Ability to make connections between a dramatic work and its historical, cultural, and social context

### **Creative Work & Professionalism**

You will also be given feedback on your ability to use the skills you have acquired through coursework and productions to develop high quality work in one or more of your areas of interest. While the specific feedback may vary based on your particular area, these are some of the things faculty may choose to discuss:

- Ability to make compelling artistic choices about a dramatic work and defend them with evidence from the text
- Ability to present ideas about dramatic work effectively both verbally and in writing
- Ability to create effective production or educational materials as appropriate to one's area(s) of interest. This could include things such as stage management paperwork, lesson plans, program notes, directing concepts, original scripts, etc.
- Professional demeanor at the jury session itself and demonstrated ability to meet the professional expectations of one's chosen field

## **BFA: Theatre Jury Schedule and Instructions**

### **Jury 1: Welcome Interview**

This usually occurs at the end of your first semester as a major in the department, and is actually not a performance or presentation, but an informal “get to know you” interview that gives us an opportunity to discuss your overall educational and career goals. You may also ask any questions you have about the department and/or the BFA program. Think of it as a practice job interview (except you already have the job).

#### **Preparation**

- Fill out the first portion of your **Jury Progress Form** by the published deadline. Your advisor or your program coordinator will provide you with a personalized link to your form for your first jury. It is comprised of questions to help the faculty get to know you and your goals. It also helps us chart your overall involvement in our department productions over time, both onstage and off. Don't worry if you don't have much to report this first time around. Fill it out and submit it anyway. It will grow over time.

#### **Presentation**

- Show up on time, dressed as you would for an audition or job interview,
- Discuss your educational and career goals with the faculty. (Don't worry if you don't know exactly what you want to do with your life yet, or even with your college education; it's fine to have more questions than answers at this point). We just want to get to know how we can help you while you're here.

#### **Feedback**

You may get some very informal feedback during this jury, but it's mostly just an open discussion about how your first semester went and how we can help keep or get you on track for success.

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### **Jury 2: Baseline Skills**

This usually occurs at the end of your second semester, or the semester following your Welcome Interview semester. For this jury, you will be asked to discuss one of the dramatic works you've studied in THEA 252: Fundamentals of Theatre and to describe how you might approach it based one of your primary areas of interest (directing, education, dramaturgy, etc.).

The feedback you get from this jury will give you some idea of what the faculty expects of you and how to best prepare for a successful BFA Application jury, which usually happens at the end of the next semester (typically at the end of your 3<sup>rd</sup> semester at WKU).

Your feedback will be based on your potential for success in the BFA program, as well as your current ability to analyze dramatic texts and use them as the basis for thoughtful, informed creative choices. You will also be evaluated for the quality of your work in your other theatre courses, your engagement with our departmental productions, and departmental citizenship.

#### **Preparation**

- Update your **Jury Progress Form** by the published deadline.

## **Presentation**

- Come prepared to discuss your assigned show and how you might approach it from one of your areas of interest. You will be notified in advance about which specific show you'll be expected to discuss.

Please Note: If you have a conflict with your assigned jury time, such as a final exam, please let your advisor know immediately so other arrangements can be made.

## **Feedback**

You may receive feedback immediately after your jury, so bring a pen and paper to take notes on any verbal feedback you get. After you receive feedback, you will have the opportunity to ask questions and/or discuss your educational goals and progress.

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## **Jury 3: BFA Application**

This is your audition for full admission into the BFA: Theatre concentration, and usually takes place in the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester, or the semester immediately following your Baseline Skills jury.

You should begin preparing your application materials early in the semester, starting with choosing a show from that semester's BFA-Theatre Play List to read, analyze and research.

The faculty will base their assessment on the following criteria:

- The quality and timeliness of your application documents.
- The level of self-reflective insight expressed in your application essay.
- The quality and thoughtfulness of your analysis of your chosen show
- The creativity, thoughtfulness, and appropriateness of your choices about how you might approach the show as an artist, educator or dramaturg.
- The level and quality of your engagement in the department, so far.
- The discipline, artistic growth, and maturity you've demonstrated, so far.
- Your GPA (A minimum 2.5 GPA is required for admission into the BFA program).

You will also be assessed on your improvement in specific areas recommended by the faculty after your Baseline Skills Jury, as well as in your work in classes and productions. Please see the criteria for Specific Areas of Feedback section of this document for details about technical skills being assessed, pages 5 & 6.

## **Preparation**

- Review your notes from the previous semester and update your **Jury Progress Form** by the published deadline. Be sure to answer the BFA application questions in the form.

## **Presentation**

- Come prepared to discuss the questions you've posed about your chosen show, as well as to present your ideas about how you might approach this show based on one of your primary areas of interest (directing, dramaturgy, education, stage management, etc.).

## **Feedback**

You will be notified by email of your admission status in the BFA within 2 weeks. After you receive your notification, make an appointment with your advisor at the beginning of the next semester to discuss your jury in more detail and receive feedback. You are also then welcome to seek out feedback from individual faculty members.

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## **Jury 4: Pre-Professional Interview**

Usually, this jury is undertaken in the 5<sup>th</sup> semester, and is designed to help you refine and clarify your BFA program goals. It also allows you to get feedback about how you might best meet those goals during your remaining semesters in the department and helps you to prepare for your professional readiness jury. It is also an opportunity to discuss your overall progress in your area(s) of interest.

Be aware that the quality of your citizenship as a member of the department will be taken into account when assessing your progress. At this stage in your growth, things like how you handle your crew responsibilities, your behavior in rehearsal, and/or your role as a mentor to incoming students may be taken into account.

### **Preparation**

- Review your notes from the previous semester and update your **Jury Progress Form** by the published deadline.
- Bring two copies of your professional resume with you to your jury.
- Come prepared to talk in detail about at least one project that you've done related to your primary area(s) of interest, as well about your current progress and your plans moving forward in your degree program.

### **Presentation**

Discuss a project that you've either completed or are currently working on in your area(s) of interest, as well as your BFA Program goals and how you see yourself working towards them.

### **Feedback**

As part of this jury, you will receive verbal feedback about your work so far, as well as guidance on how best to utilize your remaining time in the program to meet your current goals. The faculty may also discuss your overall performance in the program including your classes, productions, auditions, etc., as well as department citizenship. You may also choose to schedule a meeting with your advisor or other faculty members in attendance afterwards for additional feedback.

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## **Jury 5: Professional Readiness Demonstration**

This typically happens in your 7<sup>th</sup> semester or the semester immediately preceding your last planned semester as a student in the department. This jury gives you the opportunity to demonstrate your readiness to compete for entry-level jobs or graduate school admission in your chosen field. Treat this as a professional interview. You will receive feedback on the materials you showcase, how well you present yourself and how appropriate the materials are for your chosen career path. You will also be evaluated on whether you have gained mastery of the skills being taught in the classes you've taken and productions you've worked on. Your work will be measured against your previous juries, productions, and classes, but you will also be measured against your potential. In other words, have you fulfilled the promise of your talent? Have you worked hard to be the best that you can be in your area(s) of concentration?

### **Preparation**

- Review your notes from the previous semester and update your **Jury Progress Form** by the published deadline.
- Professional Resume: Bring two copies of your professional resume with you.

For students focusing primarily on directing, stage management, playwriting, dramaturgy, and/or are interested in being freelance teaching artists:



- In consultation with your advisor, create a website marketing your skills and showcasing your work in your chosen area(s)

For students focusing on K-12 education:

- In consultation with your advisor, prepare a syllabus, course outline, study guide or curriculum unit that would be appropriate to the specific grade level(s) and educational setting in which you are hoping to teach

If your area of interest does not fall into one of these specific categories, you may work with your advisor to figure out the most appropriate materials to prepare for this jury.

### **Presentation**

Come prepared to present your website or other materials and to discuss your qualifications for jobs in your specific field(s).

### **Feedback**

Feedback from the faculty will continue to focus on the areas introduced in the Specific Areas of Feedback section of this book, as well as areas/issues you were advised to address in your last jury, things you are working on in classes, and general professional considerations. The faculty may also discuss your overall performance in the program including your classes, productions, auditions, citizenship, etc.

An unsatisfactory performance of this Professional Readiness jury will result in your being required to repeat it the following semester in addition to any other regularly scheduled jury requirement, such as an Exit Interview.

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## **Jury 6: The Exit Interview**

The Exit Interview usually happens at the end of your last planned semester in residence. This does not include any performance by you, but rather a conversation with the faculty.

### **Preparation**

- Review your notes from the previous semester and update your **Jury Progress Form** by the published deadline.
- Bring one copy of your professional resume. The department will keep this copy.
- Complete the Exit Survey by the published deadline.

### **Presentation**

- Show up as scheduled with time to spare, all required paperwork in hand, ready to discuss your “next step” plans as a graduate of WKU Department of Theatre & Dance.
- We will discuss ways you can stay connected with the department.

### **Feedback**

This session is a conversation that is meant to reflect on your time at WKU as well as your plans post-graduation (vague though they may be.) At this time, the faculty may offer comments or observations about your progress over the years, and we encourage you to share your thoughts about your growth as a creative artist. As always, you can ask for specific feedback or critique from the faculty, and/or ask any questions you have. We also welcome any constructive comments you would be willing to offer about your overall educational experience at WKU, should you choose to share those with us.

## Easy Overview of Requirements, Semester by Semester

<b>BFA-Theatre Jury Overview</b>		<b>1: WELCOME</b>	<b>2: BASELINE</b>	<b>3: APPLICATION</b>	<b>4: PRE-PROFESSIONAL</b>	<b>5: PROFESSIONAL READINESS</b>	<b>6: EXIT</b>
		1 <sup>st</sup> sem	2 <sup>nd</sup> sem	3 <sup>rd</sup> sem	5 <sup>th</sup> sem	7 <sup>th</sup> sem	8 <sup>th</sup> sem
Fill Out	Jury Progress Form	√	√	√	√	√	√
Complete	Theatre Application Discussion Preparation Form			√			
Bring with you	Professional Resume (2 copies)				√	√	
	Professional Resume (1 copy)						√
In Person	Interview only	√					√
	Prepare Materials to Present/Discuss		√	√	√	√	

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