

Penn State School of Music

2019 VOICE AREA HANDBOOK

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GENERAL INFORMATION

This handbook is a set of practical guidelines compiled by the voice faculty concerning solo voice study. It is designed as a reference to help clarify day-to-day happenings in the voice area, though it does not attempt to be comprehensive. Questions pertaining to degree requirements should be addressed to the appropriate source.

VOICE AREA BULLETIN BOARD

This board is located across from room 110, Music Building I. Students are encouraged to check regularly for events, Voice Forum and Voice Jury sign-ups, and other announcements. A copy of this handbook is also posted there.

SCHEDULING VOICE LESSONS

Students should contact their assigned teacher either prior to or within the first days of each semester to schedule regular lessons times. Some teachers will post available lesson times and have students sign up (after confirming availability with accompanists); others may ask for copies of schedules to assign lesson times.

ACCOMPANISTS

It is your responsibility to find an accompanist who can be available for lessons, juries, and performances. Accompanists will typically be needed for the second half-hour of lessons, and should also be available to rehearse with you each week. Your teacher may be able to make recommendations if needed. (Staff accompanists in the School of Theatre typically play for BFA students.) Singers must remember that accompanists are equal partners in music making. Ensemble preparation is not to be neglected, and the professional relationship with your accompanist is to be nurtured. This includes being prompt to rehearsals and lessons, providing music in a timely manner, and notifying your pianist in advance if you must cancel your lesson.

ACADEMIC REMINDERS

Voice students in the BM, BMA, and BME degree programs must be in a vocal ensemble each semester. Those in the BA and voice minors must be in an ensemble for four semesters.

The voice faculty recommends that all voice students enroll for diction (MUS 387) in their freshman year.

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Undergraduate academic advising is provided through the College of Arts and Architecture (<https://artsandarchitecture.psu.edu/advising>). The designated contact for the School of Music is Margaret Higgins (mah68@psu.edu). Her office is 104 Borland Building. Each student is also assigned to a faculty adviser, and is strongly encouraged to meet with them regularly. Contact information for assigned academic advisors can be viewed in both [LionPATH](#) and [Starfish](#) student information systems. Advisers can be valuable sources of help in discussing degree progress, giving advice concerning academic issues, or selecting courses for subsequent semesters.

CONCURRENT TEACHERS

In the standard course of voice study it is typical for students to study with one primary studio teacher, enhanced by complementary instruction in diction, pedagogy, ensembles, guest master classes, and the like.

Beyond this, there may be a desire and good reason for students to seek additional voice training—lessons with another faculty member or an outside teacher to focus on an area of specialty, for example—but in every case the student should make the arrangement known to the primary studio teacher. This collaborative philosophy is in the best interest of students and promotes an atmosphere of trust and shared values within the area. Students who are not proactive in this regard may lose jury-track privileges.

DECLARING A MAJOR / MID-PROGRAM EVALUATION

From the School of Music Undergraduate Handbook:

Students may apply for entrance to the BM and BMA programs at the end of their fourth semester. During the first two years of study, students' progress in theory, basic musicianship, music literature, and performance track applied courses is monitored. Students must achieve a minimum cumulative grade-point average of 2.0 to be admitted to the degree program.

To facilitate program reviews for voice students tracking the BM or the BMA, a mid-program evaluation will take place (also discussed in VOICE JURIES—PROCEDURE—page 10).

To be admitted to the performance track (BM/BMA), students are required to present a **Sophomore Showcase**, demonstrating competency and emerging ability in both vocal technique as well as performance. The showcase will typically take place on Bach's Lunch toward the end of the 4th semester of study. Each student's showcase will feature the required repertoire for a 4th semester jury (6 pieces, arias and art songs in English, Italian, and at least one other language). However, care should be taken that the repertoire is programmatically interesting as a performance even as it demonstrates required repertoire. The Showcase is in lieu of a 4th semester jury.

Following the Showcase, students will meet with the faculty for a conversation with feedback. Possible outcomes of the Showcase include (1) the student is on track to continue in the major, (2) the student is on probation and needs to attend to certain issues before continuing in the major, (3) the student is not recommended to continue in the performance track.

Prior to the Sophomore Showcase performance, students are to submit a performance resumé, a statement of goals, and a cumulative repertoire list. Seek advice from the faculty on creating these documents (formatting and editing) in advance. These completed documents are to be submitted to the applied teacher two weeks before the showcase.

ADDITIONAL STUDY IN ALL DEGREE PROGRAMS

Students sometimes wish to continue lessons beyond the sequence required for a degree (4 semesters for BA, MM, and voice minors; 7 for BME; 8 for BM, BMA, and BFA). Additional semesters are made available on a case-by-case and space-available basis (to a maximum of 10 undergraduate or 6 graduate). Speak to your teacher if interested in additional study.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

It is expected that students admitted to the jury track will progress in accordance with their degree program. Students who leave the jury track for any reason other than an official leave of absence must re-audition. Contact Music Admissions concerning the re-audition.

BREADTH AND DEPTH OF LITERATURE

The voice faculty understands the importance of exposing students to a wide range of styles of solo vocal literature. The necessity for depth is addressed in the studio literature assigned to the student for performance purposes. Breadth is addressed in vocal literature classes, in the singing of literature in diction and pedagogy classes, the requirement to attend Voice Forum, and the requirement to attend Voice Events. Specific information pertaining to applied literature and attendance requirements can be found elsewhere in this handbook.

VOICE EVENT ATTENDANCE

All classical students studying voice for 2 or more credits are required to attend a minimum of 7 solo voice events each semester. Classical performance majors are expected to attend one of the MetHD broadcasts every semester as part of their Voice Event Attendance.

BFA Musical Theatre majors have the following requirements, based on their year in the program:

Freshmen—5 events (2 must be classical); in the fall semester, write 3 Voice Event reviews and turn them in no later than one week after the event.

Sophomores—3 events (2 must be classical).

Juniors—3 events (1 must be classical); in the spring semester, attendance at one Voice Forum may count as one vocal event.

Seniors—3 events in the fall semester only (1 must be classical).

Students choose events from an approved list of offerings provided by the voice faculty. The list is emailed each week in the *Vocal-List* and is also posted on the Voice Area Bulletin Board. Students may not count events in which they perform (even if their performance is only a percentage of the program). Check the Voice Area Bulletin Board regularly for reminder notices of events.

Full credit will be given when the student attends the entire performance. Arriving late or leaving early results in no attendance credit.

Please note: In the case of a sold-out run of a musical theatre performance, you may go to the box office and put yourself on a waiting list. Come at least a half-hour before the show—there are almost always seats available!

The attendance requirement benefits voice students in the following ways:

- As singers, voice students need to know as much vocal literature as possible. The body of literature is so vast that no student could sing even a large fraction of it, so they must continue to learn vocal works by listening to live concerts and recordings.
- As students of singing, voice students need to hear their teachers, other solo artists, and other students perform, to see and hear in action the physical, vocal, musical, and artistic principles they are learning in the studio.
- As members of the School of Music community and the voice area, voice students need to support the solo vocal activities of their teachers, peers and the School.
- As aspiring professional musicians, voice students need to acquire the habit of going to concerts.
- To reinforce the concepts above, teachers will engage students in an understanding of the literature and performance components of the performances they attend.

VOICE EVENT SELECTION

Approved events are solo performances that focus on students who currently study voice at Penn State, and Penn State-sponsored performances that emphasize solo singing. Choral concerts are not counted towards the attendance requirement, but oratorio performances with solo singing are. Also approved are: Undergraduate and Graduate Recognition Recitals, NATS Student Auditions, dress rehearsals for recitals, multiple performances of the Penn State Opera Theatre (when there are different casts), and university-sponsored voice master classes and trips, such as the BFA New York

trip (one show only). Other events are approved at the discretion of the faculty. Events that fall outside of these categories may not receive credit. Students may suggest events to be considered for voice event credit, though suggestions must be made well in advance of the performance. The *Vocal~List* is the final authority on approved events.

Students are encouraged to attend a variety of events, making for a well-rounded experience.

VOICE EVENT PROCEDURE AND GRADE INFLUENCE

To receive credit for solo voice events, write your name on the program from the event, and give it to your voice teacher so they can record it on their master list.

The **LATEST YOU MAY TURN IN PROGRAMS FOR CREDIT IS NOON on MONDAY of FINAL EXAMS WEEK**. If your program is turned in after that, you will not receive credit for it. Period.

Attendance influences final voice grades in the following ways:

Missing one or two events drops the grade one quality point (e.g., from A to A-).

Missing three or four events drops the grade two quality points (e.g., from A to B+).

Missing five or six events drops the grade three quality points (e.g., from A to B).

Missing all seven events drops the grade four quality points (e.g., from A to B-).

BACH'S LUNCH

Bach's Lunch is a weekly voice area concert series, Thursdays at 12:10 pm in Eisenhower Chapel. Programs are presented from Labor Day through the end of the academic year. The series is jointly sponsored by the School of Music and the Center for Ethics and Religious Affairs.

In the fall semester, Bach's Lunch typically features our voice students by class standing (MM students, Seniors and Juniors, Sophomores and Freshmen), and also in performances associated with Voice Area courses (Opera Theatre, Vocal Literature, Lyric Diction, and Voice Pedagogy— with Voice Minors and Elective Students). The spring semester features students by individual voice studio, and again in performances with Voice Area courses. Voice Jury Honors, Faculty Recitals, Elective Early Jury performances, and Sophomore Showcase are also scheduled on the series.

Weekly attendance is encouraged for all students, as is occasional performance. Please plan accordingly when scheduling classes each semester. All Bach's Lunch performances qualify for Voice Event Attendance.

VOICE FORUM

Voice Forum is a combined–studios master class that meets Fridays from 3:30 to 4:30 pm in room 110 MBI. Forum offers an opportunity for performance with constructive feedback from voice faculty and peers, and for special events. **Sign-up sheets are posted on the Voice Area Bulletin Board. MUSIC FOR THE FORUM PIANIST IS DUE WEDNESDAY by NOON.** The music can be put in the designated envelope on the Voice Area Bulletin Board. Singers who do not provide their music in advance will not perform in Forum that week.

In addition to the work on voice technique, interpretation, and performance practice, Voice Forum is an opportunity to learn about voice literature. Students will be expected to engage in conversation about aspects of the pieces presented. **All School of Music voice majors and minors are required to attend at least 7 Voice Forums per semester.** This includes those students who have satisfied applied music degree requirements, and are taking voice as an elective. **BFA students must attend Voice Forum in the Freshman and Sophomore years (Freshmen are required to attend a minimum of 6 Forums, and Sophomores are required to attend a minimum of 5 Forums).** Other music majors, non-majors studying voice as an elective, and students in voice classes are encouraged to attend Voice Forum. **To receive attendance credit at Forum, sign-in on the individual studio sheets made available.** Each voice faculty member keeps track of the attendance of their students through these sheets.

Undergraduate students may defer the Voice Forum attendance requirement during any two semesters of study to allow more flexibility in scheduling required general education courses. The student is to make his or her applied teacher aware of any deferred attendance at the beginning of the semester in question to avoid inappropriate grade penalties.

Students are encouraged to check the voice area bulletin board regularly for reminder notices of events, including changes to the regular Voice Forum format.

VOICE FORUM PROCEDURE AND GRADE INFLUENCE

Students sign-in on the individual studio sheets when they arrive at Voice Forum. A record of attendance is kept by the studio teacher. **Latecomers and those who leave early may not receive full credit.** If you have questions about whether you are eligible to receive attendance credit on a day you arrived late or needed to leave early, please ask your teacher.

Attendance influences final voice grades in the following ways:

Missing one or two required Forums drops the grade one quality point (e.g., from A to A-).

Missing three or four required Forums drops the grade two quality points (e.g., from A to B+).

Missing five or more required Forums drops the grade three quality points (e.g., from A to B).

VOICE JURIES

REPERTOIRE GUIDELINES

Other languages may be added or substituted at the discretion of the teacher.

For School of Music students, one musical theatre selection may be included at the discretion of the teacher.

BM / BMA

Freshman	5 selections in English and Italian
Sophomore	6 selections in English, Italian, German or French
Junior	7 selections in English, Italian, German, and French
Senior	8 selections in English, Italian, German, and French

BME / BA / Minor

Freshman	4 selections in English and Italian
Sophomore	5 selections in English and Italian
Junior	6 selections in English, Italian, German or French
Senior	7 selections in English, Italian, German, and French

BFA in Musical Theatre

Sophomore	5 selections, including 2 MT and 2 classical selections in English and Italian
Junior Year	6 selections, including 3 MT and 2 classical selections in English and Italian
Senior Year	7 selections, including 4 MT and 2 classical selections in English and Italian

MM / PPC

8 or more selections, usually representing at least 4 languages.

V110 / V510

V110 repertoire guidelines depend on class standing and major.

1. Non-Voice Major, jury or alternative cumulative event at the discretion of the teacher.

The type of repertoire and number of selections will be assigned by the teacher.

2. Voice Major, ninth semester and above, 8 selections.

V510, 5 or more songs, usually representing at least 2 languages.

PROCEDURE

1. Students studying voice for 2 or more credits sing a jury each semester. Students may substitute a recital hearing the semester of their degree recital (see Recitals / Degree Recital Hearings). PPC students may jury at the discretion of the teacher.
2. Singers begin with the selection of their choice; the faculty then chooses other material. Students studying for 2 credits typically sing two pieces, those studying for 3 or 4 credits typically sing three pieces. All selections are to be memorized unless approved in advance. The faculty may ask students about their vocal work or other pertinent information.
3. Elective Early Juries. There may be opportunities to sing juries prior to finals week. Ask your teacher if interested. These take place at Voice Forum and/or Bach's Lunch, and

include the performance of 3 selections for sophomores and juniors, 4 for seniors, and 5 for graduate students. Repertoire will be selected at the discretion of the faculty.

4. With the teacher's permission, the jury may also serve other purposes.
 - A. To audition for admission to the BM or BMA program.

To be admitted to the performance track (BM/BMA), students present a **Sophomore Showcase**, showing competency and emerging ability in vocal technique as well as performance. (For more information see page 4—"Declaring a Major / Mid-Program Evaluation.")
 - B. To skip a voice course level.

On rare occasions a student may use the jury to request skipping a voice course level. As a part of this process, the student is expected to demonstrate **significant** vocal and musical growth. The student must also present memorized repertoire for the level they wish to skip in addition to the repertoire for the current semester.
5. Juries may be deferred when necessary, in consultation with the applied teacher. Make-up juries will be heard early in the following semester, within the first six weeks of classes.

GRADING

Evaluative marks will be assigned by each faculty member, and averaged to determine the jury grade. The jury grade influences the course grade in the following manner:

- Freshman and Sophomore—the course grade is typically within one letter grade of the jury grade.
- Junior—the course grade will typically be within two quality points of the jury grade.
- Senior—the course grade will typically be within one quality point of the jury grade.
- Graduate—the course grade will be influenced by the jury grade.

DEGREE RECITALS and PROJECTS

RECITAL GUIDELINES

Recitals are required for students in the BM, BMA, and MM programs, and for BME students who wish to pursue the Performance Certificate Award. Additional recitals may be presented in any degree program with permission of the instructor.

Repertoire will be determined with the student at the discretion of the teacher. All material is to be memorized (exceptions may be requested).

DEGREE RECITAL HEARINGS

A hearing is to be scheduled for degree recitals, and should take place at least two weeks prior to the performance. Hearings are generally held during voice area faculty meetings. Copies of the program will be needed, and students begin with the selection of their choice. The faculty will ask for additional selections. If the program does not seem ready, the hearing and recital will need to be rescheduled for a later date.

Juniors in the BM program who are presenting a half recital may sing a hearing at the discretion of the teacher, assuming the repertoire requirements for the course are met.

Hearings are not required for non-degree recitals, though BME and BA students presenting a senior recital may sing a hearing in lieu of a jury.

SCHEDULING

Degree recitals are to be presented during the scheduled academic year; faculty mentoring of master's papers also follows this schedule (from the first day of classes through the last day of classes, fall and spring semesters).

GRADUATE FINAL PROJECTS

In addition to a solo recital, MM students give a lecture-recital (or write a master's paper). These projects should not be scheduled for the same semester as the solo recital. All projects are evaluated by a committee appointed by the School of Music Graduate Committee. The lecture-recital or master's paper for students in the MM in Voice Pedagogy and Performance degree is to be specified in an area of pedagogy. Information and guidelines for the projects can be found in the School of Music Graduate Handbook.

ORAL EXAMS

Oral exams take place in the final semester of study, and are evaluated by the studio teacher and two other faculty. The committee is assigned by the Graduate Committee, though students may request specific professors. Refer to the Graduate Handbook for additional information. Scheduling should take place before the final 2–3 weeks of the semester in case the committee requires a second hearing to address weaknesses in the first session.

The exam is typically divided between a listening component (in which students are expected to demonstrate an understanding of general concepts of style, historical context, and other pertinent information through listening skills) and other questions appropriate to the degree (pedagogical information and/or performance understanding).

PROFESSIONAL PERFORMER CERTIFICATE (PPC)

PPC students will focus on performance activities over the course of the year, including lessons at the V530 level and a minimum of either an opera role or a full-length recital. Students are encouraged to explore additional performance opportunities as well. PPC students have standard requirements for Voice Forum and Voice Event attendance.

PROCEDURE FOR REQUESTING A CHANGE OF TEACHER

Voice students typically stay with their initial applied teacher for the duration of their degree program, since consistency in the teaching and learning of fundamental techniques is often very helpful.

Rarely, and for good reason only, a student or teacher may feel it necessary to request a change. In that case, this procedure must be followed:

1. The student is to discuss any issues in person with their current teacher. The student should not speak to other voice teachers about a possible switch before this has been accomplished. Such conversations may draw the other teacher into unethical and unprofessional behavior.
2. If a change of teacher seems like the best course of action, the current teacher will bring the information to the voice faculty. The Coordinator of the Voice Area will follow up with the student about possible openings in faculty studios.
3. If a student believes that their safety or personal rights are being abused in the student-teacher relationship, they should go directly to the Director of the School of Music. The University has established procedures for investigating and resolving grievances.
4. If a teacher feels that a change of studio would be in the best interest of a student, the teacher will address the matter directly with the student and follow up with the voice faculty.

PERFORMING OPPORTUNITIES

Singers are encouraged to take advantage of the many opportunities provided.

Students tracking performance degrees (BM, BMA, MM) are required to audition for all curricular performance opportunities; this includes auditioning every semester for opera, as well as other appropriate solo opportunities. Students are to accept roles as cast and to fulfill all associated performance and rehearsal commitments.

As a student your performances reflect not only your own work, but that of your studio teacher; in many ways, you serve as an ambassador for the School of Music, and even for Penn State. Inform your teacher of all of the public performances you undertake. Generally, they will want to work with you on material you are performing.

VOICE FORUM — Combined–studios master class, Friday 3:30–4:30 pm, room 110, MB I

BACH’S LUNCH — Voice Area Concert Series, Thursday 12:10 pm, Eisenhower Chapel

COMMON HOUR — School of Music student concert, Friday 2:30–3:30 pm

SING OUT! — Voice Area scholarship competition for voice performance across theatrical genres.

OPERA THEATRE — Penn State Opera Theatre is an auditioned ensemble that offers performance opportunities, mainly full-length operas, presented in staged, workshop, or concert settings. Acting for Singers is a performance techniques class that culminates in a performance of excerpts from the lyric theatre.

RECITALS — Recitals are required in many degrees, though recitals are encouraged for voice students in all degree programs.

CHORAL ENSEMBLES — Solo opportunities happen regularly in choirs. Be certain to inform your voice teacher if you are offered the opportunity to audition or sing.

SCHOOL of THEATRE — Theatre auditions are open to all students. Watch for audition announcements.

SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITION — Current undergraduates with a 3.0 GPA and at least one year of study in music remaining are eligible. Students are nominated by faculty. The competition is held every spring. <https://music.psu.edu/admissions/undergraduate/undergraduate-financial-aid>

CONCERTO COMPETITION — The Penn State Philharmonic holds auditions to perform with the ensemble. Following the fall voice juries, singers are nominated to audition.

GRADUATE EXHIBITION — <http://gradschool.psu.edu/exhibition/>

PENN STATE THESPIANS and NO REFUND THEATRE — Student-run theatrical organizations. <https://www.psuperformingartscouncil.com/theatre.html>

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF SINGING

The National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) is a professional organization of importance to teachers and students of singing. The objectives of NATS are “to encourage the highest standards of the vocal art and of ethical principles in the teaching of singing; and to promote vocal education and research at all levels, both for the enrichment of the general public and for the professional advancement of the talented.”

NATS is established on national, regional, district, and local chapter levels. There are organized events on each level, usually including opportunities for students to sing for constructive comments and compete for prizes.

The local Allegheny Mountain Chapter (AMC NATS) holds a member meeting and student auditions each fall. Additional information is available from your teacher. Transportation to the auditions is typically provided by the Voice Area.

The Eastern Region of NATS (comprised of Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Québec) holds student auditions every spring. These auditions take place over a three-day weekend. Students are responsible for out-of-town expenses. Transportation may be provided by the Voice Area.

National events include the National Student Auditions, NATS Artist Award, and National Music Theater Competition. Visit www.nats.org for more information.

The NATS *Journal of Singing* contains articles relating to the art and technique of singing, reviews of newly published books and music, and a wealth of other pertinent information. It is published bi-monthly and sent to all members. The *Journal of Singing* is also available in Pattee Library. For membership information, talk to any of the voice faculty or visit www.nats.org.

STUDENT NATS CHAPTER (SNATS)

The National Association of Teachers of Singing has fostered Student NATS (SNATS) chapters to advance knowledge about the Association and the professions of teaching and singing. The PSU SNATS Chapter was established in 2007, and holds events, discussions, and workshops throughout the year on a variety of topics, often bringing in guest presenters or tapping resident experts. PSU SNATS also sponsors and assists with occasional voice area activities. Leadership opportunities are available, and programming of events can respond to the interests of members. There are modest dues paid to the chapter to offset costs. Please contact the SNATS Advisor, Jennifer Trost, for further information, or visit http://www.nats.org/about_snats.html.