

Theatre Handbook

Welcome to the CSU Chico Department of Music and Theatre. This handbook will provide you with an overview of the department, its various subject areas, and common procedures and policies that will impact your time at CSU Chico. Updated regularly, the handbook reflects any changes in our faculty, degree programs, and performance opportunities.

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Mission Statement and Philosophy

The central mission of the Musical Theatre and Theatre programs at California State University, Chico is to provide students with a balanced undergraduate education in the practice, theory, and history of theatre; to that end the department is committed to excellence in instruction and artistic example in all arenas of contact with students. It is our mission to provide the best possible educational experiences for our students and audiences that time and resources allow.

The focus of our mission is aimed at three sets of goals: Liberal Arts Education, Pre-Professional Training, and Student's Individual Growth.

Liberal Arts Education

Teaching is the central task of the department. The faculty believes that study and practical involvement in theatre promotes and achieves the goals of a well-rounded liberal arts education, foremost among which are the abilities to reason clearly, imagine creatively, and express oneself effectively. The department seeks to cultivate in all students who pass through its doors a measure of the artistic, intellectual, and interpersonal skills that can broaden their horizons, sharpen their perceptions, and add grace to their interactions.

Pre-Professional Training

In addition to offering a strong liberal arts education to all students, the department focuses on those especially motivated students who demonstrate a genuine desire for a professional career in the performing arts or entertainment industry. We maintain a series of advanced performance and design/technical courses necessary to prepare candidates for entry-level professional work or graduate school/conservatory training as well as a tradition of intensive, individualized mentorship.

Student's Individual Growth

The faculty recognizes that each student is unique and in possession of individual gifts and aspirations. Thus, the department is committed to help all majors and minors gain a clear perspective of their life and career goals and to focus their energies and time at Chico State toward the most personally productive and fulfilling use of a theatre education.

The Theatre and Musical Theatre faculty believe in a student-centered teaching approach and strive to nurture and unlock each student's individual goals and potential.

Theatre Division Class Attendance Policy

Your attendance is crucial to your success in this class. **Cell phones must be off** and students must arrive on time.

In accordance with the University Catalog, you are expected to attend classes regularly. You should discuss absences with your instructors, but you may report an absence of more than a week's duration to the Office of Advising and Orientation when it results from circumstances beyond your control, such as illness or accident. The office will then send notification of your absence and the reason for it to your instructors. Instructors can, if they choose, drop you from a course for non-attendance.

You are allowed the equivalent of one week (two classes) of excused absences without penalty. The student is solely responsible for arranging any make-up arrangements with the instructor prior to the actual absence and, if an assignment requires an accompanist the student *may* be responsible to hire their own.

After one week of equivalent absences, the student is allowed the equivalent of a second week of absences for emergencies, sickness, and extraordinary circumstances. **The penalty for these absences, whether excused or unexcused, is at the discretion of the instructor of the course.** Any absence beyond two weeks, regardless of the circumstances, is considered too excessive for successful completion of the course. Students that exceed the allowable absences will receive a grade of "F," "NC" or "WU," at the discretion of the instructor. In extreme situations, with serious and compelling reasons, a student may arrange with the instructor to receive a grade of "I," but this dispensation by the instructor must be prearranged and must have a completed plan for completion of the course requirements within a reasonable time frame. Students should not assume that an Incomplete is automatic.

You are responsible for all materials, announcements, and information given in lecture and recitation. As class time is valuable, please note that coming late to class will impact your absences. Every two late classes equal one absence.

Auditions, Portfolios and Interviews

General Auditions

Twice yearly general auditions serve two functions for the department: 1) to cast the mainstage productions of the season and 2) to provide a yearly opportunity (during the January call) for the faculty to assess and comment on the growth and development of performance and audition skills of theatre arts and musical theatre students.

At the January juried auditions, members of the faculty respond on paper to the audition of each theatre arts and musical theatre major. Each response includes a set of numerical ratings as well as written comments. These responses are simply a snapshot of impressions of your craft skills and overall accomplishment as an actor as demonstrated during the two minutes of your audition. Don't look at these as grades, but as information to help you continue to work toward your goals. We encourage you to make appointments with the adjudicators for additional feedback.

For each of the fall and spring auditions, please prepare one of the following standard, memorized audition packages:

1. two contrasting monologues, **or**
2. one monologue and one contrasting song

The *maximum* time for any of these options is **2** minutes. You will be timed and stopped if you exceed the two-minute time limit.

An accompaniment is provided. If you plan to sing, bring sheet music in your key, clearly marked. No taped accompaniment and no acapella, please.

Sign-up sheets for specific audition appointments are posted on the MUTA Department Callboard outside of PAC 106 approximately one week prior to auditions, which normally begin the Sunday prior to the first day of the semester's classes.

Other Audition Information

The gathering place to receive instructions from the stage managers is in the Green Room. Please show up well in advance of your group's call time so you can complete the audition paperwork. Callbacks for these shows are posted in the mornings for that evening. Cast lists are posted by the end of the first week of school.

Casting Policy

The department is committed to providing the best educational experience possible for students involved in the production program. To this end, we give first consideration for roles and design and crew assignments to theatre and musical theatre majors followed by other students who audition. On occasion, we will cast guest artists, faculty members and/or community members to provide additional educational experiences to our students. The department believes that the practice of color-blind, gender-blind casting is appropriate in certain circumstances, and such casting will occur when suitable to the production. Students who audition may express a preference as to which roles they wish to be considered.

To avoid obvious scheduling conflicts, students must bring complete semester calendars of their commitments to auditions or interviews. Once cast in a role or given a design/crew assignment, a student has the option of accepting or rejecting the role or assignment. This is accomplished by notifying the director and/or supervisor before rehearsals or assignments begin. Initialing a cast list and/or attending a rehearsal or production meeting also indicate that a student has accepted a role or assignment. Any student who accepts a role or assignment and later wishes to be released from a production must present serious and compelling reasons to the director and/or supervisor and the Chair of the department to avoid sanctions. Students leaving a show without the permission of both the director/supervisor and Chair may be barred from participating in future departmental productions.

Students cast in CSU Chico productions will be enrolled in a 1-unit section of THEA 301 (Theatre Rehearsal) or 302 (Musical Theatre Rehearsal) accordingly.

The department values participation in mainstage productions and their value to student's educational experience while at CSU Chico. Each semester students are *required* to audition for department productions or present design/tech portfolios. Any student who wishes not to participate in production work in any given semester are required to consult with their advisor program coordinator prior to auditions.

Students who are not cast or are not on a crew in a given semester and wish to participate in off-campus theatrical productions must meet with their program coordinator prior to accepting the position. If, after meeting with their program coordinator, it is mutually determined that the production opportunity is beneficial to the student, the student is encouraged to accept the position.

To be eligible for participation in department productions in any capacity, students must maintain a Grade Point Average of 2.0 or higher during any semester in which they participate. If a student is placed on academic probation by the university (which happens whenever the CSU, Chico G.P.A. or the cumulative G.P.A. drops below 2.0) or if the student fails to achieve at

least a 2.0 G.P.A. in the preceding semester, the student will be required to drop any role or design/crew assignment that he or she may be presently engaged in and will be ineligible for any subsequent casting or assignment until he or she regains clear academic standing.

Students on academic probation or whose previous semester's G.P.A. has fallen below a 2.0 may continue to participate on a production run crew only if participation is a specific, curricular requirement of a course the student is enrolled in. Students who are on Work Study must maintain a G.P.A. of at least 2.0. Students whose semester G.P.A. falls below a 2.0 must resolve prior to the first day of classes of the following semester any issues concerning incompletes and change-of-grades that might raise their semester G.P.A. above a 2.0.

Portfolio Review Information

Students with a Tech and Design focus who do not wish to audition will participate in a Portfolio Review Interview at the end of each semester. At the Spring Portfolio Review students may also apply to design, assistant design or stage manage the following season's productions.

Students must make an appointment for their portfolio review with the Tech & Design Program Coordinator. **If you have any questions, please contact Jacob Brown at JBrown5@csuchico.edu.**

For Scholarship Audition/Portfolio information, please go [here](#).

Auditions and Interviews remain the primary avenue of access to employment and educational opportunities in the performing arts. To aid our own production and program and to help our students acquire the poised, presentational skills necessary for job hunting in the profession, we have designed an annual system of auditions, portfolio review/interviews and evaluations.

Special Theatre Major Requirements

All musical theatre majors are required to audition at the beginning of each semester.

All theatre arts majors are required either to a) audition at the beginning of each semester, or b) present a portfolio of technical, design, or stage management experience every semester.

Any student with an interest in technical production, design, or stage management as well as performance may choose to participate in both portfolio reviews and auditions.

Any major who wishes not to participate in a department production during any given semester, must notify their program coordinator ahead of auditions or interviews, however, she or he must still participate in the audition or interview process.

Any *theatre scholarship* student, in addition to the basic audition/portfolio requirements, *must* participate as cast or crew in at least *one* department production each semester he or she receives an award from the Theatre Department.

Please refer to the Casting/Crewing policy for more information.

Students who are not participating in a department production and wish to perform in, design or crew an off-campus production must meet with their program coordinator before auditioning and/or accepting the position.

Juried Auditioned Response Sheet Criteria

Students are judged in a variety of categories with attention given to whether they are a first-time presenter, at the intermediate level, or advanced students. The criteria used is similar to that used a CETA, URTA, ACTF, SETC and other unified auditions. Students then have a better idea of where they need to improve their skills. The faculty and staff use a 1-5 ranking system for responses, 1 being poor and 5 being excellent.

- [Theatre Arts Portfolio Review Response Sheet \(DOC\)](#) (.doc format)

Categories

General Appearance

- Department
- Attitude
- Appropriate attire

Spoken Presentation

- Introduction
- Body of Presentation
- Conclusion
- Overall: materials, details, support, handling, organization

Résumé

- Appearance
- Accuracy
- Proofreading
- Appropriateness

Visual Presentation not expected from all first time presenters

- Quality and choice of materials (aesthetics/artistry/ability)
- Neatness: paperwork, plots, drawings, organization
- Graphics and layout: presentation format, titles, labels, etc.
- Overall success of visual presentation

A Few Thoughts on Auditioning

Life is unfair.

The theatre is less fair than life.

Acting is the least fair part of the theatre.

An actor will never be asked to do anything less fair in his or her life than audition.

And the worst part of it is that an actor is never NOT auditioning. If you truly want to be an actor, these are the given circumstances of your condition with which you must make peace.

It's good to keep a few things in mind:

- Whenever you audition for a director, you are auditioning for every show he or she will direct for the rest of both your lives, not just the one coming up next. Whenever you are in a show, you are auditioning for the future projects of every director and producer who see it, as well as the director you're working with.
- Directors will forget your name the minute you walk out the door, but if you behave unprofessionally before, during, or after the audition, they will remember your face forever.
- If you are a delight in the audition, prove yourself talented and skilled, read beautifully and bring everyone in the room to tears and/or gales of laughter, you may *still* not get the part, but the director will remember your face, and maybe even your name, forever.
- Directors have a lot on their minds during auditions and are trying to balance a host of issues having to do with the complex nature of a production; whether or not you would be good in a given part, even the best, is often not the most relevant consideration. For your own mental health, try not to take it personally.
- An audition is a job interview. Whether or not there is actual monetary pay involved is irrelevant. You must present and behave yourself professionally. Don't lie on your resume and be honest about what you are and *are not* willing to do. People are taking a lot of time and working very hard to make very difficult decisions for the good of a project that is larger than you.
- The dynamics of a company ensemble begin to take shape immediately after the cast list goes up. The news of your attitude, good or bad, travels fast and has a lasting influence on how you, as a colleague, are regarded in the future. If you are angry or miffed, save its expression for the privacy of your home.

- You can't know what is in a director's mind. You can't know why you didn't get the part. If you truly want to be an actor, the only thing you can DO that is worth your time and energy is get ready for the next audition and do your very best *again*.

Professionalism

Professionalism is one of those things that everyone agrees is absolutely indispensable in the theatre; yet, we don't teach a specific class in it, nor does it appear as such in the topic calendar of many, if any, course syllabi.

Everyone knows it when they see it, though. It has nothing to do with whether or not one is an actual *professional*, as in one who is paid for a service. It has nothing to do with unions, contracts, paychecks, academic degrees, age or experience. It has everything to do with conduct.

Professionalism implies reliability and responsibility. It means good will and genuine effort to give one's best to any project one commits to. To behave professionally in the theatre is to care more about the overall good of the show than about one's own comfort, convenience or applause. Professionalism does not imply a refusal or inability to question or criticize; but, it *does* mean that one refrains from insult, innuendo, back-stabbing or any other negative behavior or talk that serves to trash any individual in a company and, therefore, undermine the hard work of all and, ultimately, the quality of the theatrical experience for the audience.

On some basic level it implies a conscience.

It is said that it is impossible to legislate morality. Certainly, it is futile to try to create a Theatre Department policy regulating *professionalism*.

We all know it when we see it, though. And we all know it when we don't.

The professionalism of this department, then, depends on the commitment of each individual in it -- faculty, staff and student -- to behave according to a personal code of conduct that helps to enhance the experience of everyone else here and to uphold the ideals that brought us all together in the first place.

Performance Attendance

Students are required to attend four performances per semester, of which they cannot be a performer or crew participant. We encourage students to attend a mix of both music and theatre performances.

Code of Conduct for Performers

College of Humanities and Fine Arts

California State University Chico

August 2003

There are three basic agreements that guide our behavior as performers. These agreements are as old as art itself, and as important to understand as any other part of performance.

The agreement between performer and producer: The producer shall enthusiastically advertise and promote the work of the performer to investors, potential audience members, and the community as a whole. The producer will work diligently to provide the best resources possible for the performance. This promotion shall be based on the quality of past performances and the belief that the artist will present the very best performance possible every time. The trust of this agreement is worth preserving to assure proper investment in artistic work.

The agreement between performer and audience member: the audience member purchases a ticket for a performance sight unseen, sound unheard, quality unknown. The purchase is an act of faith that each performer will give his or her very best at every performance to ensure the audience member receives his/her money's worth. The audience member rewards good performances by giving praise to the artist, speaking well of the artist to others, and buying tickets for future productions. The trust of this agreement is worth preserving to assure that audiences continue to attend artistic events.

The agreement between performer and performer: artists share a performance together based in the belief that every performer will give the very best they can at every instant of every performance to support the other performers on the stage and to elevate the level of the performance above entertainment to art. The trust of this agreement is worth preserving because creating art is what all artists wish to achieve.

There are many ways to betray the trust these agreements represent, but one of the surest ways is to come to a performance unprepared. The lack of preparation can be as obvious as not learning the music or lines, or as egregious as appearing on stage in an inebriated or drugged state. It is impossible to perform at your peak if you are unprepared, unfocused or physically impaired. It should be a part of your artistic discipline, and a matter of your pride as a performing artist to honor these agreements. You will be held to these standards throughout your artistic career.

I understand that coming to a rehearsal or performance after drinking or taking drugs is a direct violation of the Student Conduct Code and the University Alcohol Policy of California State University, Chico. Violations will result in immediate expulsion from all performance ensembles in the College of Humanities and Fine Arts for a minimum of one semester, and may result in

further sanctions by the department, College of Humanities and Fine Arts, or Office of Student Judicial Affairs.