

## **BFA in Acting** Student Expectations

UMBC's Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in Acting degree is for students interested in an intensive performance program leading to the pursuit of graduate study and/or careers in professional acting. While all UMBC students are welcome to participate in Theatre Dept performances and activities, BFA students immerse themselves in advanced technique in acting, voice, and movement courses, and learn the application of these skills to characterization in a wide range of productions in which they perform.

Admission to the BFA in Acting Major is by audition and interview. Prospective majors may audition before coming to UMBC, or after enrolling, and we have a special accelerated BFA program for acting major transfers. All of the information can be found on the UMBC Theatre website.

### **Acting Class & Rehearsal Expectations:**

Acting is interactive; your classmates rely on you to be present and well-prepared for scene work and other exercises. UMBC acting instructors and directors publish their rules for attendance, punctuality and make-up work in syllabi; it is your responsibility to know them and adhere to them.

Below are shared expectations for ALL acting classes, rehearsals, fittings and production calls at UMBC Theatre:

1. Always arrive ON TIME. If you expect to be late or absent:
  - Notify the instructor or stage manager immediately
  - Communicate clearly with your instructor about makeup work, it is your responsibility.
2. Always arrive PREPARED, and appropriately dressed.
  - Actors who arrive unprepared, and/or not appropriately dressed for the work may be asked to sit out or have an understudy work in their place.
3. Stay in CLOSE COMMUNICATION with instructors, directors, and stage managers. All BFA students are expected to:
  - Check UMBC email at minimum once per day
  - Read and respond to ALL instructor and stage manager emails promptly,

### **Ongoing Evaluation:**

BFA students are evaluated on their progress throughout the semester and their overall journey at UMBC. Progress in the BFA is evaluated in two ways:

1. Production auditions: all BFA students are required to audition twice per year for our fall and spring productions (even if given a casting exception, see below). They are expected to prepare thoroughly, read their feedback evaluations, and continue to improve from one semester to the next, applying the techniques developed in training. Audition announcements, including all information on schedules, sign-ups, material, etc. are distributed approximately 4-6 weeks prior to each audition.
2. Individual coursework. BFA majors are expected to meet high standards of focus, commitment and overall growth in all acting classes, including production. Students struggling in acting classes / production (such as excessive absences or poor preparation) are expected to communicate immediately and often with the impacted instructor(s) to address any issues, or seek support. Ongoing challenges will be shared with the students' academic advisor, the head of the BFA program, and (if warranted) the department chair, and may impact casting. All courses required for the BFA degree must be completed with a "C" or better in order to graduate. If a student receives less than a "C" in any required course, they should discuss with their academic advisor how they will complete their degree.

### **Casting and Auditions:**

All BFA majors are expected to audition each semester for upcoming UMBC productions. Everyone who auditions, regardless of major or track, agrees to “play as cast.” This means that by auditioning, the student is committing to accepting any role and understudy assignment and is available for the rehearsal and production schedule. Production dates are usually outlined in the semi-annual audition announcement and in production calendars.

There are ways to share concerns or make requests regarding scheduling, boundaries, and/or “sitting out” a semester of casting. UMBC Theatre’s audition announcements are circulated to all majors via email, and include information on the plays/productions, and instructions for signing up. The audition sign-up process includes opportunities to declare the following, if needed:

1. Boundary/consent conflicts. Students are always welcome to discuss with the Dept. Chair or head of the BFA any concerns they may have, or boundaries they wish to declare, about a production/play/role they are auditioning for (such as staged intimacy, violence, or traumatic content, for example). Students will have the opportunity to share these, if applicable, when they sign up for auditions. Students will not be cast in roles that are not in alignment with their stated boundaries at casting.
2. Potential scheduling concerns. While schedule or time conflicts cannot always be accommodated, production management will share anything you list on the audition sign-up form with the directors to see if something can be worked out.
3. A request not to be cast. Any BFA student may complete a **Casting Exemption Request** for approval by the Dept. chair, if they do not wish to be cast in the upcoming semester. So long as the request is made by the deadline, and the student has not had repeated exemptions, these are usually granted. Students exempted from casting are still required to audition for evaluation purposes.

Any BFA major not performing an acting role must still ensure they meet the production requirements for the BFA degree via other production responsibilities. This is up to the student to arrange, and should see the Production Stage Manager, Grace Shepperd (gshepper1@umbc.edu) ASAP when not assigned an acting role.

Questions about the audition policy may be directed to the Department Chair, Eve Muson (ebmuson@umbc.edu).

### **Outside Productions**

BFA faculty wish to support majors in taking advantage of the major’s substantial learning opportunities, and meet their graduation goals. Outside productions are therefore encouraged during the summer and winter break, but not during the fall and spring semesters. BFA students who wish to participate in productions during that time (and are not working on a UMBC production, or in excess credits), must get approval from the Head of the BFA in Acting program, Gerrad Alex Taylor (gtaylor@umbc.edu), prior to accepting an outside role during the semester. For best consideration, please discuss the opportunity prior to auditioning or submitting for an outside project.

### **Study Abroad**

If a student hopes to study abroad during an academic year, they should meet with their advisor to forecast their course load and requirements for subsequent semesters. Students choosing to study abroad do so with the recognition that this *may* result in an added semester(s) of enrollment at UMBC.

### **Questions?**

Most information about UMBC Theatre, including details about the BFA auditions, productions, and degree requirements can be found on the UMBC Theatre website. For questions specifically related to your training and interests, please speak with your academic advisor or Prof. Gerrad Alex Taylor, Head of the BFA in Acting, at gtaylor@umbc.edu.