

THE DIRECTOR'S CUT

THE MUSICAL THEATRE & ACTORS STUDIO



Director's Notes

Welcome to this year's first issue of *The Director's Cut*, a monthly newsletter where I – along with the students in the Musical Theatre & Actors Studio [MTAS] – will offer a behind the scenes look at what makes up our Academy!

At the end of each month, you'll get an inside look into what we've been working on. We'll be sharing our experiences involving curriculum, performances, guest artists, workshops & masterclasses, and so much more! I look forward to regularly communicating with the families and colleagues who support our program and welcome you to always reach out with any questions or concerns.

I am honored to serve as the Director of the Musical Theatre & Actors Studio! I'm eager to work closely with our students to unlock their true creative potential...not to mention make some amazing memories along the way!



Mr. Erich DiCenzo

DIRECTOR OF THE MUSICAL THEATRE & ACTORS STUDIO

WELCOME BACK!



Mr. DiCenzo with his seniors enrolled in AM BLOCK: Pre-Professional Musical Theatre

Welcome to our 2023-2024 school year! For those of you whom I have yet to meet, my name is Erich DiCenzo, Director of the Musical Theatre & Actors Studio [MTAS]. I am thrilled to be entering my fourth year in this position – eleventh as a Performing Arts educator – and cannot wait for the opportunity to work with you!

I want to ensure you that safety will remain a top priority. I have always strived to foster a classroom in which students feel both physically and emotionally safe. It's essential to our work as performing artists that individuals in the MTAS feel free to express themselves, feel encouraged to take risks, and feel supported as they grow to discover their own identity and abilities.

It's going to be an exciting year! With plans to offer multiple performance opportunities, continue our successful partnerships with professional theatre companies, and welcome in several Broadway artists, students in the Academy will be exposed to one-of-a-kind industry experiences sure to foster growth and success. A heightened focus on professional pursuits and college and career readiness is just part of what makes the MTAS so special. Students will get to experience this firsthand as some of the field's top college and conservatory admissions officers visit the classroom for in-depth Q&A's and recruitment.

With so much planned for our year, I don't want you to miss a beat. Parents and students alike can join our REMIND101 by utilizing the class codes listed on the course syllabus found on Schoology. In addition to this resource, be sure to keep a lookout for the next issue of *The Director's Cut* and visit our Musical Theatre & Actors Studio website often! And, as always, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to email me, or schedule an appointment. I want to thank you for supporting the performing arts and the Fairfax Academy. I look forward to working together!

With Gratitude,
Erich DiCenzo

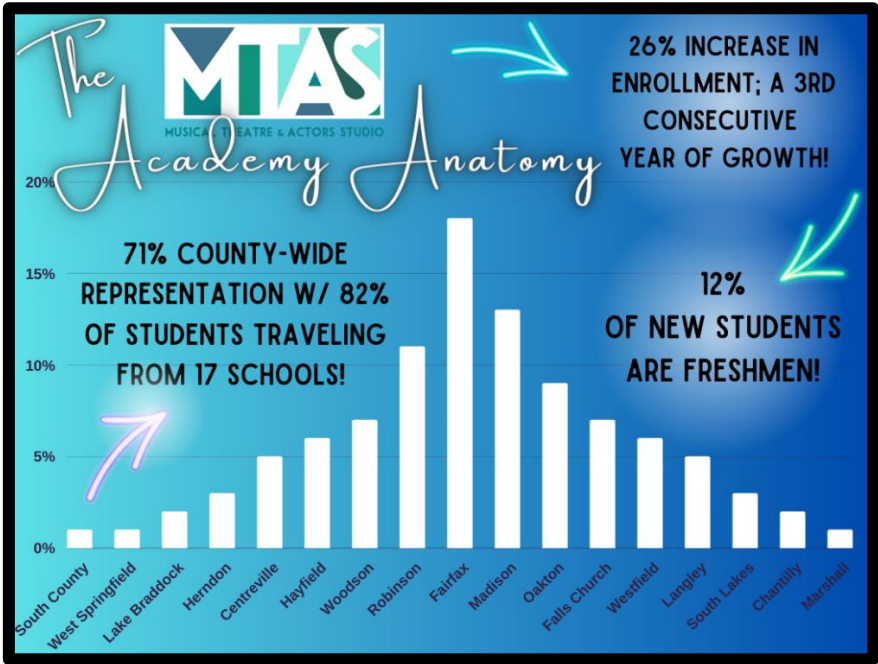
THE ACADEMY ANATOMY:

Where Are Our Academy Students Coming From?

This year, the Musical Theatre & Actors Studio experienced a third consecutive year of growth, with more than a 26% increase in enrollment. In fact, due to such high demand, a sixth full section of Musical Theatre was added, and – for the first time ever – a freshmen course offering was created. These new ninth grade students make-up 12% of our overall MTAS enrollment. All six courses continue to be waitlisted.

The Musical Theatre & Actors Studio has the opportunity to welcome students from just about every one of our FCPS high schools and centers. This year, the Musical Theatre & Actors Studio has students enrolled from seventeen out of the twenty-four possible base high school locations, equating to 71% county-wide representation.

This year, 82% of our MTAS students come from high schools across the County. The rest, 18%, attend Fairfax High School as their base school. The bar chart below highlights this year's high school representation by percentage.



New Voices: What are your first impressions of the MTAS Academy?

"I have never been more welcomed into a space by my peers and teacher. Just one week in, I have realized the countless number of things I'll be learning, and I feel so lucky that I get to start every morning here in MTAS with these amazing people."

Elisa Mamani Duran [Lake Braddock SS]; *Pre-Professional Musical Theatre*

"So far academy has been such an amazing experience. I am so grateful to be able to have this opportunity to learn from Mr. D and to work with my talented peers. I cannot wait to see what we can achieve as an ensemble!"

Allie Blanchet [Herndon HS]; *Musical Theatre Fundamentals*

"This is my first year in the MTAS and I already feel like a valued member of its tight knit community. Its abundance of opportunities and resources creates a safe and refreshing environment that encourages growth and improvement and is free of any judgement from others. The immense organization and range of activities make MTAS a highlight of my day, and I can't wait to spend the next few years learning and expanding at the Academy."

John Poncy [Oakton HS]; *Musical Theatre Workshop*

"I was intimidated by the academy when I first joined, but soon after I found a group of super welcoming people who are all just as excited about theatre as I am."

Aquilles Ailus [Hayfield SS]; *Advanced Musical Theatre Workshop*



A Look Ahead



As outlined in the [MTAS Handbook](#), a high expectation on students in the Academy is to maintain an organized and detailed calendar, especially for those students who will be balancing opportunities at both their base school and within the Academy. To aid in this success, I have shared our entire school year at-a-glance through multiple mediums:

- 1.) Full Year Wall Calendar in Classroom
- 2.) Important Dates Trifold Hardcopy
- 3.) Full Digital Calendar Linked on MTAS Website

It is important to me that students are able to participate in everything they desire. At the same time, it is imperative that students do not spread themselves too thin. I am a big believer that with enough advanced planning and proactive communication, conflicts can be worked through. I never want a student to look at a rehearsal calendar and just assume that they can't participate. In the end, it may *not* be possible, but I encourage all students to initiate open and clear communication to see if a work-around may exist.

Once we return from Labor Day weekend, our year will really begin to kick into high gear! I want to use this opportunity to highlight some of the early events on our schedule so you may begin to save the dates on yours!

MTAS Pizza Party Kick-Off Event

Thursday, September 7th
FHS AUDITORIUM
5:30-7:30pm

Come meet your peers from all the other classes for dinner and bonding!

Academy Back to School Night

Tuesday, September 12th
BLACK BOX THEATRE
5:30-6:30pm

Parents are invited to come meet Mr. DiCenzo and hear about MTAS and the vision for this year.

NO SCHOOL

Monday, September 25th

Professional Masterclass

October 2nd – 6th
BLACK BOX THEATRE
During All Classes

Students will work with improv artist, Pete Bergen, for a week long masterclass.