

Music Department
Baltimore School for the Arts
Dr. Mellasenah Edwards, Music Department Head

Mission

The Baltimore School for the Arts offers a pre-professional music training program with the highest educational and artistic standards for talented and committed high school students. Our programs are built on the techniques and repertoire of classical music. We are a diverse and nurturing community, and we embrace the values of discipline and personal growth fostered by training in the arts.

Overview of the Curriculum

Music students at the Baltimore School for the Arts pursue a course of study that seeks to foster the comprehensive development of a young musician.

Studio Lesson

The studio lesson is the center of the music curriculum. It is a weekly individual meeting between the student and an artist-teacher who specializes in the student's major area of performance. We feel the relationship of students to the artist-teacher is crucial to the development of young musicians. There is an agreement stating the nature of the relationship of the musical mentor to the student that must be read and signed before lessons begin.

The studio lesson is a class that requires significant home preparation and is graded weekly, principally on the quality of the home preparation. Teachers provide students with written instructions for the preparation of each lesson. It is the student's responsibility to purchase the sheet music as directed by the studio teacher promptly.

A professional pianist is provided for rehearsals with each student. Students must arrive punctually for this individual rehearsal.

Students perform twice a year (once per semester) in student recitals. **All first and second year** students perform mid-year hearings during the January exam week. This hearing and the final music jury in June (all students) are professional evaluations of the semester's and year's work and are entered as exam grades. A failing grade on either hearing can be sufficient cause for dismissal from the school.

An average schedule of practice for the private lesson:

- Instrumental musicians – 90 to 120 minutes a day (10½ to 14 hours per week)
- Vocal musicians – 45 minutes a day (5 hours per week)

Ensembles

Chorus, Wind Symphony, BSA Orchestra, Chamber Chorus, Chamber Orchestra, Instrumental Chamber Music, Jazz Ensembles

There are many performance ensembles at the BSA. They vary from the 120-member chorus (all BSA music students sing in the chorus) to chamber ensembles of three or four persons. The amount of preparation required varies by the ensemble and by the individual.

All students are graded through individual hearings of prepared material. Proper rehearsal behavior (quiet, aware, and receptive), serious preparation and prompt arrivals at all ensemble meetings are the principal elements of success in all ensemble work. Please see the information below about policies regarding performances and rehearsals.

Repertoire is prepared and presented for public performance. Consistent, punctual attendance is necessary for success.

- Chorus – All music students participate in the Chorus. This experience is designed to develop musical literacy for all participants.
- Chamber Chorus - The Chamber Chorus consists of junior and senior vocal majors. Music of a more advanced nature is studied, as well as smaller-scale choral works. This ensemble has frequent performances.
- Wind Symphony – All wind, brass, and percussion students participate in the Wind Symphony.
- Baltimore School for the Arts Orchestra – All violin, viola, cello, and bass students (and selected winds, brass, and percussion by audition) participate in the BSA Orchestra.
- String Orchestra (Concertato) - All violin, viola, cello, and bass students participate in the String Orchestra. This ensemble focuses on string orchestral repertoire.
- Instrumental Chamber Music – All violin, viola, cello, bass, guitar, brass, wind, and percussion participate in Chamber Music. Piano and harp students may have opportunities to participate in Chamber Music - the selection is made in consultation with the private lesson teacher, chamber coach, and the music department head.
- Jazz Ensembles – All saxophone, trumpet, and trombone students are required to participate in the Jazz Ensembles for four years. All piano, guitar, bass, and percussion students are required to participate in the Jazz Ensembles for two years of study. Selection of these students is made with consultation with the jazz instructor, private lesson teacher, and the music department head.

Auditions

Auditions for the following school year are held in January.

Admission to the BSA is based solely on an arts audition and interview — no academic criteria are used. Every student gets a level playing field and a fresh start at the BSA.

We are looking for 8th and 9th-grade students who want to be part of the next generation of the creative workforce. Students may audition in one or two art areas. For our department, you may audition for vocal music and instrumental.

We are part of the Baltimore City Public School System, and most of our students are city residents, but we accept students who reside in any county.

Here is how the audition process works:.

You will find on our website requirements for *instrumental and vocal auditions*. Here are **some things to note for instrumentalists:**

- No accompanist is needed nor will we provide an accompanist.
- The suggested repertoire is only a suggestion.
- Be prepared to play a second solo and there is sight-reading.
- You may be asked to demonstrate the ability to match with your voice pitches played on the piano by a panel member.
- Percussionists need only bring their sticks. We will provide a snare, timpani, and a mallet instrument. We will not have a set.
- We do not provide amps and we do have stands.

Vocalists, please be sure that you sing for your audition. We do not want to hear you rap. That is speaking and not singing. We need to hear you connect notes and the quality of your voice. Vocalists should choose a simple song - Patriotic songs, church hymns, some show tunes, and art songs are appropriate.

- You may bring sheet music and the school will provide an accompanist. You may not bring your own accompanist.
- Popular songs that imitate the style of a particular singer are not helpful.

What to expect and what to bring to the audition?

- Only bring what is needed to audition.
- Parents will remain in the Ballroom and students will head upstairs for the audition. We promise we will bring them back.
- Students - Look nice and do not chew gum!
- Be enthusiastic and be on your best behavior.
- We want to hear you and want you to do well.

Who will be at the audition?

- Faculty members from the department. They are all very nice.

How do I prepare?

- Find someone to help you prepare your music - music teacher at school, private lessons
- Perform your audition music many times for your parents, grandparents, pets, friends - make sure you are very comfortable with your music
- Perform in the clothes that you plan to wear to the audition and make sure that you are comfortable.