

# CREATING A BA (HONS) IN MUSICAL THEATRE IN PORTUGAL

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# Why Am I Doing This?

- Professional musical theatre performer for the past 5 years.
- Musical theatre singing teacher for the past 4 years.
- Increasing number of students wanting to take a Musical Theatre degree. (EDSAE, 2023; Stagedoor, 2023).
- No higher education degree in Musical Theatre in Portugal.
- Increasing number of musical theatre shows produced in Portugal.

# Main Aims and Objectives

- Compare Musical Theatre industry's demands in Portugal to the industry's demands abroad.
- Possibility of creating a BA (Hons) in Portugal that would meet the Musical Theatre industry's demands, comparable to leading training establishments abroad.
- Funding for a potential BA (Hons) in Musical Theatre allowing lower costs to students.
- Advantages for students of studying in their own country instead of studying abroad.
- Focus group of musical theatre performers/educators, musical theatre students for feedback.
- Questionnaire to UK's musical theatre pedagogues for feedback.
- Participants' ideas into the viability of creating a BA (Hons) in Musical Theatre
- Subjects to take into consideration for eventual program model of a BA (Hons) in Musical Theatre in Portugal.

# Previous Literature Review

- **Vocal Health and Hygiene** (Thompson, 2014; Burnett, 2017; Chandler, 2014; Searce, 2016; LeBorgne, 2014; Henny, 2019; Fisher and Kayes, 2016; Hughes, 2014; Titze, 2013).
- **Acting as a tool for singing** (Adler, 2000; Ahmed, 2021; Burgess, 2005; Cole, 1955; Freeman, 2015; Harvard, 2013).
- **The importance of repertoire** (Edwin, 2003; Flom, 2016; Flom, 2013; Freeman, 2015; Amadeo, 2021; Lindsay, 2021).
- **Schedule organization for the musical theatre performer** (Donahue, et al, 2014; Waltar, et al, 2012; Timmermans, 2005; Chan et al, 2003; Sataloff et al, 2002; Smith et al, 2004; Samlan et al, 2004).

# Updated Literature Review Findings

**Current vocal demands of the Musical Theatre industry in the UK and NY (Flom, 2016; Freeman, 2015; Jones, n.d; Skdev, 2023).**

- **Legit**
- **Traditional Musical Theatre**
- **Contemporary Musical Theatre**
- **Pop/Rock**

# Updated Literature Review Findings

Table 1: Casting Briefs in UK Casting Platforms

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>“Vocal versatility is a must for this role, styles include Pop, Jazz, Swing, Rock &amp; Musical Theatre.”</b><br/><b>(Spotlight UK, 2022)</b></p>                                                             |
| <p><b>“Seeking powerhouse vocalists with great stamina. Styles to include pop/rock, R&amp;B, contemporary musical theater.” (Spotlight UK, 2022)</b></p>                                                            |
| <p><b>“Powerhouse vocalists, who can sing in the styles of contemporary pop/rock and musical theater.”</b><br/><b>(Spotlight UK, 2022)</b></p>                                                                      |
| <p><b>“LEADING SOLOIST SINGERS FOR PRODUCTION SHOWS - All singers need to vocally encompass a wide variety of genres of pop/rock/modern musical theatre, with a talent for harmonies”. (Spotlight UK, 2022)</b></p> |
| <p><b>“Must have great contemporary pop voices” (Spotlight UK, 2022)</b></p>                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

# Updated Literature Review Findings

## The Portuguese Musical Theatre Industry (Carrilho, 2011; Araújo, 2016)



1976



1983



1990

The Children-Youth musical

# Updated Literature Review Findings

**The Vocal Demands of the Portuguese Musical Theatre Industry** (Araújo, 2016; Aguiar, 2007; Bosseur & Bosseur, 1990; Alcobia, 2014).

**Predominant genre of singing in Portugal**



**Classical singing - Bel Canto**



**Training Opera Singers**



**Limits students to explore a more contemporary sound**

# Updated Literature Review Findings

Table 2: Audition Briefs in Portugal by  
different producing companies

|                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>“Singer/Actors; 18-25; must send one song of their choice” (FProdução, 2023)</b>                                                                                                   |
| <b>“Singer/Actors; 18-35; must send one song and one monologue” (FProdução, 2023)</b>                                                                                                 |
| <b>“Candidates must be ready to sing two musical theatre songs acapella, one in English and one in Portuguese, and must also prepare a monologue of their choice” (AM LIVE, 2016)</b> |
| <b>“Singers/Actors/dancers, must send a 2-minute video showcasing singing and dancing ability”<br/>(FProdução, 2019)</b>                                                              |
| <b>“Singer/Actors, legit and contemporary singers, bring a song of your choice” (La Féria, 2019)</b>                                                                                  |

# Methodology

**Qualitative research** - Aims to address 'rigorous/relevance gap' (Keiser and Leiner, 2009)

**Constructive paradigm** - considers reality to be socially constructed and it is given meaning by people (Easterby - Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson, 2008)

## Action research

Seeks to resolve the issues investigated and has a political agenda, it's democratic and collaborative (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1998)

Collaborative and participatory by its very nature (Barbour, 2013; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988; Reason and Bradbury, 2001; Pieters et al, 2019).

Already an established approach in the music education field (Reason and Bradbury, 2001; Laprise, 2017; Barbour, 2013; Pieters et al, 2019; Hine, 2013; Cain, 2008; West, 2011).

Action research and reflective cycle to help maintain perspective



**Figure 1:** The Action Research Cycle (Laprise, 2017)

# Methods

Literature Review



Survey – research activity - UK  
Musical Theatre Pedagogues



Focus Groups – reasearch activity –  
Portuguese Musical Theatre Students  
and Educators

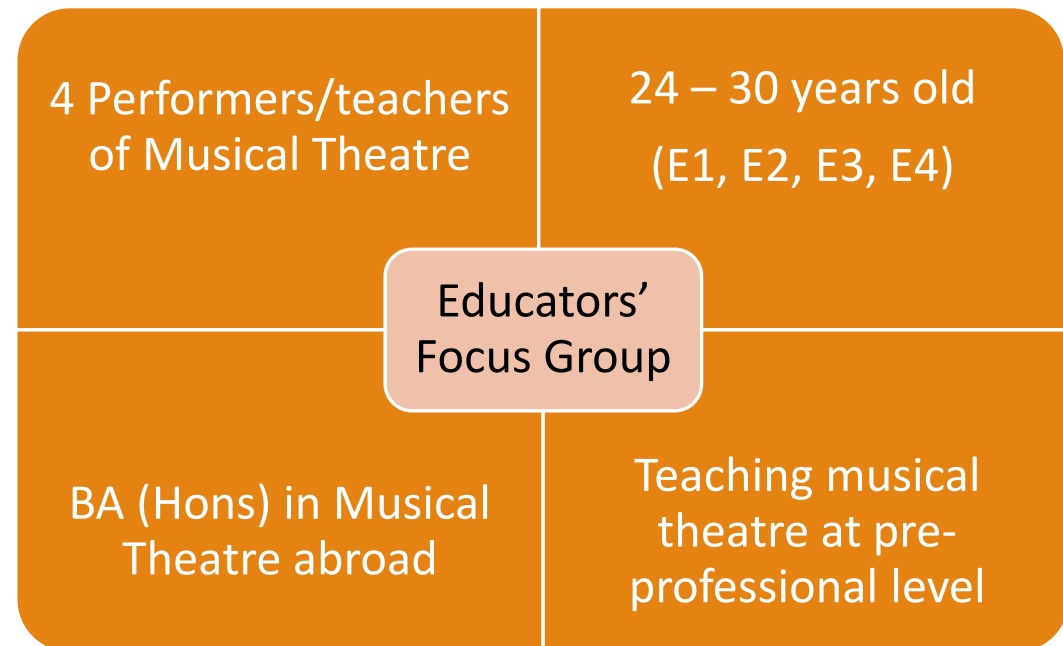
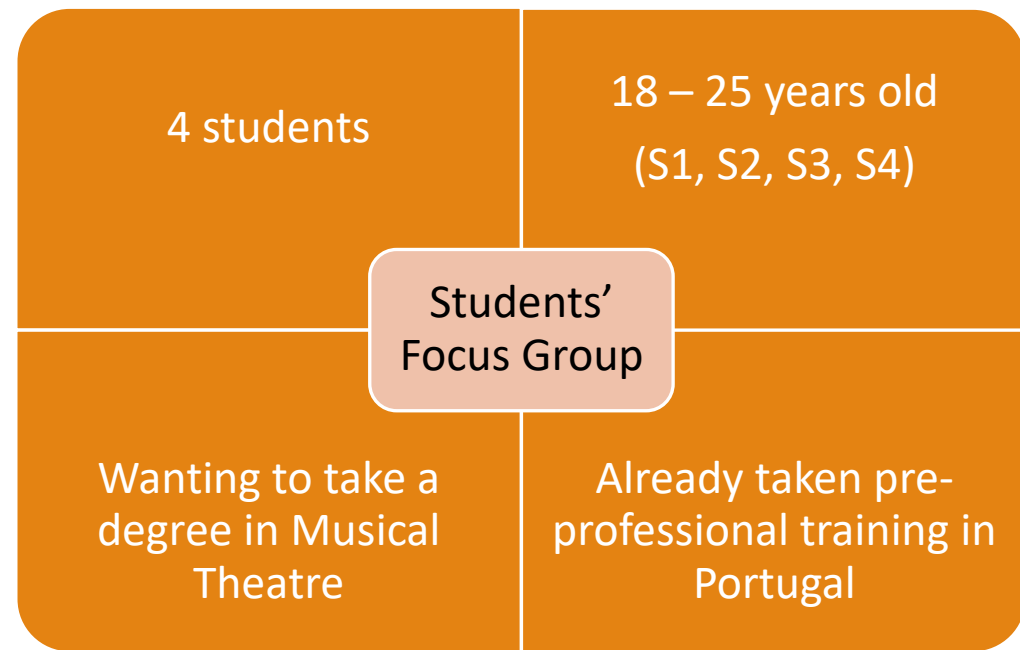


Iterative cycle - analysis of data and  
adjustments

# Ethical Considerations

- Insider research - improve and create knowledge within my practice (Breen, 2007; Costley, 2010)
- Risks: Bias could threaten the validity of data since the insider may lack impartiality and researcher's position could influence the participants answers.
- Skilled observation for perspective and anonymous of the focus groups and questionnaires (Bell, 2005) mitigated the risks
- Ethical guidelines: consent forms prior to participation with contact information and purpose of research clear, participation was voluntary.

# Focus Groups Composition



## **In Vivo coding**

**Direct language of the participants as the primary data source  
(Saldaña, 2016)**

# Students' Focus Group

## Advantages and Disadvantages of having a BA (Hons) in Portugal

“terms of money it could be very helpful” (S2).

“we have lots of musical theatre performers in Portugal and I think we could have lots of experiences from professionals that maybe a few years ago we couldn’t” (S1);

“would be very good since we would not need to leave our country to study what we love” (S2);

“having a Musical Theatre college here would be very valuable. When I was younger it took me a while to understand that I could make a living out of Musical Theatre. Especially because the industry here was not as developed as it is now.” (S3);

“just because I don’t know if there would be enough people.” (S1)

“not many people who would be interested. Because the industry is getting more developed in Portugal but at the same time, not that much and I think there would be many people that would think that abroad they would have a better experience than here.” (S4).

# Students' Focus Group

## Type of Program

“balance between theory and practice”. (S1)

“I think Musical Theatre History is very important” (S3)

“subjects related to voice work and how we can use it effectively.” (S3)

“Acting Through Song, different dance styles, one-to-one singing lessons.” (S1).

“subjects like repertoire, technique, anatomy, vocal health” (S3)

“workshops with professionals that can teach us how to start our careers would be great” (S4).

“It would be helpful to understand the different styles, differences, to see our difficulties and how to improve the voice in terms of styles matching the song we are working on.” (S3)

# Students' Focus Group

## Teachers

“to have people actively working in the industry teach in a BA (Hons).” (S1)

“who would be working not only here but also abroad so students could understand how the industry works here and that it is possible to make a living from musical theatre here in Portugal.” (S2).

“there are so many actors that do not have a higher education degree so it would be weird to teach at a higher education level. There would have to be specific criteria to choose the teachers.” (S1).

# Students' Focus Group

## Outcomes from the Course

“correct auditions and castings. And that is hard to do but in classes we really need to try and find ourselves and what would show us better according to what we can do, and we are good at so that we are always ready for the auditions we go into.” (S1).

“understand the reality of the industry that it is not perfect and that you won’t get the most amazing jobs after auditioning twice.” (S4).

“a good CV, good headshot, how to make our own showreel” (S2)

“connect the three elements of musical theatre. A character does not change because they are singing or dancing and that seems simple, but it is super important.” (S3).

“our critical sense should be great to develop this in a higher degree level” (S1).

## Educators' Focus Group

### Studying in Portugal

“Personally, I have always known that I wanted to work in Portugal so, if I had the option I would have studied here because I would already be networking within the industry I wanted to get into.” (E2)

“18-year-old me would not think that it would be as good as a London School. For me I really wanted to go and audition for London schools, work there, and get into that industry. As a kid I don’t think I really connected to the Portuguese culture, I wanted to find something different, and I was always felt more connected to the London culture.” (E4)

# Educators' Focus Group

## Costs

“must be an investment by the government.” (E3).

“because there was already a trial for a higher degree in Musical Theatre here, but it was so expensive that no one could afford it.” (E2)

# Educators' Focus Group

## Effects on the Portuguese Musical Theatre Industry

“that you could guarantee that there would be enough jobs for the people graduating.” (E2)

“there would also have to a raise in the quality of the shows and a bigger variety of shows to guarantee that more and new people would get into the industry.” (E2).

“great recognition to Portugal” (E1).

# Educators' Focus Group

## Organization of Program



**Figure 2:** Possible disciplines of a BA (Hons) in Musical Theatre in Portugal

# Educators' Focus Group

## Different Types of Programs

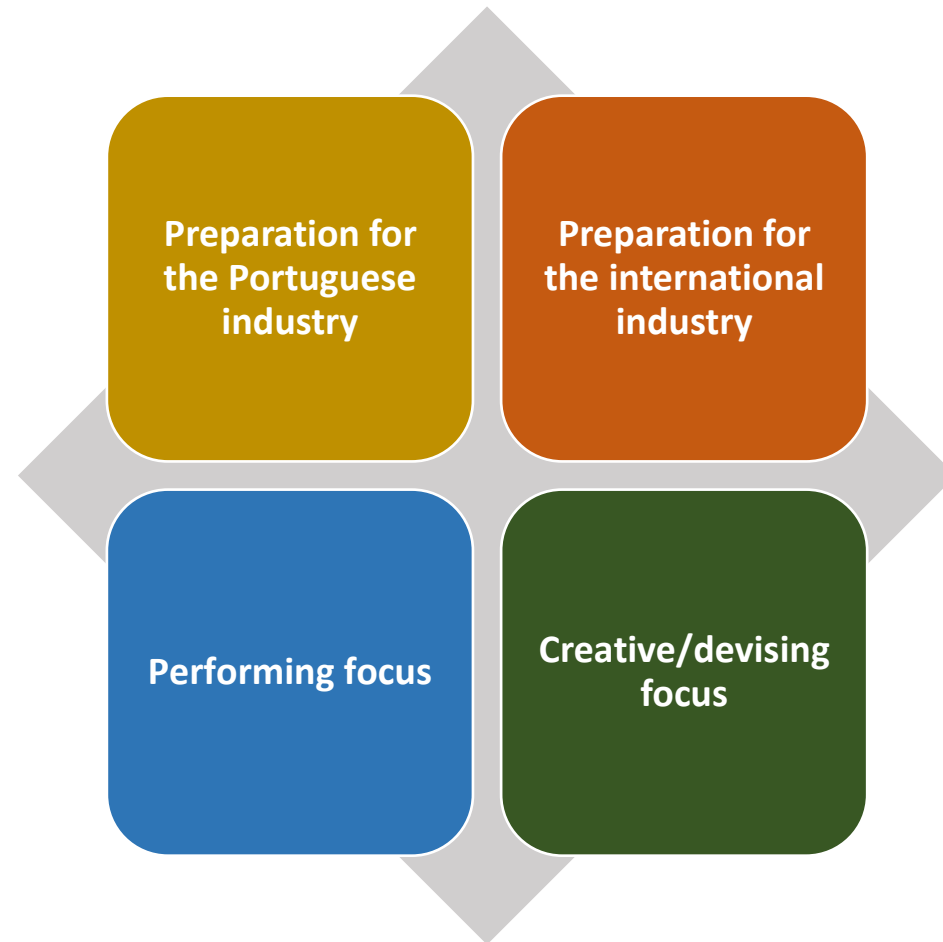


**Figure 3:** Possible types of programs of a BA (Hons) in Musical Theatre in Portugal

# Educators' Focus Group

## Investment in Portugal

“international students could live and get to know Portugal and the country could benefit for it.” (E1).

# Educators' Focus Group

## Teachers

“having international choreographers and directors to work with the students” (E1).

work with different teachers - “super useful and beneficial so that students can gather different tools through their training.” (E3)

# Survey Participants

- Sent to 4 UK pedagogues who have developed Musical Theatre Courses in different countries.
- Available online - [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com) - it is a leading survey and feedback management solution platform around the globe (G2 Crowd, 2024; Capterra, 2024).
- 7 open questions - extended response - how the pedagogues organized the musical theatre courses they developed.
- Only 1 answer.
- Results cannot reflect the views and opinions of this group of people.

# Survey Results

## Key aspects to consider when developing a Musical Theatre course

- Contact hours
- The market
- Introducing the students to the industry
- Spotlight accreditation
- One-to-one singing sessions

# Survey Results

## Essential subjects of the course

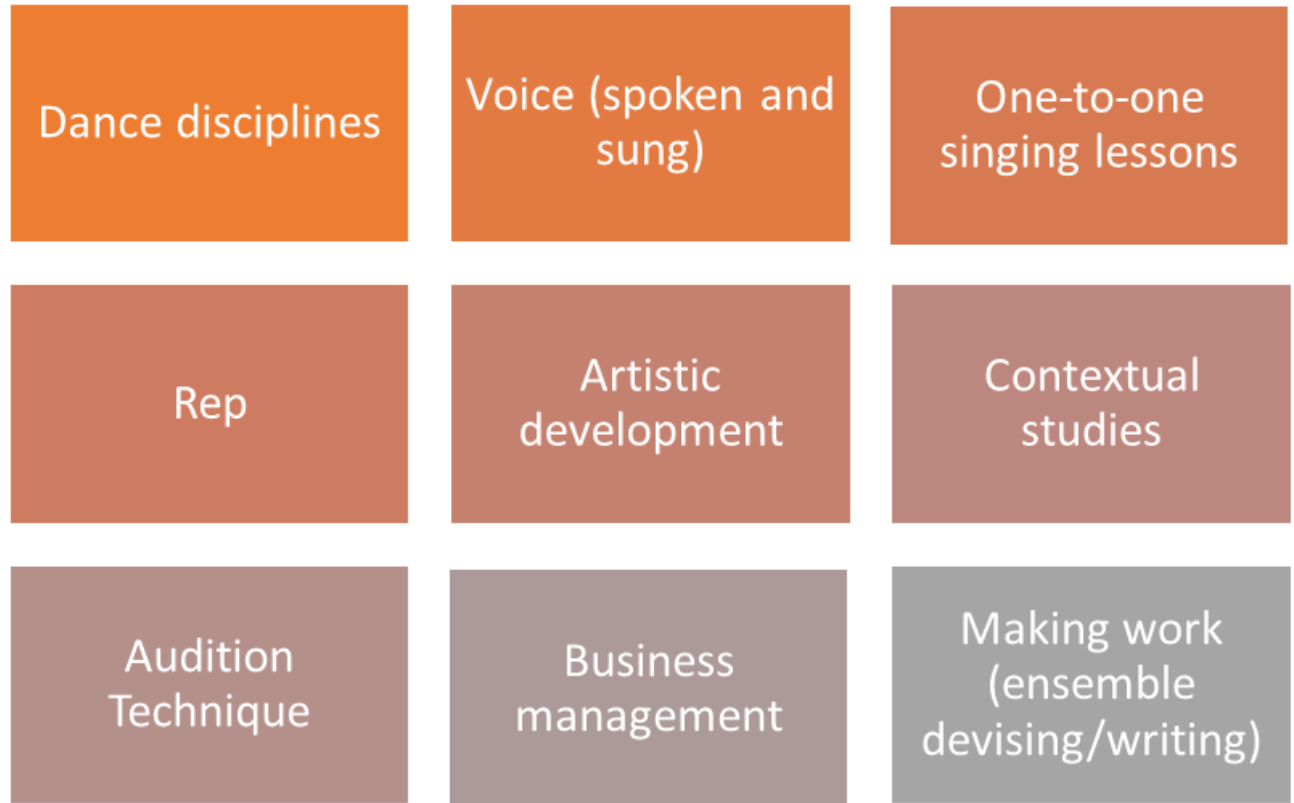


**Figure 4:** Indispensable subjects in a BA (Hons) in Musical Theatre

# Survey Results

## Bureaucratic considerations

- Consultation with industry partners.
- Testing concepts.
- Writing and rewriting of curriculum.
- External scrutiny.
- Cost analysis.

# Survey Results

## **Faculty recruitment**

Platforms of Conservatoire systems with widest reach – avoid bias.

## **Advantages of a higher education in Musical Theatre**

“rigorous, vocational full-time training”.

# Analysis and Reflection



**Figure 5:** Gibbs' reflective cycle (1988)

## **Advantages of creating a BA (Hons) in Musical Theatre in Portugal**

- Development of this genre in the country.
- Stay in their country, close to their friends and family while studying what they loved.
- Direct contact with the Portuguese Musical Theatre industry.
- Legitimize Musical Theatre as a career for future generations.
- “Rigorous, vocational, full-time training and industry introduction.” – UK Pedagogue

# Subjects

Acting Through  
Song

Repertoire

Vocal technique  
and anatomy

Vocal styles

Acting

Artistic  
development

Voice and  
dialects

Different dance  
Styles (Tap,  
ballet, jazz)

Audition  
Technique

Contextual  
studies

Business  
management

Making work  
(ensemble  
devising/writing)

Similar to the ones existing in other programs at leading drama schools all over Europe (IAB, 2024; Artsed, 2024; GSA, 2024; Bird College, 2024)

## Teachers

- Actively working within the Musical Theatre industry
- International staff
- Different teachers thorough training
- Meticulous recruitment process



**English as a mandatory subject since first grade (DGE, 2024).  
Series and movies are not dubbed but subtitled (Martins, 2018).**

## Costs

- Reduction on the costs - students only pay for the fees and materials
- Governmental financial support
- Loans or scholarships for students
- International students - increasing in fees for non-Portuguese students (ISCTE, 2024; ESTC, 2024)
- Connections with UK pedagogues - possible partnerships in the future

## Limitations, Recommendations and Impact

- Zoom
- Only four participants in each focus group and
- Only one UK pedagogue answering the survey
- Future research - more participants since - group data with similar outcomes - increase the research validity.
- Increase of interest in the field of Musical Theatre in Portugal as well as the advantages of having a BA (Hons) in Musical Theatre
- Further study - creation of a BA program. - connections with international institutions.

## Final Conclusions

- I have a clearer understanding of the Musical Theatre industry's demands in Portugal and abroad.
- I comprehend the importance of having financial aid to help the students support the costs of the course.
- I have ascertained advantages for students of studying in their own country versus abroad.
- I have listened to the perspectives and views of a group of experienced educators and industry professionals as well as students, and I have learned a lot from them.
- I have established connections with UK pedagogues.
- I feel confident to keep developing this project and eventually create a BA (Hons) in Musical Theatre in my home country.

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