



Leeds Conservatoire

Audition Requirements

2026 Entry

MA Musical Direction

MA Musical Direction

The audition process is your opportunity to demonstrate your skills and interests as a Musical Director, in particular musicality, storytelling and collaboration. It is also our opportunity to assess your skill and suitability for the programme.

We are proud to have removed all audition fees for our programmes at the conservatoire. If you have an interest in applying for our programmes, we don't want finances to be a barrier to you gaining access to our audition process.

STAGE 1: Online Portfolio Submission

We use an online system called Acceptd which you will need to use to upload your portfolio. Full details on how to access Acceptd will be sent to you following your application.

Personal Statement

Please submit a video recording of no more than four minutes about who you are and what you hope to achieve through this MA.

We are particularly interested in learning about what skills you wish to improve and the kinds of work you want to make, rather than your previous experiences.

Portfolio

Please upload a minimum of two examples of your work that show your skills as a Musical Director.

Within this portfolio, please ensure at least one piece shows your skills with your chosen instrument.

The other should show other skills, such as arrangement, accompanying, conducting, working with musicians or singers etc. You do not need to show all of these skills in Stage 1,

Portfolio Guidance

- Work can be submitted in any format; video, audio, PDFs etc.
- Please let each piece uploaded be no more than 5-10 minutes long.
- They do not need to be professionally recorded - recording on your phone or using a camera is fine.
- For each of these, please accompany them with a brief description of the piece and (where relevant) your role in it.
- Minimum two pieces, but feel free to share as many as is helpful. You don't need to show all of your skill in Stage 1.

We want to see your skills as a musical director. We are not expecting applicants to be highly skilled in all areas, however, you must show strong abilities in some areas and potential in others.

Musical Directors are not just instrumentalists - we are much more interested in how you work with others as well as hearing your own creative voice. We will explore how you work with others in Stage 2.

Select pieces which best show a range of abilities. These can be performances, rehearsals, recordings, sheet music, annotated scores, and do not necessarily have to be for the stage.

STAGE 2: Recall

You can choose whether to attend the second stage in person or online. Please let us know which when you confirm your attendance.

If you are successful in Stage 1 we will contact you to invite you to a Stage 2 audition, which will include the following:

1. Based on what you submitted for Round 1, we will invite you to perform a contrasting piece, offering some examples of what would be appropriate from the Musical Theatre repertoire. This will be discussed by email when arranging your audition, ensuring you are given plenty time to either revise something you already know, or learn something appropriate. This can be on the piano or another instrument of your choice. (You will play this without a singer.)
2. We will ask you to coach a singer or singer/instrumentalist in an informal workshop style. The singer/instrumentalist will be one of our School of Drama undergraduate students.

We are interested to see:

- What you do with the piece (you can mix, arrange, strip back or present as it is, or re-write it entirely)
 - How you work with the performer on the material 'in the room'
 - You may choose to leave the piece exactly as it is, bringing out what already exists in the music - the choice is yours. This is an opportunity to show your skills adapting to and working with others, as well as your own creative voice in how you choose to present this.
3. We will then ask you to try a short bit of sight reading with a singer, which will be provided on the day. We are interested to see:
- How comfortable you currently are with sight-reading, particularly as an accompanist, and where your skills could be developed
 - What your strategies are for sight-reading and continuing to make progress through a new piece of music e.g. simplifying the part, analysing the chord sequence and 'comping' or improvising etc, to allow the singer to complete the performance.

If you are auditioning online then you will coach the singer/instrumentalist as a soloist and perform the sight-reading alone. Sheet music for both will be sent by email immediately prior to your audition.

4. We will conclude the session with a chat about your needs and aims in applying for the programme and you will have a chance to ask any questions you may have.

FAQs:

What does the interview entail?

The interview is a brief opportunity for the programme team to get to know the person behind the personal statement and the work presented. It is a relaxed and informal discussion in which you will be asked questions about your interests, passions, experiences and you are given the opportunity to ask any questions you may have about the programme, team or life at Leeds Conservatoire. Try not to overthink the interview or worry about giving the 'right' answer. The team genuinely want to know who you are and why you think you would benefit from training here at Leeds Conservatoire.

Do I need to be able to sight read or read music?

The ability to use notated music is necessary to engage with the full range of training and performance opportunities available as part of MA Musical Direction. It is feasible, however, to advance this skill during your training alongside developed aural ability and instrumental capacity. This can be discussed during your interview.

Does piano have to be my first instrument?

Although most musical directors play the piano (and some level of understanding of the piano is important), we are happy to accept submissions from students who specialise in other instruments including voice. As roles within theatre keep evolving we want to encourage applicants who want to reimagine these roles for themselves and be an active part in the changing face of theatre. There is a lot of potential for multi-instrumentalists across the course in terms of playing in classes and performances.

I compose as well - should I apply for MA Musical Theatre Creatives instead?

In theatre there is often crossover with various creative roles; dramaturgs often work as directors, actors often write, and composers often work as musical directors (and vice versa). The skills in both are transferrable, composers often have to work with performers to shape narratives, whilst musical directors are often asked to compose or underscore for new productions. Although both courses share several modules, we'd recommend looking at both courses and seeing which one fits you and your aspirations. Our Musical Theatre Creatives course is much more about the generation of new work and your own creative voice, whilst Musical Directing helps shape and bring to life that work by working with performers and musicians.

Will I receive feedback?

Unfortunately, due to the number of applicants for the MA programmes, we are unable to provide feedback for first stage applicants. At the second stage audition, applicants are able to discuss their suitability for the programme and feedback will be built into the interview.

