
Senior Projects Spring 2022

Bard Undergraduate Senior Projects

Spring 2022

A Night On Broadway: A Senior Project Piano Recital

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Bard College

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A NIGHT ON BROADWAY
A Senior Project Piano Recital

Senior Project submitted to
The Division of the Arts
of Bard College

by
Jonja Leon Danh Merck

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
May 2022

For my senior project concert in the music program at Bard College, I collaborated with friends and colleagues from various departments on campus to perform a musical theater cabaret. Before starting rehearsals, I underwent research in musical theater works, both from the golden age and newer, pop-music musicals to choose a repertoire for the concert. I picked a variety of songs, ranging from Jason Robert Brown to Stephen Sondheim. In direct response to my dream to music direct musicals, I wanted to improve my skills in that area: teaching, vocal coaching, and playing repertoire that is challenging for both the singer and the accompanist.

Working on several projects as music director and accompanist during my four years at Bard College, I learned a lot about accompanying singers and adapting my piano playing to fit into a pit orchestra setting. Additionally, I worked on my vocal coaching, how to lead warm-ups and rehearsals effectively. Simultaneously, during my jazz piano private lessons, I focussed on chord voicings and how to accompany singers with solo piano. During the first semester of senior year, I was fortunate enough to participate in the newly created musical theater performance workshop class as the pianist alongside professor David Sytkowski. This was a valuable experience, as I was able to work with singers of all ranges and learn from a professional music director and vocal coach. I used several of the songs prepared in this class for my senior project. Most notably, I included an original composition, *To Be A Star* in my program, which I composed for my Theater & Performance senior project musical.

Two months before the first senior project performance, I had finalized my setlist and started rehearsing with the singers. The majority of singers were friends whom I had met in the musical theater class. During each rehearsal, I worked with the singer to improve diction, clarify any questions about the content of the song/show the song was featured in, and helped memorize the lyrics. At the last rehearsal before the performance, I played the full set of songs with the

singers in The Old Gym, to get used to the acoustics in the room and soundcheck the microphones and keyboard.

The performance was a huge success, with a full audience in the theater. My first senior project concert had a runtime of exactly one hour. I believe I was able to successfully craft a performance that challenged me as a performer and as a music director (choosing the songs to be performed and how to coach singers vocally). It was very rewarding and helpful to hear my original composition performed in front of an audience before the scheduled performance of the musical the following February.

The members of my Senior Project Board were James Bagwell, John Esposito, and David Sytkowski.

PLAYBILL®

THE OLD GYM

JONJA MERCK'S SENIOR PROJECT I: A NIGHT ON BROADWAY.

AN HOUR LONG SET OF MUSICAL
THEATRE GALORE SUNG BY
AMAZING SINGER FRIENDS.

THE OLD GYM
NOVEMBER 22, 2021
6:30 PM

LIMITED SEATING CAPACITY.



**Bard College Music Program
The Old Gym**

A NIGHT ON BROADWAY

Music Senior Project Concert I

Jonja Leon Merck, collaborative piano

Monday, November 22, 2021

6:30 pm

Old Gym

Bard College, NY

Senior Project Board Members

James Bagwell, John Esposito, David Sytkowski

Jazz Piano Professor: Larry Ham

Bio

Jonja Leon Merck was born in Ho-Chi-Minh City and is a music director for musical theatre works and is based in New York and Berlin. His passion for music started when he began taking piano lessons at the age of four. Throughout high school and college, Merck has music directed, conducted, and produced several musical theater productions, including *Promenade*, *The Last Five Years*, and *Pippin*. He is a proud member of MUSE (Musicians United for Social Equity | www.museonline.org) and a student in the MUSE One-On-One Mentorship program (mentor Andrea Grody - *The Band's Visit* and *Tootsie*). Merck is a double major in jazz piano performance and theater & performance at Bard College.

www.jonjamerck.com | [@jonjamerck](https://www.instagram.com/jonjamerck)

Acknowledgment

I started my career as a musician with the help and support of my family, Ute, Nikolaus, and Lilly, to whom I dedicate this concert. I also want to express my gratitude to all my teachers who have guided me through my musical journey thus far, with special thanks to my senior project board, James Bagwell, John Esposito, and David Sytkowski, as well as my private piano professor Larry Ham. Finally, a thank you to my MUSE mentor Andrea Grody for challenging me these past couple of months both musically and in critical thinking about how art is made.

This performance is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts degree.

PROGRAM

All The Things You Are from *Very Warm For May*
Julia Morin, voice **Jerome Kern**

She Cries from *Songs For A New World*
Scotty Hindy, Voice **Jason Robert Brown**

Killer Instinct from *Bring It On*
Olivia Dower, voice **Tom Kitt**

Stars and the Moon from *Songs For A New World*
Lila Bowe, voice **Jason Robert Brown**

Ladies Who Lunch from *Company*
Chloe Griffault, voice **Stephen Sondheim**

Calm from *Ordinary Days*
Hannah Eisendrath, voice **Adam Gwon**

A Summer In Ohio from *Last Five Years*
Campbell Kurlander, voice **Jason Robert Brown**

– Intermission –

I Can Cook Too from *On The Town*
Chloe Griffault, voice **Leonard Bernstein**

Run Away With Me from *The Mad Ones*
Scotty Hindy, Voice **Kerrigan-Lowdermilk**

This is Not Over Yet from *Parade*
Riley Cerabona and Jonja Merck, voice **Jason Robert Brown**

Willow from *Venice*
Maya Miggins and Faith Williams, voice **Matt Sax**

To Be A Star from *The Fur Coat*
Laila Perlman, voice **Original Composition**

A Soft Place To Land from *Waitress*
Olivia Dower, Natalie Hawkins, and Faith Williams, voice **Sara Bareilles**