

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION
The University of Michigan
School of Music, Theatre & Dance

Cynthia L. Westphal, associate professor of music, with tenure, Department of Musical Theatre, School of Music, Theatre & Dance, is recommended for promotion to professor of music, with tenure, Department of Musical Theatre, School of Music, Theatre & Dance.

Academic Degrees:

M.M. 1994 Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI, Piano Performance
B.M. 1993 Hope College, Holland MI, Piano Performance

Professional Record:

2004 – present Associate Professor of Music, Department of Musical Theatre, University of Michigan
1996 Music Director/Faculty, New York Youth Theatre
1994 – 1995 Staff Accompanist, Kalamazoo College

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Westphal teaches courses in musical theatre performance and contributes to the department's productions as a music director, conductor, and arranger. In addition to her classes, she has served as the music director for six departmental productions since her last promotion. As a musical coach, Professor Westphal specializes in character study, libretto analysis, and the singing of pop and rock songs in dramatic contexts. Her teaching is built upon technical mastery, and the belief that "discipline is freedom." In alignment with the professional orientation of the department, Professor Westphal trains students with a goal of preparing them for success on the musical theatre stage. She spends substantial time directing vocal aspects of student productions, rehearsing with students at least 30 hours a week during the preparation period for public performances.

She is an excellent pianist who deftly helps students synthesize their musicianship and performance technique. She is regarded as a deeply knowledgeable, impeccably organized, and professionally focused teacher. She receives consistently high student evaluations, and in their narrative comments, students express appreciation for her knowledge of the craft and professional standards, high expectations, and personal commitment. Her students have gone on to great success in the field, and generously attribute their success to her mentorship. Musical Theatre graduates that have studied directly with Professor Westphal have garnered every major performance award in musical theatre, television, film and drama including the Oscar, Emmy, Tony and Grammy awards.

Professional Activities: Professor Westphal has sustained a high-level career as a performer and musical theatre director. Since her promotion to associate professor in 2015, she has served as the music director for the 5th Avenue Theatre (Seattle) production of *Man of La Mancha*, and, most recently as music director, pianist, and accordion player for the first Broadway National Tour of Tony-winning *Come From Away*. She conducted *Come From Away* to sold-out audiences in 27 cities across North America. She has also been active as an orchestral pianist and accompanist for notable actors and musicians, including Alex Lacamoire, Glen Close, and Stephen Schwartz. Professor Westphal's level and volume of professional work is significant, especially given the time and scheduling constraints of her teaching responsibilities.

Professor Westphal is considered an expert in the field and a stand-alone among her peers, as one of only a few women working as musical supervisors and directors. She is inspirational, in this aspect, to all. She is recognized as being the first female musical supervisor to open a Broadway show, and doing so while concurrently touring as a pianist with Italian opera tenor Andrea Bocelli. Not only is Professor Westphal immersed in the production of musical theatre, she is also heavily involved in casting operations, and has worked with casting directors on Broadway productions, national tours, and regional tours.

Service: Within SMTD, Professor Westphal has served on the Scholarship Committee, four search committees, and an ad hoc committee to explore the expanding the curriculum to include popular music, all since 2015. She steps in regularly to help with student organization productions (Musket and Basement Arts) through extra coaching and consultations, and she supported the student-led *Color Cabaret*, a response to student advocacy for diversification of the Musical Theatre department through staging of BIPOC musical theatre works. She accompanies students for many donor events. Within the community, she frequently performs for faith organizations and charities. Professor Westphal's service is primarily at the department and school level, where she is regarded as a willing and energetic contributor.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer A: "As a fellow pianist/conductor/musical director, I find Professor Westphal's prolific contributions in orchestra pits outstanding. I admire the balance she finds between life in the professional theatre and effective teaching at a university...If name recognition and success in 'landing' positions as a pianist/musical director/conductor in prestigious theatres and on tour are an indicator of a solid reputation, Professor Westphal has that in spades."

Reviewer B: "Professor Westphal is acknowledging the hard work that goes into musical theatre training and is cultivating in her students a love for the craft. Her emphasis on 'process' over 'product' in her teaching is also noted, as is her desire to meet each student individually over issues of diversity, equity and inclusion. Her certification in Estill voice training is also indicative of her dedication to her students...Her extensive professional theatre credits far exceed those of most others in her faculty position."

Reviewer C: "...she has a reputation in the business as a generous artist, thorough scholar, industrious colleague, and devoted teacher...Her service, quality of work, professional accomplishments, and excellence in teaching are of the highest quality, and her value as a professor who is an expert in her field will only increase over time."

Reviewer D: "...she leads her classes with passion and enthusiasm, with a deep respect for her students and for the genre of Musical Theater. Her syllabi are well-rounded and well-thought-out, her topics are timely and relevant, and her experience makes her completely in-tune with the tools her pupils need to flourish once they graduate. I consider UMich to be the best school for out there for Musical Theater, and I believe that it is in large part due to Cynthia Westphal being on the faculty."

Reviewer E: "Her determination to retain her standing in the field as a nationally recognized conductor and musician is greatly to be admired...Cynthia is a member of a group of powerful women directors...who are trusted by everyone in the business. I would consider her at the very top of her field."

Reviewer F: “I’m also very impressed that she is a pioneer in advocating for the diversity and inclusion of all. Her continuing work and acknowledgement of our education towards an evolution as an art form, as well as a world, precisely embodies the humility and humanity that our industry needs to continue pursuing...Cynthia’s professional accomplishments are vast and overwhelmingly impressive, and the shows on which she has worked speak volumes regarding her expertise in an array of styles. I believe these accomplishments, coupled with her extensive educational resume puts her at the very top of her category.”

Reviewer G: “Ms. Westphal’s body of work in musical theater, both as a keyboardist and Music Director is balanced, and impressive. It is obvious that the most respected names in the business trust her abilities as a coach, accompanist, keyboardist and conductor...I believe there is only one true measure of effective teaching, and that is student success. In this regard Ms. Westphal hits it out of the park! The list of student accomplishments is incredibly impressive...”

Reviewer H: “Her success in the area of teaching is in evidence with the extraordinarily strong and consistent success of her former students, many of whom have gone on to major success on Broadway as performers, composers, and lyricists...Associate Professor Westphal’s academic and professional work is of the highest standard. It is clear that she is an important reason why the Musical Theatre program at the University of Michigan is one of the #1 programs of its kind in the country.

Reviewer I: “Cynthia is simply outstanding in every category you have asked me to evaluate...I am most impressed by how Cynthia still manages to get back out into the professional world, most recently music directing and performing onstage in a major tour...It takes more than natural ability and a learned technique to make that happen...it takes drive, and a ton of it. I don’t imagine many of Cynthia’s and my colleagues are working this consistently at such a high professional level, while at the same time contributing so importantly to the academy.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Westphal is an integral member of one of SMTD’s most successful and heralded departments. She has a sustained record as an effective and dedicated teacher and is a strong musical leader from both the keyboard and the podium, who continues to secure some of the most coveted work in an exceptionally competitive profession. Her effort to remain engaged in the profession has, at times, presented challenges for the department, but also informs her teaching in valuable ways, and supports the department’s reputation as the preeminent professional training program in the country. She has a good record of engagement in service to the department and school. With the support of the school’s Executive Committee Executive Committee, I recommend and support Cynthia L. Westphal for promotion to professor of music, with tenure, Department of Musical Theatre, School of Music, Theatre & Dance.



David Gier
Paul Boylan Collegiate Professor of Music
and Dean, School of Music, Theatre & Dance

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