

Project Narrative Overview
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AIMS in Graz: A Full Immersion of Operatic Training

Trying to explain my passion for western classical music to my very traditional, very conservative Chinese parents was tough. However, involving in the arts, meeting incredible faculty and talented peer artists at the University of Virginia inspired me to further develop my talent. I am fortunate to have found my true passion at a young age and I feel that now that I have found it, I am obligated to pursue it. During the summer of 2018, I want to continue developing myself as both a vocalist and a performer by working with past and new teachers, and building further connections with professional musicians and artists.

I will apply to an immersive and competitive opera program presented by the American Institute of Musical Studies (AIMS) in Graz, Austria. AIMS in Graz is an intensive six-week program that provides singers with private lessons, coaching, and masterclasses given by renowned faculty from professional opera houses and opera training programs throughout Europe and America. This program has helped hundreds of singers since its inception in 1969. The program is particularly suited for me due to its unique combination of language and diction instruction, opera acting lessons, technical vocal training, career building, and performance opportunities. Unlike most summer programs that only introduce specific productions of operas, AIMS offers a festival atmosphere that allows singers to present much more diverse repertoire.

German is offered every weekday during the program. As one of the three languages – French, Italian, and German – in which operas are most often written, German is to me the hardest language to sing in. It seems harsh at first, but it is actually a beautiful and intricate language and needs to be carefully dealt with in order to have the proper effect. In contrast with the language classes taught in a typical academic environment, the German lessons at AIMS are designed specifically for musicians, with an emphasis on frequently appearing vocabulary in German opera repertoire and conversations related to auditioning in German. Taking the language class for the first time in an immersive environment would be crucial for me in terms of both better understanding and interpreting the music and better communication with native speakers.

The experiences I would gain over this summer and the interaction with new teachers and coaches would be helpful in both continuing to develop my musical performance techniques and interpretation, and cultivating connections and mentors for my future career. By attending AIMS in Graz, I would not only be able to meet and study with internationally renowned voice teachers and vocal coaches on a daily basis, but also learn from incredible peer singers from all over the world. The many performance opportunities the program offers would also be the perfect chance to test what I have learned in the past two years at the University of Virginia.

In order to attend this program, I will study intensely with my current voice teacher, Professor Brenda Patterson, working 2 hours a week in voice lessons this semester to improve my vocal technique and to better prepare for the program. Thanks to the generous sponsorship of the McIntire Department of Music for the Performance Concentration, I am able to take a one-hour lesson for free with Professor Patterson every week. I believe developing a strong and healthy vocal technique is one of the most important goals for a young singer like myself, and taking extra lessons will accelerate my rate of improvement.

Through the AIMS program in Graz, I will not only develop more as a young performer regarding the technical and language training, but also build up the resume with which I will present to future graduate school programs. I am grateful for having programs such as the Miller Art Scholars at the University of Virginia that appreciate young artists and their hard work and are able to help young artists financially. As my art supplement for this grant application, I have included 2 of my audition recordings for the program. I will additionally record myself the following fall to show the progress I have made since having attended the program. I will also share my interpretation with everyone in the community in my hour-long senior recital in the spring of 2019.

Timeline

Spring 2018

- Study with Professor Patterson for 2 hours a week
- Background research in preparation for potential summer performance
- Send audition tapes to summer programs

Summer 2018

- Travel to Graz, Austria to attend AIMS in Graz program
- Work intensively on German language, performance technique and audition skills
- Perform in recitals, concerts or competition

Fall 2018

- Continue studying with Professor Patterson
- Prepare and record for pre-screening audition for graduate schools
- Prepare for my senior recital in Spring 2019

Spring 2019

- Graduate schools live auditions
- Outcome Presentation for MAS Fourth-year Award
- Senior Recital (Possible Distinguish Major Program Recital)

Budget

Audition Fee	\$45
Recording Fee	\$120
Application Fee	\$250
Transportation to Embassy and Visa fees (\$74 + \$81)	\$155
Tuition (Including housing, two meals per day, and health insurance)	\$6,695
Flight Travel Expenses (Estimated)	\$2000
Personal Expenses (Meals, local transportation, textbooks, music, etc)	\$1000
Voice Lessons (\$75*10)	\$750

Total budget: \$11015

The program's costs clearly exceed the amount available through the rising 4th year Art Scholars awards. I realize the number is big and I am requesting \$5000 from MAS to cover most of my program tuitions and preparatory work for the application. I am prepared to cover the rest of the budget from my personal income and parents' support. I am also applying for other local scholarships and grants to help me make this trip affordable.

Participation in the Arts

I have heavily involved in the arts at the University of Virginia and the Charlottesville community. I study voice privately with Professor Brenda Patterson and I am excited to be accepted into the selective programs like Miller Arts Scholars and Performance Concentration. I enjoy singing solo as well as in ensembles, and I am a member of both the University Singers and Chamber Singers. In the Charlottesville community, I was cast in the chorus of Rameau's *Sympathy*, presented by the Victory Hall Opera last semester. In the newly formed seminar "Voice for the Stage" taught by Professor Brenda Patterson and Professor Pamela Beasley, I am able to develop my opera acting skills and gain hands-on experience on scene directing. I am the head sound designer of Lingxi Chinese Theater this season, working closely with other designers and directors to create the play which will be performed at the PVCC Auditorium in the early April.

The Miller Arts Scholar is incredible that it brings artists from different field together, opens every person's mind about other fields, and offers an opportunity for us to appreciate other people's work. As a performer, I became interested in the backstage of a production and I used the MAS Minigrant to support my experience as the sound designer of Lingxi Chinese Theater. Although I was not able to attend the social events because of my work at the music library, I still met some of my best friends in the seminar last semester. I went to the Virginia Film Festival for the first time after Mr. Kielbasa's visit and really regretted not knowing it earlier. I plan to rejoin the seminar next semester to share my portfolio with new and old arts scholars and be inspired to become a well-rounded artist myself.