

Meggie Ferguson

Miller Arts Fourth Year Award Proposal

28 March 2022

Personalized Training of the Voice and Body for Theatre

Description of Project

Over the past two years, despite difficulties posed by the pandemic, I have tried to make the most of the opportunities at UVA and elsewhere to continue my actor training. I would like to pursue a career in musical theatre, TV, and/or film, so I have sought out experiences focused on singing, acting, and dancing in order to hone my skill set. This past summer, I attended the Joffrey Ballet School's 4-week long musical theatre intensive, which involved a wide array of classes including many styles of dance, vocals, acting, and audition prep, in addition to weekly performance opportunities. When I got back to UVA last fall, I wanted to continue this training, so I took the Modern/Contemporary I dance class. This semester, I am studying abroad in London through IES Abroad's Theatre Studies program, during which I have taken an acting short course at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. With each community that I join and each city that I explore, I learn more about myself as a human being, which I see as a vital step in growing as a theatre creator and performer. Therefore, I would like to continue this exploration of voice and body over the course of my fourth year at UVA.

While I have been in many vocal ensembles over the course of my life, including chamber choirs and a cappella groups, and performed vocally in a wide range of settings, from musicals to talent shows, I have little private vocal training. I took some lessons with my high school choir teacher in the summer before senior year, but those lessons ceased as the school year got started. Therefore, the first half of my project involves taking private vocal lessons with a teacher based in Charlottesville. The Vocal Lab is a community of teachers based in Charlottesville who offer online voice and acting lessons, which can be geared towards any musical style. I would reach out to them to have a consultation to be matched with a teacher and then aim to have about 15 lessons over the course of the year. Some of my main goals in pursuing these lessons would be to strengthen my technique, broaden my range, and improve my breath support. Not only would this training benefit my singing, but it would also transfer to my vocal health and ability when I am acting. Personal attention and feedback from a professional would be extremely valuable to me as I am preparing to launch my career which will rely so heavily on my voice's health and quality!

The second half of my project involves continuing my dance and movement training, specifically in New York City. I intend to move to New York after college, and I believe that there is a lot of value in establishing connections with professionals in the city and in learning from them. My plans for this summer are still very much in the air since I have yet to hear back from a job and from a theatre experience that I auditioned for, so I do not know what my exact availability will be. Therefore, I have explored two different options for continued dance training. The first option would involve participating in one week of the Joffrey Ballet School's

Musical Theatre Intensive in New York City this summer. Having participated in this intensive this past summer, I know what a wonderful and inspiring experience this is, and I have already established positive relationships with much of the staff which would be beneficial to reaffirm and strengthen. The second option would involve personally planning out a full week of dance classes to take place over winter break at Steps on Broadway and Broadway Dance Center, two dance studios in the City which offer a wide array of dance classes. Each of these options would allow me to work with professionals based in New York City who are coming from different training and work experiences themselves, which is extremely valuable. I felt motivated and inspired when I trained in New York this past summer, and I would continue to push myself and thrive if given the opportunity to revisit this environment again.

Given the nature of the period during which I have been in college, I have had a different experience than what I envisioned for most of my life. I had anticipated being involved in numerous performing arts organizations, being in a production every semester, and taking as many performance-based classes as I could. I also thought that I would get a lot more personal attention, and looked forward to the strength and confidence that that would have afforded me as a performer. However, much of that has not been possible. Therefore, I have had to adjust my approaches and be flexible, crafting a college experience full of outside programs, personal training, and devotion to a few organizations through which I have found the most meaning. I want to make the most of this final year of my undergraduate education, and I believe that these very personalized and individual experiences outlined in my project proposal would best help me to achieve the level of craftsmanship and confidence that I am striving towards.

By next April, I hope to have a collection of new, polished songs in my repertoire, along with a collection of dance combinations that I have learned that I could reflect on and present in an outcome report and presentation. I would be able to reflect on both my growth with these pieces over the course of my year of training, and on how working on these pieces has propelled me towards my larger goals.

Project Timeline

OPTION #1: 1-week long summer musical theatre intensive at the Joffrey Ballet School + vocal lessons with the Vocal Lab in Charlottesville

Summer 2022	Between June 13-July 8, 2022, Joffrey Ballet School will be hosting 4 weeks' worth of summer musical theatre intensives in New York City. Individuals can choose to participate in as many or as few of these weeks as they would like. Depending on my summer schedule and availability, I would choose one of these weeks to participate in the intensive. Auditions for this intensive are reviewed on a rolling basis, and I would have up until a week before the intensive for which I chose to register.
Fall 2022 + Spring 2023	- Take about 15 1-hour long voice lessons over the course of the year, between May 2022-May 2023, with a teacher through The Vocal Lab, which is an organization based in Charlottesville.

	- Outcome presentation of the year’s findings: first week of April
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OPTION #2: 1 week of dance classes in New York City over winter break + vocal lessons with the Vocal Lab in Charlottesville

Fall 2022	Take about 7 1-hour long vocal lessons with a teacher through The Vocal Lab over the course of the semester, between May-December 2022.
Winter 2022/23	Over the course of winter break, I would choose to spend a week in New York City, taking à la carte classes at Steps on Broadway and at Broadway Dance Center (BDC). I would craft my own schedule for this experience based on what classes they offered at this time, trying to fill each day with around 3-4 classes, which is comparable to Joffrey’s summer intensive schedule of 4 classes a day.
Spring 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take about 7 1-hour long vocal lessons with a teacher through The Vocal Lab over the course of the semester, between January-May 2023. - Outcome presentation of the year’s findings: first week of April

Budget

OPTION #1: 1-week long summer musical theatre intensive at the Joffrey Ballet School + vocal lessons with the Vocal Lab in Charlottesville

Summer 2022	<p>Week at the Joffrey Ballet School in NYC for their MT intensive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Tuition</u>: \$799 - <u>Transportation</u>: My family would provide transportation to and from the city; however, I would want to purchase a week-long unlimited subway pass to get around the city easily, which would cost \$33. - <u>Lodging</u>: I would not have to pay for lodging during this time period because my uncle has an apartment in the city that I could stay in. - <u>Registration Fee</u>: \$99 - <u>In-person Performance Fee</u> (includes tickets to a show): \$150-250 - <u>COVID Cleaning Fee</u>: \$25 - <u>Food</u>: Eating in a city is expensive, so I would want to budget about \$30/day for food, which would add up to \$270. - <u>Supplies</u>: In order to be best prepared for this week of training, I would like to invest in a pair of LaDuca character shoes, one of the highest quality brands of dance shoes, which would cost about \$250 depending on the style that I got. In addition, I would like to update my current supply of basic ballet shoes (\$30), jazz shoes (\$45),
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	tights (\$20 x 4 = 80), and leotards (\$30 x 2 = 60), which could cost around \$250 .
Fall 2022- Spring 2023	About \$1350 for 15 1-hour long vocal lessons over the course of the year
TOTAL	~\$3,326

OPTION #2: 1 week of dance classes in New York City over winter break + vocal lessons with the Vocal Lab in Charlottesville

Fall 2022	About \$675 for about 7 1-hour vocal lessons over the course of the semester
Winter 2022/23	<p>Week of dance classes in NYC over winter break:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Classes</u>: Both Steps and BDC offer packages of 10 dance classes for \$220 ($\\$220 \times 2 = \\$440$). I would purchase one of these packages for each studio so that I could experience training at each center. - <u>Transportation</u>: My family would provide transportation to and from the city; however, I would want to purchase a week-long unlimited subway pass to get around the city easily, which would cost \$33. - <u>Lodging</u>: I would not have to pay for lodging during this time period because my uncle has an apartment in the city that I could stay in. - <u>Food</u>: Eating in a city is expensive, so I would want to budget about \$30/day for food, which would add up to \$270. - <u>Supplies</u>: In order to be best prepared for this week of training, I would like to invest in a pair of LaDuca character shoes, one of the highest quality brands of dance shoes, which would cost about \$250 depending on the style that I got. In addition, I would also like to update my current supply of basic ballet shoes (\$30), jazz shoes (\$45), tights ($\\$20 \times 4 = 80$), and leotards ($\\$30 \times 2 = 60$), which could cost around \$250.
Spring 2023	About \$675 for about 7 1-hour vocal lessons over the course of the semester
TOTAL	~ \$2,593

Overall, the project options range from about \$2,600-\$3,300. Therefore, in order to make the most of the proposed opportunities, I would benefit from receiving the full funding of \$3,000. If my expenses went over this amount, I would reassess my allocation of funds and try to cut down in certain areas. However, ultimately, if my expenses exceeded \$3,000, I would cover those excess charges.

Participation in the Arts

I have always been extremely interested in how involvement in the arts is related to one's brain development and function, and my double majors in Psychology and Drama have given me the opportunity to reflect on and explore this relationship over the course of my time at UVA. I am also a French minor, and have taken a range of classes covering film-making in French, French literature, and French culture, which have been interesting to tie into what I have been learning in my other courses. Some of the most impactful and engaging arts courses that I have taken at UVA have included Acting I, Sound Design, Performance and/as Theory, and Modern/Contemporary I, which have given me the opportunity to explore various aspects of performance.

Outside of the classroom, my main arts involvements at UVA have been the Virginia Belles a cappella group and First Year Players (FYP). I have been in Belles since Spring 2020, and was the social chair for 2021. I have also arranged some of our music in addition to trying my hand at all the voice parts and learning vocal percussion! I got involved in FYP during Fall 2019, when I auditioned for the production of *The Music Man*, in which I played Mrs. Paroo and was a featured dancer. I was cast in FYP's Spring 2020 production of *Kiss Me, Kate*, but it was cancelled due to COVID. In order to continue my involvement during my second year, I was one of FYP's social chairs in Fall 2020, and then one of the historians in Spring 2021. I have also been on FYP's fundraising committee and publicity committee during my time at UVA. In addition to these organizations, I have also gotten involved with Broadway Talks Back (publicity chair 2021), Arts Grounds Guides, and Virginia Players at UVA. Most recently, I was in Virginia Players' lab series production, *Peace by Piece*, this past fall in which I played Stevie. It was exciting to be able to perform live again in one of the Drama Department spaces, and I hope to continue this involvement into my fourth year.

I have been a Miller Arts Scholar since last spring, when I joined as a second year. Last semester, I took the CASS 1010 seminar course, which I valued as an opportunity to get a glimpse into other art disciplines at UVA, and to be inspired by my peers' artistic backgrounds and endeavors. I also appreciated having it as an opportunity to learn about how to best consolidate my experiences and work into marketable resources including an About Me page, resume, and portfolio. In addition, I have received two mini-grants through Miller Arts, one that I used to get professional headshots taken, and one that I am currently using to attend shows around London and to explore other artistic and cultural events around Europe, such as galleries, museums, and historical landmarks. I am extremely grateful for the opportunities that Miller Arts have made available to me and for the ways in which it has propelled me as an artist.