

Third Year Recital: From Practice to Performance

Benjamin Trombetta, Miller Arts Scholar (Music)

Project Proposal: I am asking for funding for three elements: continuing voice lessons with Pamela Beasley in Charlottesville, attending five Broadway shows in New York City over winter break, and ultimately presenting what I have learned in a cumulative third year recital at UVA.

Faculty Mentor: Pamela Beasley, pbb2c@virginia.edu

Project Overview

Though I have participated in music and theater through various choral groups, jazz bands, and musicals for most of my life, I only recently gained the confidence to think of myself as a solo performer. Before coming to UVA, I had not taken consistent private voice lessons outside of chorus class in school; after 3 semesters of vocal study with Mrs. Pamela Beasley, I have noticed tremendous personal growth, particularly in the areas of posture, breath support, vocal tone and clarity, range, and most importantly, confidence. As I continue performing at various Tea Time Recitals and vocal juries, my usual nerves and jitters have slowly given way to excitement; a performance opportunity brings a new chance to brighten someone's day by sharing the beautiful music I have been working on for months. My voice lessons, combined with other performances experiences like the University Singers and Chamber Singers, have granted me the opportunity to blossom as a classical performer, and I hope to continue this journey of growth by continuing private lessons over the course of the summer and upcoming academic year, culminating in a third-year recital in Spring 2021. In the event that COVID-19 affects my ability to be in Charlottesville for the late summer or fall semester, I have arranged a back-up plan of taking voice lessons with Mrs. Beasley in an online setting for the same price.

During this past semester of vocal study, we began to explore the musical theater voice, a complement to my usual classical study of German, English, and Italian art songs like *Der Neugierige* by Franz Schubert. As we sang through pieces like *Younger than Springtime* from Rodgers and Hammerstein's *South Pacific*, I deeply enjoyed practicing newly learned vocal techniques, but felt like something was missing. In order to really express myself while singing a musical theater piece, I must get more into character through more intensive study. I hope to increase the scope of my acting skills by taking Professor Greg Harris' Musical Theater Performance class this upcoming academic year, alongside voice lessons that focus on both classical and musical theater styles, in an attempt to connect emotion to technique. Though I have portrayed comic roles like "the Reverend Crisparkle" in First Year Players' 2019 production of *Drood*, I have always thought of myself as a singer and not an actor, so developing more refined acting skills through concentrated study is a welcome challenge.

Under the mentorship of Pamela Beasley, I intend to perform a third-year recital early in the Spring semester of 2021, featuring both classical and musical theater repertoire. In an attempt

to further my knowledge of musical theater performance, I hope to attend 5 contrasting Broadway musicals, some comedies, some dramas: *Hamilton*, *The Music Man*, *Company*, *West Side Story*, and *Six*. Due to the recent COVID-19 outbreak, I plan to see these musicals over winter break instead of during the summer, so to allow ample time for shows to remount. Should the availability of performances change, I will happily attend a “replacement show” at a similar price. Attending these musicals will allow me to internalize the various concepts discussed during my voice lessons that are difficult to grasp without much of a first-hand experience seeing professional theater. Musical theater voice requires a high level of performance; for example, when singing *The Impossible Dream* from *Man of La Mancha*, a performer cannot expect to move a crowd if his facial expressions are lackluster and bland. The entire body must unite with the voice so to properly convey the rousing anthems or desolate ballads of a musical theater piece. Though I live in Pleasantville, NY, a suburb of New York City, I have not been able to see works of musical art like *Hamilton* or *The Music Man* due to the high-ticket cost; seeing 5 professional musicals would afford me the opportunity to hone my acting and singing skills as I prepare for my recital. Luckily, my close proximity to NYC means I can get to the city via Metro North, and do not have to stay overnight in a hotel.

Ever since watching older peers in our studio design third and fourth-year recitals, I have dreamed of preparing for my own. Due to obligations to other courses of study, I did not apply for the performance concentration, which would guarantee a fourth-year recital. I will be writing a substantial thesis my fourth-year spring through the Political and Social Thought program and am unsure if I could handle putting on a recital at the same time. This is one of the main reasons I am proposing a third-year recital instead, which would allow me to continue pursuing vocal study at a high level. This recital is symbolic of how far I have come as a music major; having studied proper vocal technique for many semesters, I am eager to develop even more as an artist by performing in a recital setting where I can demonstrate all I have learned through lessons, musical theater class, and attending the various Broadway musicals. I have never designed or performed a full-length recital on my own before, so this will undoubtedly be a challenge. An obstacle I face in preparing for this recital is the cost; though I am on a partial scholarship, voice lessons are still rather expensive, as well as the costs of renting a space for performance, securing and compensating an accompanist, and various other expenses like promotional photographs, refreshments, and printed programs, outlined in greater detail in the budget below. One concern I have is obtaining a recital space, but through advance coordination and communication with professors in the music and drama departments, I am confident I can secure a space like Old Cabell Hall or the Helms Theater. I believe that the musical and theatrical skills I will learn through continued vocal study, attending five Broadway musicals, and preparing for a third-year recital are essential to my development as an artist, and I am excited to begin preparations for this project.

Budget

Expense	Amount	Details
Private Voice Lessons with Pam Beasley	\$910	4 lessons this summer at \$80/hour. Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 collectively cost \$590. I currently receive a music department scholarship of \$495/semester, offsetting the total cost of \$1580.
Recital – Photoshoot	\$50	Quote received from a local Charlottesville photographer. Photos to be used as material for promoting the recital.
Recital – Space Rental	\$500	Based on cost of Helms Theater rental; rough estimate, actual recital space TBD. Options include Old Cabell Hall, Brooks Hall, Helms Theater, etc.
Recital – Accompanist Fees	\$425	Estimated pianist fees; \$300 for recital, \$125 for 5 ½ hour rehearsal sessions at \$25 each
Recital – Miscellaneous Costs	\$200	Includes program printing, refreshments, possible rise in space rental cost, etc.
<i>Hamilton</i> Ticket	\$299	Front mezzanine seat*
<i>The Music Man</i> Ticket	\$269	Mezzanine seat*
<i>Company</i> Ticket	\$71.50	Orchestra partial view seat*
<i>West Side Story</i> Ticket	\$71.50	Mezzanine seat*
<i>Six</i> Ticket	\$91.50	Mezzanine seat*
Transportation	\$112.50	5 round-trip off-peak Metro North train tickets from Pleasantville, NY to Grand Central Station at \$22.50 each
Total Cost	\$3,000	I recognize that this is the maximum amount we are able to request. I would graciously appreciate any funding from the Miller Arts Program to help me accomplish my musical goals.

*All Broadway ticket costs include handling fees and are based on average prices from reliable vendors like Broadway.com and TodayTix.

Timeline

Summer/Fall 2020:

- Purchase Broadway tickets from vendors like Broadway.com and TodayTix as seats become available for winter performances. This varies by show.

Summer 2020:

- Take 4 summer voice lessons with Mrs. Beasley from late July through August, either in-person or online depending on social distancing recommendations.

Fall 2020:

- Continue taking Advanced Vocal Performance with Mrs. Beasley.
- Enroll in Professor Greg Harris' Musical Theatre Performance Class, DRAM 3450, and continue to work on acting skills. Should COVID-19 force the fall semester online, I will take this class during the spring semester instead.
- Coordinate with music department faculty to secure a date (late February/early March) and space for Spring Recital. Confirm that Abby Flanigan, departmental accompanist, can play for this date.
- Take headshots with local Charlottesville photographer.

December/January 2020:

- Attend 5 Broadway performances over winter break, taking note of all elements of performance so to further personal growth in the spring.

Spring 2020:

- Continue taking Advanced Vocal Performance with Mrs. Beasley.
- Finalize program for recital; rehearse with Abby Flanigan throughout January and February in anticipation of late February/early March recital date.
- Print programs, purchase refreshments, and prepare recital space for performance.
- Hold third year recital!
- Post-recital: reflect on what I have learned by completing an Outcome Report by 4/1/21.

Example of Work:

Below are links to two songs from a Tea Time Recital performance in Old Cabell Hall this past December 2019. Tea Time Recitals, as well as end of the semester recitals for Pam Beasley's studio, are a joy to be a part of, as they represent a culmination of a semester's worth of vocal study. In these videos, I sing two classical pieces; *Non lo dirò col labbro* by George Frederic Handel and *Go, Lovely Rose* by Roger Quilter.

<https://youtu.be/jaWZOsiHESU>

<https://youtu.be/614G81y6gBc>

Evidence of Participation in the Arts

I have been quite involved in various aspects of the arts, ranging from music to drama to dance, during my time at the University of Virginia; these experiences have undoubtedly shaped my UVA experience, and I am so grateful for the profound impact the arts have had on me in the past two years. I took the following courses during the past four semesters:

- COLA 1500: How to Music (Ethnomusicology)
- DANC 2220: Modern/Contemporary I
- MUEN 3650: University Singers (3 times)
- MUEN 3651: Chamber Singers (3 times)
- MUPF 2111: Performance (Voice)/MUPF 3110: Advanced Performance (Voice)
- MUSI 3310: Theory I*
- MUSI 3332: Musicianship I
- CASS 1010: College Arts Scholars Seminar**
- ARTH 3525: Sieneese Art and Architecture (Renaissance Art History)**

*I attempted to take Theory I during my first-year spring, but due to other commitments I became overwhelmed and had to withdraw. I retook the course this past fall, instead.

**I am studying abroad in Siena, Italy for the Spring 2020 semester, so I have to delay taking CASS 1011 until my third-year spring. However, I have continued to explore new artistic interests in Italy by pursuing a fascinating art history course!

As a music major, I am quite excited to take courses like Choral Conducting I/II, Songwriting, and Theory II in future semesters, and I hope to take a few more classes in the dance or drama departments beyond DRAM 3450 this fall. I have enjoyed many opportunities through voice lessons to perform in challenging settings such as Tea Time Recitals, juries, and VANATS, and experienced masterclass training with acclaimed pianist Martin Katz. This past semester, I served as the tenor section leader for the University Singers, taking attendance at all rehearsals and concerts and leading sectionals for the group as we prepared for our Mendelssohn-Bruckner concert with the Charlottesville Symphony. I also was the General Manager for Chamber Singers, coordinating all logistics from hall setup during concerts to reminding singers of concert attire and fostering a shared love of choral singing.

Outside of the music department, I am a member of the Academical Village People A cappella group and have performed in First Year Players' *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* as "the Reverend Crisparkle." I hope to perform in more drama department or Spectrum Theater shows in the coming semesters. I also am an Arts Grounds Guide; I give tours of the architecture, studio art, creative writing, music, dance, and drama departments to prospective students and their families. As Tour Coordinator this past year, I was responsible for maintaining an online spreadsheet of tours and being the main point of contact for prospective students and families.

I am an active member of the Miller Arts Scholars at UVA; I have taken CASS 1010 and am considering future leadership roles. I also enjoy supporting fellow scholars in all of their endeavors whenever I can, like dance concerts, staged readings, or chamber performances.