

Third Year Recital: From Practice to Performance

Benjamin Trombetta, Miller Arts Scholar (Music)

Project Outcome

Originally, when I wrote my project proposal last March, I intended to stage an in-person third-year recital in a space like Old Cabell Hall, comprised of both classical and musical theatre pieces. I planned to take a musical theatre performance class during the fall semester and attend Broadway shows like *Hamilton* and *The Music Man* during winter break in an attempt to explore the importance of getting into character and conveying emotion through song. I also planned on continuing voice lessons with Pamela Beasley so to expand my repertoire and technical skills before designing my recital for the spring. Due to her extensive knowledge of the voice, position in the music department, and our close relationship as a teacher-student pair, I asked Professor Beasley to be my advisor for the project. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic had other ideas, and I was unable to pursue any of the in-person components of my original plan. Despite the limitations of the past year, I was still able to work closely with Prof. Beasley to grow as an artist and devise a new plan for my third-year award: a musical enrichment fund. Depending on funding sources and pandemic conditions, I now hope to mount an in-person fourth year recital as a culminating mark of my time as a music major and vocal student at UVA.

Over the course of the academic year, I take weekly voice lessons with Prof. Beasley, which were fully funded by the music department this year thanks to an internal scholarship. This semester, we are actively working on pieces like Gaetano Donizetti's "Quanto è Bella" from *L'Elisir D'Amore* and Robert Schumann's "Widmung." Even though lessons shifted to an online format on the Zoom platform, I still cherish each hour with Prof. Beasley and have continued to expand my vocal knowledge and range. In addition, I enjoyed the opportunity to perform two pieces in a virtual "Studio Recital" this past fall, and will do the same this spring. I am currently researching other online performance venues to showcase what I have been working on independently and through lessons, including the music department's "Tea Time Recitals" and cabarets through student theatre groups, and aim to record a few more songs in the coming weeks, like "Younger than Springtime" from *South Pacific*. A large portion of my musical resource fund is devoted to voice lessons; first, I purchased a portable speaker to amplify accompaniment during lessons and subsequent filming, in addition to a subscription to Appcompanionist, an app that provides virtual accompaniment for countless songs. I also purchased

a ring light to create a brighter film setup, a sturdy music stand for at-home musical practice, and a humidifier and neti pot, both of which help maintain proper vocal health.

This semester, I stepped into a teaching role for the first time as a vocal director for First Year Players' production of *Singin' in the Rain* and as a vocal coach for [Empowered Players](#), a Fluvanna-based nonprofit directed by Arts Scholar alumnae Jessica Harris that aims to "make a difference in the community through the arts." As a vocal coach, I work directly with students aged 8 to 16 during weekly 30-minute lesson slots and teach beginner vocal skills like healthy techniques for singing, how to be confident when performing, and the importance of expressing emotions through music. I quickly discovered a need for a keyboard so to effectively conduct warm-ups and play out challenging intervals and rhythmic patterns; after doing some research, I invested in a Roland piano package, complete with an 88-key portable keyboard, stand, and bench. I played piano as a child, and hope to use some of my remaining grant money to take keyboarding lessons and become a more well-rounded vocalist and teacher. Outside of the classical and musical theater realm, I would love to continue expanding my knowledge of chord progressions, theory, and songwriting, eventually producing my own covers and original music. Under this aim, I decided to invest in other technical aspects like a condenser microphone, a MIDI keyboard, sound mixing software (Logic Pro) and video editing software (Final Cut Pro), which are sold for a reduced price as part of Apple's "Pro Apps for Education" package. Many of these products, especially the keyboard, are of a high quality and will last for years to come.

Even when theaters and concert halls are shuttered, the arts live on in our hearts and in our homes, giving us all hope for brighter days ahead. Although the past year has forced me to get creative with music-making in ways I had never thought possible before, and shifting to more of a recording-based environment was quite discouraging and difficult at first, I am enthusiastic about the opportunity to learn new digital skills like sound mixing and recording with a microphone while strengthening my vocal capabilities, both as an individual performer and a teacher. I am so grateful to my faculty mentor, Pamela Beasley, for collaborating with me on this project, and for the Miller Arts Scholars Program and Faculty Advisory Committee for graciously providing the funding to make our artistic dreams attainable.

Budget:

Expense	Amount
<u>Rode NT1-A Large Diaphragm Microphone</u>	\$229
<u>Akai MPK Mini MkII MIDI Keyboard</u>	\$114.44
<u>Roland FP-30X Piano Package</u>	\$749.99
<u>Pro Apps for Education Bundle</u> (Final Cut Pro, Logic Pro, Motion, Compressor, MainStage)	\$199.99
<u>JBL Charge 4 Portable Speaker</u>	\$129.95
<u>Appcompanionist Subscription</u>	\$65
<u>Emart Standing Ring Light</u>	\$29.99
<u>On-Stage Music Stand</u>	\$36.95
<u>TaoTronics Humidifier</u>	\$39.99
<u>NeilMed Porcelain Neti Pot</u>	\$14.99
Total Spent (as of March 2021)	\$1,610.29
Total Remaining*	\$1,389.71

*Due to the COVID-19 pandemic significantly altering my plans for the third-year award, I have yet to use all of my allotted grant money. However, I will continue utilizing these funds throughout the spring semester until the \$3,000 total is reached. The remaining money will be used for various aspects of musical enrichment, including, but not limited to: headshots, a video camera, music books, additional voice lessons with Pamela Beasley, COVID-safe theatrical/musical experiences, and Masterclass-style classes with professional performers.