

SABBATICAL REQUEST FORM
Summer 2014/Fall 2014/Spring 2015/Summer 2015

Please complete the following information to enable the Sabbatical Review Committee to consider your request. Answer all questions. This form must be received in the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs by *October 15*.

Name: _____

Address _____

Telephone #, Home: _____ College Extension: _____

Period of previous sabbatical, if applicable: none

List of unpaid leave (s) of absence: From none To _____

Preference for sabbatical leave (rank your preferences 1st, 2nd, 3rd):

Full Year _____

Fall Semester first

Spring Semester second

(Note: You must accept a full-year sabbatical if you rank it among your preferences and it is awarded.)

Statement of Purpose (See format provided for additional instructions.)

The statement of purpose for the sabbatical shall demonstrate the proposed benefit to individual professional growth or to a college program. "Individual professional growth" is defined as pursuit of knowledge related to the faculty member's discipline or duties at the College, to the teaching profession, or to an approved training program.

Please be advised that within eight weeks after the return from you sabbatical, you must submit to the President a report of your activities during your sabbatical leave. Forms for this report will be provided upon award of the sabbatical. Also note that you are obligated to return to the College for one year following the sabbatical. The failure to return or to complete the sabbatical as awarded can result in a financial liability for the return of salary paid during the sabbatical.

Signed: _____

Date: 10/13/13

DATE (10/13/13)

REQUIRED FORMAT

SABBATICAL APPLICATION: STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Directions are in Italics

Abstract for Publication/Board Resolution:

(Develop two to four sentences capturing the essence of the proposal.)

I propose to compose a one-act opera based on an unfinished drama by Austrian Expressionist poet Georg Trakl (1887-1914). This project will allow me to take the melodic, rhythmic, harmonic, and timbral ideas I have been developing in smaller-scale pieces and transfer them to a much larger canvas.

A. Narrative on Activity

(Please specify courses to be taken, professional projects, or research to be conducted, a new program to be developed, or publications to be created. In describing your activity, you must indicate your preparatory work demonstrating readiness to carry out the goals, e.g. where the courses are to be taken, how the professional project was developed, the research methodology or the programs to be visited, with method by which they were selected.)

In addition to existing criteria, the applicant must demonstrate that the sabbatical proposal will involve activity at least equivalent to a full-time teaching/work load and is beyond the professional activity expected to be performed concurrent with full-time duties.

My Master's and Doctor of Musical Arts Degrees are in Music Composition, and thus, my professional work primarily consists of composing new works and having them, as well as older works, performed. Recently, I have completed numerous commissions, and my works were performed at national and regional conferences of the College Music Society, the Long Island Composers' Alliance, at new music festivals, and by professional and college ensembles in twenty states, as well as in Taiwan, Israel, Italy, and Canada.

For my proposed sabbatical, I will compose an opera (approximately 30 minutes) based on two abstract surrealist scenes left unfinished by Austrian poet Georg Trakl at the time of his death. When composing an opera, creating the libretto is among the most challenging task, as one typically needs assistance in adapting and condensing an existing story to its essentials. In the case of this opera, the libretto is already essentially complete, as I will set Trakl's text verbatim. My only remaining task to complete the libretto involves merging two different versions of the first scene, a process that is well underway and that will not take long. The two versions are very similar, with the exception of a few sentences. Aside from this, all of the preliminary work is complete and all that is left to do is write the music.

Trakl's poetry is in the Public Domain, so copyright clearance is not an issue. I am already familiar with setting the poetry of Trakl to music, something I have previously done in my song cycles *Night Songs* (2006) and *Distressed Fragments* (2007), in which I set poems left incomplete and unfinished as a series of short songs.

My dissertation composition (2006) was a 53-minute song cycle for soprano and chamber

orchestra based on a poem by Rainer Maria Rilke. Composition of this opera will be an extension of what I learned from composing my dissertation and mark an important step in my evolution and development as a composer.

The opera will be structured so that it may be performed as a whole or as individual concert arias, making the opera more marketable and increasing the opportunities for performance in a wider variety of settings, including conferences, new music festivals, and on solo recitals.

A brief synopsis of the story follows:

Characters-Johanna, Kermor, Peter, the Tenant, the Traveller, the Murderer

Scene 1-A hut at the edge of the forest. A castle in the background. It is evening.

Kermor (tenor) arrives at the home of Peter (bass) and tells him that he just murdered his horse in the woods and was then threatened by nature. Kermor then sinks into sleep where he is pursued by a bleeding moon and hears a strange singing. As Kermor speaks in his sleep, Peter and the Tenant discuss the body of a monk that was found at the mill earlier in the day. This discussion causes the Tenant to recall the death of his wife and wrongful death of his first child. Was he involved in their deaths? Peter hears Johanna singing in the thorn bush (just as Kermor does in his nightmare). The Tenant describes Peter's situation-living at the edge of the forest, his wife and daughter both dead. Who was responsible for their deaths? As the Tenant speaks, Johanna, led to this spot in her nightmare, sleepwalks into the room and the Tenant falls into sleep. Kermor then wakes up, sees Johanna, and flees in terror. Johanna is angry at Kermor for invading her dreams.

Scene 2-Thorny wilderness, rocks, a spring. It is night.

Johanna describes a memory of her sister's murder and her own assault at the hands of the same assailant. Who was responsible? An apparition of her sister appears, sees her murderer (Peter) in the shadows, and flees. Johanna then falls unconsciously in the thorn bush and sings as it closes around her. In her dream, the Traveller (Kermor?), complains that he was reminded of his dead wife and child. It is revealed that he suffers the same nightmares as Johanna and has a similar relationship to the Murderer as she does. The Murderer, angry for being awakened from his own dreams, finds the murder weapon in his hand, attacks and kills the Traveller then coldly searches his satchel.

Obviously, the story is presented in an extremely abstract way, but one gets the impression of heinous and vile crimes committed by male characters, but the question of who is guilty is ultimately left open-ended. The story represents the often hidden problem of domestic violence, as well as crimes against innocent victims. The experimental nature of this project is in line with many recent operas; including *Criminal Element* by David Smooke, which utilizes a language created by the composer and *Soldier Songs* by David Little, which combines elements of opera, musical theater, and rock into a multimedia event. The music will reflect the dark abstraction of the story, yet still be melodic and inviting.

Singers:

Kermor/Traveller-tenor

Peter/Murderer-bass

the Tenant-baritone

Johanna-soprano

the Apparition-mezzo-soprano

-Kermor and the Traveller will be played by the same singer, as will Peter and the Murderer.

This will represent the dual nature of their characters, who exist in the living world, as well as in dreams.

The Ensemble:

violin, viola, cello, saxophone, piano, and percussion

*additional instruments may be added as desired or if they are available

-This relatively small ensemble is meant to be portable so that the opera can be staged and performed in a wide variety of performance spaces. Although I will give general staging instructions, final staging decisions will be made by the first group to perform the work.

In early October 2013, I submitted a proposal to Rhymes With Opera, for them to perform the opera after it is completed. "Rhymes With Opera is an ensemble based in New York and Baltimore, and is dedicated to creating and performing contemporary experimental vocal music and chamber opera. Rhymes With Opera expands the repertoire of new vocal music by commissioning and promoting new works, collaborating with a variety of artists, and creating works that forge new connections between music and other disciplines. RWO seeks new audiences for contemporary opera by bringing smaller, more flexible productions to a wide variety of venues, creating meaningful connections between the work, the place where it is performed, and the audience." –www.rhymeswithopera.org

I already have a working relationship with RWO, as their Artistic Director is a good friend, and I am presenting some of my vocal music at their Salon on October 19, 2013 in Brooklyn. RWO makes programming decisions well in advance of each season, and since the opera would not be completed until either December 2014 or May 2015, they would not perform the work until the following season at the earliest. At the time of this application, RWO has not reviewed my proposal. Similar to writing a novel, it is not uncommon to not have an agreement for performance before the work is complete.

I typically complete a number of short pieces for mixed ensembles each semester, and I have no doubt that without the responsibility of teaching, I will be able to compose the opera and prepare the score and parts for performance during the sabbatical. This will be a substantial project that will require many hours of work every day.

I am currently working on commissions that will keep me busy throughout this academic year, but the opera is constantly in mind. Throughout the year, I will continue to sketch ideas to use later when I have the time to focus on composing the opera.

B. Professional Benefit to Applicant

(Discuss how the activity will make you a better teacher or other professional or scholar.)

Although I am primarily a composer of vocal music, having composed songs, song cycles, choral pieces, and large-scale works for voice and orchestra, I have never composed an opera. Composing this piece will fill a large void in my catalog of works. Having an opera in my catalog will give me greater visibility and legitimacy as a composer of vocal music. By structuring the opera so that shorter excerpts may be performed independent of the entire opera, I will have a number of new pieces to submit to conferences, new music festivals, composition competitions, and professional performers. I am confident this project will be an important step in my development and evolution as a composer, as it will give me the opportunity and time to work with a large-scale composition for the first time since my dissertation.

I typically teach six or seven classes per semester and run the music computer lab, leaving me little time to compose. Taking on project of this magnitude and expecting to complete it during a summer or semester while teaching would be virtually impossible. A sabbatical will not only allow me the time to rejuvenate and refocus my creative energies, but also to reflect and gain better perspective on my recent compositions. Composing new pieces is analogous to writing short stories, a novel, or a book of poetry as it takes an incredible amount of time, energy, and focus to formulate and see ideas through to completion. Without the responsibility of teaching, and despite the scope of the opera, I will have no problem completing the opera in a semester's time. In addition to composing new works, I spend a large amount of time maintaining my catalog of older works, submitting them to conferences and performers to make sure they stay in circulation.

In July 2013 I attended the soundSCAPE Composer and Performer Exchange in Maccagno, Italy. Spending two weeks to focus solely on composing was incredibly beneficial to my students and I. I returned home with renewed creative energy and focus, as well as new material for my class. I envision a sabbatical will be similarly beneficial.

A large project such as this would virtually guarantee me a residency of a few weeks at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, an artist colony in VA, where I was previously a resident in 2008, 2010, and 2011. While at VCCA, one is free to work without distraction for long periods of time. Obviously, it is impossible to spend a few weeks at VCCA to focus on composing during the semester, but a sabbatical residency there would ensure me greater ability to focus and to compose quickly. My previous residencies at VCCA have led to the collaborations with a number of different composers, performers, and poets, resulting in new pieces that have been performed throughout the US. It is my hope that another residency leads to more opportunities for collaboration and new pieces.

Although I have not previously composed an opera, I am somewhat familiar with current trends and composers. A sabbatical will allow me time to catch up and become current with the most recent developments in contemporary opera. To do so, I will attend as many opera performances in the NY area as possible during my sabbatical, thus enhancing my knowledge outside my area of expertise.

If Rhymes With Opera accepts my proposal, a first-rate opera company will guarantee me performances in New York City and Baltimore, with the possibility of performances in other cities. The recording and video of the performances will be placed on my website, as well as YouTube, and will be used as promotional materials for future RWO performances. A performance by RWO, or any other opera company, would be hugely beneficial to me as a composer and will likely lead to further commissions and performances.

C. Benefit to the College

(Discuss the specific impact your sabbatical opportunity may have on carrying out your professional responsibilities e.g. to teaching; to student learning; to programs, courses or curriculum development; to retraining, or to an institution specific project.)

Musicians must continuously remain active in their field of specialization. Students need their professors to be role models. Once students graduate, they will be expected to remain professionally active as well. I am an extremely active composer. As stated earlier, my compositions are performed regularly throughout the United States, and occasionally in other countries. While this is important for me professionally, it is equally important for students that many of my compositions are performed at SCCC by SCCC faculty and student ensembles, as

well as professionals at Performing Arts Series events. I am a member of the Performing Arts Series committee and am responsible for bringing in approximately a dozen different ensembles to SCCC in the past few years. It is my hope that the group that premieres the opera will also perform it at SCCC as part of our Performing Arts Series. I have already spoken to the artistic director of Rhymes With Opera about doing so, and he is excited about the possibility.

Having a professionally active and visible faculty in the music department not only helps our students' ability to transfer, but also enhances the academic reputation of our school and the cultural life of Suffolk County.

The field of contemporary classical music is so vast that one can not possibly keep up with every genre, and I will use time prior to and during the potential sabbatical to research and study recent developments in opera. This will translate directly to my courses at SCCC for both majors and non-majors, as I teach opera in MUS 101 (Understanding Music), as well as in my MUS 208 (Music Theory IV) courses. I direct the SCCC Contemporary Music Ensemble (MUS 138). The ensemble has performed some of my compositions in the past, and I would love for students to have the opportunity to perform some excerpts from the opera.

There used to be a History of Opera course at SCCC, but it was recently removed from the catalog. After my sabbatical, I could propose a Special Topics course in modern opera that would be open to both music majors and non-majors to fulfill either an elective or Fine Arts credit. Part of my mission as a music teacher is to show students, majors and non-majors that the contemporary classical music is a living, thriving art form. This course would allow me another forum to do so. A few years ago, I offered a Special Topics course in Music Composition that was extremely popular. A number of students who took the course have successfully transferred into composition programs at other schools. I would like to develop this into a full-time course offering, and the sabbatical would allow me time to plan and develop this course.

Having the time to focus on creative activities will undoubtedly have a positive impact on my teaching, as I will return refreshed and refocused with new material for my classes. As there is no shortage of important music, I try to incorporate new material into my classes every year to keep the topics fresh for myself as well as the students.

My first choice for sabbatical is the fall semester because my absence will have less impact on students and faculty in the music department in the fall. I teach all of the courses in the four-semester music theory sequence, as well as Aural Skills I (offered fall and spring). In the fall, only Music Theory I and III are offered. In the Spring, we offer Music Theory I, II, and IV (my primary area of expertise).

Notes:

Your Statement of Purpose should be made with a high degree of certainty. In the event modification becomes necessary, you must promptly seek approval from the Sabbatical Review Committee.

A faculty member is expected to complete his/her sabbatical as awarded, or as modified or waived with committee approval. A faculty member granted and accepting a sabbatical who fails to complete the sabbatical as awarded, or modified or waived with committee approval, shall be required to reimburse the College for all monies paid under this provision to the faculty member during the period of said leave.

Upon return from sabbatical leave, the faculty member agrees to remain in a full-time faculty position for a minimum of one (1) year. Prior to the commencement of a sabbatical leave, a faculty member shall be

required to execute documentation to assure repayment to the College of all costs related to the sabbatical leave in the event the faculty member does not return to the employ of the College. At the conclusion of one year of full-time service following sabbatical leave, the documentation will be returned to the faculty member.