

Part 1: SABBATICAL PLAN

Board of Regents and CU System policies require the following information be provided by each faculty member applying for a sabbatical assignment. Thank you for completing this public document in a clear and substantive way. Each response should be a minimum of 300 words.

Applicant Name: _____

Title of Sabbatical Project: **Transferable Skills: Ways in Which Conducting Skills Strengthen Vocal Performance Skills**

(1) Describe your sabbatical's academic objectives including its contribution to your professional growth and expertise.

The fundamental skills that conductors must learn, develop, and implement as they learn their craft can greatly benefit solo singers. It has long been my philosophy that every vocalist who endeavors to become a professional singer should learn the basic techniques of conducting, including the foundational skills and perspective that conductors must develop.

When it comes to music learning and internalization, singers often have an uphill battle. For example, unlike instrumentalists, singers do not have a kinesthetic means of realizing the music on the page, which causes many singers to have less proficiency (in comparison with instrumentalists) when it comes to musical literacy and general musical awareness during collaborations; in fact, singers who are more successful in these fundamental areas tend to have a background or at least some experience as an instrumentalist.

Any negative stigmas assigned to singers generally do not take into account the complex act of singing, which not only involves internalization (audiation) of the printed music on the page (which, without having "perfect pitch" reference, is difficult), but also, the voice is an instrument that is embedded within the human body. For example, singers do not have an external (kinesthetic) means to gaining rhythmic accuracy, such as a pianist pressing down the keys on a keyboard with one's fingers, which automatically produces pitch and a means for rhythmic accuracy. Another complication for singers is that texts add another layer of complexity with regard to musical production and expression.

As a conductor who has worked with singers for more than two decades, as well as my many years of experience as a professional choral singer, I have long observed that the skills one must develop as a conductor can have an extraordinary effect on one's developing skills as a singer. I have experienced these benefits personally and (now) automatically integrate my skills and perspective as a conductor anytime I am singing professionally. My conducting skills have revolutionized my abilities and awareness as a singer.

I am excited to explore benefits that singers experience by learning basic conducting fundamentals; furthermore, I know of no formal research in this area. Therefore, during my sabbatical, I plan to directly explore these connections and intend to create a codified approach to music learning that singers can employ when they learn their solo repertoire. 1.) This research will strengthen my pedagogy and have positive effects on my undergraduate conducting curriculum, allowing me to communicate ways in which my students can transfer and adapt conducting skills within their own solo repertoire; 2.) I will communicate and share my codified approach with voice colleagues, hoping that these methods can be adopted in their teaching; 3.) During my sabbatical I will collaborate with choral colleagues at peer universities, consulting with those who share my enthusiasm for the potential of this topic and also

strengthening my own pedagogical approaches to teaching conducting; 4.) I plan to write and submit an article to the *Choral Journal*, the refereed, international journal of the American Choral Directors Association; 5.) Post-sabbatical, I hope to partner with CU voice colleagues to implement this approach and track its effectiveness with select undergraduate voice performance majors; 6.) I will submit proposals to present my findings at significant national conferences.

(2) Describe your work plan including all anticipated professional activities (i.e., where will you spend your sabbatical, what you will do, your work timeline, etc.).

I plan to spend my sabbatical within the state of Colorado; any interviews or observations that are necessary for my research can be conducted via Zoom or phone calls.

In preparation for my sabbatical project, I will consult with CU voice colleagues to discuss ways in which they think my research can benefit our undergraduate vocal performance students. Hearing about their ideas will help to shape the outcome of my research.

During the first part of my sabbatical (January and February), I plan to have conversations with some of our nation's leading conducting pedagogues. I would like to compare basic conducting pedagogies and techniques to ensure that my practices in pedagogy are most up-to-date. Also, during January & February, I will have conversations with colleagues who are accomplished both as conductors and professional vocalists. Gaining anecdotal data about personal successes (specifically, as singers who attribute their success to their abilities and perspective as a conductor) will serve to create a narrative for my *Choral Journal* article. All of these conversations during January and February can take place via Zoom.

During March and April, I plan to develop a codified step-by-step approach that vocal performance majors can implement for learning and internalizing solo repertoire, which will come from basic fundamental approaches that conductors take while learning and internalizing music. Once the step-by-step approach is codified, I will craft a *Choral Journal* article that can serve as a "how to" for fellow choral and voice colleagues who also teach in higher education.

Post-sabbatical, I hope to identify, with the help of my CU voice colleagues, some vocal performance majors who would benefit from exploring and implementing this approach to learning solo repertoire, and I hope to track their progress and experiences so that I can continue to refine this approach. Also post-sabbatical, I intend to submit interest session applications to present my findings at our major conferences.

(3) Describe how meeting your sabbatical objectives will benefit the academic, clinical, and/or pedagogical goals of your primary unit.

Musical literacy (fluency) and collaborative awareness are indispensable qualities at the foundation of any musician's career path. Having had many conversations with voice faculty members about more recent downward trends in musical literacy and retention skills of our performance majors, it's clear that a codified approach to learning music, informed by conducting methods and skills, can help fill these gaps. Most of the time, students simply do not have the tools to know how to go about learning their music, and many (if not most) default to learning by only listening to recordings online, which is, ultimately, not an empowering or sustainable way to learn and retain music.

Specifically, the areas that will be strengthened would be in music score study, sight reading (musical fluency), musical decision making (phrasing, interpretive choices, etc.), and musical collaboration (musical awareness).

The outcome could look like the following multi-step process (a rough sketch):

Step 1: Score marking, large form analysis, and general background study (what to do and how to do it)

Step 2: Implementing methods for musical literacy. This could involve writing in and using movable-do solfege or using a choral rehearsal method, "count-singing," to organize pitch & rhythmic elements within a musical score.

Step 3: Musical internalization. This might involve looking at the musical score as a whole and noticing connections between a piano accompaniment and the vocal line; it might involve developing methods for practicing and interpreting music.

Step 4: Addition of text. While this might come at an earlier stage in the learning process, this is a separate step which involves multiple considerations: Origin of text; if the text is in a foreign language, finding or creating a word-for-word translation and writing this into the musical score, learning and writing IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) symbols within the music in order to sing with accurate diction.

Step 5: As all of these pieces are put together, developing a sense of rhythmic integrity within the context of meter is another general area in which singers have a tendency to struggle during rehearsal and performance. Whether they are singing behind the beat, or are not solid with regard to musical entrances, for example, this is where learning how to physically conduct meter is an indispensable tool that singers can use both in solo and ensemble repertoire. Understanding where downbeats fall is a good start, and then slow practice with conducting pattern while singing during practice can help students to ground themselves and can also help them to quickly read and navigate more complex rhythms within a metrical context. With the right guidance within this step, a singer can be empowered to truly understand meter and rhythm rather than glossing over these details and learning things solely "by ear".

There are more elements and steps, including developing one's musical ear and interpretive skills, but the above steps outline a general sketch of what the codified approach could look like.

(4) Describe how your sabbatical project will enhance the university's reputation.

The outcome of my sabbatical is multi-faceted and will enhance the university's reputation in several ways:

- 1.) Once codified, I plan to share this approach with voice colleagues, who can use it in their studio teaching;
- 2.) A codified music learning approach is something that students can carry with them into their careers, helping them to be musicians of the highest caliber, and further strengthening their prospects of being employable, which ultimately enhances the university's reputation;
- 3.) With having a tradition of academic rigor within CU's graduate choral conducting program as well as the history of pedagogical excellence in our voice program, this sabbatical can help to further evolve the CU College of Music's legacies and reputation in both areas;
- 4.) I plan to write and submit an article to be published in the *Choral Journal* and perhaps to other respected journals, which will enhance the university's reputation by name;
- 5.) For the immediate years to come, I plan to submit proposals to present interest sessions on my findings at major conferences such as the American Choral Directors Association National Conference (ACDA), National Association for Teaching of Singing (NATS), and/or the National

Collegiate Choral Organization National Conference (NCCO), which will enhance the university's reputation.

(5) Describe how your sabbatical will contribute to the educational experience of students.

The heart of this project is student-centered, and the intended outcome is for student singers to become empowered to be independent and confident musicians. The skills that students will learn and develop will be something that they can implement in their music learning and collaborations for the rest of their careers.

Student experiences will include the following:

- 1.) The opportunity to learn and implement a codified approach to music learning;
- 2.) The opportunity to learn and implement a skillset that leads to strengthened practice/rehearsal skills;
- 3.) The opportunity to learn and implement a codified approach that helps them develop a sharper musical awareness for performances and collaborations;
- 4.) As they learn these skills, they will receive ongoing guidance from their voice teacher(s) and me, but because all musicians are in the business of self-assessment, the students will have opportunities to reflect so they can learn to identify when and how they are making progress as well as where their strengths and weaknesses lie... developing the ability to self-assess will help students to become independent learners and musicians.

Part 2:

REMUNERATION AND FUNDING PLAN

Regarding external funding, faculty members applying for sabbatical assignments are expected to apply for external funding (such as fellowships, grants, or clinical work) when appropriate. The total university salary to the faculty member, from sabbatical pay and any contract or grant administered through the university, shall not exceed university limits. There is no restriction on additional non-university income, subject to the faculty member satisfying the duties of the sabbatical plan and any contract/grant requirements. If a faculty member on sabbatical anticipates funding, sponsorship, employment, gifts, non-financial support, or other benefits from foreign institutions or sources, these should be detailed in the sabbatical remuneration plan, and all appropriate Export Control procedures should be followed. In addition, faculty members on sabbatical leave are not permitted to be paid for any administrative appointments or extra teaching during the sabbatical period.

- (6) **Per CU System APS 1024, it is expected that faculty members applying for sabbatical will also apply for external funding to the extent it is available. Describe any anticipated external funding sources, amount of funding from sources external to CU, and attempts to obtain such funding.**

The proposed sabbatical project will not require any additional funding.

- (7) **Describe the source and amount of any additional funding to support your sabbatical, including departmental or gift funding.**

n/a

- (8) **Describe any anticipated support from foreign or international entities, including research collaborators, host universities, or other institutions, (e.g., equipment use, office/lab space, lodging or travel).**

Should it be necessary to travel during my sabbatical, I will use my faculty travel to support travel-related expenses.

- (9) **Under the University's [APS 1024](#), faculty must identify business expenses to be reimbursed in connection with a Sabbatical Plan. Please describe anticipated business expenses and the funding source for those expenses.**

None anticipated.

- (10) **Will this plan require international travel? If so, please describe the travel including anticipated destination(s).**

n/a

Part 3:
DEPARTMENT CHAIR/UNIT HEAD
PLAN FOR COVERAGE AND REMUNERATION

Based on the corresponding CU System [APS 1024](#), the dean of the school/college shall ensure that the costs associated with the sabbatical are covered, including teaching replacement expenses. The dean may suspend a sabbatical if funding is not available in the school/college. Remuneration (from university resources such as state funding, university administered grants or contracts, or any other university managed sources) for the sabbatical assignment shall be as follows: for full-time faculty on nine-month appointments, either full salary for one semester or half salary for two semesters; for full-time faculty on 12-month appointments, six months full salary or 12 months half salary. Please note that for single semester sabbaticals, remuneration from university-managed funds or university-administered grants or contracts should not exceed 100% of the faculty member's salary. For two-semester sabbaticals, remuneration sourced from General Funds (Fund 10) should neither be used to supplement a half-salary, nor exceed 50% of the faculty member's usual base salary. Stipends for administrative duties, such as chair or center director stipends, are not included in "base salary" and shall not be taken into account in calculating the individual's salary while on sabbatical.

- (11) Describe the plan for coverage of the faculty member's teaching responsibilities and replacement of teaching expenses. If it is known at the time this application is being made, include specific course names or numbers to be replaced each semester.**

Coverage Summary:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Instructor of Record, teach 50% (needs compensation)
[REDACTED] MM student): TA and graduate conductor (in load)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] DMA student): Instructor of Record (in load)

[REDACTED]

Dr. [REDACTED] Instructor of Record (in load; course is replacing [REDACTED] which will not be offered Spring 2026)

Graduate Committees: faculty replacements [in load] (2 MM students: conducting recital and thesis grader needs confirmation)

NOTE: New DMA/TA will be assigned [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] This results in the need for an additional 25%GPTI.

- (12) If the applicant is in an additional administrative position (e.g., chair or director), indicate how the administrative responsibilities will be covered.**

n/a