

University of Texas at El Paso

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Personal Statement of Creative Activities and Scholarship

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Personal Statement of Creative Activities and Scholarship

Throughout my time as an instructor at UTEP (11 years total), I have taught a wide variety of courses. In fact, one of my greatest strengths is my ability to teach in a number of areas, including music education, choral music, vocal performance, aural skills, music theatre/opera, and vocal jazz. While the switch from lecturer to assistant professor shifted the focus of my position to the music theatre/opera production course, I maintained teaching load and performance quantity and quality in voice studio and jazz/choral areas. In particular, I feel I have been instrumental in creating new performance opportunities for students at UTEP and in the El Paso/Juárez arts community, and in promoting UTEP's vocal programs regionally, nationally, and internationally.

Foundations: 1998-2004

Upon arriving in El Paso in 1998, I began at UTEP as a part-time lecturer in the voice division. I quickly established myself as an eclectic performer, appearing with the UTEP Dinner Theatre, El Paso Opera, and various local jazz groups. At the university, I developed a reputation as a versatile educator as well, teaching applied voice, aural skills, the University Jazz Singers, and the El Paso Children's Choir, and serving as musical director for productions in the Department of Theatre. Within one year, I generated enough load to justify a full-time lecturer position, which I assumed in 1999.

As a lecturer, my work focused on building a large and highly successful voice studio with a reputation of excellence in bridging classical and contemporary vocal styles. I worked diligently to build a working relationship with the UTEP Dinner Theatre, both as performer and voice teacher/vocal coach. The results of this work can be seen in the significant performance accomplishments of my applied students, particularly at the Dinner Theatre, but at other local music theatre organizations as well, and on the national scene.

When I began directing the University Jazz Singers (UJS) in 1999, the group had not been offered for several semesters. Consequently, I began with a blank slate. Over a 6-year period, I transformed the University Jazz Singers into a 10-24 voice ensemble that specializes in the performance and study of solo and group vocal jazz repertory. Usually accompanied by a 3-5 piece instrumental combo, UJS performed regularly on UTEP choral concerts and other university and local events, including the UTEP Women's Auxiliary, UTEP Alumni Association, and Women's Club of El Paso activities until my teaching overload required the department to place the group on sabbatical in Spring 2005.

Growth: 2004-2009

Music Theatre Company

As an assistant professor, the primary focus of my teaching and scholarship shifted to the Music Theatre Company (MTCO.), the Department of Music's opera/music theatre production and

skills development course. When I assumed the course in Fall 2004, it had been on sabbatical for one year, with frequent faculty turn-over since 1998. There was no skill-driven curriculum or regular performing schedule; in fact, there were no full-scale productions for two years. In six years, I completely revised the Music Theatre Company course and achieved the following significant goals:

- Resumed production schedule of staged musical drama in Music Department and instituted a season of 2-3 productions per year, plus additional community outreach and campus performances.
- Reestablished collaboration with the UTEP Orchestra for full-stage production of opera/music theatre
- Built student enrollment from 12 to 30-35 per semester
- Adopted a textbook and auxiliary materials and designed a skill development curriculum
- Started practice of providing Spanish supertitles for all productions
- Recruited for company members in-house and on campus at large.
- Built positive image toward Music Theatre Company in-house, on campus and in community.
- Created outreach team to recruit for music theatre/vocal programs.
- Developed Music Theatre Company and music theatre program recruitment materials.
- Started a library of Music Theatre Company pictures and sound files for departmental/university use and promotion.
- Defined course and program goals within department and division.
- Reallocated and increased Opera/Music Theatre student service budget, 2003-2009.
- Inventoried Magoffin costume and set areas, storage dungeon under Recital Hall.
- Established on-going collaboration with Bilingual Creative Writing program and its director, Dr. Johnny Payne.
- Established on-going collaboration with the Department of Music's Theory/Composition Division and composer-in-residence Dr. Dominic Dousa
- Built ties to El Paso Opera by bringing in EPO apprentices for performances and master classes.
- Brought in guest artists:
 - El Paso Opera Apprentice Program: performance of *The Telephone*, February 8, 2005
 - Kathy Kosins, jazz vocalist and recording artist: clinics on American Song, November 14-15, 2005
 - Dr. Christopher Meerdink, guest stage director, *Gianni Schicchi* and *Suor Angelica*, Spring 2006
 - Gerardo Ramos, tenor and UTEP alumnus, guest artist, *Gianni Schicchi*, March-April 2006
 - Marciem Bazell, Director of Opera Theatre, University of Missouri at Kansas City, guest clinician, November 2006
 - Myron Howard Nadel, UTEP Department of Theatre and Dance, guest stage director, *Man of La Mancha*, Spring 2007
 - Ricardo Herrera, bass-baritone, UTEP alumnus, and professor of voice, University of Illinois, master class, Fall 2008

- Jeffrey Snider, bass and professor of voice, University of North Texas, master class, Fall 2008
 - David Grabarkewitz, resident director, New York City Opera, master class, March 2009
 - Michael Lee Wade, tenor, master class, March 2009
 - Kimberly Warrick, Director of Opera Theatre, Wright State University, master class, March 2009
 - Ken Forestal, UTEP Educational Psychology professor and Masters' candidate in Theatre, guest stage director, *Susannah*, March 2009
- Built ties to the UTEP Dinner Theatre, particularly with regard to technical assistance and student participation/schedule coordination.
 - Redefined teacher/student expectations for preparation and performance of staged musical drama in the Department of Music.
 - Mentored talented students in production roles, especially in areas of conducting, choreography, stage direction, and technical theatre (lighting and set design).

While Music Theatre Company is part of my teaching load, I consider it the largest part of my creative activity. Since 2004, I have presented 15 major productions and 2 original senior performance projects, and unlike directors in the Department of Theatre and Dance and the UTEP Dinner Theatre, I have no technical team of faculty and staff to assist in production endeavors. I am required to wear all hats, to assume the various roles of stage director, conductor, vocal coach, producer, costumer, lighting designer, and set designer and builder, if need be. In order to reduce my work load and increase quality, I regularly hire a team of students, former and present, and community designers to assist with technical elements; however, this creates its own challenges as I spend many extracurricular hours mentoring and overseeing this contractual work.

Additionally, directing productions in the Department of Music presents special challenges due to the limitations of its primary performance venue, the Fox Fine Arts Recital Hall. This space, which is a 450-seat concert hall, is not designed for theatre. Since 2004, I have worked diligently with our chair and faculty colleagues to improve the space, requesting a house PA system, 12 wireless microphones, front-to back-of-house communication systems, and numerous theatrical lighting instruments, including two spotlights; however, despite these upgrades, the Recital Hall is still lacking in many areas, which makes staging music theatre challenging. Further, because it is the primary performance space for ensembles, recitals, etc., MTCO., never gets more than one week in the venue for technical preparation and rehearsal.

The quality of Music Theatre Company's work has led to international recognition. In 2008, MTCO.'s production of *Romeo and Bernadette* was selected to record the official perusal recording for the show's licensing organization, Theatrical Rights Worldwide, Inc., ensuring that

UTEP students and faculty will be heard by professional musical theater directors and producers internationally.

Women's Glee Club

In addition to directing the Music Theatre Company, I am the conductor of the Women's Glee Club. Since creating this ensemble in 2005, my primary foci have been establishing a regular performing schedule and increasing visibility on campus. The group, ranging from 45-60 singers each semester, appears on all departmental choral concerts, including the Spring Gala, but has also performed on the UTEP Alumni Association's Season of Lights, a highly visible event during which the campus is lit with thousands of Christmas lights, and annually on the El Paso Independent School District's Parade of Choirs. Favorite performances include our 2005 presentation of Benjamin Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols* and, most recently, excerpts from Randall Thompson's *Frostiana* with the UTEP Orchestra in May 2009.

Solo Performance and Scholarship

In addition to my busy teaching load of 13-16 credit hours each semester, I have maintained an active and eclectic performing schedule, including numerous collaborative faculty recitals and appearances with university and local choral and instrumental ensembles. As I specialize in helping singers bridge the transition from classical to contemporary ("commercial") vocal styles, I consistently perform in classical, musical theater, and jazz styles in order to "walk my talk."

The quality of my work in the UTEP choral division has resulted in many invitations to clinic and conduct choirs locally and regionally, including district honor choirs and Texas Music Educators Association (TMEA) Region XXII Treble Choirs. Most recently, I have joined the ranks of Heritage Festivals, Inc., a national performance festival company, as a choral/vocal jazz adjudicator.

Finally, my work incorporating technology into the Music Theatre Company performance curriculum using YouTube as a vehicle for self- and peer evaluation has led to national presentations at major conferences, including College Music Society and Technology Institute for Music Educators (TI-ME).

Maturity: present

Performance

At this point in my career, the quality of my work as conductor, stage director, singer, and scholar is being rewarded with numerous regional, national, and international invitations for collaboration and performance.

Most recently, El Paso Opera, a regional professional opera company, has begun a new collaboration with Music Theatre Company, holding unprecedented UTEP auditions for principal and chorus roles for its 2009-2010 season, and reestablishing its Opera on Wheels outreach program utilizing MTCO. students.

The Universidad Autónoma Ciudad Juárez (UACJ) has invited Music Theatre Company to co-produce a fully-staged one-act opera in October 2009, in which Maestro Carlos Garcia-Ruiz will conduct, I will stage direct, and students from both universities will present performances in the U.S. and Mexico.

In the realm of music theatre, composer Mark Saltzman (*Romeo and Bernadette*) has asked MTCO. to workshop one of his most recent projects, a rock-and-roll revue, slated for performance at UTEP in 2010.

The Women's Glee Club's outstanding work has been recently recognized by an invitation to perform with the El Paso Symphony Orchestra on Gustav Holst's *The Planets* in February 2010, and the Continental Trombone Quartet, an internationally acclaimed ensemble, has submitted a proposal for the UTEP choirs under my direction to perform a premiere of a commissioned work by Paul Basler for trombone quartet and choir at the Music Teachers' National Association (MTNA) National Conference in Albuquerque in March 2010.

As a soloist, I will be performing a premiere for band and mezzo-soprano by celebrated band educator Barbara Lambrecht with the Coronado High School Band in May 2009, and plan to present a solo lecture recital on the American music theatre song cycle in Spring 2010.

Scholarship

After numerous local clinics on contemporary vocal styles and intensive work with my applied students, I have undertaken an article on healthy belting, geared to choral directors and voice teachers, which I plan to submit for publication in Fall 2009. I am in preliminary stages of developing a 5-volume, voice type-specific anthology of operetta arias with William Everett, University of Missouri at Kansas City, end date unspecified. And, I plan to write an article based on my American music theatre song cycle recital in 2010.

In the realm of technology, I am working to expand my YouTube project to include external critique from opera/music theatre professionals within the Music Theatre Company curriculum, and vocal coaching of local high school students in preparation for solo/ensemble contests. In particular, I hope to engage university students as mentors for underserved student populations in the El Paso area.