

Sabbatical Leave Proposal

Brandon Elliott, Ed.D.
Professor of Music
Department of Performing Arts

Proposal Date: October 15, 2021

Proposed Leave: Fall 2022

Previous Sabbaticals: 0

Full-Time Hire Date: August 2014 (8 years of full-time service)

Creation of a Japanese Choral & Vocal Music Compendium

Overview

It is no secret that the majority of music curriculum in Western higher education is Euro-centric and struggles to equitably and authentically integrate music from other regions and cultures. The most authoritative and broadly adopted resource on choral music repertoire in academia, *Choral Repertoire* (Shrock, 2009), does not include a listing of music outside of the United States and Europe. Perhaps one of the reasons higher education institutions in the United States struggle to represent music from other regions authentically and cultures stems from the fact that there is a dearth of resources.

In recognition of the diversity of our campus, and the need to continue to fulfill our obligation to providing an equitable and inclusive culture at Moorpark College, I believe my project will fill a need both here at Moorpark College, and for my colleagues at various institutions. The sabbatical project would conclude with a performance of Japanese choral music with the choral ensembles at Moorpark College, as well as a presentation at Moorpark College's Multicultural Day. Long term, the repertoire within the choral and vocal program would be further diversified with regular incorporation of Japanese literature.

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Values

Value of the Proposed Leave on Instruction or Service to Students

Currently, our students are primarily exposed to music representative of the United States and Europe. However, music is universal, and there is so much more to explore. Introducing students to music from an Asian country can expand their understanding of music and culture. In addition, for the 8-10% of Asian-identifying students at our college, they will now get to see themselves better represented and included in the music we study and perform at Moorpark College. As we continue in our mission to help students succeed from global backgrounds, expanding our palate of musical aesthetic representation will make notable strides in equity and inclusion.

The role of modeling is essential in a learning environment. By modeling a willingness and considerable effort to learn the music of other cultures and present it authentically, students will learn to value the same approach and perhaps incorporate that practice in their musical education and careers.

Value of the Proposed Leave to the College

Moorpark College's mission states: "Grounded in equity, social justice, and a students first philosophy, Moorpark College values diverse communities. We empower learners from local, national, and global backgrounds to complete their degree, certificate, transfer, and career education goals. Through the integration of innovative instruction and customized student support, our programs are designed to achieve equitable outcomes."

My sabbatical proposal embraces the value of diverse communities. In ensemble courses, the music we perform is the textbook and curriculum. By completing this project, our students will be exposed to an expanded global view of what music is, how it is performed, and how it connects to our global community.

My proposal also continues to place students first. In recognition that nearly 8-10% of our campus population identifies as Asian, this allows more students to feel seen, represented, and included in the music we study and perform. Research continues to also demonstrate that when students see themselves represented in the curriculum, it improves educational outcomes and sense of belonging.

Value of the Proposed Leave to the District & Consistency with the Mission of the District

Ventura County Community College District's mission states: "Ventura County Community College District provides students, in its diverse community, with access to comprehensive quality educational opportunities that support student learning and student success."

I believe my project will further embrace and amplify the diverse voices at our college and across the district. Additionally, my project will provide students with a broader representation of inclusive musical repertoire and better serve their inquiry in creativity, aesthetics, and their

more comprehensive understanding of music. Given the scope of my project, one of the goals is to disseminate my compendium to my fellow choral colleagues at various institutions. This could benefit my music colleagues at both Oxnard and Ventura colleges. It also established Ventura County Community College District as an institution that prioritizes equity and inclusion work both organization-wide and at the discipline-specific level. Our district benefits from faculty who contribute diverse perspectives and scholarship, and I believe this project will fulfill these values.

Value of the Proposed Leave on the Candidate's Professional Competence

Currently, I do not have the knowledge, experience, or expertise to introduce choral or vocal literature representative of Japan. It may have been more appealing to develop a compendium of choral repertoire from more than one Asian country at the surface level. However, historical documentation tells us that there are over 10,000 years of sung music in Japan. Limiting my inquiry to one Asian country allows me to be an authentic expert rather than someone who only possesses cursory knowledge of multiple regions. Additionally, by focusing on the music of Japan, it allows me to also learn about authentic language vocalizations. Learning how to sing in Japanese authentically can be done without acquiring fluency (though that is a personal goal) in the language by studying phonetics and tones through the use of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)—a useful tool in the field of linguistics, speech pathology, and vocal pedagogy.

Alignment with Professional Assignment

The proposed project directly aligns with my primary assignment as a choral and vocal instructor at Moorpark College. I am the Director of Choral & Vocal Activities at Moorpark College where I teach and direct three choral ensembles (MUS M10, M12, M34), and coordinate other choral & vocal courses such as fundamental vocal techniques (MUS M13A), advanced vocal development (M13BCD), opera workshop (M31A&B), and applied voice (MUS M30G). The Moorpark College Choral & Vocal Program (MCCV) enjoys a diverse enrollment of students each semester, with 96% of students returning for at least three consecutive semesters.

Project Timeline, Objectives & Dissemination

This timeline does not include initial pre-sabbatical leave planning, which would occur immediately after approval. Travel to Japan is a desired aspect of this proposal, but given the uncertainty of international travel, I will plan contingencies for a virtual-only exchange with Japanese scholars. Assuming international travel is deemed safe, I would need to contact Japanese colleagues soon after approval to arrange for visitation, interviews, etc.

Summer / August 2022:

Part I:

1. Begin independent study in elementary Japanese language.
2. Compile a singer's guide to pronunciation utilizing the International Phonetic Alphabet.

Part II:

1. Interface virtually with Japanese choral scholars to develop a listing of living Japanese composers to be interviewed and studied.
2. Solidify travel arrangements, visits, interviews, and workshops, assuming international travel is feasible.

September 7 – 24, 2022:

Travel to Japan if feasible. Virtual arrangements will be made as an alternative if international travel is forbidden or deemed unsafe per the CDC.

Part I:

1. Interview scholars and observe choral ensembles at the following institutions:
 - Tokyo University of the Arts
 - Tokyo College of Music
 - Tokyo School of Music and Dance
2. Observations of rehearsals and performances to understand sung Japanese—pronunciation, inflection, accented and non accented syllables, and other phonetic principles.
3. Interviews to understand their lived experience in community singing and how it might be similar or different to experiences here in the United States.
4. Survey past concert programs to better understand the repertoire performed.

Part II:

1. Meet with leaders at the Japanese Choral Association and present a knowledge exchange. Brandon Elliott would present the current landscape of choral music in the United States and provide information and core repertory works from contemporary living composers. Leaders from the Japanese Choral Association would then present their current core repertory and living composers.
2. As part of creating a pronunciation guide, I would present a final draft for their feedback and revise as necessary to ensure authentic representation.

Part III:

1. Interview living Japanese composers to better understand their aesthetic approach, style, and develop an understanding of similarities and differences to the Western repertoire.

October 2022:

1. Develop a compendium of choral repertoire for United States choral conductors to utilize as a primary resource. This compendium will be formatted as a searchable spreadsheet and include composer names, titles, voicing and instrumentation, text translations, and difficulty level assessments. The compendium will focus primarily on

living Japanese composers. However, it will also provide information on the rich history of Japanese folk music by providing primary source materials and contemporary arrangements of folk songs.

2. Develop a representative scores addendum, assuming intellectual property/copyright clearances can be obtained from living authors or their estates.

November – December 2022:

Part I:

1. Disseminate to my choral colleagues in the state through the California Choral Directors Association.
2. Seek peer review.
3. Implement feedback and revise for a final draft.

Part II:

1. Submit compendium for publication consideration in the *Choral Journal* (American Choral Directors Association), *The Choral Scholar* (National Collegiate Choral Organization), or similar learned society publication series.
2. Submit for a conference presentation in Spring 2022.

Part III: Curate a Japanese choral music concert program to be performed by the Moorpark College Choral & Vocal program in Spring 2023.

January 2023:

Part I: Present my findings to my Music Department colleagues at Moorpark College and our district colleges at Ventura and Oxnard.

Part II: Submit a production proposal for a spring 2023 performance featuring Japanese choral music performed by the three choral and vocal ensembles on campus.

Part III: Apply to present an interest session at Multicultural Day at Moorpark College in Spring 2023, discussing Japanese choral and vocal traditions.

Dean, Chair & Discipline Faculty Support

This project is supported by my Dean of Performing Arts, Dr. Priscilla Mora, my Chair of Performing Arts, Dr. Nathan Bowen, and my choral & vocal colleague, Professor Marilyn Anderson, who teaches applied voice, vocal techniques, and advanced vocal development. They believe this project is relevant, useful, appropriate, suitable, and feasible.

Rationale for Fall Sabbatical Leave & Program Continuity

I recognize that Spring terms are traditionally expected. However, in consideration of my unique program needs, I am requesting a Fall sabbatical. Competition and festival season occurs in the Spring season, and I find it best to remain on faculty during this time for my

students and program. If approved for a sabbatical, I would begin significant preparatory work in partnership with my Chair and choral and vocal adjunct colleagues to discuss seamless continuity for the program in the Fall 2022 term.

Financial Feasibility for International Travel

No college or district funds would be requested for travel to Japan, if that is deemed feasible in our current pandemic situation. I am able to self-sponsor international travel through an accumulation of travel reward points and cash. Additionally, if this sabbatical proposal is approved, I would request additional funding support from my learned and professional organizations.

Conclusion

I believe that disseminating this project to my choral and vocal colleagues in the district and across the California Community College system would be extremely beneficial as we all strive to diversify our curriculum, be more inclusive, and authentically study music from regions outside of the United States and Europe.

I have been dreaming of this sabbatical project for over two years and deliberately decided to wait on applying for sabbatical last year due to the retirement of one of Music's full-time faculty members. I believe Fall 2022 to be the most opportune time to take this sabbatical leave as it meets the unique pedagogical calendar needs of my students and program while also allowing me to deepen my professional knowledge and immediately implement my findings in the classroom in the Spring 2023 term.

On a personal note, as a Japanese-American that has never been quite in touch with my heritage, I find this project to be especially important and meaningful.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brandon Elliott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and "E".

Brandon Elliott, Ed.D.
Professor of Music
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Appendix: Letters of Support

October 25, 2021

Dear Moorpark College Sabbatical Leave Committee:

It is my privilege to endorse my colleague Brandon Elliott's sabbatical leave proposal for the Fall 2022 semester. His topic, scope, and timeline for completion are feasible. His project would provide tangible outcomes as part of the Music Program's equity efforts and would directly benefit our students and the College. A culminating concert of Japanese choral music and a presentation at Moorpark College's Multicultural Day would be entirely appropriate venues for bringing Brandon's work to the college.

As Brandon writes in the proposal, there is a real dearth of resources to be able to represent music authentically from diverse regions and cultures. We are keen to diversify our curriculum but finding ways to do so can be difficult without resources. Brandon's project, if fulfilled as intended, will provide dividends in our local efforts to reach disproportionately impacted students, but will also benefit the larger choral/vocal community by providing a resource that can multiply efforts at other colleges, high schools, and universities.

Having worked for years with Brandon, I know that his preparation and planning is second to none. He does many things for us within the music program, but he has already created plans to groom one of our part-time choral faculty to take over the ensembles, and I am confident that we can also prepare another colleague to fill the Applied Music Coordinator role during his absence. We would certainly miss his work while away, but as this would be a fantastic opportunity for personal professional growth, this is a long-term win for him, our program, and the College.

I encourage the Committee to review Brandon's application and proposal carefully, and I endorse this project without reservation.

Thanks,



Nathan Bowen, PhD
Department Chair, Performing Arts
Honors Co-Coordinator
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October 24, 2021

To The Sabbatical Review Committee,

I am very pleased to support Brandon Elliott, Ed.D in his application for Sabbatical Leave in Fall 2022.

Dr. Elliott's proposed expansive project is truly an important step in furthering ethnic diversity and artistic knowledge of Japanese music culture not only at Moorpark College but also throughout the Ventura County Community College District. As Dr. Elliott is a highly respected and often honored authority in choral music, his close connections with major choral organizations will result in the wide-ranging dissemination of his scholarship as he shares this very important study.

Dr. Elliott's project schedule is comprehensive to say the least. The study of the Japanese language and its application the International Phonetic Alphabet will be an invaluable tool for students and instructors of Japanese choral and solo repertoire. His travel to Japan to meet with various educational institutions, performance groups, and current composers will provide first-hand information and insight into the development, study, and performance of Japanese choral repertoire. Equally important, he will establish a rapport between choral communities of the two nations. Priceless.

I look forward to Dr. Elliott's return to the classroom rehearsals to see the students' excitement in performing this important choral literature. Students of Japanese and, no doubt, other Asian lineages will feel included and respected as they study and perform this repertoire. Audiences will also appreciate the results of this project. Dr. Elliott's scholastic abilities are totally suited to the scope of this study. His intellect, organizational skills, focus, and commitment will result in major advancements in this endeavor. I whole-heartedly support this Sabbatical study.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marilyn E. Anderson".

Marilyn E Anderson