Professional Development Grant Report  
Summer 2007  
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The professional development project I undertook for the summer of 2007 was the preparation of a solo vocal recital. The purpose of the project was both one of personal development and institutional outreach. The scope of work included four areas of emphasis:

1) Research, and selection of repertoire and collaborative pianist  
2) Rehearsal, memorization, preparation  
3) Developing performances, collaborations and publicity  
4) Performances  

The first month of the project centered around the selection of repertoire. I focused on building a program around sacred themes that would generate possible performances in concert and church settings, and also assist in articulating my interest in connecting faith and learning. The recital would ideally have educational, artistic and evangelistic value. Rather than build a program around individual songs, I chose to focus on song cycles and larger works by significant composers. While this helped narrow the field, the range was still too large and tighter artistic restrictions were needed. I further limited my programmatic range to works in English by 20th and 21st century composers in an attempt to provide a program that would be accessible to a contemporary audience and have poetic as well as musical integrity by avoiding the potential awkwardness of singing in translation or depending on printed translations to communicate the poetry. After examining the works of several major English and American composers, including Britten, Finzi, Virgil and Randall Thompson, and Quilter, I settled on four song cycles. These four works represented a range of musical styles from mid 20th century English post romantic settings (Vaughan Williams “Five Mystical Songs”) to 21st century American composers (Conrad Susa “Hymns for the Amusement of Children” and Joel Martinson “A Cycle of Light). I added to these 2 songs from Aaron Copland’s “Old American Songs” (At the River and Zion’s Walls) to act as tuneful bookends for the entire evening. These songs included an interesting range of poetry, from the works of George Herbert (Vaughan Williams), Christopher Smart (Susa) and five female poets of the latter 19th century to early 21st century (Martinson), along with the folks hymns in the Copland settings. The next task was finding a collaborative pianist who was willing to undertake this project with me. The Susa songs were particular challenging for the pianist, and I was not surprised that three of my most esteemed keyboard colleagues turned me down noting that the Susa was just too hard. Providentially, Neil Di Maggio who works in the office of College Advancement and is a gifted pianist accepted the challenge, and so the musical work began.  

Neil and I spent the month of June working on our respective roles, learning the notes so that our combined rehearsals could focus on artistic concerns. My personal discipline included 2 hours a day of focused vocal practice, frequently accompanied by an additional hour of memorization work on the poetry. We began working in earnest together in July, meeting two and three times a week through early September in
preparation for our first performance on September 30 in addition to continuing our individual work to polish and memorize the repertoire. Most of that work was in rehearsal, but a significant portion of our endeavor was also committed to developing program materials that would help our audiences connect with and understand the poetic and musical idioms at hand. Our program notes are included on the program from the Westmont recital that is submitted with this report.

Over the course of the summer Neil and I also worked on establishing performance venues for the program. We were delighted to develop five unique performance opportunities:

1) A public recital and benefit concert at Christ Lutheran Church in Goleta
2) A worship service for the clients of the Santa Barbara Rescue Mission
3) A formal campus faculty recital
4) A public performance for the Santa Barbara Music Club
5) An extension of the Evensong worship at All Saints Episcopal Church

These settings allowed us to reach a highly diverse audience across our community, and serve new constituencies through our artistic endeavors.

The performance at Christ Lutheran was enthusiastically received by an audience of circa 120 listeners. This performance had the added benefit of being a fund raising event for the Santa Barbara Women’s Shelter. Through the contributions received that evening and a matching grant program that the church was able to procure, the recital raised over $1,000 for the shelter. The performance a few days later at the Rescue Mission had a very different character. This presentation was given to the clients of the Rescue Mission who must attend the evening worship service in order to qualify for the dinner that follows. Neil and I did not know how this audience would react to the rather formal musical repertoire and complex texts involved in the program. We were both delighted when the assembled congregation of circa 100 mostly homeless men actively and positively engaged the program on many levels. They frequently called out their impressions (all positive) after many of the songs, and voiced their appreciation during and after the program in both conventional and unconventional ways. The following week we presented the program on the Westmont concert series in Deane Chapel. The Chapel was filled to standing room only, with a large number of current and prospective students in attendance who had been invited for the evening. The response was hearty and enthusiastic, and many fruitful discussions ensued in the days and weeks following the program with the students who were there. Most of the College Choir and my entire voice studio were in attendance. The next day we performed most of the program for the Santa Barbara Music Club on their regular recital series downtown. Reaching out to this non-Westmont audience of serious music lovers was a great opportunity, and the program was very well received. Before closing the book on this summer grant, we had to keep the program “up” for almost 7 more months, as we performed it one last time for Evensong at All Saints Episcopal Church in Montecito in late April. With this performance we had come full circle from our first church performance in September, and had spanned the gamut of possible Santa Barbara audience bases from the Rescue Mission to the refined strata of the Episcopal congregation.