

# **Sabbatical Report**

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## **Overview and Purpose of the Sabbatical**

The primary goal of my sabbatical was to deepen my expertise in orchestral conducting techniques, with a particular emphasis on choral-orchestral repertoire by historically underrepresented composers. The work was intended to strengthen my ability to lead major choral works with orchestra while promoting the inclusion of women, BIPOC, and LGBTQ+ composers within collegiate choral-orchestral programming.

As a choral conductor committed to artistic excellence and inclusive programming, I sought to expand my conducting skill set to include more advanced orchestral rehearsal strategies, score preparation techniques, and approaches to balancing choral and orchestral forces in performance. This work aligns with Sonoma State's mission to provide transformative educational experiences while promoting equity, representation, and community engagement in the arts.

The sabbatical also provided time to advance leadership initiatives and scholarly writing that extend these goals into national professional practice.

## **Activities Undertaken During Sabbatical**

During the sabbatical period, I completed a structured program of professional study, research, and artistic preparation aligned with the objectives in my proposal.

### **A. Conducting Student and Professional Development**

I engaged in intensive study of orchestral conducting techniques through in-person and Zoom lessons with Dr. Richard Rossi, who held the rare dual university position of Director of Choral and Orchestral Activities at Eastern Illinois University. In addition, I began weekly cello study with SSU faculty member, Jill Brindell, gaining firsthand experience with string technique that will inform my communication with orchestral players.

My conducting study included detailed work on honing my gesture vocabulary and rehearsal methodology for orchestral collaboration. This included refining my motion, physical alignment,

and overall clarity of communication with the ensemble. I explored additional ways gesture conveys tempo, prepares musical entrances, and shapes articulations and phrasing, with particular attention to promoting continuity of sound and expressive intent.

Particular attention was given to approaches to working with string players, including communicating bow distribution, encouraging players to pull rather than force the sound, and understanding how bowings affect phrasing and intonation. I also studied rehearsal language and planning strategies such as modeling desired sound through singing, sequencing repertoire strategically, addressing difficult passages early when needed, and structuring orchestral rehearsal time effectively.

These experiences strengthened both my technical conducting skills and my rehearsal decision-making and will soon be applied in preparation for and leadership of large-scale choral-orchestral collaborations involving Sonoma State ensembles.

## **B. Score Study and Repertoire Research**

A substantial portion of the sabbatical was devoted to researching and studying choral-orchestral repertoire by underrepresented composers. This included:

- Identifying historically significant and emerging composers from marginalized communities
- Studying full choral-orchestral scores to evaluate pedagogical suitability for collegiate performers
- Compiling repertoire options for future SSU programming and collaborative performance
- Completing a detailed study of *Requiem* by José Maurício Nunes Garcia, an Afro-Brazilian composer from the Classical era, as a representative example of historically significant Classical-period choral-orchestral repertoire by an underrepresented composer

This research broadened the range of repertoire available for future concerts and supports long-term goals of expanding representation within the classical canon while enriching the educational experiences of Sonoma State students.

## **C. Scholarly Writing and National Leadership**

In addition to conducting study and repertoire research, my sabbatical supported scholarly writing and national professional leadership aligned with the same artistic and pedagogical goals.

During this period, I completed work on my forthcoming *Choral Journal* article, *Meeting the Moment: Reimagining Collegiate Choral Engagement in a Time of Change*, which examines evolving models of collegiate choral engagement, collaboration, and student access within the

national choral community. The article considers current challenges and opportunities in collegiate choral music and advocates for approaches that strengthen student belonging, broaden participation, and encourage thoughtful, inclusive programming and repertoire. This scholarly work extends the sabbatical's focus on equity, representation, and artistic leadership in the realm of national professional discourse.

The sabbatical also provided time to continue planning and implementing work for the first-ever Collegiate Consortium scheduled to take place at the American Choral Directors Association's 2026 Western Region Conference. The Collegiate Consortium is an honor-choir-style experience designed to bring together collegiate ensembles from institutions within a 200-mile radius of the regional conference site in San Jose. My work with the Collegiate Consortium includes organizational planning, artistic coordination, and collaboration with conductors and participating institutions.

Together, these efforts reflect the broader goals of my sabbatical by expanding access to meaningful collegiate choral experiences and fostering inclusive, forward-looking artistic programming.

## **Conclusion**

This sabbatical provided meaningful time for reflection, growth, and renewed artistic focus at an important point in my professional career. Through intensive conducting study, expanded repertoire research, and continued scholarly and national leadership activity, I was able to strengthen both the practical skills and broader artistic vision that guide my work with students and ensembles at Sonoma State University.

I return from this sabbatical with renewed energy, expanded perspective, and a deeper sense of purpose in my work as a conductor, teacher, and mentor, particularly as I prepare upcoming collaborative projects and performances with Sonoma State ensembles. I am grateful for the opportunity Sonoma State University provided for this period of professional development, and I look forward to applying its outcomes in service to our students, our campus, and the broader choral field.