**FINAL REPORT**

**Curricular Revision for the Inclusion of Diversity and Multicultural**

**Dance and Vocal Styles in Today’s Musical Theatre**

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**Final Submission: April 9, 2022**

**Purpose of the Grant**

With such rapidly increasing varieties of dance and vocal styles appearing on the Broadway stage (i.e. rock and roll, hip-hop, bolero), it is undeniable that a well-rounded curriculum that embraces diversity and the exploration of dance and vocal styles from a range of cultures is essential to preparing the next generation of musical theatre artists. Careful consideration was given to holistic approaches in revising the course descriptions and student learning outcomes. These concentrated efforts were an aid in continuing our outreach to students of the Global Majority as well as raising the profile of Elon’s Music Theatre program to the international standard of training for the next generation of Music Theatre practitioner.

**Methods**

In our effort to integrate additional chronicled research, practice, and works by historically marginalized groups into such courses as Contemporary Vocal Styles, Rock the Music Theatre, and our Dance for the Musical Stage series, our instructors:

* + 1. Identified the contemporary non-classical, non-Western singing styles most used in Music Theatre
    2. Deepened historical knowledge of each overarching singing and dancing style through research and practical application
    3. Identified further opportunities to diversify Jazz & Tap warm-ups and other class exercises, i.e. isolations, across the floor progressions and stretch-strengthening work
    4. Identified the non-Western, lesser-known singing and choreographic works throughout music theatre history
    5. Articulated historical knowledge of each authentic song and dance forms of current styles used in professional theatres through field research
    6. Deepened pedagogical approaches of each voice and dance style through research and practical application.

**Results**

Below is an outline of what was done and all that was learned through this work:

***Initial Practice, Research, and Discovery Phase***

Reflection on the Implementation of the Inclusion of Diversity in Dance Styles

1. Initial coordination of NYC & San Francisco research trips (including travel planning, parking and lodging arrangements, scheduling of interviews, classes, and viewing of available stage productions).
2. Preliminary research conducted during the following days: June 10-25, July 15-19, and July 29, 30, 31 and Aug 2.
3. While in New York City, I participated in dance classes at the well-known and prestigious dance studios Broadway Dance Center on 45th Street and STEPS on Broadway at 73rd & Broadway and in SF at ODC located in the Mission district. Classes taken include: July 15-Tap with Gwen Potter (BDC); July 17- Tap with Kat Ponza (STEPS.) July 30-Rhythm & Motion dance (ODC.)
4. Throughout the last 3 years I have taken classes in the following styles, to deepen and widen my influences and choreographic approaches whether on my own or as part of my MFA program at UWM-Peck School of The Arts: Bharatanatyam, West African, Improvisation, Jack Cole, Contemporary Modern, Laban Movement Analysis and Bartenieff Fundamentals, and Body Percussion.
5. Viewing of live & Taped performance: July 18 (*Sally Wilfert* @ Feinstein’s 54 Below). No others available due to Covid. July 16 (TOFT division at Lincoln Center Library’s Broadway production of *Shuffle Along, or, the Making of the Musical Sensation of 1921 and All That Followed.*)
6. Viewing of art events to supplement knowledge of world history and culture: in NYC July 16 Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Alice Neel Exhibit: *People Come First* and July 17 Whitney Museum of Art’s Dawoud Bey exhibit: *An American Project* in SF: July 30 de Young Museum’s Legion of Honor Wangechi Mutu exhibit: *I Am Speaking, Are You Listening?* and the Holocaust Memorial; MOCA in Marin County’s exhibit of *Invincible: A visual quilt of the Latinx experience in California.*
7. Viewing of online performances & documentaries to round out dance styles for fall course: June 21 (*Carmen & Geoffrey* about the work/life partnership of Carmen de Lavelade and Geoffrey Holder); June 25 (Bill T. Jones documentary: *D Man in the Waters*) about the forming of his company and one of its members fight with AIDS related illness; July 23, Netflix series *We Speak Dance* featuring the dance styles of Bali, Lagos, Beirut, Vietnam, and Paris; online research will be ongoing.
8. Interviews with two Field experts from dance/theatre/academic worlds: Robin Lewis Associate Professor Music Theatre and Dance at Rider University and Marla Schulz Adjunct Professor dance/Musical Theatre Repertory at CU Boulder.

Reflection on the Implementation of the Inclusion of Diversity in Contemporary Vocal Styles & Rock the Music Theatre

### Zoom conversation on 4/20/21 with Deonte Warren, primary research is in the teaching of Music Theatre History, incorporating the contributions of Global Majority artists and removing the usual White lens.

### Zoom conversation on 7/2/21 with Jaron LeGrair, primary research in approaches to gospel singing

### Robinson-Martin, Trineice: “An Introduction to Soul Ingredients,” Webinar, June 21 2021.

### Riffing with Vishal Vaidya, Masterclass, Rock the Audition On Demand

### LeGrair, Jaron M.: “A Survey of Basic Vocal Technique, Vocal Knowledge, and Vocal Health Awareness in African-American Gospel Singers and Worship Leaders,” Poster Presentation, National Association of Teacher’s of Singing

### Rapping for Musical Theatre with Ronvé O'Daniel, Masterclass, Rock the Audition On Demand

***Working Timeline for Implementation***

Fall 2021:

1. MTE 325 Contemporary Vocal Styles (two sections)
2. MTE 150 Dance for the Musical Stage I
3. MTE 450 Dance for the Musical Stage IV

Spring 2022:

1. MTE 326 Rock the Music Theatre
2. MTE 250 Dance for the Musical Stage II
3. MTE 350 Dance for the Musical Stage III

***Initial Assessment of Results***

The following were articulated throughout the semester as well as in the Student Perception of Teaching Surveys (SPoTS):

Positive Aspects:

1. Recognition of increased variety in learning styles
2. Enthusiasm in the reception of the new material
3. Ability to clearly define and integrate learning outcomes

Challenges Expressed:

1. Lack of foundational training in the various techniques
2. Risk of injury
3. Lack of support outside of the area instructor(s)
4. Lack of assistance from expert instructors
5. Lack of diversity within the Department to assist in supporting the work

***Final Assessment of Results***

Dance (revised learning outcomes) – Upon completing the course, the student will:

1. Implement appropriate terminology and embody the various global dance styles;
2. Infuse technique with historical, society, and cultural context;
3. Articulate consent-based training and vocabulary in partnering, lifting, other forms of physical contact when necessary.

Voice (revised learning outcomes) – Upon completing the course, the student will:

1. Articulate styles with greater clarity, specificity, and understanding;
2. Access the various styles with technical facility and confidence;
3. Decentralize vocal pedagogy from the tradition that all good singing stems from a European operatic/classical tradition.

Additional Recommendation: At the behest of one of the project mentors, a Likert Scale pole was taken of the Rock the Music Theatre course participants and included as an addendum to this report (see attached).

***Future Projects for Consideration in Further Deepening the Work***

1. Exploration of the selection of repertoire (fall ’23)
2. Deepening research into the history of styles (fall ’23)
3. Encouragement of student identity-driven individual needs (fall ’23)
4. Continue evolving the process for changing voice instructors (fall ’23)
5. Increase use of technology for voice instruction (fall/spring ’23)
6. Upcoming conference presentations:

a. Instructional Touch in the Voice Studio: Southeast Theatre Conference, Memphis, TN (March)

b. Rock n Roll: Acting the Pop/Rock song: Southeast Theatre Conference, Memphis, TN (March)

c. Rock the Musical Stage: Auditioning for Musical Theatre with Pop/Rock Songs: National Association of Teachers of Singing National Conference, Chicago, IL (July)

d. Repertoire for Trans/Non-binary singing students: A Panel Discussion Panel”: National Association of Teachers of Singing National Conference, Chicago, IL (July)

e. Best Practices for Instructional Touch in the Voice Studio: International Congress of Voice Teachers, Vienna, Austria (August)

***Sharing Formal Results***

The committee is scheduled to present its findings during the April 19 Department of Performing Arts faculty/staff meeting.

Professors Kremer and Shively will present seminar in the fall 2023 for all voice and dance instructors (others invited) on their research on best practices for instructional touch in the classroom.

Professor Leamy to share findings at the International Conference Theatre between Tradition and Contemporaneity in Liebnitz, Austria in summer 2023 (pending).

As a cultural competency consultant with experience in providing strategies for creating a foundation of inclusivity, Professor Matos will share research with students in the fall Professional Practices course.

Professor Kremer has will be presenting Instructional Touch in the Voice Studio at the Southeast Theatre Conference, Memphis, TN (March)

Professor Kremer will be presenting Rock n Roll: Acting the Pop/Rock song at the Southeast Theatre Conference, Memphis, TN (March)

Professor Kremer will be presenting Rock the Musical Stage: Auditioning for Musical Theatre with Pop/Rock Songs at the National Association of Teachers of Singing National Conference, Chicago, IL (July)

Professor Kremer will be presenting Repertoire for Trans/Non-binary singing students: A Panel Discussion” at the National Association of Teachers of Singing National Conference, Chicago, IL (July)

Professor Kremer will be presenting Best Practices for Instructional Touch in the Voice Studio at the International Congress of Voice Teachers, Vienna, Austria (August)

***Addendum to Report***

A committee of three – Professors Brian Kremer, John McCarty, and Alexandra Warren – worked throughout the 2021-22 academic year to research, propose, and draft the attached New Curriculum Proposal that will be walked through the curricular revision process at the University. This should be seen as an umbrella to the work of this Diversity Curriculum Grant committee with the goal of creating a more holistic approach to Musical Theatre pedagogy by infusing greater equity, inclusivity, access, and belonging to the foundation of our curriculum and overall, consequently, each student’s overall Elon experience.

***Addendum***

Likert Scale Poll: MTE 3326A, Rock the Music Theatre

The following is out of ten participants who responded to the poll:

1) This course succeeds in decentering and deconstructing the belief that all good singing comes from a classical singing training tradition.

90% Strongly Agree

10% Agree

0% Neutral

0% Disagree

0% Strongly Disagree

2) This course succeeds in decentering and deconstructing the belief that all good song performance comes from a classical acting training tradition.

80% Strongly Agree

20% Agree

0% Neutral

0% Disagree

0% Strongly Disagree