

**MOORES SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
FACULTY MEETING MINUTES: PENDING APPROVAL  
October 4, 2007**

**ATTENDING:** Bates, Bertagnolli, Barton, Benzer, Bertman, Ciesinski, Clark, Clayton, Davis, Doty, Durrani, Evans, Goldberg, Grabiec, Hausmann, Hester, Jones,. Koozin, Kretchmar, Lamkin, Maroney, Mishra, O'Conner, Pollack, Ross, Saradjian, Simon, Snyder, Sposato, Weber, Weems, Wilkins, Wheeler.

Dr. White called the meeting to order at 1:03PM. The minutes from the last meeting were approved.

Ken Ponche was introduced as our new keyboard technician. An expert in restoration from St. Louis, Ken can be reached at kponche@uh.edu.

Dr. White praised recent MSM concerts for quality and increased attendance. He also cited the Faculty Senate sponsored conference Music Across Boundaries, which featured presentations by Katherine Ciesinski, Joseph Evans, Melissa Givens, Timothy Jones, and Howard Pollack.

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the proposed Performer's Certificate. The ad-hoc committee which created the document was present to lead a panel discussion of faculty feedback. Members: Andrew Davis, chair, Cynthia Clayton, Timothy Koozin, Jennifer Mishra, Buck Ross, and Betsy Weber.

As discussion commenced, Betsy Weber read her list of pros and cons for the Certificate. The text is included as an addendum at the end of these minutes.

Questions, comments and suggestions are listed under broad categories below, along with one or more names of faculty who spoke in each case. This is not intended to be a transcript of the meeting or to quote any faculty member verbatim.

**I. Type of student for this program:**

- a new level of student (Weber)
- upper echelon (Clayton)
- not the best of a particular audition day, rather best of an era for a given area (Clayton)
- not the same standard as for MM or DMA applicants (White)
- current students who would be candidates for Certificate: one in flute, voice, cello (White)
- not a program for those who cannot cut the academic expectations of a degree (Ross)
- mostly post-Masters in other programs, but ours will accept post-Bachelors students as well (Davis)
- may be a student currently in our program who can qualify for Certificate upon graduation(Simon)

- goal is to get new students to apply for Certificate rather than picking one out of auditions (Committee)

## **II. TOEFL requirements:**

- requirement questioned since there is no academic coursework (Saradjian)
- ensemble directors voiced issues with poor English skills (Ross)
- University-level discussion going on now about use of TOEFL (White)
- it is possible to waive TOEFL in special cases (Davis)
- 500 is a rock-bottom score on the current test (550 is UH minimum) (Mishra)
- Test of Spoken English another option (Snyder)

## **III. Audition Procedures:**

- visa problems for the required live audition (Saradjian)
- foreign students could send a tape followed by a live audition when they arrive for start of first semester (Wheeler)
- a video is required for Certificate pre-screening and will not replace the live audition round (Davis/Committee)
- assignment of new piece to learn with short notice (48 hours) would be good for piano applicants (Simon)
- no audition feedback mechanism for applicant (Wheeler)
- applicants could video their own auditions to protect confidentiality of committee and faculty opinions (Ciesinski/Snyder/Bertman)

## **IV. Audition Committee:**

- an extra committee decision for entrance into program (Bertman)
  - representation by all applied areas essential (Bertman/Wilkins)
  - large ensemble directors as non-voting members (Bertman)
  - concern that faculty lack competency to judge other areas at this level of student (Bates)
- Four options available: a - c (Davis); d (Wilkins)
- a) current proposal [piano, voice and strings coordinators, opera and orchestra directors, one at-large applied faculty member appointed by MSM director]
  - b) current proposal plus recruiting applied faculty member
  - c) all area coordinators plus one non-voting large ensemble director
  - d) all area coordinators plus recruiting faculty member

## **V. Recital Requirements:**

- four programs is too much (Saradjian)
- three recitals is just as meaningful and will attract more students to the program (Wilkins)
- minimal time to change some technical aspects (White)
- scenario of possible recital dates could be March (second semester) September (third semester) January and April (fourth semester) (Clayton)
- not necessarily all new repertoire for recitals (Clayton)
- repeating old repertoire can bring along old problems (Saradjian)

- one recital prepared on the student's own (without faculty coaching) (Simon)
- a concerto or opera role could substitute for a recital (Weems/Ross)
- one recital could be a mock audition for orchestral repertoire (Wheeler)
- wording of proposal could be altered to "tests" or "hurdles" rather than "recitals" (Ross)

**VI. Other:**

- 5 semesters would be better than 4 (Simon)
- audition preparation could be a focus for practice and study (Wheeler)
- courses on audition techniques (Simon)
- offer a 3-year window to complete the Certificate (Hester)
- find a suitable ensemble for keyboard students at this level (Weems)
- these students will improve every aspect of our school (Pollack)

The meeting was adjourned at 2:04PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Katherine Ciesinski  
Faculty Secretary

**ADDENDUM: Betsy Weber's comments read at the meeting.**

Comments in Support of the Performance Certificate Audition Committee

**The best-case scenario** is that we get students who play or sing wonderfully as soloists and in collaboration, lifting the quality of our concerts and productions, which will in turn draw more and better students to our school, and draw the attention and support of new and newly-energized patrons as well.

Student performers of this caliber will also serve as inspiration and a kind of reality check for our other, degree-seeking students.

Teaching this kind of student will energize the teaching and recruiting efforts of our applied faculty. It is appealing to envision the possibility that some of our adjunct faculty may become very successful in bringing in students who are truly promising performers.

After completion of the program, the performance certificate students will go out and, hopefully, make a name for themselves, for their teachers, and for our schools.

**The worst case scenario** is that we get students who may be better than anyone we have in a particular area or studio, but who are still not viable as eventual professional performers.

They will use scholarship dollars that would otherwise have gone to degree-seeking students (Don't talk to me about the new donations these students are going to bring in. I

do not believe that there will be new patrons eager to support PC students who couldn't also be convinced to support our current performance majors. Money is fungible, and funds that go to PC students are funds that won't go to other, degree-seeking students).

They will occupy places in the orchestra and roles in the opera that would previously have been awarded to degree-seeking students who would also greatly benefit from those experiences. They'll be able to do this in part because they are not burdened with academic coursework, giving them more time to practice, which gives them an advantage over degree-seeking students.

They will occupy studio space and faculty energy that would otherwise go to students who may be less proficient as performers, but who might eventually become more viable in furthering the cause of good music as teachers, researchers, conductors, music administrators, etc. Music ed students are particularly at risk in this scenario, particularly in the areas that are already fairly competitive like voice.

If large numbers of these students fail to achieve entrée into orchestras, apprentice programs, major competitions, etc., the overall reputation of the Moores School will diminish. We will, after all, have staked a big chunk of our reputation on our ability to identify and train professional performers.

Probably most importantly, students who are not truly viable will have devoted two years of their lives and two years' worth of financial resources in the pursuit of a dream that was never really realistic.

So, it is clear that the stakes of initiating this program are very high, and that the possible downside is very real. Because of this, it seems important that there be an audition committee, not to replace the applied area audition, but to supplement it by providing an extra layer of scrutiny. Remember, the PC is not a performance degree; it is fundamentally very different, and having an audition process that is also different will help faculty members, particularly future faculty members, make a formal distinction between the two programs.

There are other reasons why a school-wide audition committee is necessary. **Let me ask you some questions that may help make the point:**

When voting on admitting a student, have you ever voted yes in spite of having serious misgivings because a colleague whom you like and admire was lobbying actively on behalf of a student? I have.

When voting on admitting a student, have you ever heard of people voting yes in spite of misgivings because they want to maintain collegiality and because they might need that person's vote on another day? I have.

When voting on admitting a student, have you ever voted "yes" because you were worn down and tired of being the person who always votes "no?" I have.

When voting on admitting a student, have you ever observed or heard someone say, “I don’t really think that student should be admitted, but John Jones really wants him, and he needs students in his studio?” I have.

Have you ever voted yes in spite of your misgivings because you were told, “He’s really not that good, but the orchestra/opera/wind ensemble/marching band/choir, etc., etc. desperately needs oboes, bassoons, basses, tenors, etc?” I have.

Have you ever heard tales of non-tenured faculty members voting on such things very, very carefully in order to avoid inciting the wrath of more senior colleagues? I have.

Is it difficult to conceive a scenario where adjunct or full-time faculty for that matter, particularly those who are hired in the future, and who don’t have access to our collective institutional memory, who don’t fully understand the mission of the school or the purpose of the certificate program might vote yes simply because a particular student is better than anyone we currently have in a particular area? Some of our areas consist almost entirely of adjunct instructors, and new hires in the coming years are a given.

Of less importance, but still of some significance, the existence of an audition committee ensures that the process and procedures of scheduling and running the live audition are similar and equitable for all students and across all areas.

Give and take occurs at all levels of our work --- in search committees, in barriers, in juries, in recitals, and in admissions. It’s not necessarily a bad thing. I believe, however, that because the performance certificate admissions stakes are so high, and because this program is fundamentally different than a degree program, an audition committee comprised of a wide spectrum of our faculty must exist to provide one more layer of distance and objectivity to the audition process.