

## Self- Assessment

For the past seven years I have served as an assistant professor in the College of Music at Michigan State University. I was hired as a visiting professor for two years and entered the tenure stream system on my third year at MSU. Prior to that moment I had earned an excellent reputation as professional conductor in Venezuela and came to MSU to further my knowledge by pursuing graduate studies. I was fortunate to be offered a position as a faculty member upon completion of my Doctor of Musical Arts degree. The position of Associate Director of Orchestras did not exist before my time and was created to accommodate my hiring. This situation created some challenges as the structure of the orchestra program changed, but also provided me with the unique opportunity of developing my own projects and strategies.

As I write this application for tenure I look back to the last seven years believing I have made an important impact in the College of Music. Challenges aside, I feel rewarded by having developed a synergetic relationship with the faculty and by having served as a motivating force for the students. I feel pleased with what I have learned, and excited, at the same time, at the opportunity of contributing to advance the reputation of the MSU College of Music at the national and international level. It is with the future in mind that I submit this assessment of my teaching, creative and professional activities, as a portion of my application for tenure.

### **TEACHING**

My employment at Michigan State University followed a ten-year career as a professional conductor involving performances of symphonic concerts, ballet, and opera productions. As an active conductor I am able to bring to my students a broad experience in orchestral performance, an extensive knowledge of the orchestral literature, and considerable experience as an administrator.

At this point my responsibilities in the College of Music include the Philharmonic Orchestra, the Opera Theater, the new music ensemble "Musique 21", the seminar of Orchestral Conducting for Choral Conductors, and the coordination of Latin American music related activities. As an educator, my interaction with the students is mostly as an ensemble conductor, and as such it is always my intention to inspire, stimulate, and create the best possible music-making environment. I keep the students excited about orchestral performance by unveiling the wonders of music while providing the technical tools that will allow them to perform at a high artistic level.

### **Philharmonic Orchestra**

This is a very mixed group comprised of undergraduate and graduate music majors as well as non -music majors. The challenge of managing such a diverse group in terms of technical ability and performing experience is overcome by dynamic rehearsal techniques and appropriate repertoire choices that cover the classical to contemporary composers. The Philharmonic Orchestra also provides an opportunity for selected

students to perform as a soloist by having at least one student soloist in every program. This has proven to be an important motivating and recruiting tool for the studio teachers as we conduct internal competitions to win this opportunity. Each Philharmonic concert features a conducting student as well, providing very valuable podium time. The selected student works directly with me during the entire concert cycle receiving several hours of private coaching in baton technique, performance practice, interpretation, and rehearsal technique. The orchestra also performs an active roll in developing new repertoire for this type of ensemble by encouraging the composition of symphonic works. It provides faculty and composition students with a venue for featuring their work.

### **Opera**

In the process of preparing the MSU opera productions I exercise my teaching in four fundamental areas:

a) Preparation of voice students in the appropriate style and performing practice.

As opera deals with memorized music, blocking, and text, I consider myself particularly successful in creating a learning environment that allows the student to perform with absolute confidence and trust that he/she will get from the podium the necessary help to succeed as I conduct the orchestra in the final performance. My language skills make me also a valuable resource when it comes to Italian and Spanish operas.

b) Opera Conducting.

Since my appointment at Michigan State University I have enriched the conducting curriculum with opera conducting experience. Each opera production becomes an intense course in opera conducting for a selected student. The student learns the piece under my supervision and works with me during the entire process of putting the production together. This includes several hours of individual coaching in baton technique, performing practice, interpretation, and rehearsal technique. He/she gets the opportunity to lead several piano rehearsals under my guidance and conducts the last public performance. According to several students, this is considered one of the best learning experiences for conducting students in the College of Music.

c) Opera Accompaniment.

The student selected to be the accompanying pianist for each production becomes my "rehearsal orchestra" and expends many hours playing under my guidance. In this process I make sure that they get an experience that emulates "the real world". During the entire semester I teach them rehearsal techniques, performing practices, orchestra reductions, and some conducting.

d) Preparation of the Opera Orchestra.

As some of our students may have a career playing in an opera house, I give the opera orchestra the necessary tools to work in this particular setting teaching the conventions and performing practices of opera

playing. Considering it to be a valuable experience, each year many students specifically request to be assigned to the Opera Orchestra.

Finally, my position as conductor of several ensembles in the College of Music has benefited the Vocal Area enormously by creating more performance opportunities than ever before. In addition to their participation in our opera productions the voice students now have the opportunity to perform in frequent gala concerts with the Philharmonic, new music programs with Musique 21, and chamber opera productions.

### **Musique 21**

In the fall of 2004 I was assigned the responsibility of taking over a dysfunctional ensemble with major recruiting and organizational problems. Since then I have been able to establish a reputation of excellence in the study and performance of contemporary literature by increasing the amount of rehearsal time and working intensely in logistics and organization. Currently the ensemble is thriving and is perceived by the students as a select group of the best players in the College of Music.

I have taken advantage of its size and flexibility to create several projects going from landmarks of the repertoire, such as [REDACTED] Chamber Symphony, to children's operas like "Monkey See, Monkey Do". I have programmed a well-balanced series of concerts and have arranged master classes and lectures by renowned guest composers to enrich the experience of the students and the audience. The list of visiting artists includes: [REDACTED]

Under my leadership, the impact of Musique 21 in the composition area has become very evident. It provides the composition students with exposure to a wide variety of repertoire and guest artists, and creates performance opportunities for their work. I have also established regular reading sessions of student works, and changed the participation of the ensemble in the Honors Competition in Composition to an annual event.

Musique 21 continues to be committed to the outreach and the promotion of cultural diversity and regularly participates in the MSU Latin American Music Series (see LAMS report). The ensemble was also invited to open the 2007 Chicago Latino Music Festival at the Preston Bradley Hall in the Chicago Cultural Center.

### **Orchestral conducting for choral conductors**

In the fall of 2003 I was asked to develop a biennial graduate course in orchestral conducting that would prepare choral conducting students "cross the bridge" between the choral and the orchestral conducting world. My approach in creating the course was a practical one, covering topics from conducting recitatives to hiring an orchestra. Discussion in the seminar covered communication issues between the choral conductor and the orchestra including terminology, performance decisions that relate to orchestra matters, and pre-rehearsal and rehearsal techniques that will help them use a very limited amount of rehearsal time effectively.

### **Latin American Music**

Beginning with my appointment at MSU I developed a personal project focused on the music from Latin America and the impact of this music in the United States. As part of this Latin American music project I have coordinated lectures, master classes and concerts that have substantially enriched the cultural life of our students and the community at large (see LAMS report attached). This project has enabled me to develop strong professional relationships with Latin American performers, composers and institutions in the US and abroad, and create a reputation of commitment to the promotion of the Latin American culture.

### **RESEARCH**

My personal research agenda is derived from my activity as the conductor of three MSU ensembles and director of the Latin American Music Series. This activity creates the challenge of searching for and studying a huge amount of repertoire resulting in numerous world and US premieres. As a result I have been able to establish a reputation as a scholar in Latin American music. One of the projects that holds a special place in my career at MSU, is the university premiere of [REDACTED] opera [REDACTED] Amazonas that was performed and webcasted in 2007. I was able to bring the composer to campus setting up lectures, master classes, and interviews that are still available at:  
[REDACTED]

The research and promotion of the repertoire particularly of Latin American composers continues to be the center of my research activity. Last year I was contacted by the most important theaters in Spain [REDACTED] with an offer to attend one of their productions paid by the Spanish Minister of Culture, demonstrating that I am perceived as an influential musician in promoting the repertoire.

Another valuable outcome of my research is the increment in the holdings of Latin American music in our music library. I have acquired numerous performance materials and I have coordinated acquisitions and donations of hard to find materials for the main library.

### **RECRUITING**

I have put especial emphasis in recruiting highly qualified students, especially those from Latin America. In doing this I have been able to help fill principal chairs in several sections of the MSU symphony. Recruiting strategies have included:

- Identifying potential students from Latin America that are currently in the US
- Contacting potential students during my frequent trips to Latin America
- Making personal contact with these students through phone calls or emails
- Guiding students through the application process
- Helping other faculty in communicating with Latin American students
- Networking with institutions here and abroad to advertise the quality of our music program
- Serving as adjudicator for competitions at high schools and universities

- Establishing contact with music educators and teachers offering myself for clinics or master classes
- Appearing in radio and television programs (especially in Venezuela where my performances are regularly broadcasted on TV)

### **OUTREACH**

Besides a large amount of public performances on campus I continue to make the College of Music and myself very visible locally, nationally, and internationally. I have served as adjudicator and clinician for high schools and colleges such as Cass Tech in Detroit, Indiana University in Bloomington, and the National Philharmonic orchestra in Venezuela. I have developed outreach projects that include performances for the public schools with strong emphasis in the promotion of cultural diversity (Monkey See, Monkey Do: a children opera based on a Mexican folk tale). I continue to have a conducting career with public appearances at the local, national, and international level, which include performing in the very specialized field of ballet conducting with Ballet Nacional de Caracas in Venezuela, Ballet Florida in West Palm Beach and Ballet Concierto in Puerto Rico. I continue to receive frequent invitations to guest conduct the top symphony orchestras in Venezuela with regular performances every year and have recently conducted symphony orchestras in Peru and China. This upcoming year will include an engagement as conductor of the Lubeck Theater Opera Orchestra in Lubeck, Germany with performances on November 10-11, 2008.

### **FUTURE PLANS**

I continue to be committed to excellence as a musician. I plan to continue developing a career as a professional conductor by seeking opportunities to perform with world-class orchestras, ballet, and opera companies. I plan to continue networking with artist and scholars in the US and abroad establishing relations that will increase the visibility of the College of Music and my own. I plan to concentrate efforts in commissioning as many works as possible, contributing to extend the universal repertoire. I plan to continue a symbiotic relation with the MSU faculty, and I plan to continue an open relation with the students who have in me an accessible teacher and mentor.

I look forward to developing these plans and to grow even more as an artist and as a person in the coming years.

Thank you very much for reviewing the enclosed materials in support of my promotion and tenure.

  
Assistant Professor  
Michigan State University