TO: URECA Committee

FROM: Dr. William Yelverton, School of Music Faculty Mentor

RE: Letter for (Student's Name)

DATE: 9/1/20

I’m pleased to recommend my student (Student's Name) as a URECA Scholar level applicant. He is the best Junior level student in the MTSU Guitar program and has had a particularly productive summer, learning and recording new music for the guitar. He is a motivated and intelligent student who has a proven ability and work ethic to complete projects once they are started. For example, he learned the entire *Suite Populaire Brasilienne* by H. Villa Lobos, a lengthy multi movement work without much assistance in between semesters. He also the technical abilities with software and equipment to self-produce quality scores, audio, and video recordings of his performances. Above all, he is coachable and works well within my studio and is a receptive learner. This makes him a perfect candidate for such a creative endeavor as he is proposing in this URECA Grant. I give him my highest recommendation and have no doubt he will complete this project and it will be a worthwhile venture yielding a meaningful body of work.
Classical Guitar Transcriptions and Recordings of Popular Songs and Soundtracks

Submitted by (Student's Name)

Introduction

The applicant is a Junior Classical Guitar Performance Major at MTSU going into his 5th semester. While studying under Professor William Yelverton he has continued to sculpt his classical guitar abilities and have gained what the applicant feels is a unique perspective on music in doing so. Classical guitar is a solo instrument capable of multi textural music, similar to a solo piano, but the classical guitar also has to work within idiomatic limitations. As the applicant first began transcribing, learning, performing, solo guitar transcriptions from various game and movie soundtracks in summer 2019, it became apparent the idiosyncrasies and challenges of this practice.

Goals

The goal for this URECA grant is to produce video/audio recordings plus transcribed scores of popular songs and soundtracks. The plan is to transcribe 10 songs/pieces with respective standard notation, tablature, and a demonstration video. Such music transcriptions would be particularly accessible to the youth, and could serve as an introduction to a new generation of classical guitarists. Transcriptions of popular and recently released music can also serve as an effective educational tool as a student is far more likely to practice their instrument when learning a piece that they know or have heard before. Another important reason for this is that the field of classical guitar will hopefully be expanded into vaster audiences who don’t already listen to classical guitar. An example of one song to be transcribed would be “my future” by Billie Eilish which within it’s first month has already been streamed over 50 million times on Youtube.
Another popular selection to be transcribed is excerpts from the *Runescape* soundtrack. The soundtrack features contrapuntal elements and a wide selection of instrumentation that makes it perfect for an introduction to classical music. The soundtrack is widely celebrated among younger audiences and several of its tracks have hundreds of thousands of views including the track “Forever” which will be transcribed as part of this project.

**Methods**

The first step would be to search the internet for sheet music for the piece that will be transcribed. It won’t be classical guitar sheet music but it would still help the transcriber ascertain the proper chord inversions and other harmonic properties. Usually such transcriptions are for solo piano. Generally the applicant will try to find multiple sources of sheet music to rule out any inconsistencies and use original audio recordings to find what works best. One major inconsistency could be the key that the piece is played in. Figuring out which key to transcribe a piece to is dictated by one of the guitar's limitations. In order to make a transcription worthwhile to play, the guitarist must have access to at least one, but preferably all, of the open wound(bass) strings. The best keys are E, A, & D. For an example of this, if a piece's original key is Gb the applicant would transpose the piece up a half step to G before even attempting to transcribe it onto a solo guitar. Once there is an understanding of how the piece functions harmonically, the first step would be playing the melody on guitar in a monophonic fashion. Shortly after, adding in a second voice starting with bass notes. Once the transcription consists of a stripped down version of just melody and root notes the next step is to add in full chords. The transcription will be noted with the Musescore3 notational software program. During the notation process the applicant will also deduce the best fingerings and add in the appropriate dynamic and tempo markings. The final step is getting a proper audio and then video recording for the demonstration.
video, which will be done all at the applicants home studio. The audio will be recorded on an audio-technica AT2035 microphone through a Scarlett 2i2 interface, and onto Ableton Live 10 digital audio workspace. The video will be recorded using a Panasonic HC-V770 in a variety of scenic locations. Finally the video editing will be done within Adobe Premiere. The finished product will be uploaded to Youtube for anyone to see and the notated transcription will also be made available. The best way to approach the task is by transcribing, learning, then recording each piece before moving on to another.

Working with Mentor

The applicant has an hour lesson with Professor Yelverton every week. The applicant will play the transcription during these once a week lessons and have Prof. Yelverton not only critique his playing and fingerings but also play through the piece himself. This is crucial because a big part of what will make these transcriptions accessible to other guitarists is the idiomatic success of the transcription. In other words, having two guitarists of varying backgrounds and skill levels play the same thing would give me a better idea of just how difficult a piece actually is, whether it’s too difficult or if the music could be transcribed differently. Another integral part of this project that the mentor will help with applying the proper or at least best suited fingerings for these transcriptions.

Works Cited:

my future by Billie Eilish - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dm9Zf1WYQ_A

Forever by Ian Taylor - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HGgIHyOTHS8
Timeline

- October 5th: Project Start Date
- October 5th - October 9th: Research reference sheet music and begin transcription process for piece 1. 3 hours
- October 10th - 12th: Continue transcription process and notate piece 1 in a professional manner. 4 hours
- October 13th - 18th: Practice piece 1 and record audio for demonstration video. 10 hours
- October 19th - 21st: Record and edit video for piece 1 demonstration video. 3 hours
- October 22nd - October 25th: Research reference sheet music and begin transcription process for piece 2. 3 hours
- October 26th - 28th: Continue transcription process and notate piece 2 in a professional manner. 4 hours
- October 29th - November 2nd: Practice piece 2 and record audio for demonstration video. 10 hours
- November 3rd - 5th: Record and edit video for piece 2 demonstration video. 3 hours
- November 6th - 10th: Research reference sheet music and begin transcription process for piece 3. 3 hours
- November 11th - 14th: Continue transcription process and notate piece 3 in a professional manner. 4 hours
- November 15th - 22nd: Practice piece 3 and record audio for demonstration video. 10 hours
- November 23rd - 26th: Record and edit video for piece 3 demonstration video. 3 hours
- November 27th - 30th: Research reference sheet music and begin transcription process for piece 4. 3 hours
- December 1st - 4th: Continue transcription process and notate piece 4 in a professional manner. 4 hours
- December 5th - 12th: Practice piece 4 and record audio for demonstration video. 10 hours
- December 13th - 16th: Record and edit video for piece 4 demonstration video. 3 hours
- December 17th - January 3rd: Winter break
- January 4th - 7th: Research reference sheet music and begin transcription process for piece 5. 3 hours
- January 8th - 13th: Continue transcription process and notate piece 5 in a professional manner. 4 hours
- January 14th: 21st: Practice piece 5 and record audio for demonstration video. 10 hours
- January 22nd - 24th: Record and edit video for piece 5 demonstration video. 3 hours
- January 25th - 28th: Research reference sheet music and begin transcription process for piece 6. 3 hours
• January 29th - February 4th: Continue transcription process and notate piece 6 in a professional manner. 4 hours

• February 5th : 15th: Practice piece 6 and record audio for demonstration video. 10 hours

• February 16th -20th: Record and edit video for piece 6 demonstration video. 3 hours

• February 21st - 25th: Research reference sheet music and begin transcription process for piece 7. 3 hours

• February 26th - March 2nd: Continue transcription process and notate piece 7 in a professional manner. 4 hours

• March 3rd - 11th: Practice piece 7 and record audio for demonstration video. 10 hours

• March 12th - 14th: Record and edit video for piece 7 demonstration video. 3 hours

• March 15th - 19th: Research reference sheet music and begin transcription process for piece 8. 3 hours

• March 20th - 24th: Continue transcription process and notate piece 8 in a professional manner. 4 hours

• March 25th - 31st: Practice piece 8 and record audio for demonstration video. 10 hours

• April 1st - 3rd: Record and edit video for piece 8 demonstration video. 3 hours

• April 4th - 7th: Research reference sheet music and begin transcription process for piece 9. 3 hours
• April 8th - 12th: Continue transcription process and notate piece 9 in a professional manner. 4 hours

• April 13th - 20th: Practice piece 9 and record audio for demonstration video. 10 hours

• April 21st - 23rd: Record and edit video for piece 9 demonstration video. 3 hours

• April 24th - 27th: Research reference sheet music and begin transcription process for piece 10. 3 hours

• April 28th - May 1st: Continue transcription process and notate piece 10 in a professional manner. 4 hours

• May 2nd - May 8th: Practice piece 10 and record audio for demonstration video. 10 hours

• May 9th - 11th: Record and edit video for piece 10 demonstration video. 3 hours

• May 11th: Project End Date
The budgetary needs will consist of a discretionary fund of $100 for the purchase of sheet music, primarily for recently released popular songs and to be purchased on the website Music Notes. An Example of Sheet Music Prices on Music Notes

As well as a budget of $200 for the purchase of D’Addario Pro-Arte Classical Guitar Strings. The applicant came to this number by predicting changing his strings slightly less frequently than once a week over the course of 28 weeks. An Example of the price D’Addario Pro-Arte Classical Guitar Strings 3 Pack: