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Prof. Shapiro

THD07351 - Producing and the Arts

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### Project Description

The project I will be working on throughout this course is a tribute concert to Stephen Sondheim in honor of his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday and his unparalleled influence on musical theatre. The concert will chronicle the entire span of Sondheim's career from the beginning when he was working as Oscar Hammerstein's apprentice, to his work as a lyricist with the likes of Arthur Laurents and Leonard Bernstein, and Sondheim's most celebrated works such as *Into the Woods*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Company* and beyond. There will be narration throughout the concert to give the audience context as to where these songs are coming from in their respected musicals and their significance in the Stephen Sondheim catalogue. The concert will highlight professional performers and musicians who have a deep affinity for Sondheim's music. The concert will take place on May 1, 2020 with one performance at the Green Room 42 in New York City. Rehearsals will be for two weeks leading up to the performances at 48<sup>th</sup> Street Studios in New York City, with a dress rehearsal at Green Room 42 the day of the performance. The estimated cost for this project is \$15,000 to cover the venue rental, musician, director/producer, musical director and performers compensation, rights and licenses for selections, as well as sound and light rentals.

In producing and developing this concert, I hope to honor a musical theatre legend while also allowing performers and musicians the opportunity to interpret his work in way that is unique to them. I hope to challenge both our audience and performers to think of Sondheim's whole career as an artist. Let us also look back to the beginning of his career, working under the likes of Oscar

Hammerstein, Arthur Laurents and Leonard Bernstein and how those experiences influenced his own work. It is also important to have narration to give the audience a better understanding of the musicals Sondheim created. May the audience also reflect as to how these musicals are relevant today and how Stephen Sondheim influenced today's modern musical theatre as we know it.

Performing Sondheim is a challenge and a gift for any musical theatre artist. This concert is the perfect opportunity to take on that challenge and interpret this music in a way that is unique to them.

Being that this project is celebrating Stephen Sondheim, the musicality, and presentation of the concert, as well as the significance of each selection will be the most important values. I also want to give local audiences the opportunity to hear this music performed and interpreted live. Therefore, I want to keep the ticket prices modestly affordable, without underselling the event. I would like to have a five-piece professional band (piano, strings, percussion, woodwind, and brass) to accompany the performers. This will allow the selections to have a rich sound, without the performers having to compete with a full-size orchestra for volume.

The focus should be on how the performers interpret Sondheim's music. Therefore, lavish sets and production values will not be required. Being that there are countless musical selections in the Stephen Sondheim catalogue to choose from, I would have to limit selection of repertoire to pieces that are truly significant. Criteria for significance can be defined here as a piece that speaks to the overarching theme of the musical it is from, how the composition of the piece speaks to Sondheim's unique writing style or if it is a popular standard such as "Send in the Clowns" and "Children Will Listen". This final result will be an evening that is both a celebration of music that is beloved, deep, rich and luxurious to perform and listen to by so many, while also a celebration of a legend.