

Czech Language & Song Discovery

PRESSER GRADUATE MUSIC AWARD PROPOSAL
CHARLES DUGAN

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ABSTRACT

Receiving the Presser Graduate Music Award will enable me to study the Czech language, culture, and song literature for two months during the summer of 2019. Study with native speakers of Czech provides the groundwork for a lecture recital and additional concerts at the Frost School of Music and other select venues. In addition, from this experience I will create a Czech song database with interpretation and pronunciation guides, course syllabi, and a workbook available to Frost School of Music faculty and students, which may be used to supplement new Czech Diction and Literature courses. These materials and performances will directly benefit the vocal area curriculum by expanding and diversifying available Czech diction and literature resources beyond that which is currently available.

REVIEW AND COMMENTARY

In 2001, University of Michigan professor Timothy Cheek wrote the first guide for English singers on how to sing in Czech.¹ According to Lisa Howell, D.M.A., a university professor and contributor to *Opera Journal*, in the intervening decades since Cheek's initial publication, the popularity of singing in Czech has grown from being obscure to widely accepted.² In a separate review of Cheek's guide, Margaret Kennedy-Dygas, former Dean of the College of Fine Arts at Ohio University, points out: *because of a sharp worldwide increase in Czech opera being performed in the native language, there is now a need for modern professional singers to "be trained to sing in Czech to the same standard of excellence which is expected in Italian, French, German, or English."*³

Howell and Kennedy-Dygas, despite their recognition of the excellent work done by Cheek in his repertoire and diction guide, lament the limitations of studying from a book alone. Howell acknowledges the necessity of hearing a native speaker when studying a foreign language.⁴ Kennedy-Dygas points out that, "most English-speaking professional singers would work with a language coach before venturing on stage to sing in [Czech]."⁵ Internationally acclaimed soprano, Renée Fleming, in a 2009 interview on a Prague radio program comments, "What's interesting is that when I began singing [Czech] 20 years ago, 25 years ago, people were not singing in Czech at all. So it was very difficult to find anybody to teach me ... Now young singers are reading Czech, reading the language and learning the language, and have no

¹ Timothy Cheek, *Singing in Czech: A Guide to Czech Lyric Diction and Vocal Repertoire* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2001).

² Lisa M. Howell, "Singing in Czech: A Guide to Czech Lyric Diction and Vocal Repertoire, Revised Edition," *Opera Journal* 48, no. 3 (Sept 2015): 57.

³ Margaret Kennedy-Dygas, "'Singing in Czech: A Guide to Czech Lyric Diction and Vocal Repertoire,' by Timothy Cheek." *Notes - Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* 58, no. 4 (June 2002): 847.

⁴ Howell, 57.

⁵ Kennedy-Dygas, 848

fear about it.”⁶ Unfortunately, Czech diction and song literature is not taught at the University of Miami.

OBJECTIVE

I am writing this grant request to spend July and August 2019 studying the Czech language and Czech song literature in Prague, Czech Republic. It is imperative that the study be done in the Czech Republic. There is no more immediate and richer way to absorb the sound and nuance of Czech than in its native environment. The lessons, coachings, and coursework that I have outlined in the detailed budget (pg. 6), concentrate on language learning, cultural exploration and work with professional singing teachers who are native speakers of Czech or specialists in Czech song literature. The foundation of the study will be participation in a minimum of 200 hours of instruction in Czech language at the historic Charles University.

I will bring the unique opportunities found in the exploration of Czech vocal music back to the University of Miami for presentation in a lecture recital during the Fall 2019 semester. Ideally, this also fulfills a partial requirement for my degree. Currently, the only resource available to students who are interested in Czech vocal literature is the guide written by Cheek. As a product of my study, I am producing a database of Czech vocal literature similar to those that are compiled and already in use by students in the University of Miami graduate-level vocal pedagogy courses for French, German, and English Art Song for Teaching. To augment the database for accessibility to students that are not familiar with Czech, I will include pronunciation guides in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), and spoken recordings by native speakers, making this useful to *any* interested vocal student. This kind of resource is currently unavailable to singing students and expands on the available work of Cheek, which only covers seven composers and fewer than eighty songs and arias. To make the database more useful I will provide course syllabi for Czech Voice Diction and Vocal Literature, like those that I have prepared for French and German Diction, which I help teach for the voice area. Beyond the coming fall performance, and creative materials, the ability to sing in the Czech Language, with the added skill of reading and capacity to explore Czech song literature without the need for translation, will distinguish me as a teacher and professional singer.

WHY CZECH?

- The scholarship of singing performers is literature investigation and comparison (culminating in its interpretation). Historically, most of this scholarship, especially in American vocal programs, is regrettably limited to songs composed in French, German, and Italian. There is a certain exoticism many singers feel toward languages outside the bubble of the standard repertoire, Czech included. Compared to the frequency that the

⁶ Ian Willoughby, “Opera Star Renée Fleming Discusses Her Czech Roots, Singing in the Language, and a Planned Duet with Lou Reed in Prague in November,” Radio Praha, Accessed February 1, 2019, <https://www.radio.cz/en/section/arts/opera-star-renee-fleming-discusses-her-czech-roots-singing-in-the-language-and-a-planned-duet-with-lou-reed-in-prague-in-november>.

compositions of major Czech composers are performed at instrumental and orchestral concerts, the same composers are underrepresented in voice recitals... and the language is the obstacle.

- All successfully trained classical singers must show some level of competency in Italian, French, German and English. These competencies, however essential, are standard accomplishments and fail to distinguish a teacher or performer as exceptional.
- French and Italian stem from the Romantic language family; English and German from the Germanic family of languages. Czech is a Slavic language written with the Latin alphabet with diacritical markings (accents). In this facet, Czech is similar to French, German, and Italian. This distinction makes it an approachable subject of study and an important bridge to the interpretation of song literature in other Slavic languages which are written with the Cyrillic alphabet (e.g. Russian and Ukrainian). Not having to learn a new alphabet is one less obstacle to absorption of the new language and points to greater productivity during the proposed study.
- The Czech Republic is an Eastern European country that neighbors Germany, Austria, Poland and Slovakia. The university already acknowledges the importance of German language composers' contributions to song and vocal literature by requiring German Diction (a class that I help teach at the University of Miami) for undergraduate vocal performance majors. Consider the interconnected nature of the region: the Frost School of Music hosts a music festival dedicated to singing in Salzburg, Austria. Salzburg is actually closer to Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic, than Miami is to Orlando! The influence and exchange of musical ideas in the region is older than the countries themselves, and yet this music remains obscure in American vocal programs.
- Working with professional artists in the Czech Republic opens up the opportunity to meet and engage composers and repertoire that are new not only to me, but also to the Frost School of Music. I pledge to dedicate an equal portion of my repertoire study to new music and female composers.

CONCLUSION

There is a worldwide surge in the performance of operas and vocal music in Czech, but in most American singing degrees Czech vocal literature is a mystery that occupies the margins of the singing artform. The significant contributions of major and emergent Czech composers deserve to be explored and shared. Access to the Czech culture and its vocal literature rests at arm's-length. Having a functional knowledge of Czech as a part of my skillset as a performer makes me exponentially more hireable. As a teacher and scholar, it diversifies and deepens the curriculum, experience, and worldview that I will share with my students. Receipt of the 2019 Presser Graduate Music Award will directly benefit the vocal music program at the Frost School of Music, providing a material resource to University of Miami students that is unavailable in any other existing publication.

BUDGET OUTLINE

Item	Dates/Info	Anticipated Cost
1. Language Courses	a. <u>Czech Summer School</u> July 1 – July 28, 2019	\$890 (780 €)
	b. <u>Czech Language and Culture</u> July 29 – Aug 23, 2019	\$705 (620 €)
2. Singing Lessons	20 lessons x \$85 (75 €)	\$1700
3. Singing Coaching	10 coachings x \$115 (100 €)	\$1150
EDUCATION PRE-TOTAL:		\$4405
4. Travel	a. <u>Airfare</u> Depart: June 29, 2019 Return: August 25, 2019	\$1210 roundtrip (viewed Jan 20, 2019)
	b. <u>Public Transit Pass</u> (2 months)	\$25 (550 CZK)
5. Room	<u>Hotel</u> June 30, August 24-25, 2019	\$350
	<u>Apartment</u> July 1 – July 28, 2019	\$410 (360 €)
	July 29 – Aug 23, 2019	\$710 (620 €)
6. Phone		\$300 (anticipated)
7. Travel Medical Insurance	SevenCorners	\$255
TRAVEL & ROOM PRE-TOTAL:		\$3023
8. Expenses and Food (as remainder)	\$40 / day (57 days)	\$2325
TRIP TOTAL:		\$10,000

BUDGET DETAIL BY ITEM

1. Language Courses **\$1595****a. Czech Summer School**

The Czech Summer School is a month-long program hosted by the Institute for Language and Preparatory Studies at Charles University in Prague. The course focuses on reading, speaking and writing Czech. Classwork takes place daily from 9:00 am to 1:15 with opportunities for extracurricular cultural-educational activities.

More information can be found online at: <http://ujop.cuni.cz/en/course/czech-summer-school-prague>

b. Czech Language and Culture Course

The Czech Language and Culture Course is a month-long program hosted by the Institute for Language and Preparatory Studies at Charles University in Prague. The Culture course expands on the foundation of the Summer School mentioned above with continued intensive language instruction coupled with planned afternoon and evening activities focused on Czech literature, music, film and other cultural facets. Classwork takes place from 9:00 am to 1:15 five days a week.

More information can be found online at: <http://ujop.cuni.cz/en/course/czech-language-and-culture-course>

2. Singing Lessons **\$1700**

Twenty voice lessons focused on Czech diction, language, literature discovery, song interpretation, and vocal technique.

Karolína Berková, mezzo-soprano, is a native Czech speaker, professional singer and vocal pedagogue. She is a graduate of the Academy of Performic Arts in Prague and has won the International Singing Competition of Ema Destinn, and was a laureate of the International Singing Competition of Antonín Dvořák. She maintains a vibrant international singing career and an active teaching studio through the New York University Global Program in Music. She is a specialist in Czech vocal literature and has committed to the duration of study afforded in the grant.

More information can be found online at: <http://berkova.cz/en/home/> and <https://www.nyu.edu/prague/academics/music-program/music-faculty.html#Vocal>

3. Singing Coaching \$1150

Ten coachings focused on Czech diction, language, literature discovery, song interpretation, general musicality and collaborative music making.

Timothy Cheek, associate professor of vocal arts at the University of Michigan is a collaborative pianist and vocal coach specializing in the preparation of Czech art song and opera roles. He was an intern at the National Theatre in Prague. He is an accomplished performer, pedagogue and an unofficial emissary of Czech vocal music. His book, *Singing in Czech* set a new standard for teaching of foreign-language lyric diction. He is a vocal coach with the Prague Summer Nights Festival in the historic city of Tábor, Czechia.⁷

More information can be found online at: <https://smttd.umich.edu/about/faculty-profiles/timothy-cheek/> and <https://praguesummernights.com/about/faculty/>

4. Travel \$1235

a. Airfare

American and British Airways flights from Miami International Airport to Prague International Airport and back.

Depart: Saturday, July 29, 2019

Return: Sunday, August 25, 2019

More information can be found online at: <https://flights.app.goo.gl/guuvvY>

b. Public Transit Pass

Two month pass to use public transit in the Prague metro area.

More information can be found online at:

http://www.myczechrepublic.com/prague/tickets_fares.html

5. Room \$1470

a. Hotel

Three evenings total, prior to lodging availability as detailed below.

⁷ Although I have been in correspondence with Dr. Cheek, because his parent is presently in hospice care, he has been unable to commit to a summer schedule. He asked for several weeks before being able to do so, and I wish to respect that request in this sensitive time for his family. In the interim, I have reached out to several other highly qualified native Czech vocal coaches to secure their availability for the duration of the grant request. My hope is to work with Mrs. Bariková to network with several musicians who will be in Prague and Czechia for the summer music festivals.

Hotel Mala Strana

Melnicka 9, Mala Strana, Prague, 150 00, Czech Republic, 800-491-7598

Sunday, June 30, 2019 - Monday, July 1, 2019 and

Friday, August 23, 2019 – Sunday, August 25, 2019

More information can be found in the additional materials attached to this request, Appendix: Item A.

b. Apartment

Two month residency coordinated through the Institute for Language and Preparatory Studies at Charles University in Prague. Single room with facilities.

Ubytovna Vratislavova

Vratislavova 29/10, Prague 2

July 1, 2019 – August 23, 2019

More information can be found online at: <http://apartments-vysehrad.bezvadovca.cz/accommodation/> and <http://ujop.cuni.cz/en/course/czech-language-and-culture-course>

6. Phone**\$300**

Anticipated maximum cost of international carrier service, which may be a new contract through a Czech mobile carrier or an extension of my existing Verizon Wireless service.

International SIM card, two month wireless service contract.

7. Travel Medical Insurance**\$255**

SevenCorners Liaison Student Elite catastrophic medical insurance plan available only to students or educators. Moderate level of maximum financial coverage with no deductible, approved for the Czech republic during the duration of the grant request.

More information can be found in the additional materials attached to this request, Appendix: Item B and at: <https://www.sevencorners.com/products/student-travel#/quote>

8. Expenses and Food**\$2325**

Allowance averaging \$40 per day.

Anticipated expenditures beyond meals include instrument or practice space rental, concert attendance, cultural excursion, and trips to Tábor (30 mins via train not included in metro area public transport) for lessons and coachings.

CITATIONS

Cheek, Timothy. *Singing in Czech: A Guide to Czech Lyric Diction and Vocal Repertoire* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2001).

Howell, Lisa M. "Singing in Czech: A Guide to Czech Lyric Diction and Vocal Repertoire, Revised Edition." *Opera Journal* 48, no. 3 (09, 2015): 57-59.
<http://access.library.miami.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1724913385?accountid=14585>.

Kennedy-Dygas, Margaret. "'Singing in Czech: A Guide to Czech Lyric Diction and Vocal Repertoire,' by Timothy Cheek." *Notes - Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* 58, no. 4 (06, 2002): 847-848.
<http://access.library.miami.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1109779?accountid=14585>.

Willoughby, Ian. "Opera Star Renée Fleming Discusses Her Czech Roots, Singing in the Language, and a Planned Duet with Lou Reed in Prague in November." *Radio Praha*. Accessed February 1, 2019.
<https://www.radio.cz/en/section/arts/opera-star-renee-fleming-discusses-her-czech-roots-singing-in-the-language-and-a-planned-duet-with-lou-reed-in-prague-in-november>.

APPENDIX

ITEM A

[See all Prague hotels](#) Sun June 30 - Mon July 1, 2019, 1 night, 1 room, 1 adult [Change search](#)

Destination, property, or landmark
Hotel Mala Strana, Prague, Czech Republic

Check in
06/30/19
Sunday

Check out
07/01/19
Monday
1 night

Rooms
1

Adults
1
Aged 18+

Children
0
0-17

Search

Hotel Mala Strana, Prague 3-star
Meznická 9, Mala Strana, Prague, 150 00, Czech Republic
City-center hotel within easy reach of Prague National Theatre
✓ Free breakfast and free WiFi Collect nights

Special deal
~~\$76~~ **\$68**
Book Now

Price Guarantee

Jump to: [Overview](#) | [Room choices](#) | [Map](#) | [Reviews](#) | [What's around](#) | [Hotel information](#)

[See all Prague hotels](#) Fri August 23 - Sun August 25, 2019, 2 nights, 1 room, 1 adult [Change search](#)

Destination, property, or landmark
Hotel Mala Strana, Prague, Czech Republic

Check in
08/23/19
Friday

Check out
08/25/19
Sunday
2 nights

Rooms
1

Adults
1
Aged 18+

Children
0
0-17

Search


Hotel Mala Strana, Prague 3-star
Meznická 9, Mala Strana, Prague, 150 00, Czech Republic, 800-491-7598
City-center hotel within easy reach of Prague National Theatre
✓ Free breakfast and free WiFi Collect nights

Special deal
~~\$140~~ **\$99**
nightly price per room
Book Now

Price Guarantee

Jump to: [Overview](#) | [Room choices](#) | [Map](#) | [Reviews](#) | [What's around](#) | [Hotel information](#)

ITEM B

 **SEVEN CORNERS**

1 Your Quote ✓

2 Customize ✓

3 Details

4 Review

Liaison® Student Elite
Price: \$254.40
Dates: 06/29/2019 to 08/25/2019
Destination Country: CZECH REPUBLIC
Deductible Per Person Per Disablement: \$0.00
Medical Maximum Per Person Per Disablement: \$50,000.00
Hazardous Activities: Declined
[✎ Edit your information](#)

YOUR AGENT
Seven Corners, Inc. Online
800-335-0611
303 Congressional Blvd.
Carmel, Indiana 46032
USA
online@sevendcorners.com
<http://www.sevendcorners.com>