

Scholarly Reflection

AY 2024-2025

Awards and Grants

In spring 2025, I received the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Scholarship and Creative Activities. These system-level honors acknowledge and provide system-wide recognition for consistently superior professional achievement and to encourage the ongoing pursuit of excellence. The award for Scholarship supports the pursuits foundational to sustaining the intellectual growth of SUNY institutions by recognizing consistently outstanding scholarly and creative productivity, conducted in addition to teaching, by SUNY's instructional/teaching faculty. I was really honored to receive this recognition, and also grateful to colleagues who took the time to submit the application materials.

I successfully applied for several pools of money to complete research trips, including the IDA Award from UUP in Spring 2025. This IDA award was used to fund partially fund a sabbatical research trip to the New York Public Library, Performing Arts Division. I also received funding from the Crane Professional Development Fund in Spring 2025, used to partially fund a sabbatical research trip to the New York Public Library, Performing Arts Division.

Explication of Completed Presentations and Publications

In Fall 2024, my contribution to a colloquy on music, sound, and trauma appeared in print in volume 78 of the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*. This colloquy was the first work on the emerging discipline of trauma studies in music to appear in *JAMS*, and included an introduction and short pieces by six scholars. Entitled "'When the Echoes of the Last Shots Have Ceased': Hearing Nineteenth-Century Trauma," my contribution focused on ways of hearing historical trauma prior to the era of sound recordings. Quoting from the colloquy's introduction, the editors noted: "Erin Brooks excavates the role of sound in trauma's development as a modern concept in nineteenth-century France. Brooks finds sonic traces in archival sources and examines how testimonies of traumatizing sound-events during the Franco-Prussian war require consideration of the authors' social, cultural, and geographical positionalities. Brooks draws on postcolonial work on trauma to emphasize positionality, which she describes as encompassing how people hear sound from their physical locations and their cultural, ethnic, and political positions."

I also published a book review in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society* in Spring 2025. The review discussed Jacek Blaszkiewicz's *Fanfare for a City: Music and the Urban Imagination in Haussmann's Paris* (UC Press, 2023). *JAMS* is the premiere journal of record for American musicological scholarship, and I was honored to be asked to review Jacek's work on nineteenth-century French music and sound studies.

My new work on singing competitions, race, and meritocracy was accepted as a paper for the American Musicological Society annual meeting in Chicago in November 2024. Typically about eight hundred abstracts are submitted for consideration for the annual meeting; after anonymous assessment by a

panel of musicologists, about ¼ of abstracts are accepted for inclusion in the meeting. My paper, “Winning Fame and Fortune? Race and Operatic Competitions in Mid-Century America,” analyzed three case studies on meritocracy and racial inclusion in voice contests: the Metropolitan Opera Auditions of the Air in the 1930s, the Marian Anderson Awards in the 1930s-1950s, and Cold War singing contests such as the Tchaikovsky Competition. I conducted archival research for this project in the Marian Anderson Archives in Philadelphia, PA in fall 2024.

During this year’s AMS meeting I also continued my work as founding co-chair of the AMS Music, Sound, and Trauma Study Group. My co-chairs and I organized and held a film screening and talkback on excerpts from Janie Cole and Shameela Seedat’s *WE ARE NOT AFRAID: Music and Resistance in Apartheid Prisons*. I also co-led the study group business meeting.

My co-editors and I continue work on editing and commissioning essays for the contracted *Oxford Handbook of Music, Sound, and Trauma* in 2 volumes, to be delivered to Oxford in January 2027. This is a huge amount of ongoing work—usually weekly meetings—and will ramp up in 2025 and 2026.

My sabbatical project (see addendum to the end of this scholarly reflection) focused on two interrelated projects on music, media, and technology. The second part included work on my book manuscript *Operatic Listening: The Metropolitan Opera Radio Broadcasts, Culture, and Identity*. I completed two archival research trips for my book, spending time in the Library of Congress Recorded Sound Division and the New York Public Library Performing Arts Division.

Upcoming Presentations and Publications/Future Plans

I continue to work on research in the area of music, sound, and trauma. I submitted a paper for a conference on “Theorizing Trauma and Disability in the Arts and Music” to be held at UCLA in February 2025. This paper—focused on my work on polio—was accepted, but the conference was rescheduled for October 2025 due to the LA wildfires.

I have submitted edits for a chapter “Tuning In: Race, Listening, and the Metropolitan Opera Radio Broadcasts” in the edited collection *Black Identities on the Operatic Stage*, ed. Naomi André, Elizabeth Keathley, and Kristen Turner. This has already undergone one round of edits, with an eye on submission to Oxford University Press in fall 2025.

I have submitted a paper as part of a panel on music and myths of meritocracy for the fall 2025 meeting of the Royal Music Association in Southampton, England. This paper has been accepted, and will be part of a 3-paper panel on the topic.

I am continuing to work on my monograph *Operatic Listening: The Metropolitan Opera Radio Broadcasts, Culture, and Identity*. As part of my research for this monograph, I intend to make additional research trips to the Library of Congress in Washington, DC and to the Wisconsin Historical Society (which has extensive holdings of NBC papers)—I will seek external funding for both of these research trips. I already have publication interest in this manuscript from two presses, including the University of Chicago’s book series *Opera Lab: Explorations in History, Technology, and Performance*.

Addendum: Report for Spring 2025 Sabbatical

Opening Context:

When I requested a semester of sabbatical leave for spring 2025, I proposed to work on two interrelated projects on music, media, and technology: one a scholarly book project, and the other focused on curriculum/course development. These two projects are deeply intertwined, and would inform each other during my sabbatical work.

I am interested in music and technology not only because my own personal scholarly work or because of relevance to students, but also because music and technology courses are often sequestered within specific parts of music school curricula (only electives, or only for certain majors, or only for certain instruments), rather than integrated throughout. This can be particularly true in music history courses; though music history regularly touches on media and technology, these subjects rarely have formalized footholds in the music history curriculum. Yet musicology's disciplinary tools can be uniquely useful in helping students understand technology not as a "neutral" set of tools, but as cultural and historical phenomena deeply impacted by gender, race, and class.

I found my sabbatical work to be deeply rewarding, both in terms of my progress on the book project and in my increased knowledge and planning for how to initiate more courses on music history and technology. Although not officially part of my sabbatical planning, I also served as faculty co-sponsor for the Crane School of Music's music business trip to the National Association of Music Merchants show in Anaheim (January 2025). This was an additional helpful experience, since I was able to take in another disciplinary approach to music industry and technology, pushing me to continue to think about ways we can intersect curriculum for business, history, and technology.

What follows is a report on my scholarly and pedagogical work in spring 2025, divided into brief narratives, actions, and future steps for each. If any interested parties would like to talk more about individual sections (or see additional documents), please feel free to contact me.

I. Scholarship

A. Contextual Narrative

As the scholarly portion of my project, I planned to spend part of my sabbatical time working on the manuscript for my book *Operatic Listening: The Metropolitan Opera Radio Broadcasts, Culture, and Identity, 1931-1966*. I have attached the current summary of this book project as an appendix to this report, but broadly speaking the project focuses on listenership, identity, media, technology, and money through the Metropolitan Opera radio broadcasts. Elements of this book specifically focus on race (particularly in the era of "desegregating" the Met in the 1950s and 60s) and on the messy entanglements of artistic organizations and corporate philanthropy (especially the sixty-four year sponsorship by the Texaco oil company). I already have publication interest in this manuscript from two presses, including the University of Chicago's book series *Opera Lab: Explorations in History, Technology, and Performance*.

B. Actions taken during my sabbatical

1. I traveled to Washington, D.C. from April 6 - 19, 2025 to conduct archival research at the Library of Congress's Recorded Sound Division and Music Division. This trip was self-funded, as I was able to stay with a family member who lives in the DC area. During my research trip, I spent time with the Recorded Sound Division's unique holdings of early radio materials, namely NBC transcription disks, master logs, and history files. The Metropolitan Opera aired on NBC from 1931-1945, thus the Library of Congress materials are one of the two world archives who hold some portion of these corporate files and recordings from NBC. Early radio is very spottily preserved at all, and the Library of Congress Recorded Sound Division maintains some of the few significant holdings of 1930s radio broadcasts.
2. I traveled to New York City from May 21 - June 3, 2025 to conduct archival research at the Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound at The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. To partially fund this research trip, I received Professional Development funding from the Crane School of Music. I also applied for and received funding from the IDA grant from UUP. The NYPL Recorded Sound division has extensive holdings of Metropolitan Opera radio broadcasts (the three largest collections are held by the Met itself, NYPL, and the Library of Congress), and I was able to listen to a number of these early broadcasts on site in their listening room. I also consulted archival papers for individual singers such as Jan Peerce and Regina Resnik. Finally, the NYPL is one of the few archives to have significant holdings of "private" (or bootleg) opera recordings. As the final chapter of my monograph concerns collecting and radio opera bootlegs, this proved invaluable to my research (as did the conversations with archivists who are expert in private recordings).
3. During spring 2025, I revised my book organization and proposal, significantly changing the layout of the project as I continued my research. An updated book summary is attached to this report as Appendix I.
4. During spring 2025, I drafted two book chapters (Chapters 1 and 3) of the book project.
5. During spring 2025, I also did partial initial research/notetaking/drafting for most of the other chapters of the book.
6. In February 2025, I submitted a conference paper application for the 2025 Royal Musical Association on a paper drawn from a small subsection of the book project on the Metropolitan Opera Auditions of the Air. This paper, entitled "Winning Fame and Fortune? Race and Operatic Competitions in Mid-Century America," was accepted via anonymous peer review. (I delivered the paper virtually at the Annual Meeting of the Royal Musical Association, Southampton, UK, in September 2025).
7. In spring 2025, I received edits for a book chapter I've been writing which focuses on another small piece of my book project, the Metropolitan Opera broadcasts and race. This chapter, entitled "Tuning In: Race, Listening, and the Metropolitan Opera Radio Broadcasts," is intended for the proposed essay collection *Black Identities on the Operatic Stage*, edited by Naomi André, Elizabeth Keathley, and Kristen Turner. The volume is intended for Oxford University Press; the editors have been submitting partial

manuscripts already and are hoping for a formal contract in fall 2025. After revising the chapter in spring and summer 2025, I submitted my revised version in early October 2025.

C. Future Steps

1. As continuing research for this monograph, it is necessary to make a few additional research trips. First, I plan to return to the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. I've already gleaned most of the useful material from the Recorded Sound Division's microfilmed NBC master files and NBC history files and from the Music Division's Metropolitan Opera scripts by Geraldine Farrar, but I need to return to Recorded Sound to listen to more of their NBC radio transcriptions from the 1930s (namely Metropolitan Opera radio broadcasts), most of which are unique to this collection. I hope to apply for Professional Development funding for that archival trip, and intend to make that visit during Spring Break 2026. I also plan to visit the Wisconsin Historical Society (which has extensive and singular holdings of NBC papers) in summer 2026. The Historical Society has some funding opportunities available for short-term research, and I hope to acquire this funding for my summer research trip.
2. In January 2026, I plan to apply to present a small portion of my research through the American Musicological Society Library of Congress lecture series (<https://www.amsmusicology.org/events/lc-lecture/>). This is a competitive public lecture program focused on materials held by the Library of Congress; I was encouraged to apply by one of the archivists during my sabbatical research visit.
3. During spring 2026, I intend to finish revising my two book chapters and book outline. These are the materials I need to formally submit to University Chicago press for my book proposal, and I am hoping to have these materials polished and complete by the end of spring 2026. I hope to be awarded a formal book contract for this book, and complete the manuscript in 2027.
4. I also intend to continue presenting portions of this work at upcoming conferences, including the national American Musicological Society meeting in fall 2026 and the Seventh Biennial Transnational Opera Studies Conference, to be held in summer 2027.

II. Curriculum/Pedagogy

A. Contextual Narrative

The purpose of the proposed projects was to research and plan potential offerings for more robust music, media, and technology coursework within the music history curriculum (at multiple levels and for multiple degrees), and to enhance my own strength as an expert on these issues. I intended a multi-step research process, compiling a bibliography/literature review, read relevant scholarly publications, and research similar courses at other universities. I am interested in multiple ways these subjects might intersect with music history curriculum, from small-scale units to upper division seminars, WAYS courses, and perhaps a redesign of the music history core.

B. Actions taken during my sabbatical

1. During spring 2025, I began by researching higher education US music schools with bachelor's degrees majoring in music industry/music business programs. I developed a list of about 100 universities and began looking into their history degree requirements for these programs. While this research is ongoing, my general finding has been a relative lack of tailored music history courses for these students (usually students are encouraged to take relatively minimal history or standard Western music history core, with little attention to historical or cultural analysis of music technology). I think there is a lot of room to tailor our coursework more specifically, and I think this would be rather innovative in comparison to peer institutions.
2. During spring 2025, I worked on developing a personal reading list/bibliography on music history and technology, dividing the large bibliography into different eras and topics (such as 19th century developments, ways of assessing gendered discourse about DAWs, or the cultural politics of streaming services). While I'm continuing this work and adding new works to this ever-growing list, it's been a useful exercise to compile this as a possible overarching resource that I can use for different classes (or perhaps provide to students).
3. During spring 2025, I read some of the works on this list (obviously not all). Some of these works—such as Eric Drott's *Streaming Music, Streaming Capital* (Duke UP, 2025)—were so useful that I've already integrated them in smaller units in my fall 2025 syllabi.
4. During spring 2025, I began compiling a database of syllabi for any history of music technology syllabi I could locate. As noted in example 1, these were not particularly numerous, and sometimes difficult to find as online resources. I've also reached out to musicologist colleagues to inquire about their syllabi in these areas, and this work is ongoing.
5. During spring 2025, I more generally reached out to peer musicologists about questions detailed in numbers 1-4. This work is ongoing, but as a member of the American Musicological Society Pedagogy Study Group, I'm interested in bringing my colleagues together to discuss this particular intersection of disciplines.
6. During spring 2025, I drafted a prospective upper division music history elective on "History of Music Technologies." I am happy to share this with my chair or dean, although current staffing questions may add complexities to when this could first be offered.
7. During spring 2025, I began drafting a WAYS 103 course on "Music, Identity, and Technology" (with a specific focus on gender, race, bias and agency). I'm currently teaching a WAYS 103 course—so I'm familiar with the general approach and bureaucratic needs—but I'm not sure of the future 103 needs either more generally or for this course. I'm happy to speak with my chair, the dean, or WAYS administrators who'd like to chat about this.

C. Future Steps

1. Several of the steps above have ongoing work associated with them (such as ongoing readings and lit review, conversations with peers, etc). I am continuing that work beyond my spring sabbatical.
2. In addition to discussing the drafted upper division or WAYS courses with stakeholders, I'm interested in some broader discussions with stakeholders about whether/how we

might be interested in developing some version of the music history core specifically focused on music and technology. This is complicated, due to our NASM review and Gen Ed requirements, due to new programs that are coming on board but not yet fully in a multi-year groove such as the BS in Music Industry, due to ongoing discussions about overall music history curriculum changes, and due to lots of staffing changes or leaves all over Crane. But I do hope to initiate some broader discussions on this topic.

3. I would like to submit a panel discussion on integrating histories of technology into the music history curriculum at the annual Teaching Music History conference (under the aegis of the American Musicological Society). While many scholars are doing wonderful work in technology, the way this is integrated into college music curriculum seems massively under-discussed and underutilized.

Appendix 1: Updated Book Proposal

Operatic Listening: The Metropolitan Opera Radio Broadcasts, Culture, and Identity, 1931-1966

Commencing with the 1931 Christmas Day transmission of *Hänsel und Gretel*, the Metropolitan Opera radio broadcasts became a media phenomenon—by the late 1930s, around ten million listeners tuned in every weekend. Carried by hundreds of radio stations, at times 95% of American homes could hear the broadcasts. Ninety-five consecutive seasons later, millions continue to spend Saturday afternoons listening to opera on radio (and consumers can continuously stream historic broadcasts via Sirius XM and Met Opera on Demand). Yet despite extensive scholarship on Met stage productions, this exceptional radio series has received astonishingly limited critical attention. My book project, *Operatic Listening: The Metropolitan Opera Radio Broadcasts, Culture, and Identity*, analyzes the complex contributions of the broadcasts to American culture, unpacking essential questions about listenership, identity, media, technology, and money.

The first section of my project uses these broadcasts to reinterpret operatic listening cultures and technology. As listeners tuned in from kitchens, bedrooms, and cars, the broadcasts messily intertwined the “public space” of the opera house with private/domestic spaces, offering a site for analyzing the concept of “liveness,” technology, mediatization, and operatic consumption far from the expense or ritual of the opera house. Some of this story traces a history of technology, as producers experimented with ways of producing hours of opera live on the air. Listeners “heard” the ghosted presence of the audience in the hall, training them in ways to experience opera but also inviting them to forge new domestic operatic cultures.

Next, I delve into how the extramusical content of the broadcasts—especially the intermission features and the famous opera quiz—attempted to educate and entertain American audiences. Decades of broadcast intermission features showcase the Met’s attempts at educational uplift or “music appreciation,” aimed not just at creating new opera consumers but also “justifying and promoting the system of hierarchies to which they generally subscribed.” Intermission features, especially the narrations, plot summaries, and features such as *Opera News on the Air* overlapped with a broader set of Anglo-American culture wars about taste, education, and intellectual hierarchies in the 1920s-1960s. Always ambivalent, contradictory, and hotly contested, these polarizing conversations weighed questions about aesthetic value and prestige versus mass culture and the marketplace. In the case of the *Texaco Opera Quiz*, which began in 1940 and remains the longest-running quiz show in broadcasting, this feature straddled entertainment and “sugar-coated education” (as producer Geri Souvaine called it). Quiz shows remain some of the most understudied of the mass communication genres, and this particular quiz show elicited complex roles for both “experts” (which were strongly gendered in radio shows) and listener communities (particularly amongst queer opera fans).

Chapters Five and Six turn to money and artistic institutions. Economically, the broadcasts were enmeshed in a messy web of shifting industry questions about radio networks, recording contracts, union rules, and performer demands. I parse the deeply complicated relationships between this program and its sponsors—from NBC (1931) to American Tobacco (1933-34), Lambert Pharmaceutical (1934-35), the Radio Corporation of America (1936-37), and most famously Texaco for over sixty years—illustrating the entanglements of corporate capitalism with artistic institutions. Texaco hired radio

producer Henry Souvaine to organize Met broadcast intermission features in 1940, succeeded by his widow Geraldine Souvaine from 1954-81. The broadcast working process circulated multiple forms to nearly forty people, from Texaco officials to executives at ABC/NBC/CBS, the Metropolitan Opera Guild/Opera News, on-air talent such as Boris Goldovsky, and opera staff such as Rudolf Bing. Indeed, the most audible representation of the Metropolitan Opera often evaded opera management's control (in fact, Texaco held the copyright on intermission features). Highlighting another economic angle, the broadcasts served as savior for the Met by soliciting on-air donations from the listening millions, in partnership with third-party entities such as the Metropolitan Opera Guild.

Chapters Seven and Eight delve deeply into listening cultures via the lenses of geography, participation, and identity. First, I consider who listens to these broadcasts, from gender to geographic division to national identity—despite deeply nationalistic discourse about building American operatic institutions, these broadcasts always spoke to a wider constituency via shortwave radio. Chapter Eight parses the complex intersections between race, opera, and radio. Despite the Met's pre-1955 role as a segregated institution, the radio broadcasts provided a prominent (unintentional?) zone for Black operatic listening. Moreover, in the decades after Marian Anderson's debut, as the voices of Black singers such as Grace Bumbry, Leontyne Price, and George Shirley soared out over the radio waves, what kinds of assumptions did American listeners make about race, voices, and opera? In dialogue with theory by Nina Sun Eidsheim, Jennifer Stoeber, and Michelle Holmes, I argue the broadcasts—as opera-on-the-radio *musique acousmatique*—present an especially complex and meaningful site for studying racialized listening. I also trace cross-generational listening via nostalgic accounts of family members tuning in to the programs, and analyze the broadcasts as aspirational model, unpacking nearly a century of testimonies from opera singers such as Jessye Norman who first fell in love with (or sung along to!) opera on Saturday afternoons.

In the final chapter, I examine how physical copies of these broadcasts circulated outside the official music industry: incorporating theory on materiality and fan culture, I analyze how collectors taped operas from the radio and circulated these unofficial materials via bootleg networks. I incorporate case studies such as Leroy Ehrenreich, a New York City-based opera devotee whose enormous opera collection grew to some 30,000 hours of audio. Though the particular context of Ehrenreich's collection may be unique, a long and messy history connects the Metropolitan Opera Broadcasts with unauthorized recordings, encompassing capitalist enterprises, radio rivalries, record companies, even a landmark case in American copyright history: the *Metropolitan Opera Assn. v. Wagner-Nichols Recorder Co.* (1950).

Drawing on institutional documents, recordings, scripts, advertising materials, bootleg collections, memoirs, and press coverage and theoretical frameworks from voice studies, gender, sexuality, and race, collecting, intimacy, and material culture, this book project illustrates how the Metropolitan Opera radio broadcasts are not only a long-lived media product, but also a crucial source which uniquely illuminates ties between music, American culture, and identity.