

Professor Besaw,

It is appropriate here to acknowledge the gratitude felt for the deep honor of having been asked to compose this letter.

To have been a former student of Professor Feurzeig in both a group and one-on-one setting has proven to have been an invaluable gift through these past years of professional musicianship in New York City.

Within a group setting (Harmony and Form I and II, Composition 157), Dr. Feurzeig was fair, yet challenging, impressive yet accessible, and managed to bring the lessons to life with (often sight-read) performances of example pieces and student-written works. Memorable and useful in particular were fluency quizzes, of which the Professor once quite accurately said, “this isn’t actually fast; you can’t be playing and, in the middle, go, ‘hold on a second- is that- E, or Eb?’ (paraphrase). Such a phrase captures well the manner in which such coursework was treated both lightly, and with the utmost seriousness and intensity, colored by a clear awareness of the realities of professional musicianship.

Of further note is the fact that a firm work ethic would secure one, in such coursework, something in the area of B (a personal testament), while anything more required an extraordinary devotion to and mastery of the subject-matter. This was deeply refreshing, and is essential in drawing forth the finest efforts of truly-devoted students. It is always a shame if and when an “A” isn’t extraordinarily difficult to attain, for it is truly in the struggle for a thing that the value of it is defined.

As a one-on-one instructor and Independent Study Sponsor, Dr. Feurzeig proved to be a dedicated and helpful guide, as well as an unflinching source of much-needed accountability. The Professor was immensely helpful in the selection of the music performance, theory, and composition courses that comprised the core of the program, as well as accommodating and understanding of the unique demands that such a capstone project would entail. In short, the program involved courses in acting and theatre study, film and television study, and, the aforementioned musical core. The final work was a culmination of all knowledge and experience thereby gained, in the form of the direction and scoring of a feature film project.

Throughout the completion of the capstone project, Professor Feurzeig ensured that work was being completed on time, and that the project, in all creative and logistical aspects, was on reasonable track. Often there were responsibilities that would easily slip from the mind, small details that, though easily overlooked, proved to be essential to a successful end result.

The Professor assisted in smooth and timely communication with the music department, and was essential in suggesting and securing facilities for the premiere of the finished work.

As a mentor, Dr. Feurzeig was always available to offer advice and, when necessarily, to provide a hard deadline for the completion of some critical aspect of the work.

Throughout the challenging process of composing the score to the film, Dr. Feurzeig was both accommodating and a helpful guide in the timely completion of the rigorous work. Throughout, he demonstrated a firm understanding of the challenges of such a "crunch" heavy final push, allowing a final composition project in Composition 157 to be replaced by the final scoring of the film, and supplying deadlines for various stages of the scoring process.

As a general note, throughout the year, Professor Feurzeig was both deeply understanding and respectful of the personal subject matter of the film, while maintaining a firmly professional orientation to the project.

Lastly, it is important to refer to Dr. Feurzeig's vibrant and consistent contributions to the body of contemporary composition and performance. In attendance of a (semi) recent performance of five settings of International English, "Lingua Franca", for cello and bass, at New York's "National Sawdust," one witnessed both innovation and firm adherence to the timeless pillars of musical integrity, as well as a humorous and accessible approach to what, to many, may be a complex and, at times, intimidating art.

If Professor Feurzeig is unworthy of full professorship at The University of Vermont, it is difficult to conceive of a candidate that could be.

Best Regards,

-Nicholas Patyk