

Project and Learning Plan

I Intellectual Merit

Trenton, New Jersey, is a capital city with a storied past and an important geographic position between New York and Philadelphia. Known anecdotally as the spot where the American Revolution turned a corner toward victory, our city was a thriving industrial powerhouse along the Delaware River for most of its history. Beginning in the mid-twentieth century, however, things started to get complicated when the local manufacturing base began to diminish. Since that time, Trenton has struggled to maintain its economic and cultural vitality. Nowhere is this struggle more poignantly expressed than on the Lower Trenton Bridge, which, since 1935, has featured large lettering that reads: “Trenton Makes | The World Takes”. This phrase has been a source of both civic pride and poignant irony over the years. Recent efforts to rebuild and re-energize our community have often used this phrase in different contexts. The *Trenton Makes Music* project calls attention to the little-studied but significant role that musicians and institutions in New Jersey’s capital have played in the city’s formation, growth, and revitalization efforts. This project will contribute to historical knowledge while stimulating conversations across cultures and generations that will help to boost civic pride, as well as support ongoing efforts toward cultural revival.

The overarching goal of the *Trenton Makes Music* project is to document the capital city’s music legacy using civic media technologies that broadly engage the city’s citizens and stakeholders. We see this as a means of preserving an important cultural legacy and strengthening community ties while supporting the city’s arts-focused economic development efforts. Such a task is inherently interdisciplinary, and lends itself to meaningful scholarly and creative projects across disciplines. Public policy analysts and scholars have identified that support for the arts is essential to a community's economy and quality of life. The City of Trenton’s leaders see the arts sector as an integral part of their economic development plan. The research plans for each of our participating students reflect this rich terrain.

Professors Pearson (PI) and Nakra (co-PI) have obtained a major grant from the New Jersey Council of the Humanities to further develop the *Trenton Makes Music* project, with the primary goal of developing an accessible online archive and community resource at *TrentonMakesMusic.org*. This digital repository will contain three podcasts, oral histories, historical ephemera, lesson plans, maps, and community reflections on the city's music history. Trenton native Sarah Dash, a singer who has achieved fame through her work with Labelle and Keith Richard, will serve as podcast host, interviewing artists, educators, policymakers, and community members about the music and its connection to larger issues such as the role of the arts in education, economic development, violence prevention, and other important areas. During a summer 2016 MUSE project, we plan to complete these following components of the larger project:

- design and produce the website at *trentonmakesmusic.org*
- develop analytics for the website and social media outlets including facebook and twitter
- create a youtube channel for video/audio artifacts related to Trenton Makes Music
- create social media extensions and online fora to allow site interactors to comment upon and contribute to the site’s content, including voting systems for comments and tools for sharing and recommending content.
- develop concrete curricula and inclusive, culturally significant assets for K-12 music education in the Trenton region
- coordinate plans with faculty and district supervisors to allow for active participation in musical events by current Trenton Central High School students

- increased communication with prominent individuals and civic institutions in community planning
- collecting data related to cultural heritage from the Trenton Historical Society, including scores in the Trentoniana Room as arranged by Adams Sibley of the TCNJ Center for Community Engaged Learning & Research

II Role of Students and Mentors

Gabriel Salazar has been recruited by Dr. Pearson; Chris Tenev and Domenic Portera have been recruited by Dr. Nakra. Our joint plan is to form a cohesive team with these three students, encouraging them to work together throughout the eight weeks of the MUSE program in the AIMM Recording Studio suite. Each one of these students has important and differentiated skills: Gabriel, a Journalism and Professional Writing major also pursuing an IMM minor, will be responsible for the script writing, podcast production schedule, and historiographic tasks related to the archive; Chris, a major in Electrical Engineering with extensive training in our AIMM Recording Studio, will be responsible for the podcast audio production pipeline and recording tasks; Dom, a major in Interactive Multimedia, will be responsible for registering the domain, producing the website, and designing the functionality and navigability of the content distribution system. Collectively, they will work together to design and implement the front-end interface and conduct user testing. They will also create video and audio promotional segments featuring podcast host Sarah Dash.

Our plan as a 5-person (2 faculty, 3 students) team will be to meet frequently throughout each week and to conduct our research, writing, and recording activities in the Recording Studio suite in AIMM 235. We will schedule regular full team standing meetings at least twice per week, and meet in subgroups daily. Our students will have access to both group and individual working space and locked storage in the Art/IMM building. We intend to give our students significant authority and independence related to research directions, and will conference online frequently as a collaborative team to agree on next steps. (This process has worked very well in past MUSE team projects.) In our experience, students often produce their best work when provided direct guidance, clear expectations, and hard-set dates for deliverables.

All three MUSE students will begin with existing content that was created by students in the *Trenton Makes Music* FSP courses in fall 2014 and fall 2015. During those semesters, students recorded oral histories, created maps, and set up playlists to document the project. Some of the results of that work are available in beta form: <http://apps.appmakr.com/trentonmusichistory>. Also, in spring 2016, students in the Writing for Interactive Multimedia course are undertaking user research and developing requirements for this project: <https://tcnj.instructure.com/courses/1304706>.

During the Fall 2016 semester, Professors Pearson and Nakra will each teach courses for students in the Music and Journalism programs to contribute toward the project goals. The goal of this collaborative MUSE project is to complete necessary background research and refine our production processes for the podcasts and archive to be completed in the months following the summer MUSE period.

III Broader Impacts

Through the website, podcast, and archive, the *Trenton Makes Music* project will augment the resources available to music scholars, historians, K-16 educators, and those concerned with developing Trenton as a

site of heritage tourism. The public events and the interactive website and its social media extensions will provide an ongoing forum for conversation and exploration. The target audiences for this project include:

- Trenton and New Jersey history scholars and enthusiasts
- music and popular culture scholars
- members of the Trenton music community, and music industry professionals from Trenton
- educators and nonprofit organizations focused upon music and media education
- students at Trenton Central High School and The College of New Jersey

Existing project partners and supporters include:

- the New Jersey Council for the Humanities
- the College Music Society
- the Cultural and Intellectual Community Program Council (CICPC)
- the School of the Arts & Communication
- the School of Humanities and Social Sciences
- the Bonner Center for Community and Civic Engagement
- Trenton Central High School Music Department
- Trenton Conservatory Mansion

This project extends work begun in the fall of 2014 by project lead Kim Pearson in cooperation and consultation with TCNJ Bonner Scholars program, Trenton Conservatory Mansion, the Beyond Expectations media education program, and the Trenton Historical Society. These organizations have been consulted in the development of this project. Outreach to members of the Trenton music community, as well as local historians and scholars, has also been ongoing through social media outreach, email and personal conversations. As the authors of the Trenton Historical Society study on African American Historical sites in the city observed, Trenton is a city of tight networks, so the best way to reach large segments of the community is by accessing those networks. Our partner organizations, as well as our consultants Sarah Dash and Joseph Pucciatti, have extensive ties to the Trenton community – particularly its scholars, artists and civic leaders. Ms. Dash also has deep contacts throughout the music industry as a result of a hit-making career that spans more than 50 years.

IV Collaborative Nature of the project

Professors Pearson and Nakra both have extensive experience collaborating with colleagues across disciplines. Kim Pearson worked with colleagues in the Departments of Computer Science and Art to co-create the Interactive Multimedia program, a popular avenue for students interested in making and documenting new media. Teresa Nakra, a faculty member jointly appointed in both the Music and Interactive Multimedia Departments, has collaborated extensively with colleagues in other programs, including Computer Science, Biomedical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, and IMM. We are aware of both the possibilities and common pitfalls of interdisciplinary teamwork.

Both Pearson and Nakra attended a workshop sponsored by the National Science Foundation in June 2012, where we brainstormed and articulated the broad outlines of this project. This MUSE project represents our first opportunity to jointly realize the vision that we articulated nearly four years ago. We are looking forward to bringing together our different points of view and experiences to make this a very special collaboration. These students represent excellent examples of the specialized training that is possible at TCNJ; they understand both the smaller details and the larger vision involved.