Application

**Ensemble Name**

The Rose Ensemble

**Ensemble members and instruments for this project:**

Natalie Nowytski, *soprano*

Alyssa Anderson, *alto*

Jordan Sramek, *tenor, psaltery, hurdy-gurdy*

Mark Dietrich, *bass*

Ginna Watson, *vielle, harp, rebec*

David Burk, *oud*

Tim O’Keefe, Arabic percussion (*dumbek*, *riqq*, etc.)

(alternate performers can be swapped in as scheduling requires: Clara Osowski, *mezzo-soprano*, Jake Endres, *baritone*; Zafer Tawil, *oud*, *qanun*, *Arabic percussion, violin*, *ney*)

**Contact - First Name** **\***

Alyssa

**Contact - Last Name** **\***

Anderson

**Contact - Email Address**

alyssa@roseensemble.org

**Contact Phone**

651-225-4340

**Ensemble Website**

www.RoseEnsemble.org

**1) Briefly describe your history as an ensemble.**

Founded in 1996, the internationally acclaimed Rose Ensemble (TRE) specializes in creating thematic programs that introduce audiences to rarely heard music from the past 1,000 years. These carefully researched programs lift up the music, histories, and cultures of such diverse places as Bohemia, Malta, the Levant, N. Africa, Spain, Sweden, Mexico, Bolivia, Hawaii, and mainland N. America. Creative programmatic partnerships with institutions such as The Minnesota Orchestra, Minneapolis Institute of Art, and Hill Museum & Manuscript Library have earned critical acclaim. TRE has also commissioned and premiered almost 40 new choral works, most by Twin Cities’ composers. Since 2000, TRE has offered a variety of educational and community outreach programs for people of all ages, many in partnership with The Friends of the St. Paul Public Library and Landmark Center. TRE began touring nationally in 1999 and in 2005 undertook their first European tour. They have performed at numerous prestigious festivals in Latin America and Europe, and had the honor of representing St. Paul and Minneapolis in their sister cities of Neuss (Germany) and Tours (France). Beginning in 2009, TRE has extended its reach by producing a holiday radio broadcast that now reaches hundreds of thousands of people around the world. St. Paul’s only professional choral ensemble, TRE also enjoys an artist residency at the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis, a prestigious position held since 1997. TRE is the recipient of the Hillis Award for Choral Excellence as well as three 1st place wins in secular and sacred categories at the International Choral Competition inTolosa, Spain. Founder and Artistic/Executive Director Jordan Sramek is a recipient of Chorus America’s Louis Botto Award for Innovative Action and Entrepreneurial Zeal. The Rose Ensemble’s 10 CDs have received praise from *Gramophone, Early Music America Magazine, American Record Guide, International Record Review,* and *Goldberg Magazine.*

**2) Briefly describe your past experience giving educational performances**

**specifically to younger children (elementary school-age). How comfortable**

**are you in front of 500 children ages 5-12?**

The Rose Ensemble has a rich, almost-20-year history of cultural programming for young people in K-12 settings, libraries, and community centers. Educational activities have been tailored for group settings ranging from an intensive classroom experience for twenty 3rd graders, to a middle school workshop for two hundred choir/band kids, to a packed gym of an entire student body of nine-hundred high-schoolers. Our teaching artists have built upon these years of diverse interactions and experiences to create meaningful and relevant programmatic content, to draw upon our own individual and collective skills to perfect a style of presentation that is both confident and engaging, and to develop potent strategies for keeping participants of all ages thoroughly engaged.

**3) How do you incorporate music learning and concepts into your performance?**

The Rose Ensemble’s *Land of Three Faiths* program has been particularly successful in creating a pathway of learning for young people of all ages. Elementary students thrive in a learning environment wherein call-and-response rhythms and melodies are shared. Tools are given to help participants not only identify Hebrew, Arabic, Spanish, but to recognize and positively affirm those within the community who speak these languages.

Middle-school participants respond enthusiastically to “jam sessions” revealing exotic percussion and melodic instruments, and are engaged in vocal-music-specific conversation relating to world cultures, geography, languages, and more. A high-energy and direct presentation style is employed, balancing interactive discussion with engaging performance.

Older teens witness a variety of vocal styles, melodic scales, rhythmic modes, and structural harmonies from Jewish-Sephardic, Arab/Muslim, and Spanish-Christian traditions. In addition to Arabic, Spanish, and Hebrew, the incorporation of Latin and Ladino smoothly runs a thread of political and social themes through this musical conversation, providing a platform for meaningful dialog ranging from etymology to spirituality to homelessness. Through songs, instruments and languages, participants are thoughtfully encouraged to contextualize from both local and global perspectives the historical and cultural significance of music and text.

**4) Give an example of a technique or strategy that you use to engage student**

**audiences in a listening experience.**

Particularly with very young people, we have found great benefit in challenging participants to listen to several aspects of a song’s performance. A minor-sounding scale or mode often evokes students’ association with sadness or loss - a particularly powerful way to contextualize Sephardic music (from an historical perspective) as well as homelessness and immigration (a timely topic). Informing students that they will have an opportunity to name the language in which we are singing has also been an effective tool for encouraging thoughtful and concentrated listening. In addition, even casual interaction with students can identify those participants who speak Arabic and Spanish (as examples). In these cases, the body of students are challenged to listen for familiar words during a performance, which can lead not only to the empowerment of those bi-lingual/tri-lingual students, but conversations about cultures and traditions that share words and embrace dialects.

Many students, regardless of age or background, are not familiar with Arabic percussion or Middle-Eastern melodic instruments such as the *oud*, *rebec* or *riqq*. By sight, these instruments clue-in participants to possible European classical and folk relatives, but it is by sound and playing techniques that we are able to more fully assist students in comprehending the evolution of instruments throughout history and across cultures.

*Land of Three Faiths* also utilizes music featuring microtones and that which calls for improvisation - both of which are foundational aspects of Middle-Eastern music. High school students or those more musically inclined are engaged in listening activities relating to microtones as employed by both instrumentalists and singers. Improvisation, especially with regard to percussion, allows call-and-response activities (even with the youngest of students) to evolve into deeper, individually creative listening experiences.

**5) You would be expected to work with the Class Notes curriculum specialist**

**on the content of your program as well as attend a training workshop regarding**

**presentation techniques and content. How open are you to coaching and feedback?**

**Describe a time when you received feedback on an interactive concert.**

After almost two decades of organizational history working with young people, we are still learning. In an ever-shifting educational climate, we recognize that we must react and respond to educators’ needs, institutional capacity and curricula, and the growing diversity within our community’s student population. As such, we heartily welcome feedback and training regarding presentation techniques and content.   
  
Evaluations and feedback from our school and community partners are regular components of The Rose Ensemble’s own organizational outreach programming. This information is compiled and distributed to our teaching artists so that we may consistently improve/update content and hone our skills. In addition to working with thousands of young people throughout Minnesota over the last few years, our national outreach allowed us to present two workshops for hundreds of fifth graders in California (as part of our *Slavic Wonders* touring program). The community organizers approved our program outlines and recommendations for pre-visit activities, but because we presented two identical workshops, even during the break, we went the extra mile to meet with several teachers to get feedback, and discussed what was the most engaging for these particular students (teaching them to sing a Bulgarian mountain song with us) and which aspects proved to be less interesting (tales of Slavic folk heroes). We then tailored our presentation for the second session in order to more fully meet the identified needs.

**6) How do you incorporate music from diverse cultures into your presentation?**

**Conversely if you are a musician from non-western classical tradition, how could**

**you incorporate elements of western classical music into your presentation?**

Generally speaking, over the course of 21 seasons, The Rose Ensemble has created concert programs and educational outreach activities utilizing repertoire spanning 1000 years and over 25 languages, including programs highlighting Slavic, Hawaiian, Middle Eastern, North American and Mexican cultures, to name only a few. Specifically regarding our *Land of Three Faiths* program, which has been described throughout this application in numerous ways, our approach is to emphasize the cultural, musical, and linguistic exchanges and collaborations that took place among people of different faith traditions in medieval Spain, and in subsequent generations, throughout many parts of the European and Arab Mediterranean. The music on the program blurs the lines between sacred and secular, folk and classical, allowing us to demonstrate simultaneously numerous aspects of both western and non-western classical music.