



March 16, 2005

Ms. Robyn Gittleman  
The Experimental College  
Tufts University  
Medford, MA 02155

Dear Ms. Gittleman,

I am writing in response to your letter of March 11 regarding Jeffry Steele's application to teach at the Experimental University. I am a director and choreographer and have extensive experience in collaboration with Jeffry and others.

Jeffry and my collaboration goes back to 1997 when we began work on a dance drama that was intended to help our community (Gloucester) heal from the continual loss of lives at sea for almost 400 years. Titled *Clear Away: A Fisherman's Farewell*, this work was grounded in the folk music idiom but Jeffry took it well beyond into highly evocative and expressive material. The show was highly successful and led to two more major collaborations and several minor ones.

In the show *Gift of Vision*, we used the paintings of 19<sup>th</sup> century Gloucester maritime painter Fitz Hugh Lane as the basis for a "gallery of dances and music." In a challenging collaboration with poet/painter Mary Claire Wellinger as lyricist, Jeffry showed his flexibility, communication skills, and willingness to teach/learn with artists not of his medium. The result was very satisfying and rich.

*Dear Tom* was an evening length tribute to poet T.S. Elliot with recitations, dance and music. Jeffry showed his breadth of artistry as he not only performed on guitar (his specialty) but also danced the role of J. Alfred Prufrock, capturing the character perfectly.

While never fully produced, our fourth collaboration, called *Flesh and Stone*, delved into the Finnish and Italian cultures in the context of the Cape Ann granite quarries of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Though not completed for financial reasons, Jeffry's music finds the perfect blend of cultural fidelity and musical expressiveness.

At this time, Jeffry and I are collaborating on a piece, called *Silent Men Speaking*, which tells the real life stories in music and dance of three Vietnam veterans. Again, I am asking Jeffry to blend with other musicians as well as embed in the piece music from the Vietnam era.

In all my work with Jeffry, I have found him to hold himself to extremely high artistic standards while at the same time being very open and flexible as to the needs of his collaborators. As a composer he combines classical training and sensibilities with modern technology, being fully proficient in current electronic composition techniques.

As a teacher, Jeffry is very thorough and detail oriented. He has extensive experience in teaching people of all ages. By including thorough and authoritative background and historical information in his performances, he makes difficult and complex musical material more accessible and enjoyable. His knowledge and understanding of music (all forms) is huge, exceeded, perhaps, only by his love for it.

I have enormous regard for Jeffry personally and professionally and would give him my highest recommendation to teach the course on collaboration at Tufts.

Sincerely,

Carl Thomsen  
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