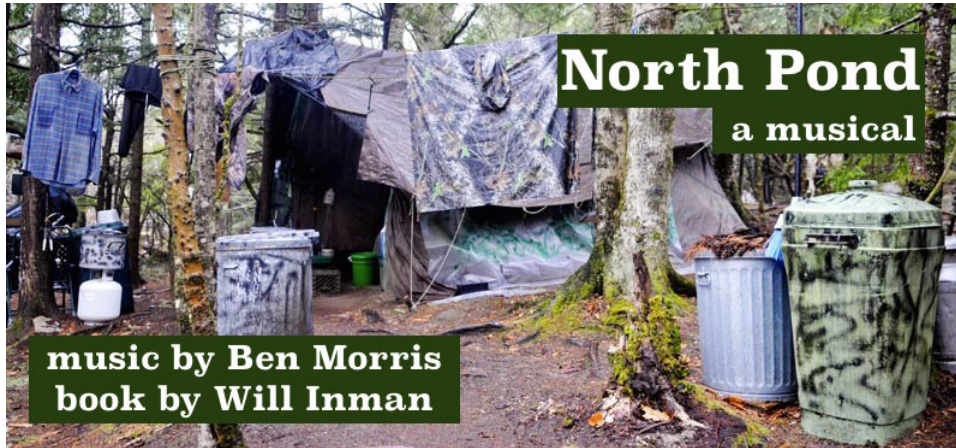


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PROJECT TITLE: North Pond – a Musical at the Moody Center

PROJECT TAGLINE/CAPTION (160 characters): “North Pond” is an original musical with music by composer Ben Morris and a book by Will Inman to be performed at the Moody Center in Spring 2017.

IMAGE:



Primary Contact: Benjamin Morris

Primary Contact Email: bsharpcheddar@optonline.net

Primary Contact Department: Shepherd School of Music Composition Department (Anthony Brandt, Kurt Stallman)

Name of Group/Organization: Moody Center for the Arts

PROJECT DETAILS

Provide a description of the project.

“North Pond” is an original musical with music by Rice University composer Ben Morris and book by University of Houston playwright Will Inman. The two are collaborating on the lyrics. The plot follows Chelsea Marlowe, a reporter investigating the life of hermit and thief Christopher Knight, a man who had lived alone in the backwoods of Maine for 27 years. Their interview in a jail visiting room is interjected with memories from Christopher’s time in the woods, as she grapples to understand his decisions while trying to assemble a story about his life, eventually realizing that the story is not what she expected. The musical will be in one act and will be just shy of an hour long. The staging of the piece is simple – it would be divided in half – on one side, the prison visiting room (an interview table), and on the other Chris’s forest camp –

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a pile of junk surrounding a tent and a lean-to, colored by light projections simulating seasons to create a feeling of the “woods.”

The project will bring together Houston artists in a variety of disciplines – video artists and projectionists (though VADA – the audio-visual media department at Rice University), the book-writer and director Will Inman at the University of Houston, singers and musicians from the Shepherd School of Music, and set designers from the Rice University and University of Houston theater departments as well as professionals in the Houston theater scene. Lighting, projection, and set design will be minimal, with a few effects conveying a feeling of location, environment, and certain events. The musical language of the piece is in between opera and contemporary musical theater and features a six-piece ensemble, a rhythm section, and a five-person chorus comprised of Shepherd School of Music students who will perform the available space in the Moody Center. Rehearsals will be sprinkled over four to five weeks from winter to early spring with a performance ideally in April or May 2016.

Timeline: If the project will take place at a specific time and place, please give details. Is it a one-time event or a series?

The project will take place in late Spring 2016 at the new Moody Center for the Arts at Rice University. The project will consist of a weekend or two of performances (Friday and weekend shows and a matinee or two) at the Moody Center, each just under an hour-long.

Audience: Who is your target audience? (e.g. program-specific, interdisciplinary, or university-wide? Will undergraduates, faculty, staff, or postdocs be involved? Any off campus participants?)

My target audience will be students and faculty from Rice University, Houston theatergoers, high school and middle-school students, and concertgoers from the Shepherd School of Music subscription concerts. The opera theater and studio at Shepherd School of Music, Wortham, will also be involved since student performers from the opera department will be participating. Since students and faculty from Rice and the University of Houston will be involved, an extended audience from both universities and beyond in the city of Houston is anticipated.

How many people do you anticipate will participate?

The Moody center has capacity for about 150 audience members a night. If the show has multiple performances (3-4, say), the maximum audience will be close to 600 members. It will have a large impact on the Houston community.

Marketing Plan: How do you plan to publicize the project?

The project’s marketing plan will be run by John Albert Harris, a composer and entrepreneur from Austin, Texas. Channels for publicity include the Houston theater and opera community, Shepherd School of Music and Rice University resources for publicity and news,

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and the new music community in Houston (through the organizations Musiqa and Da Camera). Posters around campus and in Houston, online social media, and word-of-mouth will be crucial to building awareness for this project. Due to its interdisciplinary nature, the work will have connections with various disciplines in the visual and theater arts in addition to music, opening up several more avenues for spreading the word and expanding its impact.

ADVANCEMENT

What are the goals of the project? Briefly explain the need for the project and how it will promote excellence in scholarship, training, and/or development?

The goals of the project are to help build an introductory season to the Moody Center. This project, in addition to the *Iliad* venture, will establish a strong precedent for interdisciplinary collaboration at the Moody Center, Rice University, University of Houston, and even the whole city of Houston, building connections between various communities of artistic production and bringing them together in a single convenient place. Hopefully, these two projects will inspire others to make similar works of collaborative art, building the arts community in Houston as a whole and breaking down barriers that exist between the arts.

These projects are necessary because currently, Rice University has somewhat of a segregated arts community, with only a few avenues for collaboration. The Shepherd School of Music is apart from the theater department is apart from the humanities, for the most part. Students only rarely interact to bridge these gaps, generally keeping to their own disciplines. These two projects will hopefully bridge these gaps and show that these kinds of collaborations are lucrative, productive, and rich and contribute immensely to the community; the Moody Center creates a consistent and definitive location for which to do this. *North Pond* and *Iliad* will lead by example, creating a strong opening season with accessible, interesting stories, such that it makes a solid impact on the viewing public, hooking them to what the Moody Center will have to offer in the future.

If this is an existing project/event or a similar one exists, describe how the project/event is being expanded or enhanced.

Although there are currently not any other new projects being planned for the new Moody Center other than *Iliad* and *North Pond*, I have put on dramatic and theatrical musical performances before, including a work for two 8-piece jazz combos that was performed last spring. Another example is an upcoming concert at the James Turrell Skyspace on the Rice University campus in September. Currently, I'm planning a composition department concert for the winter in the organ hall at Rice University. The world-class student musicians at Rice enhanced these projects, as well as the participation of other composers in the new music community and patrons of the arts across Houston. Incorporation of faculty mentorship from composition, performance, and video/media artists (including Kurt Stallman, Anthony Brandt, and others) have strengthened these projects, giving them direction and purpose. Since these faculty mentors have worked extensively on these kinds of projects before, their mentorship was invaluable for expanding and enhancing the impact of these projects, and will continue to do so for *North Pond*.

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If your proposal is for a pilot project, suggest how it might develop over a three-year period.

The Moody Center spaces (the theater, the galleries, etc.) offer an incredible location to create a variety of projects, and *North Pond* and *Iliad* are the first of such projects. Although they are not directly part of a series, they will set a spark for future projects, creating a template for more theatrical productions and encouraging the members of the music, theater, and visual arts departments at Rice and University of Houston to collaborate again.

Describe how you will measure the success and impact of this project. Please, provide quantitative targets, if possible.

The shows will be free, so there will be no monetary value to calculate from ticket sales, but we will be able to calculate the number of tickets given out during the concert and this will be an objective source to measure how many people attended. Otherwise, the number and quality of productions that the Moody Center puts on after *North Pond* and *Iliad* will concretely show the impact and influence the two shows have made, and how they have set up a strong start for the Moody Center.



BUDGET

Itemized Budget

Please, provide an itemized budget. List each item, a description, and the anticipated cost.

Item	Description	Cost
Projectionist fee	Cost to hire a professional or student/VADA-run projectionist and lighting designer.	\$1000
Lighting and set design	Required for building materials, lighting staff and crew, and lighting programming	\$500
Musician's fees	For singers, conductor, and ensemble to assist with practice and memorization of the work, as well as rehearsal time.	\$500
Total Expenses		\$2000

Funds from other sources

Please, provide any information on funds from other sources that you have secured or potential funds that you plan to apply for.

Source	Status	Cost
N/A		
Possible crowd-sourced funding	More information will arrive in fall.	\$500
Total Amount		\$500