Ellis Nolan
Spring 2022 Miller Arts Scholars Minigrant Outcomes Report

In Spring 2022 I was awarded funding to purchase a pair of studio monitors and stands so that I would be able to mix music with greater accuracy while at home. I am very grateful to have been able to purchase these music making tools! Since the monitors arrived, I've been using them almost non-stop. To make an analogy to visual art, now that I'm used to hearing music on the studio monitors, I almost feel as if mixing on my headphones was like trying to paint without being able to see blue or purple.

I've mixed a lot of different projects on the monitors thus far, and all of them have been helped by the improved frequency range. Most recently, I mixed my final project for Ted Coffey's class, Sound Studio, which had a lot of different types of instruments and synths on it. I found that when I listened to the mix on my speakers, I could actually push the bass a lot further up in the mix simply by eqing it to sit more in the bass range (I had been boosting the high midrange to the point where it was interfering with the electric piano since I couldn't hear the low end as well through my headphones). For this class, I was also lucky enough to talk to Charlottesville-based producer Matt Wyatt, who taught me some new techniques in Ableton, which I was better able to hear the effects of through the studio monitors.

Other projects I've worked on since my project's funding are the background music for Bardic Inspiration (fellow Miller Arts Scholar Max Tankersly's project), in which I was better able to hear the textures and timbres of the electronic instruments I was using, and some new music I've been working on with live instrumentation that I'll release on my Bandcamp soon. I think the most rewarding thing about using these speakers is really hearing instruments and even records the way they actually sound with minimal coloration. My immense gratitude goes out to the Miller Arts program for funding this project!

(Picture of the Yamaha HS5s and stands on my desk)