

Kailash Patel
wtz4nc@virginia.edu
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An Exploration of Musical Styles Through Composition

Summary:

During my time at UVA so far, I have chosen to take composition and computer technology courses offered by the music department to fulfill my major. Despite my chosen focus in composition and music technology, I have also chosen courses for my other major requirements that represent a wide array of musical styles and backgrounds. I take violin lessons and play in the Charlottesville Symphony, representing another musical point of view. I would like to continue my study of different musical styles and present my learning as a collection of pieces, originally composed and produced by myself. An opportunity to explore the framework of different types of music from a theory standpoint will be quite beneficial for my growth as a musician. I plan to collaborate with Professor Daniel Sender, employing his guidance and expertise to achieve my desired product. In order to complete my project, I am applying for a grant to allow me to purchase resources such as composition tools, recording and processing equipment, instruments, and services to present my work to the desired audience. I am requesting an arts award of \$3000 to meet my goal.

Project Description:

I have chosen Prof. Daniel Sender as my faculty mentor. I have been working closely with him since first year through violin lessons and orchestra. He is also my advisor for the music major. I wish to continue our collaboration with the project I am planning. Although the end product will be a demonstration of my skills in composition and computer technology, the project is a study of musical styles. Prof. Sender's experience studying a vast array of musical styles will enable me to do so. In addition, I will be writing at least one piece that will involve the violin. Prof. Sender has composition experience in many mediums including violin and voice, so I will require his guidance in that regard. I will need to clearly prepare my pieces, so I will work with Prof. Sender to notate and organize my musical ideas. I am not limiting myself to one instrument, so I will need to be prepared to write for several instruments, such as violin, guitar, voice, and piano. I will then need to record these instruments and produce a track that properly mixes my live instruments and computer composition into a completed piece. While I will be primarily consulting Prof. Sender for my project, certain phases of work will also require consultation with Professor Matthew Burtner. I have taken three classes with him and have worked with him to refine my music technology skills, such as working with software and hardware related to composition. I may also ask for help from Alex Christie, the technical

coordinator for the music department, as he has much experience working with recording equipment.

The full process of creating this collection of pieces requires specialized equipment. Since I am planning to write all of my own music, I will need certain software such as a Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) like Ableton Live and audio plugins to supply additional software-based instruments. Next, I will need basic home studio equipment to professionally record live instruments. Items such as microphones, an audio interface, an amp, studio monitors, and accessories such as cables and stands will allow me to obtain clean recordings of the instruments I use. In terms of instruments, I will be primarily using a violin and acoustic guitar, which I already have, and an electric guitar, which I will need, along with required accessories such as cables and a case. Since I am hoping to produce a product with a clean, professional sound, I need to ensure my instruments are in working order. To this end, a new set of violin and acoustic guitar strings will be necessary. I will also need a MIDI controller to record keyboard and other software-based instruments into my DAW. The production process will require the aforementioned DAW, Ableton Live. Finally, I will need to release my work on streaming services. I will need a one-year subscription to a service such as DistroKid so I can put my music on Spotify.

There will be certain limitations to the successful completion of my project. While the items I am requesting will be critical to achieve the desired sound of my pieces, I am new to them. I have been learning guitar on my own, and my guitar playing is at a beginner level. I am planning to enroll in guitar classes at UVA to supplement my existing guitar skills in order to effectively use two different guitars. I will also likely experience technical difficulties with the recording equipment I am requesting. I plan to consult Alex Christie and Prof. Burtner, as I mentioned earlier, who I have worked with for several semesters. I also acknowledge that the scope of this project is far larger than what I have worked on before. I will be studying musical styles and computer composition and production in depth. I plan to choose classes to complement the difficulty of my project in the upcoming Summer and Fall 2024 semesters. I will also dedicate more time with Prof. Sender in our weekly lessons to discuss musical styles in the context of history and theory to bolster my knowledge for the project.

For my outcome report, I will present a summary of my research and planning ahead of making my compositions, documentation of my composition process, including videos of my studio sessions, and a written reflection of my completed works, acknowledging my study of musical styles. I will also provide access to the completed compositions which will likely be posted on a streaming service.

As a composer, and more importantly, a musician, exposure to and knowledge of different types of music is vital. In performance, being a good orchestra member or solo violinist is dependent on the ability to understand and interpret different music based on what the composer is trying to achieve. Similarly, in composition, proficiency in a broad range of styles allows for efficient, deliberate, and effective work to be completed. Creativity can flow unbridled, able to fluctuate between different techniques with ease. My prior experience studying

multiple styles has enabled me to have great success as a musician. With the violin, my knowledge of acoustics and sonic physics from studying digital music has allowed me to improve my sound drastically, having explored new timbral possibilities and extended technique. Likewise, my knowledge of Western music theory techniques such as counterpoint and chord analysis within the context of pop has made composition much easier. Learning about funk rhythms helped me create beats with a unique funk flair for my own music. Exploration of musical styles has been monumental to my improvement as a musician and will continue to drive my development. The items I hope to obtain for my project will allow me to compose, record, produce, and release my own work. I am very excited to personally complete every step of the intricate music-making process, it is an objective I have always desired to achieve. I hope to be entrusted with the opportunity to complete my project, which will galvanize my studies of style within the context of composition, so that I may work towards my goal of being a well-rounded modern composer and producer.

Timeline:

Spring 2024

- Research electric guitars to facilitate purchase of guitar and required accessories
- Begin planning collection of pieces
 - Research how to use requested software and equipment
 - Work with Prof. Sender to research/study musical styles and coordinate ideas with requested materials

Summer 2024

- Purchase requested materials by July/August
- Finish planning pieces; have two piece drafts completed by beginning of third year

Fall 2024

- Use all purchased materials to begin writing, recording, and producing pieces
- Have at least two final pieces completed by end of fall semester

Spring 2025

- Finish all pieces; prepare to release work on streaming services
- Finishing touches: promote music release, document full process, write outcome report for Miller Arts Scholars

Budget:

Item	Price	Details
Scarlett 2i2 Audio Interface	\$199.00	Recording Equipment
Boss Katana Mini Amp	\$99.99	Recording Equipment

Shure SM58 Microphone	\$99.00	Recording Equipment
Shure SM57 Microphone Cable/Stand Bundle	\$139.99	Recording Equipment
AudioTechnica AT2035 Microphone	\$149.00	Recording Equipment
KRK Rokit Studio Monitors	\$378.00	Recording Equipment
Arturia Minilab3 Controller	\$109.00	Instrument
Electric Guitar and accessories	~\$800.00	Instrument: budget to choose a good-quality beginner electric guitar and accessories
Desktop Mic Stand	\$17.95	Equipment Accessories
10-ft XLR Cable	\$28.99	Equipment Accessories
Microphone Pop Filter	\$24.00	Equipment Accessories
Guitar and Violin Strings	\$103.00	Equipment Accessories
Ableton Live DAW	\$299.99	Software/Online Service: (student discount)
Max/MSP Software	\$250.00	Software/Online Service: (student discount)
Kontakt 7 Full Sample Library	\$299.00	Software/Online Service
DistroKid 1-Year Subscription	\$22.99	Software/Online Service
Total	\$3,019.90	Requesting \$3000 to cover total cost; remaining \$19.90 I will cover with my own funds

Note: The budget for the guitar is an approximation. Overall, I will try to adhere to my budget plan as much as possible. If the total for the guitar and accessories exceeds \$800, I will cover any additional expense over above total with my own funds.