

Emily Williams
MAS Arts Award Outcome Report

In my initial proposal entitled “Enhancing Violin Sound Quality and Technique”, I asked for funding for a bow as well as money to cover the costs needed in order to put on a senior recital. However, very quickly my plans needed to change as I had some medical issues that forced me to put down my violin for a significant period of time. During finals last May, I was feeling shooting pains throughout my hands, wrists, and forearms as I was doing a significant amount of violin playing. I was diagnosed with carpal tunnel syndrome and tendonitis in my wrists and was advised to stop playing for the entire summer. This was devastating as I was planning on learning most of my repertoire over the summer so that I could return to grounds and spend my lessons with my private teacher, Professor David Sariti, polishing the pieces and focusing on logistics.

My plans needed to change. I did some physical therapy for my wrists over the summer and spent a significant time planning for my Distinguished Major Project (DMP) recital in Conducting. At around the same time last spring when I received this grant, I was approved to do a DMP in the music department that would consist of me conducting small choral and orchestral ensembles. Over the summer, I began to pick my repertoire and while I was unable to practice physical gestures, I spent countless hours watching videos of famous conductors and studying scores in order to enhance my technique. I used a similar approach in order to keep a musical focus while I was unable to practice my violin as I watched many videos of violinists playing pieces that I wanted to play.

In the fall, Professor Sariti led me in an intensive rehabilitation process as I needed to relearn many technical aspects of the violin. I was playing with significant amounts of tension in my hands, which led to the medical issues I was facing. After regaining much of my technique and stamina, I started to learn a few pieces to perform in the music department’s semesterly Tea Time recital. Around the same time, I was in contact with professionals from the Carriage House violin shop in Newton Upper Falls, Massachusetts in order to purchase a new bow. I had improved many physical aspects of my technique but I was still being held back by the quality of my bow. I had taken a trip to Carriage House in the summer to learn how the process of trying out a new bow would work, and asked them to ship me some test bows in the fall.

Trying out bows is a long, tedious process. Different bows sound differently with every individual instrument, and they feel different to the user. I was looking for a lighter bow that could still help my violin produce a rich sound. Luckily, Carriage House had six bows in stock in my price range that fit some of my other criteria. While testing to see which bow is the best, the company typically lets the musician keep the bows for a few weeks so that they can practice with each bow for a significant amount of time. I practiced with all six bows for two weeks and then had a lesson with Professor Sariti where I could get feedback on how each of the bows

sounded with my instrument. It was a very difficult decision as two of the bows both sounded amazing but after researching the manufacturers, we chose a bow that came from a very highly-recommended bow maker to ensure that I picked the highest quality bow that would last me the longest and hopefully require less maintenance and repairs in the future.



Package of bows from Carriage House. I ended up choosing the bow on the bottom.

After purchasing a new bow and sending the rest of the bows back to Carriage House, I learned and polished my pieces for the Tea Time recital.



Performing with my accompanist, Daniel Grotz, in UVA Music's Fall 2019 Tea Time Recital

Transitioning to spring 2020, I have been transitioning into some different playing in anticipation of my graduation. I have been learning multiple new pieces with Professor Sariti, and had intended on playing a few of them in the spring 2020 Tea Time recital. However, this along with all of UVA Music's events have been cancelled due to the COVID-19 outbreak and the switch to online classes. On a similar note, I had been playing in the pit orchestra for First Year Players' production of *Kiss Me, Kate* and in fourth year student Caroline Schetlick's DMP Orchestra (she was doing a conducting DMP as well) as I am preparing to audition for orchestras in the city of my employment this coming fall.

Since I was unable to play a senior recital on violin due to my carpal tunnel, I used the remaining funds on expenses for my DMP conducting recital. Though the music department covered hall rental and accompaniment expenses, they did not cover fees for ordering and printing music for myself and my performers. I needed to order 22 scores for five separate choral pieces and print 12 scores of three orchestral pieces for myself and my singers and players. Because of copyright and other printing fees, this cost hundreds of dollars but was an absolute necessity so that each performer could have their own score that they could make markings in and take with them to practice.



A DMP Chorus rehearsal captured by fellow Music Scholar Veronica Merrill

Unfortunately, my recital was cancelled a week before the performance due to the COVID-19 outbreak as mentioned above. I am currently exploring alternatives in order to hold a performance but with the current public health advisories discouraging large groups from congregating and the performers returning to their homes away from grounds, it may be difficult to find a solution. It is incredibly disappointing that events have transpired like this, but I have gained invaluable conducting experience as I led over a dozen rehearsals with my orchestra and chorus.

I would like to thank the J. Sanford Miller family for their generosity in helping myself and the other scholars pursue our passions in ways that we would not be able to if we did not have their support. I leave the program and the University as an improved artist and most importantly, a hungrier artist eager to explore more opportunities.