Hunter Colson
Miller Arts Scholar Minigrant Proposal
Fall 2023

Spectrasonics Keyscape and NotePerformer 4

<u>Project Summary:</u>

As a beginner composer, I have spent the past two years developing my musical voice through studying music theory and practicing composition. Coursework and guidance from Professors have helped me learn the technical skills needed to compose for a variety of ensembles, which has expanded my body of work.

This past summer I attended a one month, 6 credit film scoring program led by the Film Scoring Academy of Europe. The program allowed me to focus on core disciplines of composition and musicianship. More specifically, I learned the fundamentals of how to score music for film. As part of the program, I composed four pieces of music which were recorded by the European Recording Orchestra. My four compositions included one for solo piano where I scored an emotion, another for seven-piece strings and winds, where I scored a season, another for 21-piece strings, piano, and harp, where I scored a love theme, and finally a 38-piece symphony orchestra piece, where I scored a scene. I also scored an additional (unrecorded) piece for the opening credits of a film. Here is a link to the love theme I scored.

At UVA, my composition training and practice has largely come from Orchestration I, where I composed a piece for string quartet, wind quintet, and symphony orchestra in addition to a litany of smaller composition exercises for solo string and wind instruments. In Music Theory I and II, I composed a sonata for piano among other smaller composition exercises. Throughout my coursework at UVA and personal composing, outside of course requirements, I have composed 25 pieces, over a dozen of which are solely for the piano.

Spectrasonics Keyscape Collectors Keyboards (Keyscape) is a virtual library of piano sounds that I can feature in any composition that includes a piano. Keyscape is the largest and best selection of virtual keyboards in the world and is considered an industry standard. Using Keyscape, I will be able to create professional sounding versions of a selection of my piano pieces which will ultimately comprise my debut album. I am unable to accomplish this with my current software, as it is not up to the same standard of audio quality. I will use Keyscape to enhance all past and future compositions that include the piano, which will allow me to add to my portfolio and expand my skills as a composer. I will be applying for a Masters Program in either composition or screen scoring next fall and will need professional pieces for my

application portfolio. Here is a [link](#) to an example of an improvisation showing how realistic Keyscape sounds.

As part of this Minigrant, I am also applying to fund the software NotePerformer 4. NotePerformer is an Artificial Intelligence-based playback engine for musical notation. I plan to use NotePerformer to create realistic and professional sounding versions of my orchestrated pieces directly from Dorico, my primary notation software. NotePerformer has realistic sounding instruments which allow the composer to convert a score in Dorico into a realistic sounding performance in one step. I write pieces using a notation software (Dorico) that allows me to place notes, dynamic markings, among other required components that a typical score would have. NotePerformer takes all the information I put down on the score, and uses it to create a realistic sounding version of what I wrote in Dorico. Dorico has its own virtual instruments that can play back audio as well, but those are intended for proofreading purposes and are not of high enough quality to be the final sound product. NotePerformer produces playback that is reflective of my artistic vision and can be used as the final product. Here is an [example](#) of well known orchestral music being played by the NotePerformer software.

Without NotePerformer, I would have to purchase individual sound libraries to replace each instrument, then I would need to rebalance each individual instrument's volume and dynamics (among other variables) in a separate software called a "digital audio workstation", to make everything sound correct. This process is complex, laborious, expensive, and takes significant time that could be used to create new works. NotePerformer will allow me to complete my compositions more quickly and will help me grow a professional quality portfolio. I will use NotePerformer to enhance all my compositions that feature instruments other than piano. Having the NotePerformer software will change my life as a composer.

To select Keyscape and NotePerformer, I researched current music software and consulted with Professor Rasbury to identify software capable of producing professional sounding music while providing the highest return on investment.

Timeline:
Mid October - December 2023
- Convert 7 piano compositions with Keyscape
- Convert 6 orchestrated compositions with NotePerformer

January 2024
- Seek input/critique on the updated pieces and make related revisions

Budget:

Item		Cost
Spectrasonics Keyscape		$399
NotePerformer 4		$129
TOTAL COST		**$528** ($28 paid out of pocket)