

Ellis Nolan

## Fall 2022 Miller Arts Scholars Minigrant Outcomes Report

For the Fall of 2022 I was awarded funding to purchase a 5 string electric bass, for which I am extremely grateful. After testing out many different basses I settled on a Fender Jazz V which has become my go-to electric bass. The low B string has added a lot of flexibility to what I can play and fits better musically in a lot of the ensembles I play in. Furthermore, this bass also has the extra benefit of having 22 frets, 2 more than all my other basses, which opens up more note possibilities for high register soloing as well.

So far, I've used this bass in pretty much every ensemble I regularly play in. I think the first was probably playing live with my rock band, where I noticed that the extended lower range projected much better than when I would play those same notes an octave higher out of necessity on my four string. I could/have been using this strategically, where in quieter moments I can play on mostly the top 4 strings, (the higher ones) which inherently will be hidden by the midrange-heavy guitars, but then when I need to bring more volume I can play on the bottom strings and have a more pronounced tone. Another ensemble I specifically thought a 5 string would sound better in was when I play in my church, which I think has been the case thus far. Just like with my rock band, being able to stay in the lower register fits a lot better particularly since it doesn't conflict with the range of the piano. Furthermore, jazz basses are known for having a great tone for bass slapping techniques, which has been great for playing gospel music. I also played the bass with my Jazz small group for our fall concert, where I appreciated having some extra notes for taking solos. Even though I normally play upright with that ensemble, I also felt like the 5 string sat better in the mix than when I've played my 4 string electric in that situation. Finally, I was offered a gig playing bass in the pit of Live Arts' production of the musical Violet right as I purchased the bass, and coincidentally the part is written for a 5 string (or at least a bass that can reach a C below the staff!). I'm pretty sure the musical director would have been fine with me using a 4 string and just playing those notes an octave higher, but it's been a lot of fun reading and playing that part with some great low notes. Once again I am immensely grateful to the Miller Arts Scholars program for funding my project!



The bass in my room and with me on the set of Violet at Live Arts (The band is on stage in this show!)