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Millers Arts Rising 3rd Year Award
3/17/2024

Third Year Arts Award Outcome Report Funding For a Piccolo

Project Overview: Throughout my time as a flutist, piccolo has become a constant, though at times intermittent, pursuit. As a part of the marching band, in concert band, auditioning for ensembles, and playing in the Charlottesville Symphony Orchestra. However, this has only been made possible by borrowing a piccolo from my past flute instructors as well as the piccolo owned by the Music department while at UVA. Piccolo, though in many respects very similar to the flute, assumes a much different role within the ensemble setting. The part can be bare at times, but adds a brilliance that pushes through the orchestra. Learning the instrument comes with understanding its quirks and how it fits into the ensemble. However, in borrowing the piccolo, there is a limit to my improvement based on the availability of the instrument and its need elsewhere (for example, in the flute ensemble). Through the funding I have been able to receive, I am very thankful to have been able to purchase a piccolo. Additionally with having undergone the process of trying multiple piccolos, I have been able to better understand the variability in the instrument that must be matched to my own style and needs.

Outcome: Thank you to the Miller Arts Fund. I am very grateful to have been able to receive funding for a piccolo. With help from my flute instructor and advisor, Dr. Kelly Sulick, I was able to try many piccolos and come to a decision.

Through the New York Flute Center I was able to request multiple trials with four different piccolo brands over the course of multiple weeks. I began requesting trials in early January, and finalized the purchase in March. The brands include Yamaha, Burkhardt, Hammig, and Powell (with multiple headjoints included to try with each).

Short description of each piccolo:

The Yamaha YPC-81 is professionally handcrafted, made of Grenadilla wood with the split E mechanism and silver plated. The Yamaha piccolo included a normal flat headjoint as well as a wave headjoint.

The Burkhardt Professional piccolo was handmade from aged African Grenadilla wood, sterling silver mechanism, white gold springs, Straubinger pads, and Y-style arms. The Burkhardt came with a flat and wave headjoint.

The Hammig Piccolo Model 650/2 was handmade from aged African Grenadilla Wood with silver-plated keys, pointed arms, blue steel springs, Straubinger pads, and the split E mechanism. This piccolo came with three headjoints, the flat, wave cut, and modified wave cut. The Powell was handmade from aged African Grenadilla wood, sterling silver keys, white gold springs, Pisoni star pads, and conical bore. It came with the flat and wave cut headjoints.

In trying each piccolo, I was able to compare how different piccolos fit my natural playing. It was surprising to see how cost did not necessarily correlate to quality of sound. There was a threshold at which cost helped, but it did not define the best fit. The Burkart, Powell, and Hammig are similar in description, with all three having the same wood headjoint/body, interestingly the sound quality differed greatly. Additionally, the headjoint played a big role in the concentration of the resulting sound. With every piccolo the flat headjoint did not produce a focused sound in comparison to the wave cut and modified wave cut headjoints. This was true despite multiple attempts with changes to the embouchure. Some other details, like the arm being pointed or Y, had no bearing on the decision made other than differences in appearance.

In looking for the best fit I was looking for tone, tuning, and control. As practice can work out some issues, but there are certain limits placed on improvement by the instrument itself. In blind testing the piccolos with Dr. Kelly Sulick, the best action and tone was consistently given to the Hammig piccolo with the wave head joint. It allows me the best control and color in tone. The notes are focused and full. The instrument could best bring to light the color of the notes I had sought to convey. The Hammig fell in the middle of the options in terms of the price and the details. It does not have the same level of detail and high cost materials as the Burkart or the Powell, but felt better to me.

With this piccolo I am excited to begin to learn the instrument and repertoire, as well as play in the Charlottesville Symphony Orchestra. There is depth to be explored and much to be learned. Undoubtedly this is an investment that will carry me far beyond my college years. Thank you again to the Miller Arts Scholar Program for providing me with generous support.

Piccolo descriptions on The Flute Center of New York website:

Yamaha: <https://flutecenter.com/products/picc-yamaha-81?variant=40248856313950#>

Burkhart: <https://flutecenter.com/products/picc-burk-pro?variant=32208862740574>

Hammig: <https://flutecenter.com/products/picc-hammig-6502?variant=1217148951>

Powell: <https://flutecenter.com/products/picc-pow-sig?variant=32278887989342>

Budget Breakdown:

Item	Cost
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Hammig Piccolo Model 650/2	5,495
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Total: 5,495

Miller Arts Funding: 3,000

Out of pocket: 2,495

Picture:

