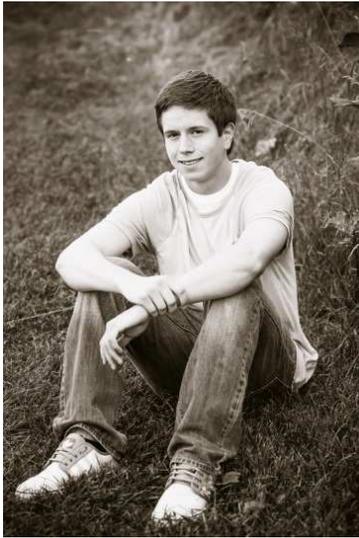


SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

Class of 2014

Reflections of Music Study



Zach Nechvatal, Verona Area High School

Then:

1) How old were you when you started lessons?

When I was four, I started taking the Kids-N-Keys class with Mickey as my teacher, then when I was about five I began taking lessons.

2) Why did you start taking lessons?

I was always into music, walking around the house singing songs-usually the Sunday school songs from church. My parents signed me up for the class and lessons and I never looked back.

3) What was your favorite part about lessons?

Getting to have such a vast variety of music was the most fun. If there was a piece that I really wanted to play, I would get the sheet music and learn it. If I liked a certain kind of music, I could play it. The freedom of being able to choose what you want to do was great.

4) What kept you going when lessons were challenging?

Most definitely having a teacher that understood my schedule and would push me to what she believed I could do, but respected the fact that I had a lot of other things going on in my life with sports, work, etc. I broke my finger at the beginning of this year, and instead of giving up right then like most would, Mickey found someone handed pieces for me and I continued right on playing. It really was a challenge, but I am so glad that I went through with it and had a great teacher and friend with me all along to help.

5) What is your favorite memory from music lessons?

When Mickey or I would say something and neither of us could stop laughing. These jokes could go on for 5 minutes, until both of us stop and realize I should probably play the song that has been sitting in front of me for a while.

Now:

1) How has music study influenced the person you are today?

Taking lessons and working to become a better piano player has made me really appreciate all of the things other people work hard at. Seeing other people excel at the instrument they play, seeing people who are great at a sport that takes acquired skill, things like that really make me happy because it shows that they are really dedicated to what they do.

2) In your opinion, what is the greatest benefit of music study for people your age?

The greatest benefit is having a talent that will stick with you for so long. We can take this to college and impress our friends by sitting down at any piano and busting out a random song. So many people wish they could play piano, or always say that they want to start. We have actually done it, we went through with the hours of practice every week and that's something to be proud of.

3) What advice would you give younger music students?

Do. Your. Theory.

Also, if your life starts to get a little busy or something happens that may deter you from playing, never give up. The end of 8th grade Mickey could clearly tell that I had my doubts about playing through high school, so instead of me just giving up and ending my lessons there, we talked about it and worked something out. I took off that whole summer and came back so eager to play because I realized how much I missed it. I played football, lacrosse, and snowboarded throughout high school. I had a busy life. But that shouldn't stop you because you always can find time to practice, and you won't regret sticking with it. But you would regret quitting.

4) Do you still get nervous when you play in front of people?

Never. Playing so many recitals and in front of so many judges has made me realize that getting nervous for a performance is silly, if you mess up, so what? You know how well you can play the piece on your own time and it really shouldn't matter too much what others think.

5) What is your favorite piece of music or composer- and why?

I'm going to change this question to favorite genre. My favorite genre is anything except classical. And Mickey knows that better than anyone else.

6) Practice tips?

If you never practice and play your songs like they are brand new at every lesson, you will be a good sight reader. If you always practice the same song all the time, you will be great at memorizing. Find an even balance and try to be great at both. I wish I could memorize...

7) What is your biggest achievement in music so far?

Either achieving Superior in Federation 9 years in a row, or becoming a Scale Master in 2002. The excitement of becoming a Scale Master at age six really sticks with you.



Rachel Spears, Waunakee High School

Then:

1. How old were you when you started lessons? 4
2. Why did you start taking lessons? I took lessons in Alabama and my mom wanted me to continue
3. What was your favorite part about lessons? Stickers!
4. What kept you going when lessons were challenging? Stickers :)
5. What is your favorite memory from music lessons? The day my hand was big enough to stretch an octave (like a year ago)

Now:

1. How has music study influenced the person you are today? I love music and I have a really good ear for harmony now.
2. In your opinion, what is the greatest benefit of music study for people your age? It opens your eyes to more than what's on the radio.
3. What advice would you give younger music students? keep practicing
4. Do you still get nervous when you play in front of people? definitely
5. What is your favorite piece of music or composer- and why? Debussy all the way! I like the flowy music
6. Practice tips? Chunk your sections
7. What is your biggest achievement in music so far? Playing the piano for the school musical 2 years ago!

Adam Foster, Middleton High School

Then:

- 1) How old were you when you started lessons? I was 6 years old.
- 2) Why did you start taking lessons? My parents wanted me to start playing piano.
- 3) What was your favorite part about lessons? I liked to learn new songs and improve.
- 4) What kept you going when lessons were challenging? My parents kept me in lessons at first, but later on I liked to work towards a goal like recitals or festivals.
- 5) What is your favorite memory from music lessons? I liked learning new songs and preparing for recitals.

Now:

- 1) How has music study influenced the person you are today? It has made me a more musical and well-rounded person, piano and music in general have become a big part of my life.
- 2) In your opinion, what is the greatest benefit of music study for people your age? It's a great hobby for anyone to try.
- 3) What advice would you give younger music students? Practice, work on technique and get good early.
- 4) Do you still get nervous when you play in front of people? A little, not as much as I used to.
- 5) What is your favorite piece of music or composer- and why? The Maple Leaf Rag by Scoot Joplin, it is challenging but fun to play.
- 6) Practice tips? Don't just run through the piece, use your time wisely and work on what you really need to improve.
- 7) What is your biggest achievement in music so far? A superior plus in Guild.

Ian Smith, Homeschooled

Then:

- 1) How old were you when you started lessons?**

I was 6 years old when I had my first piano lesson.

- 2) Why did you start taking lessons?**

I was eager. Music must be in my blood. Even after a short time, when I began to lose interest in music, I discovered the addictiveness of learning new songs.

- 3) What was your favorite part about lessons?**

I loved to learn when it came to music (at the time, only music). I was also given the freedom (and sometimes the encouragement) to play as fast as I wanted.

- 4) What kept you going when lessons were challenging?**

The vision of becoming a true musician has kept me going through the last several years. I'm not sure if I fully understood then, but I definitely understand the power of that motivation now.

- 5) What is your favorite memory from music lessons?**

Laughter. I love music almost as much as I do fun. All of the instructors that I have come to know at Rhapsody have been beyond fantastic.

Now:

- 1) How has music study influenced the person you are today?**

It has shaped the person I am today. Music is much like a language for me. Through sound, I now have the ability to use music to communicate my feelings and emotions. Thus, I cannot give enough thanks to Rhapsody for helping me become the person I am today.

- 2) In your opinion, what is the greatest benefit of music study for people your age?**

It makes you think differently about things, whether you like it or not. Music in general teaches you to think. Practice teaches discipline, and performance teaches self-control and preparation.

3) What advice would you give younger music students?

Don't stop playing, practicing, learning, or creating music. School and other commitments (which I call the Dark Ages) might try to drag your attention elsewhere. Also, learn multiple instruments. After coming to learn many different instruments, I can see how each one relates to another type of music. Finally, don't be afraid of musical theory. It is much simpler than many people make it seem. Don't give up.

4) Do you still get nervous when you play in front of people?

Absolutely. But once I start playing (and stop shaking), I allow myself to feel through the piece I'm playing. When that happens, it's a party.

5) What is your favorite piece of music or composer- and why?

I have to say Scott Joplin. His music has been a part of my life for almost as long as I have been taking lessons at Rhapsody. I also see much of his tricks and techniques sneak into my own compositions (it keeps me on my toes).

6) Practice tips?

Use a metronome. No matter how tedious use it can be, it *will* aid you in your performance life whether you want it to or not. And don't lose hope! The hardest part of practicing a song or an instrument is just taking the time to sit down and do it. From there, if you let yourself be immersed in it, it's a breeze.

7) What is your biggest achievement in music so far?

It wouldn't be possible for me to pick out the greatest of my musical achievements, but I can say that the skills, mindsets and experiences that I have taken from within the Rhapsody walls have lead me from producing musical albums to performing in an event for over a thousand people.

Steven Queoff, Verona Area High School

Then:

- 1) **How old were you when you started lessons?** I started lessons when I was 5,
- 2) **Why did you start taking lessons?** My brother Erik was taking piano lessons and I decided that I wanted to do it as well.
- 3) **What was your favorite part about lessons?** The music I got to play. I liked that I could actually play songs that I had only heard before.
- 4) **What kept you going when lessons were challenging?** Definitely my mom. There were definitely times when I wanted to stop taking lessons but my mom kept me in it and I am very grateful to her for that.
- 5) **What is your favorite memory from music lessons?** Learning the first movement of Sonata Pathetique (which is still in progress by the way). It's really difficult, but once you get it down, it is incredibly fun to play.

Now:

- 1) **How has music study influenced the person you are today?** It has made me into a more well-rounded person. I think that because I have studied piano, I can better understand other art forms and styles.
- 2) **In your opinion, what is the greatest benefit of music study for people your age?** I feel like many people my age can be under a lot of pressure due to homework, college stuff and maybe a job. Music would provide a nice way to output some of that stress, rather than keeping it all bottled up.
- 3) **What advice would you give younger music students?** It may be really difficult and boring now, but just wait, it gets way way better.

- 4) **Do you still get nervous when you play in front of people?** Of course! Everyone I know gets nervous when having to do anything in front of people. I have learned to cope with it much better now though.
- 5) **What is your favorite piece of music or composer- and why?** My favorite composer is Rachmaninov. I like how he can write in a very gritty, very classic-Russian-sounding music, like in his Preludes in C# minor and G minor, but he can also write really majestic and romantic music, like parts in Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini or Piano Concerto No.2.
- 6) **Practice tips?** Slow it down first.
- 7) **What is your biggest achievement in music so far?** So far, I think my biggest achievement was learning about chords and chord structure. Although I am still not very good at it, it really helps me recognize what the composer is trying to do.



Emily Rohn, Madison Memorial High School

Then:

1. **How old were you when you started lessons?** When I was five years old I took group piano with three other girls. The next year I started taking lessons with Mickey.
2. **Why did you start taking lessons?** My brother took lessons and I always liked watching and listening to him. I also learned to play chop sticks at a family friend's house one day and after that I wanted to play like my brother and learn for myself.
3. **What was your favorite part about lessons?** Seeing Mickey's smiling face every week of course!
4. **What kept you going when lessons were challenging?** Knowing that I had made it that far already. I knew it was just one rough patch and that it'd have to eventually get better. Mickey was also always encouraging and pushing me to achieve all that I could, whether I wanted to or not.
5. **What is your favorite memory from music lessons?** All of the conversations I've had with Mickey. Not only is she an amazing music teacher but she is also someone I can talk to about anything. She's helped me through a lot of hard times, as well as shared a lot of laughs. Sometimes I felt she knew me better than I did, and always knew what to do to help me be the best I could. It was also entertaining to see the new creative ways she would try to and motivate me. One year I hadn't done my theory for roughly four months, so she challenged me that if I finished my theory by the following week, she would buy me a McFlurry. I got my McFlurry :)

Now:

1. **How has music study influenced the person you are today?** Music has been something that I knew was always there. It's been a stress reliever and something I've become proud of. I know what it's like to look at something and think there's no possible way you could do that, and then later on look back at and realize that you were able to accomplish. Sometimes you have to push yourself past your limits to realize the full potential you really have. Mickey always pushed me, and never allowed me to achieve less than my ability.
2. **In your opinion, what is the greatest benefit of music study for people your age?** Just learning how to commit to something and work hard and progress at it. I've also learned some time management skills and that procrastination is not your friend.
3. **What advice would you give younger music students?** Don't give up or quit! There have been times before when I thought of just quitting so I wouldn't have to practice anymore, but I'm so thankful I didn't. Music is something that will stay with you for a very long time, and it's a really special talent to have. The practice may not be fun now, but it will get better. Mix it up or take a short break, but don't completely give up on music.

4. **Do you still get nervous when you play in front of people?** Yes, I put a lot of pressure on myself to try and play everything perfectly when I perform. You'd think I would have lost my nerves by now, but my heart still races every time I play in front of a big crowd or judge. I try to cover it up and play it cool though.
5. **What is your favorite piece of music or composer- and why?** I like contemporary, but I also like some classical pieces. Anything flashy and fast.
6. **Practice tips?** Do your theory!!!! And try to practice every day.
7. **What is your biggest achievement in music so far?** Just seeing how far I've come. Placing in some competitions was always nice, but it's just rewarding to see how far I've come and the difficulty of the music I can play now.



EMMA WITMER, VERONA AREA HIGH SCHOOL

Then:

1. **How old were you when you started lessons?** I started taking piano lessons at four, drum lessons at 9, voice lessons at 15, and recording technology lessons at 16.
2. **Why did you start taking lessons?** My Mom made me start piano. I actually found that I loved music so I started the other lessons to become a more well-rounded musician.
3. **What was your favorite part about lessons?** There's something new to do in them every week.
4. **What kept you going when lessons were challenging?** Sometimes it was sheer will power. Sometimes I just knew that I had to get through it.
5. **What is your favorite memory from music lessons?** When Chris Collins first started teaching me drums. I had a blast.

Now:

6. **How has music study influenced the person you are today?** I've based my whole life on music. I'm going into music production, looking to study Recorded Music at NYU. I couldn't be where I am now without music study.
7. **In your opinion, what is the greatest benefit of music study for people your age?** It helps you become a more well-rounded person in general. It adds culture to your life, along with discipline. And it's always nice to have a skill you can show off at parties.
8. **What advice would you give younger music students?** Stick with it. It may end up being your whole life.
9. **Do you still get nervous when you play in front of people?** Not at all. I've been playing with my own rock band for the past four years, playing over 50 shows. At some point you sort of have to get over stage fright.
10. **What is your favorite piece of music or composer- and why?** Gymnopedie No. 1 by Erik Satie. I like how Satie made his own style of music with this song, and I like how the difficulty in playing the piece lies mostly in the expression.
11. **Practice tips?** Practice every day. Drill yourself. If you keep playing something wrong, play it on repeat until it's right.
12. **What is your biggest achievement in music so far?** Getting into NYU's Clive Davis Institute of Recorded Music.