

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

Class of 2016

Reflections of Music Study

Olivia Prescott

Then:

How old were you when you started lessons?

I was 6 years old.



Why did you start taking lessons?

My older sister started taking them the year before and I really wanted to learn how to play too!

What was your favorite part about lessons?

Everything about lessons was fun for me: learning new pieces, growing as a musician, and just having fun with music!

What kept you going when lessons were challenging?

I always strived for that feeling of success when I finally played a difficult piece perfectly.

What is your favorite memory from music lessons?

I don't really have a specific favorite memory, but whenever I had a bad day going to piano cheered me up every time!

Now:

How has music study influenced the person you are today?

Music has broadened my horizons as I truly believe it is the universal language. Whether it is listening to music, playing piano, or obnoxiously singing with friends, music is my escape from reality and keeps me smiling.

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

Since people my age are usually very busy and have a lot of change going on in their lives, music allows us to reconnect to who we are and take a break from reality.

What advice would you give younger music students?

If you love music, you will always find time to incorporate it into your life even if it isn't your top priority, so don't stop!

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

YES!

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

I love a variety of music, but a lot of my favorite pieces were composed by Mozart (such as Fantasia in D Minor and Sonata in C Major). I love the dramatic transitions incorporated in his pieces!

Practice tips?

Practicing shouldn't feel like a chore, it should be fun! Play the songs that you feel like playing as it will change day to day - and don't be afraid to step back and review the basics!

What is your biggest achievement in music so far?

I'm not big on performing, so I don't exactly have a big musical achievement. However, I am proud that I have chosen to continue to take lessons despite quitting three times!

Kathleen Leone

Then:

How old were you when you started lessons?

I had just turned six.

Why did you start taking lessons?

My older sister took lessons, and I had been begging my mom to let me take lessons for a while, so she signed me up for a summer group class at Rhapsody. I then went on to take private lessons with Chris that fall.



What was your favorite part about lessons?

Everything! Chris was (and still is) an amazing teacher. I've never had a boring lesson with him. He definitely passed his passion for music on to me.

What kept you going when lessons were challenging?

Chris, mostly. Also, as a kid I was extremely competitive. I honestly wanted to be the best, and was sure I could be if I worked hard enough.

What is your favorite memory from music lessons?

Chris used to name the colored pencils we would use to mark fingerings on my music. There was a short red

pencil that we called "the mosquito" and Chris would make the most annoying mosquito sound whenever he used it. Greatest teacher ever.

Now:

How has music study influenced the person you are today?

Playing the piano has been a part of my life for thirteen years. It's who I am. It has given me many opportunities and advantages throughout life, and I wouldn't give it up for the world.

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

For me, music is freeing, stress-relieving, and comforting. Beyond that, sight reading comes in handy all the time, especially in theatre. Being a musical person really puts one at an advantage.

What advice would you give younger music students?

There will always be someone better than you. Don't worry about it. I have a Theodore Roosevelt quote painted on my mirror: "Comparison is the thief of joy." Don't compare yourself to others, compare yourself to the person you were yesterday, and be even better today. Don't be discouraged by other people's talent, be inspired!

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

Having performed at so many Rhapsody recitals, I don't get nervous there. When I perform at a competition, audition, or really any other concert, I still get pretty nervous.

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

I'm in love with musical theatre, so my favorite composer at the moment would have to be Lin-Manuel Miranda, the writer of the musical Hamilton. My favorites change all the time, though. I also love Chopin, Debussy, and Sondheim.

Practice tips?

Take the hard songs one measure at a time. Play the hard measures in a loop and repeat them until they're perfect. Also, when you get frustrated, don't give up, but feel free to take a quick break and come back to the song with a clear mind.

What is your biggest achievement in music so far?

Either being the pianist in The Children's Theatre of Madison's "Music Lesson", or singing with the Madison Opera at Opera in the Park 2015.

Angelica Emrich

Then:



How old when you started lessons?

I started taking lessons in piano when I was six, and in guitar when I was 13, but I had already learned some things from my family.

Why did you start taking lessons?

I started taking lessons because my family is musical, and it seemed natural to learn more about how to play.

What was your favorite part about taking lessons?

What I like most about music lessons is laughing with my teachers and the personal attention, which is different from school.

What kept going when lessons challenging?

The encouragement of my family and teachers, as well as my love of music and the pleasure I get from creating keeps me going when things get tough. I know it will not always be easy, but it is worth it.

What is your favorite memory from music lessons?

I have many favorite memories from music lessons, and every one of them relates to fun and laughter. It makes learning easier.

Now:

How has music study influenced you today?

I find I have become more contemplative, more observant and more passionate about life through my study.

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

The greatest benefit of music study for young people is increased intelligence through abstract and creative work. It provides for the mind and spirit of the creative student.

What advice would you give younger music students?

Music can help you grow creatively as well as improve your study in other areas. It is also a very healthy and centering outlet for the stress of life these days.

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

I still get slightly anxious playing for an audience, but I keep in mind that playing for others provides enjoyment, which makes me feel a bit better.

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

I don't think I can choose. I find that my favorites are often based on the personality and passions of the composer, which frequently turn out to be similar to my own. They are people I feel I could hang out with.

Practice tips?

Practice at brief, frequent intervals in order to learn more effectively and not grow tired or frustrated. Minimizing distractions and having water/snacks handy are also helpful.

Biggest achievement in music so far?

My greatest achievement so far is learning to compose my own music and enjoying it so much that I don't seem able to stop!

Alyssa Smith

Then:

How old were you when you started lessons?

I was 6 years old.

Why did you start taking lessons?

My parents and I both wanted me to learn more about music. Preceding the start of my lessons at Rhapsody (and unfortunately I don't remember this very well since I was so young), I played around on our piano almost every day. Perhaps my parents liked the prospect of a better-sounding 6-year old!

What was your favorite part about lessons?

I always liked learning new improvisational techniques!

What kept you going when lessons were challenging?

Whenever I encountered a difficult passage in some music I was learning, my teacher (Chris) would always give me new ideas for how to practice it. Practice was hardly ever boring!

What is your favorite memory from music lessons?

I liked performing in the recitals. It always felt very rewarding to finally learn a challenging piece and then perform it.

Now:

How has music study influenced the person you are today?

Well, if it weren't for music lessons, I'd be looking for different careers! Chris helped me hone my skills as a musician and find a love for learning, and now I want to pursue a career in music performance. Music is something I do every day, and it is an integral part of my life.

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

I can't speak for others, but for me, learning music was one of the most rewarding activities I took part in. Overcoming challenging passages, learning to interpret music in my own way, even learning to improvise or compose my own music--these are all things that gave me an extreme sense of gratification. Music, for me, is a creative outlet, a mental exercise, and a gift from God.



What advice would you give younger music students?

Sometimes listening to older and more experienced musicians can be intimidating--I know for me it was (and still is). The best thing for me to do in those situations was to try to see them as inspirational rather than intimidating. Everyone starts at level one--it's just a matter of how far you're *willing* to go, not how far you're *able* to go.

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

Yep! I don't think that's something anyone can really fully get rid of. Everyone gets nervous!

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

My favorite piece is Rhapsody in Blue by Gershwin. Gershwin, Ravel, and Debussy are some of my favorite composers. These composers (especially Gershwin) use a lot of jazzy elements in their writing while still staying true to their predecessors. Their music, in my opinion, is some of the most creative.

Kirsten Queoff

Then:

How old were you when you started lessons?

I was 6 years old when I started piano lessons.



Why did you start taking lessons?

I started taking lessons at a young age because my parents signed me up and after a few years struggling with the basics, I feel in love with playing the piano!

What was your favorite part about lessons?

My favorite part about lessons when I was younger (and still today) would be to pick out Christmas music to play each winter and talking, sometimes too much during lessons, with my piano teacher.

What kept you going when lessons were challenging?

Whenever I would go through a rough patch with piano, I would start a new piece that I loved and just couldn't stop playing. It would remind me how much I loved and couldn't live without piano.

What is your favorite memory from music lessons?

My favorite memory from music lessons was doing the recitals. I would always be so nervous before I played but I would feel so good and proud of myself after that I couldn't stop smiling!

Now:

How has music study influenced the person you are today?

I have always loved music whether it be playing piano, other instruments, or listening to others. Music has given me a place where I can always think, distress, relax and be happy!

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

I believe that studying music or some form of the arts is very important for people my age. Music gives you the chance to express yourself through making something beautiful.

What advice would you give younger music students?

Stick with it! Don't quit because you think it might be hard or not as fun as you would like it to be! Music shouldn't be stressful, do it for you and you won't regret it!

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

Yes! I always get nervous before I play before people but my love for playing is so much greater than my fear of performing.

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

My favorite piece to play is Carol of the bells. Not only is it a beautiful song but it is a Christmas song and Christmas music is my favorite to play!

Practice tips?

Try to always be playing at least one piece you are really passionate and love but don't ignore the other pieces. Although they might seem difficult and not fun at first if you keep with it, you will find that even the most challenging pieces are fun!

What is your biggest achievement in music so far?

My biggest achievement in music would probably be just the personal achievement of sticking with piano through my busy school and sport filled schedule.