

GOALS

For four years I have been playing music in Kent's Band Program. As a trained drummer, I missed out on learning the ins and outs of harmonic music. My mission this year was to gain some proficiency in piano and vibraphone to build a foundation for college music. I also wanted to study my favorite instrument, the timbales, in a more formal setting.

WHY?

In order to become a truly well-rounded musician, I had to learn other instruments. This year I learned to play the keyboard and vibraphone with beginner proficiency. Throughout the whole year I have written reflections on my process.



FIGURE 1: Drums, piano, and vibraphone

As a percussionist, I have learned many different instruments, but in order to be truly well-rounded my playing required greater expertise. To meet my musical goals, it was extremely worthwhile for me to dive into note-based music.

This was a challenging process because I had little no experience with note-based music. Drum music was rhythm based, while piano and vibraphone music included rhythm and notes. While drumming was a matter of learning to coordinate my limbs, this was a more academic approach to music.

PROCESS

I began this year being unable to read piano music. I could only read rhythms from my drum instruction books.

I have always loved Jazz music and began learning simple Jazz Standards. The Real Book allowed me to choose a variety of songs to challenge me.

I also began percussion lessons with Leo Corona. He helped me improve my timbale and conga skills throughout the winter. I made swift improvements on both instruments. These lessons helped me pay attention to details like the way I hit the drum shell.

I also learned very basic piano and vibraphone skills such as learning to play scales. I also learned to construct different kinds of chords including dominant seventh, major seventh, and minor seventh chords.

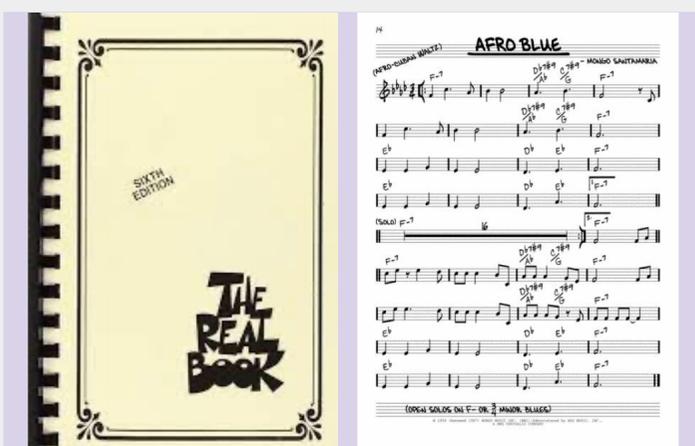


FIGURE 2: Real Book Afro Blue, where I learned to read basic Jazz music

RESULTS

While my Capstone was not necessarily a measurable project, it was a process of diligent learning over time.



FIGURE 3: Playing with my percussion instructor Leo Corona

Most of the experience I gained on these instruments was in a band setting. Since my band this year had two percussionists, I often played the Vibraphone. It was very different from pecking at individual keys on a keyboard. I had to put serious effort into staying afloat with other musicians. This experience gave me different insights into playing with a band.

I started writing very basic chord charts with a litany mistakes. They were very difficult for my band to play. Throughout junior and senior year, I familiarized myself with Musescore.

This winter I began writing a chart for La Vida Es Un Carnaval. I used my ear, Musescore, and various online resources. I wrote parts for the rhythm section as well as horn players.



FIGURE 4: La Vida Es Un Carnaval chart I wrote

This chart was especially difficult because salsa songs are extremely complex. Unlike pop songs, it is difficult to track the ways the parts change. There are also multiple instrument with different parts that I had to coordinate.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this inquiry into note-based music has been extremely helpful. This experience will help me make the most of music opportunities in college.

At Stanford I plan to play in the Afro-Latin Jazz Ensemble. My percussion lessons will certainly help me down the line.

Overall, the piano is essential to all higher-level music study. I may want to minor in music and knowledge of the piano is absolutely essential.