Why Iowa?

Growing up in the Iowa City area, I was opposed to the idea of attending the University of Iowa. It was only after I started exploring a major in music therapy, that I realized just how much Iowa had to offer. I wanted a well-rounded learning experience that would provide me an excellent education in both music therapy and my primary instrument, the double bass. Iowa was the only school able to offer this. I knew I would have the opportunity to learn from nationally-recognized and world-renowned professors, as well as performing in the state of the art facilities of Hancher Auditorium and Voxman Music Building. Although I was initially skeptical that Iowa would be a good fit for me, I can now say with confidence that I made the right decision.

When did you know you wanted to make a career in music?

In 2012, I saw the movie “The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey” and I fell in love with both the movie and the music. I wanted to compose film scores that would make people feel as strongly as I did when listening to a soundtrack. When I realized composition and theory weren’t my passion, I began to explore another musical avenue. My junior year, I attended a presentation at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics about music therapy. It sounded incredible and I wanted to explore it further. After taking the orientation to music therapy course at Iowa, I knew that I found a career that fulfilled my passion for music, love of helping others, and is a perfect fit for my outgoing personality.

Tell us about a favorite memory of your time at Iowa.

Since many of my courses have been online this semester, I have found myself reminiscing about the little things that I took for granted. I used to walk to the library around lunch time and grab a flex meal. As I walked back up the hill to Voxman, I would be excited to get to the point where I could see all my amazing music friends through the huge lobby window. It always made me so happy knowing that I had such an incredible community. I would make a silly face through the window and they would eagerly wave back to me. Then we all would share lunch together. People would come and go but I almost always had someone to sit and chat with. In these unusual times of isolation, I have come to realize it is the simple things that I cherish, whether that be talking with friends before class, meeting to study for an exam, or having lunch with my friends.

Looking back on your time here, what advice do you have for incoming freshmen?

Be persistent. For most of us, college is our first taste of freedom and a chance to really explore who you want to be. However, college is also challenging. Balancing academics and the new responsibilities of living on your own can be hard. But don’t let that scare you off. If you fail, try again. Be persistent and continue to fight for what you want even when things get hard. I am not saying keep doing the same thing and expect a different result. I am saying learn from your mistakes, be flexible, and adapt to adversity. If you can be persistent, you will be successful in the end.

What are your plans for the future, and how has the School of Music prepared you for the next stages of your career?

After the spring semester, I will complete a 6-month internship and then take the music therapy board certification exam. Then I will be out into the professional world on the search for a full-time music therapy position! My professors have been so helpful in helping me look for internships that are a good fit for me and my professional interests.
Why Iowa?
I'm an Iowa native, so UI was a natural choice for me. I love the atmosphere of a Big Ten school, but at the same time, my studies and instruction have felt so personalized. For me, being able to have weekly one-on-one lessons with my professor as a freshman was so meaningful. Not a lot of universities offer that to incoming freshmen, so it was extremely influential in my decision to choose UI.

What has been your greatest success as of late?
My greatest success is definitely founding the UI Women's Brass student organization. We have a healthy number of students participating already, even though our semester looks a bit uncertain. Our goals are to meet monthly (over Zoom) to discuss topics surrounding what it means to be a female/trans/non-binary individual in the world of professional brass instrumentalists. Such topics include resume building, networking, articles/resources, attending conferences, and inviting professional artists to speak to us about their own experiences. We'd also love to put together various brass ensembles and look forward to performing with one another once it is safe to do so.

Another goal of ours is fundraising. These funds will go towards future travel, commissioning pieces for our organization (involving the SoM composition department), inviting guest artists, as well as fundraising for the Iowa City community. I'm a huge proponent of taking care and doing as much as you can for the community you're involved in, and through fundraising I'd love to do that, particularly for the Iowa City Domestic Violence Intervention Program.

We also have hopes to attend the International Women's Brass Conference in the spring of 2021, held at the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas.

What advice would you give to your freshman self?
I would tell my freshman self (wow, feels like an eternity ago-) to focus on what you're passionate about. If you don't know what that is yet, don't be afraid. Focus on your strengths and what you LOVE to do. Don't waste your time comparing yourself to others, because one of these days you will find that passion, and it'll drive you more than anything or anyone else. Oh and also, 2020 is a whirlwind. You'll learn more skills than the past five years combined. Good luck.

What do you want to do after graduation?
After graduation, I plan to teach (preferably a middle school or high school) band program for a few years before advancing to graduate studies in conducting. I have a passion for conducting and am so excited to pursue a future in it!
Way to prepare for more substantial performances. It's not strictly piano-related, but I will always remember performing Mozart's Great Mass in C minor, K. 427 as a singer in the Camerata Choir. The ensemble included four other choirs and the UI Symphony Orchestra at Hancher Auditorium, and it was the largest ensemble I've ever performed in.

What are your post-graduation goals? How is UI preparing you to achieve those goals?

It's hard to say exactly right now! I may not pursue music as a career, but I will never lose my desire to glorify God through music, and I want it to be a part of every day of my life. As for mathematics, I chose that major because it’s extremely versatile. It would allow me to pursue further study in business, law, engineering, or any of a dozen of other disciplines. Being able to double major at Iowa is the greatest tool I have for building the future I want. I'm so grateful for everything the University has already done for me, and for all the opportunities that are sure to come along in the future at Iowa.

Why Iowa?

I sought out the University of Iowa to study with my piano professor, Dr. Nosikova, and to have the opportunity to double major in two disciplines that I love. The fact that Iowa is the perfect distance from home and close to my grandmother’s house in Tipton, IA, was the icing on the cake. When I visited, I fell in love with the campus, especially the Voxman Music Building, and I could tell that the School of Music was full of faculty and students that were really committed to making Iowa a world-class place to study music.

What has surprised you most about your time at UI?

One of the things I was surprised by is the sheer number of opportunities that are available to undergraduates in such a great variety of fields. Through the music school, I was able to start playing in a quartet right away as a freshman, and we got to have coaching sessions with several visiting professional performing groups through the Chamber Music Residency Program. Right off the bat, I had performance opportunities and masterclasses waiting for me. The rest of Iowa is no different.

How do you balance the rigors of two majors?

I wouldn’t be able to do it if I didn’t schedule my time very meticulously. Having practicing on my calendar as if it were a class has always been an extremely important component of my scheduling process, and I do the same thing with work I need to accomplish outside of class for my other studies. I also never let schoolwork come before sleep, because if I don’t get enough sleep everything else will certainly suffer. And I’m not afraid to put recreation or relaxation on the calendar as well, to keep myself sane.

Describe the performing opportunities available to pianists at Iowa. Is there a particular experience that was memorable for you?

In COVID times, opportunities have been more limited than usual, but I did get to record a performance in the Old Capitol for the Piano Sundays concert series this fall. Our weekly seminars are a great way to prepare for more substantial performances. It’s not strictly piano-related, but I will always remember performing Mozart’s Great Mass in C minor, K. 427 as a singer in the Camerata Choir. The ensemble included four other choirs and the UI Symphony Orchestra at Hancher Auditorium, and it was the largest ensemble I’ve ever performed in.

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Why Iowa?

I chose Iowa because I felt at home with the jazz faculty here. During the summer of my junior to senior year of high school, I participated in the Iowa Summer Jazz Camp. I learned so much about theory, improvisation, and about myself as a player, too. After that week of camp, I knew right away that Iowa was going to be my home for the next upcoming years of my life.

Tell us about your early musical experiences. What led you to pursue music at the collegiate level?

The start to my musical journey began when I was six. My parents signed me up for piano lessons just to keep me busy and out of trouble. I ended up loving it (and staying out of trouble). I continued strongly playing piano all the way up until freshman year of high school. Throughout all of this I picked up guitar, drums, and bass guitar and of course, saxophone. I only picked the saxophone because that was the instrument I could make a sound on in fifth grade when trying out instruments for band. Playing saxophone (alto at that time) was just something I did on top of all the other instruments I was trying to learn until I got my first saxophone feature my 9th grade year, at our 8th/9th grade building in Waukee. From there, I knew that I wanted to take this saxophone thing seriously. After many solos and competitions later, I decided that I wanted to pursue playing jazz saxophone in college.

Do you have any takeaways from your first couple of months at UI? What has surprised you?

The biggest takeaway that I have gotten from these few months at UI is how much the faculty/music program cares about the students. They are doing the most they can with COVID; whether that is through spaced out rehearsals, Zoom lessons, social distancing seats, etc.

What goals do you have for your future in music? How do you think the UI School of Music will help you achieve them?

I’m hoping to come out of UI a better musician and a better person. A big goal of mine is to make and receive an invitation to a collegiate festival or all-star band. All the resources I need to better myself are all here at UI, it’s now a game of how much am I going to use them in order to achieve these goals of mine.

You started your college career in the middle of a pandemic. What helps you stay positive?

Something that helps me stay positive is listening to new music. Just in the first few months here, my music library has expanded a ton due to professors and friends giving me so much music to which I can listen. This keeps me busy and gives me something to do since most of my classes are online and it’s tough to hang with friends and such. This gives me a medium to stay in touch with friends and professors.