

Music has always been an integral part of my life. My grandmother began teaching me piano at five years old, with lessons almost weekly until I moved from Wisconsin to New Jersey for college. At ten, I began learning violin from her, continuing with orchestra throughout middle school and high school. In sixth grade, I began clarinet, and while in high school I taught myself cello, bass clarinet, flute, guitar, percussion, and any other instrument my band director would allow me to take home. Music taught me patience, determination, and the confidence necessary to perform as a soloist and in an ensemble. When I moved to Rowan, I knew I wanted to continue with music, so I found ways to continue independently and through the Honors College, attending numerous performances to fulfill many of my Honors Participation requirements.

As an incoming freshman, I auditioned for band placement, and ended up in the Wind Ensemble, the highest level ensemble on campus. I started college during the COVID-19 pandemic, so the first semester was almost entirely online, learning more about theoretical and technical aspects of wind ensemble music than actually playing. We would meet on Zoom and talk about theory-based concepts such as note pairing and analyzing a score along with listening assignments to familiarize ourselves with a wide range of music and styles that influence band music. Dr. Higgins did his best to keep us engaged in both listening to and playing music, even if it wasn't together in a physical space.

During this first semester, I also took Songs of Praise, Songs of Protest, an online Honors class taught by Dr. Plant in the music department. This connection led me to join Collegium Musicum my sophomore year, an early music ensemble also taught by Dr. Plant that focuses on Baroque and Renaissance music. This small, specialized group allowed me to explore different genres and historical periods of music that I hadn't played before and on period instruments such as the crumhorn and recorders, instruments that were typical for the time.

As ensembles returned to playing in-person music, I continued in Wind Ensemble, Collegium, and the Clarinet Ensemble where in total I played at least 23 concerts and 86 pieces of music over all eight semesters. Moreover, as COVID restrictions loosened, I was able to further engage in music through Honors Thrive events, including attending dozens of faculty recitals, guest artist concerts, and other events put on by the music department.

One guest artist performance that stood out was The Crossroads Project performing *Rising Tides* on September 22, 2023. The project is a collaboration between composer Laura Kaminsky, physicist Robert Davies, and the Fry Street Quartet out of Utah State University. The performance was broken into four sections: H2O, Bios, Forage, and Societas. Each section had a narration by Robert Davies accompanied by images from world-renowned photographers, separated by excerpts of music played by the quartet. The performance approached topics of climate change in a way that didn't make the audience feel defensive, regardless of their stance on the matter. Throughout the performance, the images shifted from pictures of the incredible diversity of life on Earth to the human interactions with the planet to our impact on the world and its resources. Images of pollution, deforestation, fracking, and other negative effects we have on the Earth were accompanied by increasingly agitated music. *Rising Tides* ended on a hopeful note, talking about what we can do to change the course of climate change, one small action at a time. The creators use the term "applied hope," or giving people both the inspiration and actionable tasks to make real change. Their message was that no one person can fix the world,

but if everyone finds some small area to change and make it our own, the combined action of billions of people can help save our ecosystems.

Performances like *Rising Tides* also created a connection between performing and visual arts, particularly in my area of scientific visualization. Their use of paintings and photographs to accompany and enhance the message of a performance is a unique area that fits in with what I have studied in the Biomedical Art & Visualization program, with a focus on environmental activism and inspiration. These same topics are prominent in my own work, which focuses on communicating science to a general audience to encourage learning and conservation action.

I am grateful for the opportunities that participating in the Honors College has afforded me. From going to music performances to taking Honors music classes, I have been able to continue my lifelong commitment to music while being encouraged to explore different connections between music, society, and the natural world.