

Senior Project Proposal

by Max Kelley

Webster Thomas High School

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Overview

My name is Max Kelley, and I am a senior this year at Webster Thomas, actively involved in many clubs and activities such as Amateur Radio Club, the Morning News, the Wind Ensemble, Varsity Radio Club, the district play, and countless others. This past summer, my grandfather passed away after being shuffled between various nursing homes and facilities, attempting to find him the best care. At the last nursing home, the patients were mostly relegated to sitting in the hallway in wheelchairs, or in their rooms. There was very little interaction between the patients and staff. I feel that this neglect was detrimental to the conditions of the residents at the home, including my grandfather. Confined to their chairs and rooms all day, the residents rarely connected with the outside world.

As a piano student of four years, I have discovered that in times of sadness or confusion, music has been a way for me to express myself and better my mood. My project will allow me to further my passion for music and jazz, as well as improve the wellbeing of senior citizens in our community. I plan on holding a jazz piano recital at a local area nursing home, featuring not only myself, but other piano students from The Music Store Inc. in the Village of Webster.

Through this project, I aim to:

- Improve my piano playing skills by assembling and practicing a repertoire of jazz pieces
- Learn how to schedule and organize a semi-public event
- Learn how to compose and perform an original piece
- Improve the confidence and skills of students at The Music Store Inc. by means of a low-pressure performance opportunity
- Provide entertainment for senior citizens in our community, in memory of my grandparents.

Mentor

Rick Pearson

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My mentor for this project is Rick Pearson, my piano teacher, who teaches at The Music Store Inc. in the Village of Webster. Rick has been teaching for 35 years and has been playing piano for a total of 50 years in various ensembles, pit orchestras, and solo gigs. His sense of humor and excellent knowledge of jazz and improvisation will help me be the best player possible, along with the rest of the musicians playing at the recital. Rick will also be able to assist me in proper writing and arranging techniques for my original piece, as he is very proficient in classical and jazz music theory. For these reasons, I believe that Rick Pearson is a perfect fit as a mentor for my senior project.

Plan of Action

In order to accomplish the goals of this project, I will follow the following general timetable:

February

- Solicit performers to play
- Monday night piano lessons (2 hours)

March

- Schedule performance date with nursing home (.5 hours)
- Monday night piano lessons (2.5 hours)
- Finalize and practice personal repertoire for concert (3 hours)
- Finalize list of performers & pieces

April

- Arrange and print paper program for performances (1 hour)
- Performance (estimated 2 hours)
- Edit and upload video for website (5 hours)
- Create website (1 hour)
- Monday night piano lessons (2 hours)

Completion Date: April 22, 2011

Total Estimated Time: 21 hours

Documentation of Project Process

It would be rather repetitive and pointless to post information regarding my personal practice of the pieces during the development of the project. However, after the recital, video of the performances, separated by each artist, will be available to the public at jazz.maxkelley.com, allowing the families of the performers, as well as the performers, and senior citizens to view the performances at their leisure. I believe these videos will be an excellent testament to the hard work of the piano students, and their ability to discipline themselves to practice pieces to a level suitable for recital.

Conclusion

This project will enable me share my passion for jazz music with the elderly who are confined to life in nursing homes, while enriching their lives and improving their mood. By playing some classic, popular jazz songs, the recital will hopefully allow them to relive memories from their earlier years, while improving the performers' own playing skills.

The composition of an original piece will allow me to apply what I have learned in music theory classes here at Thomas, and in my 9 years of taking music in school. It will also allow me to practice writing and arranging music so that it is not only technically challenging, but pleasing to the ear of the audience.

Finally, this project will require me to be well-organized in order to coordinate with the nursing home to set up a performance date. I will also have to write and print programs for the performance, as well as arrange for the audio and/or video recording of the show.

Overall, I believe that this project will be an excellent way to combine my skills in music, organization, and technology in order to present a product that will benefit elders in the local community as well as the skills and experience of the piano students at The Music Store Inc.