

USC Percussion Recording Grant Application

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The USC Percussion Recording Grant would allow the purchase of key audio hardware to allow students in the percussion area (applied, percussion ensemble, steel band) to record lessons, rehearsals and pre-screen audition materials to improve their performance potential.

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Courses affected

MUSC 111-811K	Applied Percussion
MUSC 130 D section 001	Percussion Ensemble
MUSC 130 D section 002	Percussion Players
MUSC 130 C	Palmetto Pans Steel Band

Students affected

Students in the above courses will have access to the recording hardware/software that will be purchased with these funds. Typically, there are between 20 and 25 percussion majors in the USC School of Music. Each of these students are enrolled in applied lessons. Applied percussion students are encouraged to record their practice on a regular basis for self-evaluation. The acquisition of this recording hardware and software would make it convenient for percussionists to record their practice and lessons. Because of the size of percussion instruments, there are a limited number of rooms in the USC School of Music that can fit these percussion instruments. Outfitting a semi-permanent professional quality recording set-up in the percussion studio would encourage students to use this hardware/software on a weekly basis. In addition, recording pre-screen audition materials for graduate auditions would be much easier with professional quality audio gear. In recent years, a higher percentage of percussion students are electing to enroll in the performer's certificate program. These students are frequently auditioning for summer festivals and graduate programs, which often require pre-screened auditions. By providing a location where percussion instruments can be recorded, percussion students will gain an advantage in these auditions.

Innovation

The materials purchased (audio interface/microphones/recording software) will be of the highest quality. These materials will give USC percussion students the best opportunity to sound professional when they record practice, lessons, rehearsals and pre-screen auditions. Very few peer institutions have a set up similar to what this proposal entails, thereby establishing USC as a leader in this venture. By providing a computer (through USC School of Music), microphones, audio interface, and recording software that can be accessed by students whenever they need it, students will be more likely to take advantage of this innovative technology.

Impact

As students actively record themselves, they become their own self-evaluators. Listening to the sound one creates, the accuracy with which one plays, and the musical statements one makes is a powerful learning tool. I currently record nearly all of my applied lessons, and frequently play clips back during students' lessons. When they hear for themselves how they sound, they immediately find things they want to improve and things they like in their sound. When students are given the opportunity to self-evaluate, they will become better musicians and will be more successful in their future musical endeavors. Students will have the opportunity to send their applied teacher recordings from practice

sessions and rehearsals, allowing the instructor to evaluate a student's performance potential outside of the applied lesson. Ultimately, this will make USC Percussion students more competitive for graduate positions, summer festivals and other events that require recorded audition materials. There will also be opportunities for students to evaluate other students' recordings. By using these recordings in the studio class setting, evaluation of sound, phrasing, tempo can easily be done. In addition, students can learn how various microphone placements and engineering techniques can affect recording quality. Finally, students will also be able to record percussion ensemble, steel band, and chamber music rehearsals.

Funding

The funds from this grant will be used to purchase the following:

MOTU 896mk3 hybrid Audio Interface	\$900
This unit provides pre-amps for up to 8 condenser microphones Comes with software for mixing and editing recordings	
AKG C3000 Studio Twin Pack	\$400
Pair of large-diaphragm condenser microphones	
Creative Cloud Subscription (1 yr.)	\$155.88
Subscription for Adobe Audition recording/editing software	
Total	\$1455.88

Distinct Values

This project will address two of the distinct values the School of Music has identified.

1. Musicians as Educators and Educators as Musicians.

First, and foremost having this technology available to the students will address one of the primary objectives of my teaching philosophy – to help students become their own teacher. When students leave the applied lesson environment, they need to have skills that will help them become a better musician and/or educator. While a recording of their own playing is certainly not a replacement for private instruction, it is certainly a large step in that direction. When students are given the opportunity to critically listen to all aspects of their playing, they can begin to evaluate their performance abilities. This is an important step to becoming a lifelong learner as a musician. There will not always be someone on the other side of the instrument to evaluate their skills as a musician, so learning to use this technology in such a way will be highly advantageous when they leave the applied environment

2. Diversely Skilled Musicians

Musicians are constantly being expected to expand their knowledge base and working with electronics is one way that percussionists can do that. Percussion is a natural instrument for this as many of our solo and chamber works feature soundscapes, delay and loops. We need to look no further than one of our current DMA students, Brett Landry, to demonstrate this. His Major Document deals with the topic of marimba with electronic effects. Without at least a working knowledge of micing percussion instruments and delay software, he would not possess the skills to pursue this project. Percussionists are often expected to know how to use technology of recording hardware and software, microphones and sound boards. It is my intention to draw upon School of Music recording engineer Jeff Francis to present some sessions to the percussion students on basic microphone placement for recording and live sound. These skills will put USC percussionists ahead of many musicians who are not exposed to these aspects of recording/amplification technology.