

Dayton Hare
Princeton University Personal Statement

While I identify first and foremost as a composer, my work has been influenced in important ways by roles I have played outside of my life in music. During my first year as an undergraduate at the University of Michigan, I began working as an arts journalist at the campus newspaper. I was attracted by the prospect of using the position of a critic to interview interesting composers and musicians, and liked the idea of clarifying my thinking about music by writing about it. But very quickly my interest shifted towards the value of journalism itself, to the good it could do in the world if done properly. In addition to my role as an arts reporter and classical music columnist, I started taking on leadership roles at the paper, first as a senior arts editor and then as the managing editor of the entire publication. From those vantage points, I could see the good we were doing in our community.

A case in point: During my tenure as managing editor one of our journalists caught wind of rumors about serious sexual misconduct on the part of a university faculty member. Over the course of months, our editorial team supported his work as the reporter doggedly tracked down the details of the story, unearthing documents and interviewing witnesses. By the time we went to print we had an assailable case against the faculty member in question. The Feds evidently agreed. Today the faculty member is serving a federal prison sentence for his predation, and our community is a little bit safer.

The experience of having participated in something that so meaningful helped the community inspired me to carry a socially-minded approach back into my music. While art obviously acts on us in different, generally less direct ways, I strongly believe that it can make a positive impact on our attitudes and communities. In my work today, I often deal with subjects that are of both personal and social concern, and I hope through my music I might make some small contribution to remedying the problems we collectively face.