

Dayton Hare
Princeton University Statement of Purpose

In my music, I strive for a balance between narrative, form, and atmosphere in order to create a space for people to grapple with large, abstract problems and experiences. Much of my work engages with environmental themes stemming from my concern about climate change, but I enjoy letting my imagination roam across inspirations ranging from literature to politics. Whatever the topic, I'm most interested in finding creative ways to link musical decision-making directly to my subject matter, treating it not as a prompt but as an integral structural and perceptual element. I believe that Princeton's PhD program, with its combination of resources, student autonomy, and a vibrant artistic community, offers the ideal environment to develop my work in new directions. Attending would not only fulfill a deeply-held dream, but would pave the way for my aspiration to become a professional composer and music educator.

To communicate complex ideas through my music, I often embrace formal concepts informed by my background as a student of literature at the University of Michigan. From literary modernists like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf I absorbed the ethos that linking a work's form to its content inherently illuminates its ideas. Lit from within, a piece becomes transparent. This approach can be heard in pieces like *An object of some concern*, a piano trio about climate anxiety. The composition is built out of successively shorter sections in accelerating tempos and rising registers, mimicking a vicious cycle of an anxiety attack and simulating the experience for audiences. A related strategy shapes the orchestra piece I wrote for the New York Youth Symphony as part of the Jon Deak First Music Program last year, *spiral-bound*. Here again I use sections that grow shorter and faster, reflecting the structure of both a mental health spiral and spiral structures in nature. This spiraling manifests most clearly in the main melodic material: a twelve-tone row (a first for me) that continuously transposes, with the final note doubling as the first pitch in each new transposition, looping back like a Möbius strip. Similarly, in an orchestra piece from my master's at Yale, *Estuary*, I was guided by the program of following a river from its headwaters to its mouth.

Sometimes the influence of my literature background is more explicit. In *whereof one cannot speak*, a choir piece commissioned for the Norfolk Festival Chamber Choir, I dramatize the transition from "meaningless noise" to "meaningful noise," i.e. language, by gradually assembling the text out of its constituent phonemes. Inspired by Ludwig Wittgenstein, I reenact the process we undergo as children, learning to turn abstract sound into concrete meaning and dramatizing the struggle to be understood. The embrace of each of these formal ideas and musical techniques serves the broader goal of communicating a piece's message. Because music can move people to care about things in new ways, I believe it's essential to use it to communicate widely, especially about issues like climate change.

These questions were central during my Fulbright year in Paris. While there, I incorporated field recordings I took of natural and urban environments into *how to be both*, a collaboration with a painter and a meditation on our relationship to nature and built human environments. Scored for prepared piano four hands and live electronics, the piece represents my most ambitious use of mixed media to date—both in terms of electronics and its companion painting—and it ignited the urge to collaborate more with visual artists and creatives from other fields. I believe that drawing techniques from different areas can tie a listener's experience to real-world concerns—a particularly useful quality when dealing with abstract subjects like environmental crises, and I've already taken steps to incorporate certain aspects of this in

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upcoming projects. At Princeton I would be extremely interested in continuing to pursue collaborations of this kind within the broader artistic community.

Another great example of recent mixed media use is my current project, an open-score work about endangered Great Lakes birds conceived during an artist residency on Rabbit Island in Lake Superior. In it, I intermingle recorded birdsong and wave sounds with composed material derived from them, treating the environment as a co-equal collaborator, and giving listeners a fresh perspective on artistic authorship.

These recent mixed media projects represent a new evolution for my work, which has historically been mostly focused on acoustic concert music. While I'm curious to see where this path may lead, I don't yet feel as at home as I'd like in the electronic music world. As a consequence, the electronics resources on offer at Princeton are a big draw for me. With the benefit of the department's music tech labs and the expertise of faculty members like Jeff Snyder, one of my goals for graduate study would be to develop this nascent strain of my thinking into a fully-fledged creative tool.

Understanding how to communicate ideas to diverse audiences has been central to my work, and the importance of adapting my communication style has also become clear through my teaching experiences—first as an English teacher in France during the pandemic and later as a composition instructor at the Yale Department of Music. I found working with my students to be inspiring, both creatively and personally, and at Princeton's visit day I was very encouraged to learn about the availability of precepting and teaching opportunities for graduate students, which would help me build my resume and give me a leg up as I pursue the long-term goal of teaching composition at the university level.

Princeton offers many other opportunities essential for my future growth as a composer. I've long been curious about spectral techniques and extended intonation systems, and while I've lightly incorporated elements into pieces like *Estuary*, I've yet to truly dive headfirst into that rich and expansive world. During my doctoral studies, I'm determined to finally take the plunge and experiment with integrating that vocabulary into my compositional voice. The insights of faculty members like Donnacha Dennehy—who has been perhaps my favorite composer since undergrad and is certainly an expert in the area—and Juri Seo, whose seminar on extended intonation is exactly the thing I'm looking for in graduate coursework, are resources unmatched by any other program.

Overall, my music uses bespoke formal conceits and techniques to convey complicated ideas about subjects ranging from environmentalism to linguistics. I believe studying at Princeton would deepen my work by helping me develop a more expansive technical vocabulary, cultivate new collaborative partners, and refine work that speaks to our present moment and shared environmental reality. More importantly, I believe Princeton's community of variegated artists is one where I'd thrive and contribute, a belief I hold all the more firmly after having visited campus, heard student compositions at a PSK concert, and talked with current and recent graduate students about their experiences in the program. For all these reasons and more, just like last year, Princeton is far and away my top choice for doctoral study.