

A Story of Development

Once, during late afternoons when the sun was setting on an orange-pink sky, I would take out my headphones and lay down on soft pillows, peacefully listening to sound waves as they traveled through my ears. Other nights like this, if I were in need for escape, my feet would carry me up the steps to my mom's room to enter new worlds of ice dragons or freakish beasts. Immersed in the chilling snow, I would drag my feet up the mountain to deliver the final blow to the creature. Yet at the same time, I was looking in, with a sweet blackberry soda in one hand and my controller in the other. For years, I have always been the consumer. I have always been the one appreciating others' work, but never wanted to be the one creating the work for others to appreciate. Although they were fun, hobbies and interests like listening to music and playing video games weren't leading me to discover my aspirations. It also seemed like there was always something that got in the way of me thinking creating was something I wanted to do.

I grew up with a father who was into the music game in Oakland California. He was a friend with many musicians and poets who would meet late at coffee shops to deliver their pieces. These artists formed a supportive community with each other and many had children who grew up to be musicians and young artists themselves. I grew up with these people for most of my childhood, but I hadn't got into making music of my own, so I felt isolated from the group. I am thankful that being an artist is supported in my family, but I actually felt pressured to start making music, which made me not want to make music. At a young age I had made some songs, but I had many interests from swimming to flying trapeze. I hadn't thought it was something I actually wanted to do. I remember, when I was 8 years of age, I told my dad I didn't want to perform with him anymore. My dad and I had always been performing together raps when I was younger, but I grew disinterested in it, partially driven by the fear of judgment that arose back then. Although disappointed, my dad continued to support me, which allowed me to discover what I wanted to do, later leading me to OSA.

Throughout the years of losing and picking up new interests, playing video games had always been constant as one of my favorite things to do. Ever since I was four years old, I have been playing video games or watching my mom play. I remember staying up late in her room pretending to be asleep while I watched her play Lora Croft or Heavenly Sword on PlayStation 3. On my Nintendo DS I would play Cooking Mama, on the PlayStation, Sonic Heroes and Namco games (Dig Dug was my favorite). In middle school, I picked up on watching people play games. I would watch youtubers like DanTDM, Jacksepticeye, and Gloom. Around this time I would play My Little Big Planet and Plants Vs. Zombies or Guitar

Hero and Dance Dance Revolution with my mom, which actually required movement. Then I discovered flash games on the computer. I admittedly spent class time playing Happy Wheels, Snake, CoolMathGames such as Papa's Sushiria, and Acid Bunny on my chromebook. Finally I started playing more quest and story based adventure games like Skyrim Elder Scrolls V, Borderlands, The Last Of Us, Hellblade and Folklore, yet I still like playing calming and cute games like Flower, Katamari Forever, and Child of Eden. I have always had a passion for games and I continue to try new games and game related things like VR, which made me extremely dizzy. I also still find it interesting to watch people play games, which lead to me getting Twitch. Video games are phenomenal as they incorporate music, stories, visual art, architecture, combat, character development, fashion, and much more while most importantly allowing the player to enter a new world where they are the main character. To me, video games have always been the best form of entertainment.

When I wasn't playing video games in class, in my years at OSA, I began learning about the ins and outs of singing from Music Theory, to how to have good dynamics, to the importance of diction. While I once had aspirations of singing developed in elementary school, after a while of being in the vocal music department at OSA, I grew less interested in singing other's songs. After 6 years, I didn't feel like I was learning anything new. However, I did become inspired to create works of my own. Making music became a type of therapy for me that helped me a lot through the different things I was going through. It allowed me to express anything in my mind without having to explicitly say it, through melodies, harmonies, and figurative language. Accompanied my new found interest in writing, another interest I picked up was arranging songs for different voices. Arranging was a way for me to apply math and my creativity to songs, and it allowed me to develop songs more fully as they were accompanied with chords and interesting textures. After writing, arranging, recording, and editing a song I'd written based off of a personal experience, I took a leap and decided to audition for the Audio Production & Engineering department at OSA. With some fine tuning to my song, *Flow*, and the creation of another song, *Falling*, I got in and started this year. So far this change has been really good for me and I feel a lot happier in the art that I am focusing on. Something interesting I've found is that as I am spending more time making music of my own, I spend less time listening to others music. This is a byproduct of becoming a producer after being a consumer.

A similar thing happened to me when I got into game development, in that I was spending less time playing games than I was learning how to make them. My getting into game development was first sparked with my interest in coding. I always heard about coding from different classes and organizations dedicated to coding, but I never made it a priority to

learn. I became inspired with the actual idea of making a game myself when my uncle made a cute game of his son running from side to side and collecting items on Scratch. I decided that if I was going to learn coding I might as well start with Scratch as it was an easy platform to use and is a good place to start out for aspiring programmers. Although Scratch itself is not technically a coding platform, it encompasses many of the tools used in coding and helps build up logical thinking and problem solving which is crucial in coding. I had also used it before in a computer class years ago. I chose to make a video game based off of my sister's cats Starbuck and Stanley with little experience. There were two characters and two game selections. The first one took place in the cat owner's house with three minigames. The second was a 2-D platformer game with parkour and obstacles where one cat had to save the other from a dream world. After a few coding videos, websites, and a few months, I had finally finished the game! Now, I am currently working on a game called *Nepenthe* with a team of students, "Nevermore Games," on a 2-D platformer coded on Unity about a man whose husband dies and is experiencing the 5 stages of grief as represented by enemies and levels in the game. I am glad to get the experience to learn actual coding and work on this game with a few of my peers.

In all, I once was a consumer and now I am a producer. Now, when the moon dominates the sky, I am up late creating songs or making games. Although my initial hobbies of listening to music and playing video games didn't explicitly direct me to my dreams, they helped pave the way for me to discover the empowerment of creating the things I liked to consume. I am now able to code for and help develop a game while working on the music and sound for it, which is an amazing opportunity. Although I still may not know exactly what my dreams are, I do have somewhere to start. I know that whatever it is I will set off to do, music and video games will always be a part of my life.