***Students in Arts and Sciences embrace the opportunity to delve into multifaceted academic interests, embodying in 21st century terms Ezra Cornell’s “any person…any study” founding vision. Tell us about the areas of study you are excited to explore, and specifically why you wish to pursue them in our College. (650 words)***

My first encounter with psychology was in the sixth grade, when I took a music psychology course at my local conservatory. Immersed inside the realms of neurons and notes stringed together, I found joy in interconnecting two worlds that I never thought would cross paths in a single classroom. My teacher gave me a task to interpret the meaning behind Debussy’s Pagodes, a piece inspired by a traditional Indonesian music instrument, the Gamelan. While listening to this piece, I was amazed how Debussy was able to express himself through music. His emotions were as clear as the day when writing this song: calm, but confused at the same time, as seen through the regular changes in melodies and chords throughout the piece. Realizing the connection between music and human emotion, I scrambled through my repertoires for hidden meanings inside the music that composers have incorporated. Pieces such as Elgar’s Enigma and Tchaikovsky’s Nutcracker convey hundreds of emotions, from the dark horns that symbolize anger to the voice of the piccolo that reminds us of contentment.

In the 9th grade, my piano teacher and I started a project about music therapy, where we would play in mental health institutions around Jakarta. I saw that calming and soothing pieces made others calm and happy, and I realized the crucial contribution music has towards mental health. A few months after the project started, my grandma got diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. I saw that playing the piano for my grandma made her happy, and the event prompted me to contribute towards the research of finding a cure for memory-related illnesses.

At Cornell, I would like to pursue the Independent Major Program at the College of Arts and Sciences, where I am able to integrate and design a major of my choice: the meeting point of psychology and music. Cornell’s longstanding commitment on holistic education meant that I would be accompanied by an abundance of courses that Cornell has to offer. At Cornell’s College of Arts and Sciences, I know the courses would not only require me to learn, but also to innovate, improve and challenge current research methods and cures for memory disorders.

As an aspiring research psychologist in neuroscience disorders, I am specifically drawn to classes like PSYCH 4910 – Research Methods in Psychology, as this class will serve as a pedestal for my future endeavors in psychological research. In this class, I look forward to getting involved in the exchange of ideas with other students, who are all advocating and finding a way to stress the importance of psychological research. Furthermore, PSYCH 4180 – Psychology of Music will definitely become the foundation of my study when undergoing the Independent Major Program. At Cornell, I will further my goal of finding a cure of memory-related diseases, as well as make music a major contribution in this field.

In [Indonesia?], where I am from, mental health has always been a stigma because the awareness of it is not widespread. In high school, I worked alongside a psychologist to raise awareness regarding mental health through seminars. I would like to continue this through the Cornell Minds Matter club, where I would learn to mold mental health policies on campus to serve the community in Ithaca. I would also like to continue my experiences in debate at the Cornell Debate and Society, where I hope to advocate about mental health issues around the world.

Furthermore, I am specifically interested in the Cornell Symphony Orchestra, where I look forward to contributing my musical skills playing several symphonic pieces with other inspired musicians.

I know that because of Cornell’s emphasis on interdisciplinary learning, I need not sacrifice my interests because I will be able to exercise my passions in both psychology and music. I am optimistic that my experience at Cornell will become something revolutionary for myself and my community.

*Hey Priyaanka!*

*This sounds like a solid essay! I can really feel the passion for music and mental health just reverberating all over this essay.*

*There are a few parts where I think your essay would benefit from a greater sense of clarity. I've Indicated these parts in the comment.*

*Also, I recommend using the space you have to display your diverse menagerie of interests, instead of repeatedly treading on the same few notes over and over again. You're a musical brain doctor. We get it. What else you got?*

*Overall, this is a really pleasant read. Most of these recommendations are made to serve as a nice cherry on top.*

*All the best with your application, Priyaanka!*

*--Paul*