

How does deaf composer Tyler Mazone create music? He feels it with all his senses

In many ways, [Tyler Mazone](#)'s career path defies logic. He's an accomplished musician, a respected composer and a Ph.D candidate in music composition at Michigan State University. Mazone also is deaf.

How, then, is he able to compose and play music?

"I listen to music with all my senses," Mazone, 25, said. "I feel the vibrations, see how people play and react to music, and I do hear some of it through my ears.

"When I play with the (Lansing) Concert Band, I'm watching everyone else around me move to the music and I am also feeling the music, like, it's a feeling you can't get from listening through headphones," he said. "I can feel the tuba and the percussion and lower instruments that resonate."

'You listen in a different way'

Mazone plays clarinet and bass clarinet. He received his bachelor's degree from SUNY Crane School of Music in Potsdam, New York, where he worked with clarinet professor Julianne Kirk Doyle.

She recalled Mazone's visit to Crane as a high school senior to audition for admittance. He asked Doyle for a private lesson the day before his audition.

"Before we began the lesson, he said to me, 'You know, I read lips and I need to see your face so I can understand what you're saying, because I can't hear very well.'

"When Tyler came back the next day for the audition, he had changed so much. He made huge improvements," Doyle said. "Most students his age would have taken a few weeks to make his level of improvement."

Doyle was impressed.

“I told him, ‘Wow, you listen more than some of my students who can hear. You listen in a different way. You’re more attentive to the detail.’ I remember being gobsmacked. He was so open to change.”

The clarinet professor said she was fascinated by the way Mazone processed music.

“It’s a different experience for him,” she said. “In terms of musicality, we talked about the shape and direction of the music. He was a very intuitive musician. He was refreshing to have as a student.”

When asked how Mazone is able to study, perform and compose music without normal hearing, Biedenbender said, “For Tyler, it’s a full body experience. He uses sight, body language and vibration. It’s amazing. People who don’t pay close attention have no idea that he is deaf.”