

Arts in Mind

A series from Kiddo that explores arts and arts education

Blaine Patrick: Mill Valley Musician
By Christina Pettigrew

Blaine Patrick has always had a connection with music, and is about to realize his dream of becoming a professional drummer. His first music teacher was Lori Adessa at Edna Maguire School, and it was in fourth grade that Blaine chose to play the cello. In fifth grade he moved to Florida and started to play the snare drum. A passion began and soon he moved to a full drum set. Blaine moved back to Mill Valley for the start of sixth grade.

He continued with music at Mill Valley Middle School, playing under the direction of music teacher Max Perkoff. In sixth grade he decided to start playing drums in the jazz band and he has never looked back. Blaine says, “I learned so much about drumming from Max, such as how to let rhythm compliment the melody.”

During his summer vacations he started attending the Stanford Jazz Workshop, a summer camp for kids who are serious about music. Blaine loved the workshop and he credits Kiddo! with helping him get there by supporting him with classes to hone the skills he needed.

After middle school, Blaine attended Tamalpais High School. His first year he joined the jazz band and he also formed the rock band, Only On Tuesdays. He continued to attend the Stanford Jazz Workshop on a scholarship, and was chosen to perform with their traditional Dixieland Jazz Band, a coveted spot offered by invitation only.

In tenth grade he formed a band called The Abi Yoyos, playing a combination of punk, rock and folk music. As the band continued to develop, as well as perform around the Bay Area, Blaine remained involved with the jazz program at Tam High. For the next four years he was under the direction of Spiro Tsingaris, who selected Blaine as his student assistant.

“When Blaine was a freshmen we had a senior, Tyler Sabbag, who was a sensational drummer and went on to study jazz at USC.” Tsingaris said. “Tyler worked with Blaine his freshmen year. I think this really inspired Blaine because his improvement over his four years at Tam was astounding! By Blaine's junior year he was our best percussionist and was mentoring younger drummers, as Tyler did him.” Tsingaris added, “One of the strongest aspects of Tam's music program is the fact that experienced students help those that are less experienced. Although Blaine was a great drummer and already had a wonderful reputation among Tam's musicians, he was never too busy to help a younger, less experienced drummer. Blaine is humble and extremely teacheable – This, coupled with his talent, is a recipe for success.”

Tsingaris also praised Blaine's parents, Jim and Daisy, for providing him and his younger brother Kyle, along with Tam's music department, a great deal of support and an environment conducive to success.

Blaine is now 19 years old and a student at San Francisco State University which has one of the best music programs in the Bay Area. When he is not busy with school and his music classes, he is performing with The Abi Yoyos. The group just finished their first CD entitled "Mill Valley". After Blaine finishes his sophomore year, he and the band will set off this summer on a cross-country tour, and are looking forward to performing 27 shows in 21 states. It has always been a dream of Blaine's to tour in a band. He looks back on his introduction into music and is thankful for the years of education and support that have helped him achieve his goal.

Christina Pettigrew, a parent in the Mill Valley School District, serves on Kiddo!'s Arts Committee.