

EXPOSURE



IN CONCERT WITH COMMUNITY

Building leaders through composition

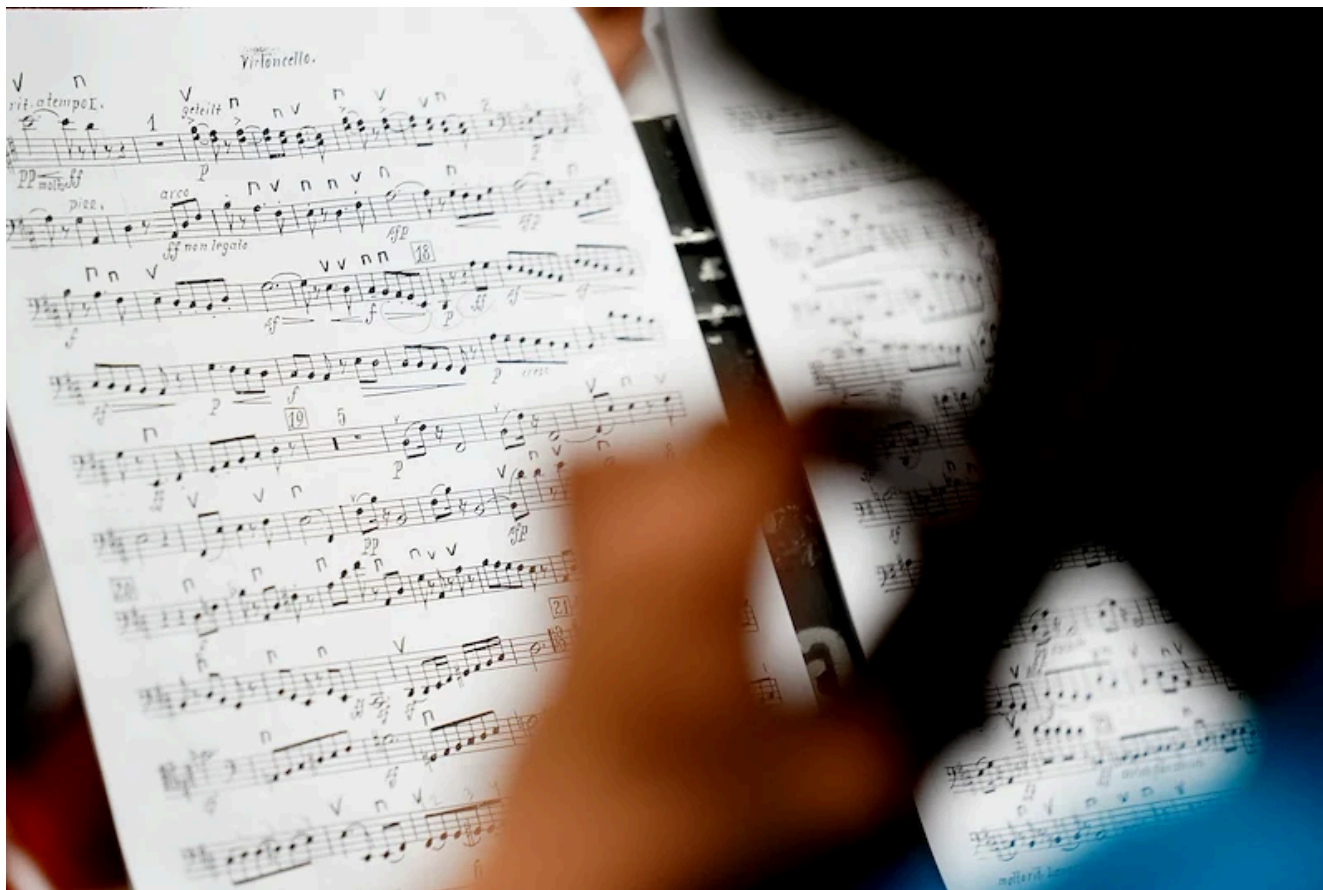
Story by [Fresno State](#)

January 11th, 2023

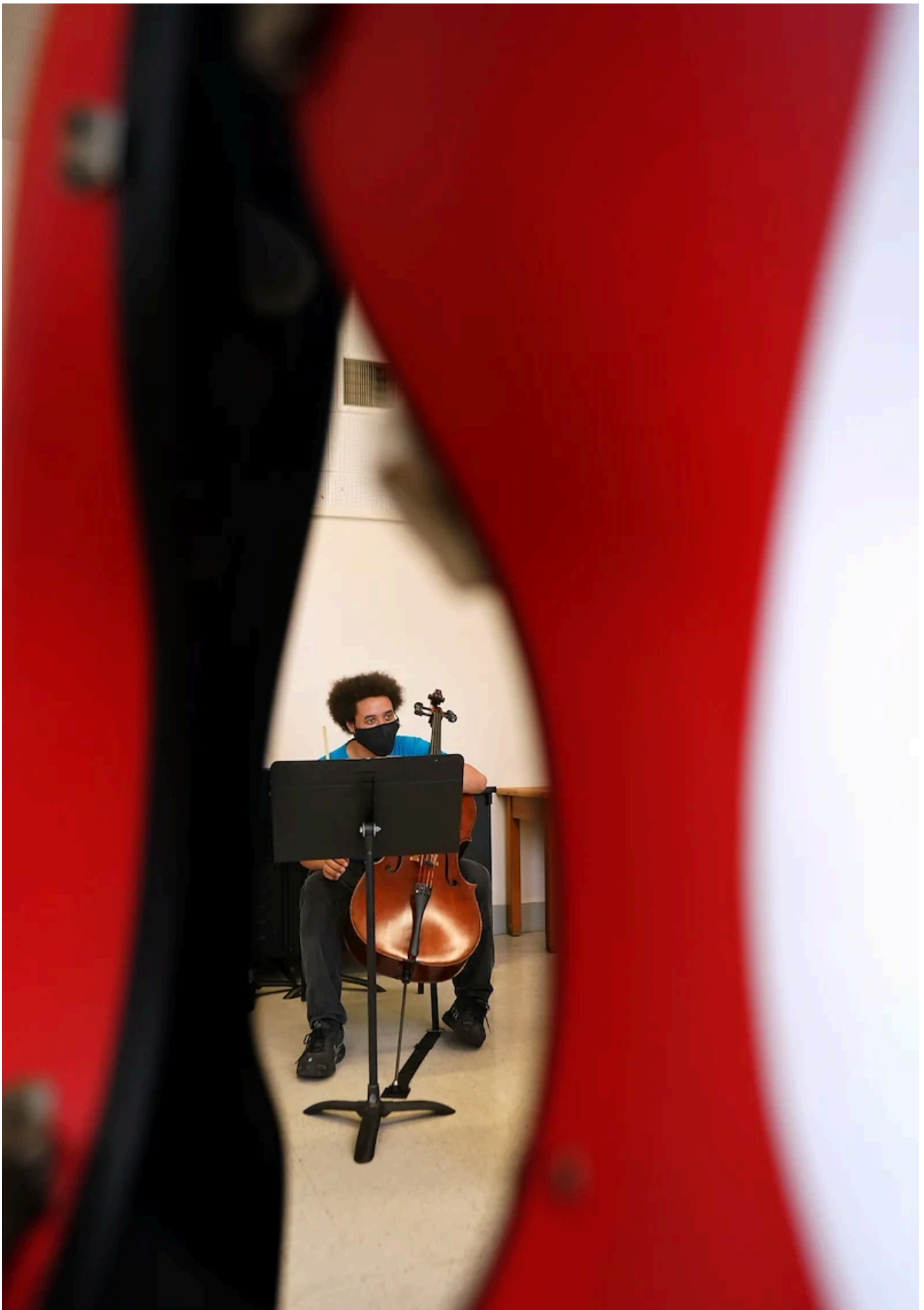
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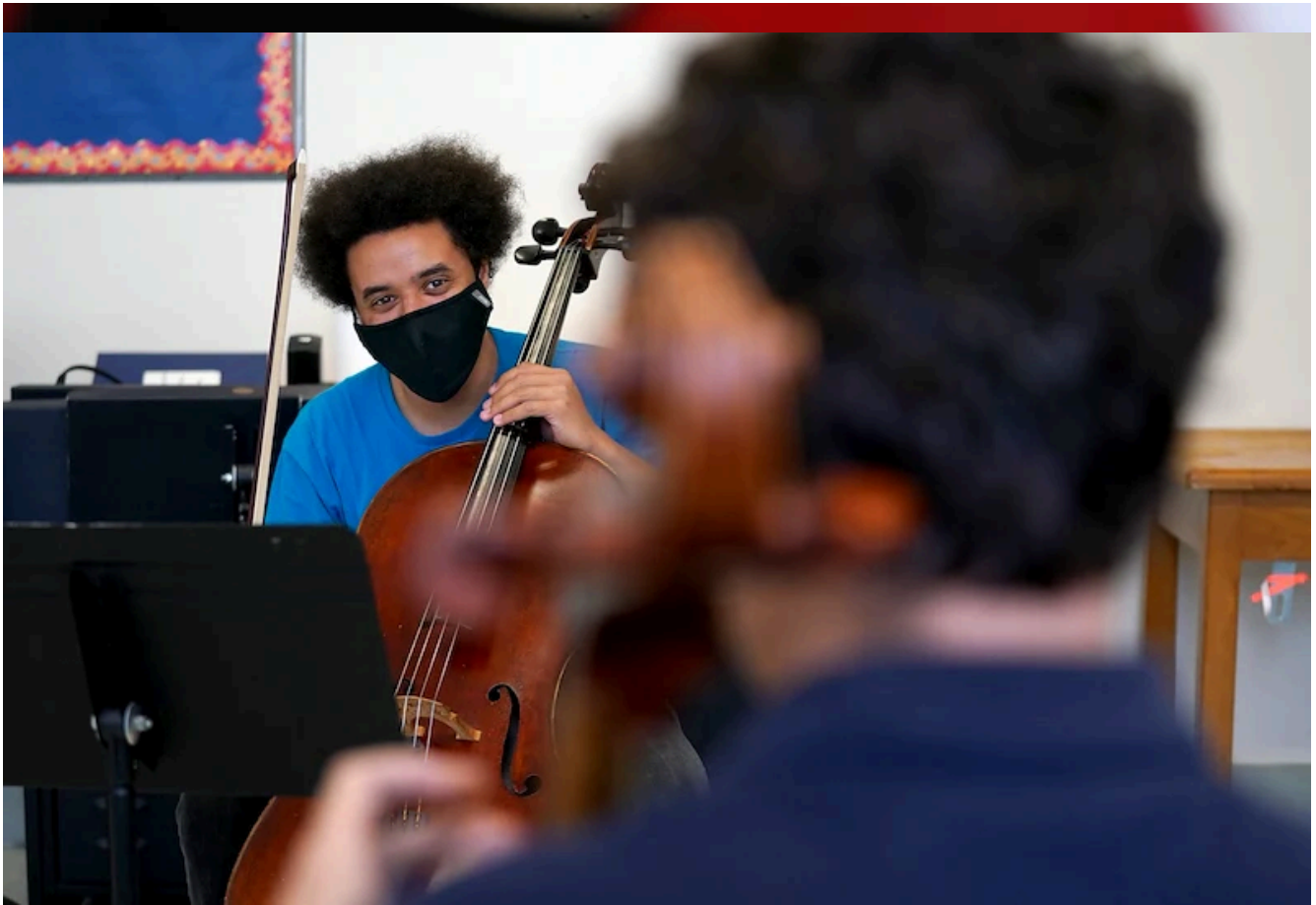
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The concert hall lights dim and all eyes are on the performers. Rows of musicians and their instruments line the floor. Dalton Morris, a senior double majoring in instrumental performance and composition, sits behind his cello as the music begins to flow through his fingertips. It's the excitement and challenge of the performance, especially when playing a piece of his own, that fuels his passion for music.

Dalton was first introduced to music performance at an early age after watching his sister take up the cello, but it wasn't until high school when he fell in love with composition. Since then, Dalton has been able to define his own style and draw on his performance background to elevate his written work.

"For me, I kind of see performing and composing as hand-in-hand. I really love playing solo stuff, but I think sharing what you've written and then playing it as best you can is a really important thing."

Although his writing process stretches anywhere from a few weeks to a few months, there's nothing he finds more rewarding than having his original work performed, especially by his peers.

"There are only one or two of my own songs that I've heard from the audience, and that was so surreal. The artist came up to me afterward and said, 'As soon as I saw this piece, I really

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connected with it.' And I thought that was just really special to me, because that's what you want from a piece," he said with a smile.

In Concert With Community: Building Confidence Through Composition



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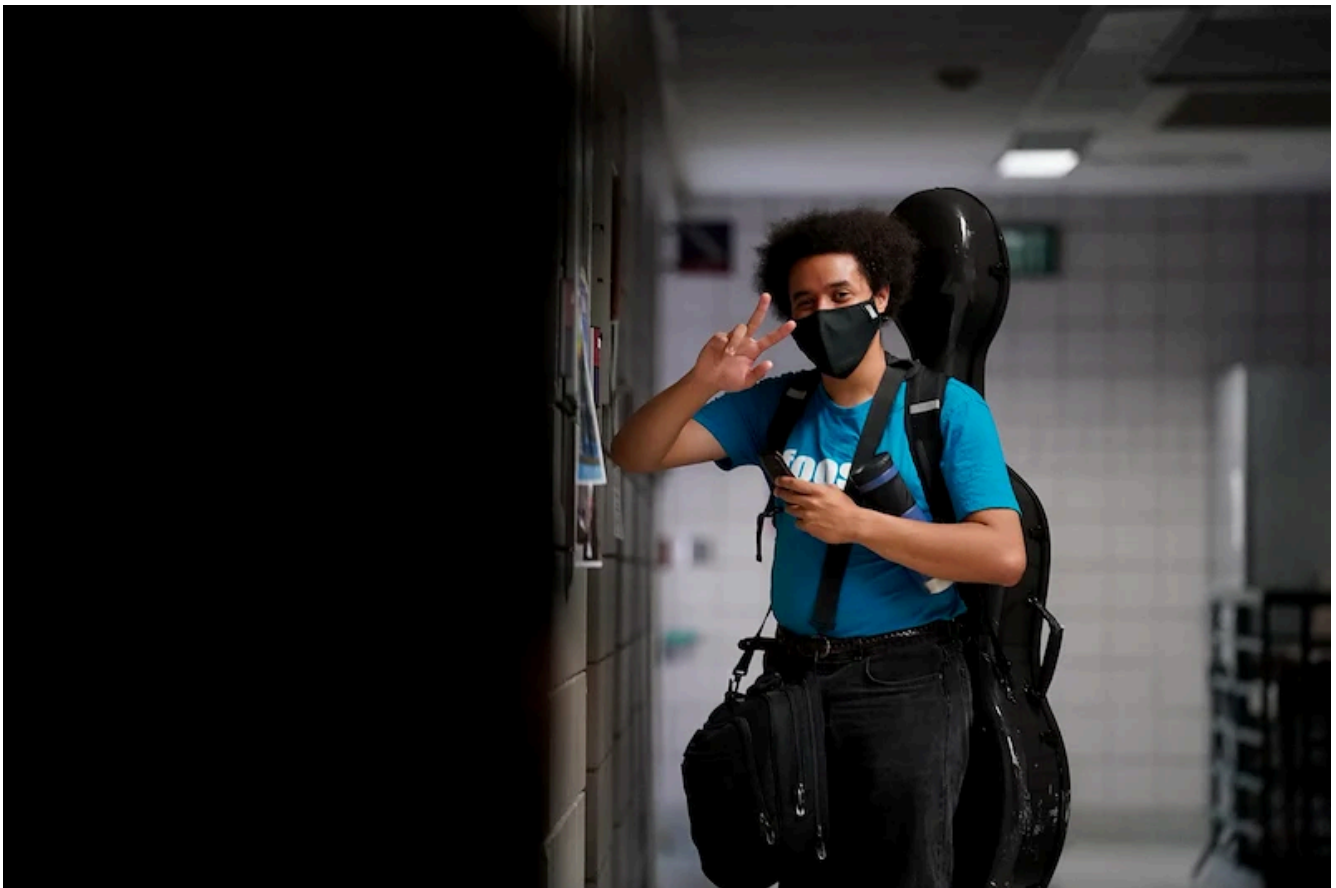
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COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Knowing “music can create a powerful connection with a lot of people,” Dalton has taken advantage of every opportunity to connect with his fellow musicians, mentors and the broader arts community.

Last summer, Dalton participated in one of the most rewarding opportunities yet — the Fresno Summer Orchestra and Opera Academy’s (FOOSA) summer music festival. Each year, top student musicians audition to learn from internationally-renowned faculty during a two-week training intensive that culminates in a philharmonic performance. For Dalton, the lessons, rehearsals and performance opportunities challenged him to grow as both a writer and a performer.

“It’s like putting an entire semester of work into two weeks,” he said. “It’s a lot more focused, so you can really engross yourself into the music, work on your technique and just build yourself to be a better musician.”

One of Dalton’s favorite aspects of the entire experience was the final performance at the William Saroyan Theater in downtown Fresno, where the entire philharmonic performed Mahler’s Fifth Symphony.

“We spend so much time perfecting this piece and making it our own,” he said. “And I think that’s such an incredible moment to get to that performance and finally showcase all that you worked for to the community.”



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MORE THAN MUSIC

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Through the Music Department's robust curriculum, distinguished guest speakers and comprehensive programming, Dalton has been able to grow his network and learn about the numerous career paths he can take as a musician, including film scoring, video game scoring, sound design, orchestral composition and more.

“Here at Fresno State, I’ve learned so much more about music than I have ever known before, and it’s helped me build my confidence and really grow as a person,” he said.

→Did you know? Fresno State’s Music Department is housed in the College of Arts and Humanities and offers both undergraduate and graduate degree programs as well as a 20-unit minor and certificate of special study.

With an overarching goal to “just keep doing music,” Dalton knows that a career in the arts is so much more than just a job. It’s a lifelong dedication to an artform that binds us all.

“Music brings people together. You see how similar we are but then also all the differences we have—and respecting our differences and appreciating them,” he said.

As a performer, the promise of connection and community is what fuels Dalton’s hope for the future.

“I think Fresno State being able to show the community that there’s a lot of young people that are really passionate about music is so important,” he said. “And having that investment from the community would show that we want to see it grow for generations to come.”



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Footnote: *Photos by Cary Edmondson, Video by Matt Mealer, Story by Victoria Cisneros — University Brand Strategy and Marketing*

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