



Rae Kertzner

For our student spotlight this semester, we interviewed music education major Rae Kertzner '26! Rae is a saxophonist, vocalist, and burgeoning conductor here at the University of Puget Sound – as well as becoming a leader in several ensembles around the School of Music. While this keeps him busy, Rae enjoys the connections it brings. As he puts it, “Leadership positions are simply good excuses to create connections within the School of Music.”

Over the summer, Rae worked as an administrative intern with the Pioneer Valley Symphony in Greenfield, Massachusetts, where he worked in roles such as music librarian and usher. “One of my favorite parts was being able to see, up close, the inner workings of a community symphony. My main takeaway from these experiences is the fact that there are millions of ways one can be involved in the field of music!”

One of Rae’s most memorable moments from being a music education major was conducting multiple songs for the Pops on the Lawn concert last spring. Pops on the Lawn is an annual concert that the School of Music performs at the end of the spring semester involving the Wind Ensemble and Symphony Orchestra. The concert is typically outside on Karlen Quad in front of the Music Building, but due to inclement weather last year, the concert had to be moved inside. Commenting on the experience, Rae explained how it made him realize his love of conducting, and the true importance of standing on a podium.

"Learning first-hand the work and thought that goes into leading an ensemble through a piece of music was an experience I will never take for granted."

More recently, Rae has joined the Jam It! a cappella group on campus. Being in a choral setting has helped him discover certain facets of music learning that he'd never thought of prior. "I think experiencing so many aspects of music has just made me appreciate all of the transferable skills we learn as musicians." Rae also made the connection that "knowing how to sing our parts in an instrumental ensemble is equally as important as knowing how to plunk out some notes on a piano."

Since Rae is training to be an educator, we asked him for some advice that he believes could help other students learning to play music. He said, "Sing and play with joy! Be kind to yourself, each semester will be unique in its own way, but each semester can be an opportunity to remember why music is such an important thing in many of our lives."

After graduating, Rae plans to continue connecting with others through music, whether it's through teaching, playing in an ensemble, or making the field of music more welcoming and accessible to all identities and bodies. We can't wait to see where Rae goes in their music-making journey!

