

Passion for Piano as a Career Path

By Riley Luskey

SHAWNEE, OKLA.- “I just fell in love with studying at an advanced level.”

Senior piano performance major with a pedagogy emphasis Cailey Morris shares that choosing her career path was a journey, but that it is a journey she is thankful for as it has allowed her to build the future of her dreams.

“I’ve always been a pianist,” says Morris. Now 22, she has over 17 years of experience playing the instrument.

Piano is more than a hobby for her; it is also a job. Professionally accompanying since the 7th grade, she does smaller gigs such as the choirs of Chisholm Public Schools as well as state wide choirs like Circle the State with Song and Western Oklahoma Choral Directors Association (WOCDA).

Not only does Morris accompany as a pianist, she also competes. Winning superior ratings in local competitions was a common occurrence for young Morris. She still carries that winning spirit, with her most recent accomplishment being selected as a winner of Oklahoma Baptist University’s 50th annual Concerto Aria. Out of her musical achievements, Morris names her Junior Recital of Spring 2024 her biggest accomplishment to date.

Morris' talent as a pianist made choosing to pursue music in higher education a simple decision, but it was not always the primary focus of her degree.

Morris originally started at OBU as a global marketplace engagement major with a minor in music. It only took a semester for her to realize how much she loves studying music at an advanced level.

However, her love for music education and piano was not the sole puzzle piece in Morris' switching of majors. Professor of music Dr. Abigail Mace was a serious, influential factor in Morris deciding to officially change the direction of her education.

Dr. Mace, previously employed by OBU, had built a relationship with Morris before Morris was even a student at the university. Morris commuted from Enid, Oklahoma to Shawnee- a four hour drive round trip- once a week during her senior year of highschool.

Despite her extensive accomplishments, Morris says she never felt "good enough" to pursue a career in piano. Dr. Mace aided in fostering the confidence Morris needed as a musician to make the switch in her education.

"I was like, I should do this with my life," Morris says. Making piano a large part of her life is precisely what she has done since changing her major. As an active member of her church's worship band, an accompanist and a piano teacher, her passion keeps her busy.

Daily practices, memorizing music and choosing performance pieces take a lot of her time. During her recital season, Morris practices piano anywhere from two to four hours a day, sometimes more.

“Practicing three hours a day is crazy,” says Morris. Though it is intense and takes a great deal of discipline, she has no regrets for choosing this major. Not only is it a study of something she is passionate about, it also gives her the flexibility she wants for her future. She has recently applied to graduate schools for piano performance and pedagogy.

After graduation, she says she hopes to teach piano from a studio of her own. Morris plans to be a mother who is able to stay home with her future children and homeschool them with a classic education. In being a piano performance major, these dreams can now easily become her reality.