

## INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

*James: J*

*Participant (Andrew): P*

**J:** Okay. Thank you so much for participating. So first of all, we're not evaluating you in any way. But we're learning about how you use software, just anything to like, practice and learn and use it, and what works and what doesn't work for you. With this, we're hoping to make our products, and my product is looking at music softwares and music websites, especially for keyboards and guitars. And we're just trying to make it better for other people, as well as you, our target audience. There are no right or wrong answers or anything to any of the questions I'm asking in the study. We're simply interested in understanding how you do a certain thing...I guess, when learning or practicing music, we will conduct the study, mostly as a discussion.

So I'll ask you to show me how you do things and ask you questions to better understand, like, just what you're doing at a certain time. Here's how the session is going to be scheduled. I will ask you a few general questions about how you learn music, then we'll go through some activities that you can do. And then while you're working on those music learning tasks, I would like you to just think aloud, so you can be like I'm doing this - and this is why I'm doing it. And then you can give us a running commentary of what's going on in your mind. And they can talk about things you don't like or things you like about a certain task, and then feel free to say anything, it really doesn't matter. So I'll record a little audio for you. So I can go back and review things later. And make sure that we get everything right. We will never use your name in conjunction with the recording or the results. And the recording will only be used internally and won't be shared anywhere else. So how does that all sound to you?

**P:** That sounds good. You might end up calling me out for not practicing as much as I should. But I'll answer whatever I can.

James: No worries! And do you have any questions at this point?

P: No, I really don't know what to expect. So let's get into it.

**J:** So first, background questions. So first of all, can you tell me a little bit about what you do, and how you're related to learning and practicing music?

P: So, I started playing piano when I was four, and I took lessons for about nine or 10 years up until the beginning of high school. And I stopped taking lessons but I participated in marching band and jazz band as a trumpet player. I play drums in my church's worship group.

And so after you know, high school, I played in marching band for like, about a year. But then I stopped pursuing music activities within like a structured school setting. And so practice wasn't a part of my daily schedule. Partly because I didn't have an instrument like a keyboard in my dorm or my apartment to practice and to practice with. So what was the original question again?

J: Could you tell me just a little bit about what you...how you're related to, like, music learning or music practicing?

P: Yeah, so my piano teacher was always like, you know, emphasized the importance of practicing. She had these little books that she would make me practice every day. Obviously, we never got to practice every single day. My work ethic was...was lacking in that sort of way at times. But when things are important, like this, I try to practice every day, like with what Andrew is conducting here for this musical.

And then, obviously, I mean, I've taught in some, like informal settings, you know, teaching music, and like, it's always something to preach is like, you got to practice. And something my band has always preached to me as well. You got, like, all like the skill in the world, but like, if you don't practice and you're never going to cultivate that, like, it's just like working out, like your muscles, you know, like, if you don't work out every single day, you're gonna lose that muscle mass and lose that build up. You're never gonna get anywhere.

And I kind of learned it the hard way, when we had a music class playing trumpet. And I didn't practice as much as I should and like so when the time came for the show, my chops went out, and so I couldn't play for some of the shows because it hurt so bad. So that...that was an important lesson to me that like: "okay, I really do need to practice like,, it's difficult, but, it's something you do have to do. So I guess that's my long answer for that.

J: Yes. And so I guess we're at a piano right now. But do you play other instruments? You mentioned trumpet...and how much time do you spend on each instrument?

P: Yeah, well, I don't know how much ever would be here in college so I don't play that...I don't practice that anymore. Piano, for this, I mean, I wish I tried to practice, you know, 45 minutes per day on this...on this stuff. And then this is the only instrument I can...I feel confident...like that I can play this in actual settings. You know, drums I play for fun. I played for my church every Sunday but like you know, churches are very informal...not informal, but like it's a very forgiving environment: if you mess up, or if you're not perfect, it is not the end of the world. So I wouldn't practice...I would only practice, like during practices because I don't have a drumset at home or anything. So I guess a lot of this is boiling down to accessibility of instruments. In the way that I don't, I don't practice them very often. But now that I have a keyboard in my room, I'm able to practice like when I need to practice something. Like today.

J: Awesome, yes! And so I guess in relation to music learning, so...sheet music, learning new pieces, that type of thing. Where, where do you usually do this? Do you use the Internet? Do you usually do sheet music? Do you play in groups? You know, that type of thing?

P: Yeah. I mean, like...nowadays, when I want to learn something for fun, it'll usually be like, some sort of classical piece, I'll just go in IMSLP and download the sheet music on my laptop and like, try and like balance it on my keyboard, because I don't have a music stand like here. Just trying to scroll.

So that's been my main mode of learning, you know, practicing for new things. And obviously, like, for something like this, you know, you have the music, you know, given to you. And you just, like go through

it and hit the trouble spots and like. Yeah, so it's just, like, where do I practice? Like, at my instrument? If that answers that question?

J: Okay. Yes, yes. And so do you think that that works? I guess, do you like using, you mentioned, IMSLP? Right? And using those resources to find music?

P: Yeah, I think IMSLP is super cool. Just like to have that database. I mean, if you think about even like, you know, 10-20 years ago, you would need to go out and purchase this sheet music, like this, like this database of all these things that you just like, you know, conjure up at the click of a button.

But I do think there's also something to be had with physical paper sheet music that you can't really get from just looking out for your laptop screen. One: it's...it's easier to look at a piece of paper, and you can work on it. Feels good.

So I liked the accessibility of it. But if I really want to learn something and dedicate time to it, I would print it out. And then like, what you can do with IMSLP and other like, sort of sheet music databases.

J: And then just on the topic...I guess you mentioned drums. I'm wondering when you were learning drums, like drum techniques, drum sheet music and stuff, did you also use IMSLP? Or do you use other [techniques]?

P: I never used music as a drummer. Like, all the drum techniques I learned? Well, I did take percussion workshops in the past, and we would use sheet music there. But as far as playing in my church, it was a kit. So we played and I wouldn't use sheet music, I just went off of feel. And that's how I learned was off a field for drums specifically. So in that regard, sheet music didn't really help me. And like even like, you put like a drum...drum sheet in front of me, like, I don't know how well I could read it. I took drum lessons. Like I took maybe like one or two drum lessons when I was like, Oh, this is kind of fun. Let me see what else I could learn. And then he showed me some sheet music, and I was like "Oh man, it's kind of tough", like, the technicality of it was hard for me. So like, I could pass by, in my settings. I played drums based on just feel alone. So I didn't really use that.

J: And then, yeah, you mentioned taking drum lessons. Right? So did they use any, I guess...tools, digital tools or anything? Or was it just...

P: Not really...it was like, here's some sheet music, take this. And then we...we were like...No, I don't think there was any. It was very informal. It was a long time ago though, too. So I can't really remember all the details of it.

J: Well, I guess in terms of also, you play at your church, right? So when you play gospel music, for services and stuff. Where do you kind of get...what drums to play a certain time? Like, do you just do it based on what you envision or guidelines?

P: Well for...there's a bird here. It's very distracting. Like the more contemporary pieces that we would play or like the gospel pieces that we would play, I'd listen to recordings, and like my brother was usually in charge of the music. Like music arrangements, stuff like that. So he just...he'd like mark it out on a

sheet. Like, alright, you should come in here like listen to the recording here. That's how you should do it. Before the pieces were like...like we would take like, you know, traditional hymns and turn those into like sort of like, not wrong, but like, you know, add a beat to them. That would be completely off of feel. But as far as... Yeah, like pieces that were pre arranged, I would listen to recordings beforehand, and try and emulate what the drummer was doing in those.

J: And then so...where do you typically get those recordings? On YouTube?

P: Yeah, on Youtube!

J: Okay, so I guess we can transition now oto the activities. So the first will be...

Oh yeah. Do you mind if I take like pictures? Okay? So the first is: could you show me how you play or interact with your music? So I guess using your sheet music, how do you approach a piece of music? How do you annotate it? That type of thing?

P: Like when I first get a piece of music? Yeah, okay. Um...this is kind of weird because there's so much going on because this is the score that Andrew has, so it's hard to read. The first thing I did for this was listen to the Broadway cast recording. And I found that it actually matches up pretty well with this specifically. And so I listened through once, and I was at the piano, I was trying to, like, you know, hear it in my head. And then I'm like: "Okay, well, that's too fast, obviously, for me to play it up for the first time". And so I actually looked a lot at...they give the chord markings here. And so they helped me with sight-reading actually quite a bit. In that when I was trying to, like go through, like, I might not play as perfectly, but like, okay, that's G as F, that's E minor. It's like, it's like walking down. And so that's easy for me to conceptualize. And from there, I can be like: "Okay, so like...I don't know how to explain it. But it's sort of like scaffolds, like what I'm looking at on the page." And so it's like, it's not as much like "Okay, what is this specific note? What's this...this, what's this, what's this?" It's like, okay, that's a G chord. And then, so that makes it easy for me. If I'm looking at a piece of classical music, obviously, like, these are not annotated for you. So that would be...I'm trying to figure out my process for that. It's been a while. Let me see if there's anything else I did. And if things aren't notated. Like sometimes I have difficulty reading, like ledger lines below the staff or in the treble clef. So like, I might, like, write out a note, you know, like, a specific example.

I don't have a specific example. But like, I'll be like, okay, that note's, like an F, or whatever. So I like how it allows you to put it into my hands better. Just I want to note, I'm not classical...like, a very good musician anyway. So a lot of this is very juvenile and, but it works for me. And then like, all right, in specific fingerings for things that are tricky, like long passages. I'm trying to figure out what to say. Do you have specific questions about how I would approach something?

J: Yeah. So I'm interested in...you mentioned chords, right? And so out there not necessarily in all sheet music? Right. And so could you describe the ways in which how you learned chords in the first place? How, how do you start to associate like, G or D flat with specific notes?

P: The bird's crazy. Um, that's a good question, I guess. Well, it started with music theory, obviously. I took music theory, you know, with my piano teacher as she was...I did appreciate that a lot. It wasn't the Suzuki method. Like, you know, fingers go here in this way. It was more "Let's talk about what chords are and like to get to there from there. I did play piano a little bit in my church bands. And then like, that was always just like, pretty much all lead sheets, like you had to...you had to learn the chords. And then just like talking with my friends who are really into jazz music, and like, they teach me like, voicings and things like that. And then my dad - my dad is also a piano player. And he would teach me a different you know, what these different notations mean. Yeah, and so that was pretty formative for me, I think. So I guess it's just over time you get a feel of what it is.

J: Yeah, do you think that method to learn music theory was really helpful? Like, would you have done it any other way?

P: Um, to start out with as a kid, no. There was like a specific book. I don't think it was one specific book, but we just went through that. They're like: "Here's the lesson at the beginning of the book, and then here's some like worksheets do by next week, like make sure you like do this worksheet, you know, you write out these voice leadings or whatever and like, talking about first inversion, second inversion, third inversion, things like that.

And then we come back next week and talk about it, and we'd like, do a theory thing every...every other week or every month or so. And so that was as a kid, I was very easy to digest, very easy to learn. I do think like going further in, you know, as I grew up in middle school and high school, that I kept at that theory. Just because there are still things in chords...there's obviously so much theory stuff that I just don't understand. And I never got to that advanced level of doing things, because I transitioned more to playing trumpet and drums rather than piano in high school. When like, we were doing things in jazz band and things like that. So like, a lot of jazz was still a little bit above my paygrade. So I guess I like looking back in hindsight, I wish I kept on that and kept, you know, growing that skill.

J: I'm also curious to see the lyrics on the sheet. How does that help you or hurt you? Or?

P: Well, for playing in the pit, I think it helps me. I'll actually sometimes, like, sing along while I'm playing as well. That comes in handy later on, when we're in, you know...when we're actually doing run-throughs of the show. That's really helpful. Because like, it doesn't throw me off when like: "Oh, we got to introduce another like, element!". You know. his is, like, I do thrive off of like, predictability and knowing what's going to happen. It's like having that is good. And like also, having a melody line here instead of just like, "Okay, what did these chords mean out of context? Like this...does something make any sense? This provides the context, I guess, for me, that helps me find like the B flat or the G7". That reason. And the lead makes sense, like in the context of, of the melody line. And so, there's all these things combined together, making it easier to sight read at the beginning. And then when a time comes, like the actual performance to help me like, you know, figure out "Okay, like, this is fun, I like doing this!"

J: And then I think you mentioned playing with recording. Yeah. And then so you use YouTube, I guess?

P: I found the album, the Broadway recording, on Spotify for this one. So it is nice. I mean, my dad would always be like, “You should go on YouTube, you should slow things down, because YouTube has that slide down to .5 Speed option. And he'll use that a lot when he was transcribing things. He would always slow down the speed. And he had this, like, he actually had the software, I remember when I was growing up, where he could isolate a certain chord and just play it over and over again, like slow it down. So he'd like pick out the specific like...voicing that this jazz piano player is playing or whatever. And he always like touted that, like, oh, you should get used to always doing it. I think YouTube is helpful in that way. Because I don't think Spotify has a slowdown feature. But for like this, specifically, I used Spotify.

J: And then the other activity I wanted y'all to do is...So, I guess right now you have prescribed pieces, right? I guess when you're picking out new songs to play, like in general, maybe for drums or anything like that. Or maybe if you're flipping through this book, and you're like, “Ooh, this song looks really fun or something like that”, you know. How do you pick those songs to play or what songs look fun?

P: Fun? It's an interesting question. I think a lot of it comes from...I don't know, just like, either your friends, like I listen to something that's cool. Or like, “Oh, I really enjoy a song I hear and like, that's like a cool beat. You know, I kind of want to emulate that on drums.” I think the more you try to emulate people who've done things in the past, the better you get at. You know, the more you can add to your repertoire and things like that. So a lot of it comes from: “Oh, you should listen to this.” Okay. “Oh, that's cool. I want to learn that too.” Like my friends like: “Oh, I'm learning this piece and it's really cool that we picked that up.” Like “Oh, like I'm practicing The Lark and like it's very it's very interesting. Let me look that up. And just like this is either like too hard for me or like it's the next thing. As far as this book, I don't know...I was attracted to this song because it's very gospelly, it's very fun. It's a good question. I haven't really thought about that. But I'll have to think a little bit more about it, and I might have the answer for you later on.

J: And so...you mentioned like your friends recommending music right? And so what types of ways in which is it communicated? Like is it mostly through voice? Like hanging out with a friend in-person and them being like “Oh, you should play this?”

P: Something like...sometimes like that? Sometimes I'd walk in. Because my friends upstairs in our apartment they also have a keyboard. So they'll be playing something like, “What is that?” and the other sheet music on they're like: “Oh, that's cool”. It won't even be like: “Oh, you should play this song” and be more like me thinking “Oh my God, that's kind of cool.” And it was the same when I was growing up with my brother, because he was also taking piano lessons at the time. He would be, you know, he'd be learning a song. And he was like, a couple, you know, skill levels above me or whatever, because he was two years older than me, and be like “Oh, like, in the future, like, I want to play that song. Because that's cool”.

And my piano teacher, specifically. She'd have a very specific, specific repertoire of songs, you know, catalog that she'd choose from to give to her students. And so like, it's kind of expected like: “Okay, once you reach this level, like you'll be able to, to learn Rondo Alla Turca” or learn whatever. And then like, I think growing up, my goal at the end of like, when I was going to be done taking lessons was to learn

“Hungarian Rhapsody” by Liszt. It's like, I don't know why. It was a Tom and Jerry Cartoon. My dad showed me a cartoon. Oh, this is hilarious. And like, I love this song. And it's so fun. It's like, oh, man, I need to learn this. And so like, once I got to that level, it's like, okay, we can finally learn it. I got to play that. So like, that was cartoon exposure, which is kind of interesting. I don't know how applicable it is to other things.

J: Do you ever hear what your friends play through the Internet? Social media? Mostly?

P: Yeah. Yeah. Social media. I don't...yeah, yeah, I'd say so. Internet, and social media to an extent. And growing up, you know, look, and then sometimes, you know, you'll be browsing you're like, Explorer, or whatever, on Instagram, or whatever. And you'll see a really good piano player, you know, playing some cool piece. And you're like, oh, what does that say? Like, you look at the comment sections, and he was talking about it, or sometimes they'd just put in, like, the description. And then you can like, go, Look, go find that or whatever. So yeah, I think social media does play a role. And I've definitely, like, been interested in pieces that I've seen, you know, originally, just like on Instagram, or Facebook, or Twitter or something, or Reddit.

J: And so do you think social media and stuff...Has that improved your range of music that you've been exposed to? Or do you think it's been pretty within the same genres and composers?

P: I don't think it's been restricting in any way. If anything, it expanded things. I mean, I deleted Tik Tok a long time ago, but like, in the brief time that I was on, it was like, you know, sometimes your For You page was cultivated like, “Oh, here's like jazz.” And they'll be like, oh, like, try this progression at home, which was kind of fun, like, and so like, those things are kind of cool. Obviously, the algorithm could work the other way, in that it's like, “Okay, now you're only listening to this one person”, like...then it's like, restrictive. But I don't think that that's a problem for me, I think it's mostly been more enlightening than than restricting.

J: And so whenever, like, you'll hear pieces on social media and the Internet versus when like, you hear someone play it live, or friends playing it...Do you prefer or does one of them give a piece of music more allure, like you're like, you're more likely to like, try something out. If you see it in-person?

P: I don't think I'm more likely to try something out. Obviously, it's better to hear things in person. Just, you know, acoustically, and like experientially, but like, as far as like me thinking, oh, I want to learn this piece. I don't think it makes a difference between like hearing it in person, or hearing in, you know, on your, through your Air Pods, you know, so...

J: Yeah, and then there's a couple of questions about problems that you've had when doing music learning, right? So have you had any problems or like, I don't know...issues whenever you learn music? Like is music all accessible? Do you feel like there's enough resources on the internet or in person or your school to like help you get by?

P: I think there are. YouTube's pretty impressive. If you want to like...I've tried to pick up guitar in the past, but like there's just so many lessons on YouTube with... from people that want to teach you how to

play the guitar. From people that want to teach you how to play the piano. And so like in that regard, I think it's like there are enough resources where if you want to learn something, you can do it. This difficulties like accessibility wise,

J: Just anything you can come up with!

P: Let me think. I guess like...I don't know. This is like very minor, but like IMSLP covers all, like the classical music you could possibly imagine. But if you wanted to learn, like, if a kid wanted to, like, look up, like, you know how to play their favorite pop song, it's a little harder to get to see something like you can like, look up the chords and guitar tabs or whatever. But like, sometimes kids don't know how to read chords, you know, and they want to, like, look at the actual sheet music. In some ways they're a little hard to find. I mean, they're online, you just got to, you got to buy them, which is like not the worst thing in the world. But I don't know, I think generally, like the Internet is improving and like, providing these resources and like as far as in-person, you know, being a UCLA, there's plenty of people that are willing to teach you how to do things. So I feel pretty lucky in that regard.

J: You bring up a really good point, like the guitar. So you mentioned you...you tried to play guitar, and guitar tabs. So what was your experience? Number one: learning guitar? Did something causes you to like, stop? And then I guess guitar tabs?

P: Yeah, well, like I...I learned, I started playing like the ukulele when I went to Hawaii when I was like, sixth grade or whatever. And like, that was the first time I had ever worked with a, you know, stringed instrument, like a guitar, ukulele, or anything like that strum. And so that kind of sparked my interest from there. I downloaded guitar tabs and films, for five bucks. And like, I was able to, like learn chords and ukulele through that, because it had fingerings and everything, which is like, super cool.

And then it was like, during quarantine, my dad got a new guitar. And so he gave me his old one. And I was like, Okay, I might as well just say, you know, I'm bored. I'm stuck in the house, I learn something, I learned something. And so like I...my hands aren't big enough for his guitar. So that was like the first initial struggle. And so I know basic chords now and I still play. Like, every so often on my roommate's guitar. I don't have one of my own here at UCLA. But like, I think mostly like guitar tabs are actually fairly reliable for like, you know, basic pop songs and things like that. Obviously, if you're going to the more complex stuff, you need to graduate from guitar tabs, but I think it's a very good launching off point for, you know, beginner people that want to learn how to do these things, like having these various scores. And like, just want to, like, you know, sit around a campfire and play pop songs with their friends. I think that's important.

J: And so which services did you use? So you mentioned, so for guitar tabs, do you remember, like the specific websites that you bought for guitar tabs?

P: It was like Ultimate Guitar Tabs. I think someone has my phone right now. That was the main one, I think, pretty much solely that for most things. Because they had the feature to like transpose, which is like I found to be helpful, because like, I don't have a capo for a while. And so it was like it. This is like, okay, capo 2, let me just push this up to, you know, two half steps, and then play that instead of the actual chords. So that was cool. And they had like, they had like Pro tabs on there....You can like, slowly, you



could like play along with a track and like, slow it down. And like, that was actually a pretty cool feature. I didn't use too much. But like, it was there. And I needed to it. It was mainly Ultimate-Guitar tabs.

J: And then were there any problems with that website, or using guitar tabs?

P: There were some options that you needed to pay to upgrade to, which is like, annoying. They should ...like I already gave six bucks, like don't take any more of my money. I mean, the rater system of whether or not tab is good was sometimes misleading. Because like, oh, this, this tab up four and a half out of five stars must be good. Like I look at it and like...this is not correct. Something is wrong, like these are like that is not equal, or they're like, I don't know what you're talking about. So those were some problems. I don't know how. Like, I guess reliability is sometimes a crapshoot. Other than that, you know, no, just pay to pay to play and sometimes if, you know, consistency,

J: I'm also wondering: what's kind of the reasons why you're not playing guitar now? Is it another instrument or something else?

P: I mean, it was just for fun. And like, it's not like I've given up, you know, I still...I will still pick up the guitar and I will still play basic songs. But, you know, busy with other things, you know, being I don't know, it's hard to get an instrument off the ground, you know, as far as like, skill wise, and sometimes it gets frustrating, like, "Oh, my God, like, my hands are never gonna be big enough. I'm never gonna do this". Like, stop playing for like a week and then come back to it. It's like, it's a lack of consistency on my part, as well as just being busy with other things. But like not that that's not for a lack of not wanting to learn. It's just like...

J: Have you ever played guitar in a group?

P: No.

J: First, this is a really hypothetical question, but if you could create a magical tool that could have you learn music however you wanted...like genres, you could pick the mode of instruction...what would such a tool be?

P: Wow, that's a deeply creative, conceptual question that I don't have the brain cells to process. Any tool to help you learn something? I think it would be fun to...I want to learn this piece, so pull it up and here's the sheet. And if you want to hear a specific section...I'm sure this is out there, but could you play this at this speed? And a metronome. You could play along and repeat that. And maybe even tips from professionals...like here's a technique to how you could play this. This fingering is a bit tricky, so here's something you could try instead. I think that could be kinda cool. And then...I don't know. I'm trying to think of other genres besides classical. I don't know....I might be able to come up with an answer in the next three hours.

J: The last question is that I've been asking you a lot of questions: do you have any questions for me?

P: So are you designing something?

J: Yeah, so my goal is to design...or re-design...Ultimate-Guitar. So it's funny you brought it up. I know it has stuff for keyboards, guitars, so I'm interested in how people use or learn music on it. Anything else?

P: No, I think I'm good. I might need water.

J: Oh, I don't think I got your name.

P: Andrew...Andrew Moon. Yeah. His mom...I don't want to reveal information...disclose personal information. I'm Andrew.

J: Thank you so much for your time, and I'll let you play now. So yeah, I will stop recording. Your name won't be associated with this audio.

Well thank you so much!