

Alum composes musical score for national Toyota commercial

With the skills he honed and the mindset he developed as a music major at Dominican, Anthony Circo '14 at the age of 24 was chosen this fall to score a national television commercial for Toyota.

In doing so, Anthony fell back on the experience he had in [Dominican's Department of Music, Dance, and Performing Arts](#). That's where he was inspired by the support and encouragement he received from department chairs Craig Singleton and June Choi Oh, and from instructors who challenged him, such as Mark Culbertson, Cheryl Ziedrich, and Mazdak Khamda.

"It felt like home," Anthony says. "My reach school goal was USC, but now looking back, I think I would have gotten lost there. The one-on-one experience I was able to have at Dominican helped build my confidence and push me to do things beyond my imagination."

Upon graduating from Dominican, Anthony took on two internships: one at a Fortune 500 advertising agency and the other with a premier film scoring studio. He juggled both internships and eventually was offered a full-time position at the advertising agency as a production coordinator.

Anthony happened to be in the right place at the right time in 2016. When the creative team for the Toyota TV commercial hit a musical roadblock for one of its projects, Anthony offered to help.

"The music needed to help dramatize the changing emotions of the storyline," he explains. "When I saw the script before the commercial was filmed, I connected with it. Something about it spoke to me and, when I saw the rough edit, I heard the music playing in my head. I went home, [wrote a few tracks](#), and gave them to the editor to see if he thought they worked. One of the tracks seemed to work best to bring out the emotion of the story."

The heart-tugging commercial for Toyota -- called "Championship Game" -- was aired during halftime of NBC's NFL Sunday Night Football. It depicts two sisters learning the meaning of sportsmanship when they attend their father's wheelchair basketball game. They nervously watch as he gets knocked to the court by an opposing player, and then witness the dejection in his eyes after his team is defeated. As they are about to leave, he rolls over to the man who knocked him down and shakes his hand.

The Toyota commercial is expected to air through NCAA basketball coverage of March Madness in 2017. Anthony expects his success could lead to other projects. He has composed original music for [LINES Ballet BFA in Dance program](#) students and alums, including Ha Vo '16 and [Katie Scherman](#) '10. He is also working on the musical score for a feature-length documentary -- The Time We Have -- created by Joan Baranow, an English professor and director of Graduate Humanities in the [School of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences](#).

Besides learning the skills to be a producer, one of Anthony's goals is to one day compose music for film in the entertainment industry. His Dominican experience prepared him for that.

"I learned it was okay to be uncomfortable," Anthony says. "It's one thing to stay in your comfort zone, but it's another to go out of your comfort zone and actually seek to be uncomfortable. It's important to know your skill set, but it's also important to push your skill set, as well as yourself, farther than you think you think you can go. That's something I learned when I went to Dominican -- to put myself in situations that stretched my creativity and challenged my fears of going outside what I thought was safe."

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