

Work and Play: Pursuing Your Dreams While Paying Your Bills

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By Claire Ion

Zack Poelwijk, dressed in a spiffy blue sports coat and dark jeans, sings The Temptations “My Girl” as he wheels his hand truck in to the band room at Cascade Middle School in Eugene. On the cart sits a 6 foot long, 18 inch deep black box with two silver clasps near the end. He pauses to read something on his phone, mumbles aloud to himself and quickly responds back to an email.

Poelwijk sets up an X-style keyboard stand and smiles before pulling out his 70 pound dark grey keyboard.

“I use the same keyboard that Stevie Wonder uses, a yamaha Motif es8. It has 88 keys and several dozen control buttons so I can fully customize any sound on my keyboard,” Poelwijk says proudly of his most prized possession.



By day, Poelwijk works as Director of Client Services at a marketing firm called [Limelight Department](#). Located at 12th and Pearl Street in Eugene, Ore., Limelight specializes in online content creation including full service web design, web development and mobile apps to help people market their business, service, or product online.

Poelwijk; however, works mostly virtually since he lives a 2 hour drive away in Damascus, Ore. “The world is my office. As long as I have an internet connection and my laptop I can work from anywhere, which is really great for pursuing music,” he says as his fingers stroke the black and white keys of his yamaha.

By night, Poelwijk pursues his dreams. Stage. Lights. Music. He “plays keys” with multiple bands in the Eugene and Portland area. [The Essentials](#), a local funk soul band in Eugene, is the first group he joined with after graduating the University of Oregon, made up of mostly UO Music alumni.

The band that is closest to his heart; however, taking up most of his time and focus is a band called N’touch. N’touch is located out of Portland and is comprised of many talented musicians all on tour with national acts. Their music is an inventive recipe of funky R&B and smooth jazz with a creative gospel spin to it.

“I’m really proud of my musical accomplishments in terms of the artists I’ve played with over the past two years,” he says of his musical journey so far as a 26 year old. “I’ve been blessed to play with the world’s best musicians from Lady Gaga’s band, two members of Usher’s band, Stevie Wonders drummer and many others.”

Finding balance between music and work at Limelight is a challenge Poelwijk faces daily. “It starts by being ridiculously organized,” he says with a little chuckle. His solution? A Google calendar app that schedules every second of his life from rehearsals and work meetings to grabbing a drink with some friends. A regular work week, music and day job, ranges between 50



to 85 hours for him. According to the article [“Work/Life Balancing Activities Implications and Solutions”](#) by Dr. G.N.D Raju, the key to managing work and personal activities is “having the ability to make choices in the allocation of time and energy.” Poelwijk clearly understands the importance of this. “I have no idea how he does it,” says Shaylor Murray, Poelwijk’s boss and CEO of Limelight department. Limelight prides itself

on supporting employees personal privacy and time as well as providing not just a job, but a life balance. “If Zack needs time off for music, he’s welcome to take it as long as his client relationships don’t suffer,” Murray says on supporting Polewijks music career.

One of Poelwijks greatest strengths is his ability to integrate the aspects that make him successful at work into his music career. “He’s as thorough, organized, talented and professional with his music as he is with his work,” says Murray. He believes the key to Poelwijk’s success in balancing business with pleasure is his ability to be a critical thinker and his desire to always be proactive.

From the beginning, Peolwijk always knew he was meant to play the piano. At the age of four, his mother gave him a cassette tape of Rod Stewart’s MTV Unplugged with Ron Wood. His mother came into the family room one day to find him playing along by ear to the cassette tape on the their piano.

“At that point in my life, all I had done was pound on it with my toy hammer and chip all the keys. But she noticed that I had this gift of playing by ear and put me in piano lessons, and that’s really where it all started,” Poelwijk says on his first encounters with a piano.

After that, Poelwijk started to make a place for himself in the world of music. He studied classically for about a dozen years before taking lessons and playing in the jazz band at Sam Barlow High School. Poelwijk continued following his musical dreams while attending college at the University of Oregon. His passion for music began to unravel even more after attending his first UO Gospel concert.

“I thought, that is something I want to be a part of. It just really spoke to me and was a kind of music that I began to love,” Poelwijk says. He played with the gospel program throughout college and still plays with them occasionally today. He was even inspired to found and direct his own gospel choir out of Portland called The New Vision Gospel Choir.



Although Poelwijk considers himself a “realist and skeptical by nature,” he looks forward to continuing his musical journey regardless of the known “risks of being a full time musician” in our economy today. He is extremely grateful for the position he is in now: working full time with a great company that supports his dreams of becoming a professional keyboard player.

“The moment you think you’ve arrived at greatness is the moment when you get surpassed. You must always be convinced that someone else is better than you and have an insatiable appetite to be better than them,” he says.

After 20 years and 7,300 hours of piano practice as well four years of Business school, he is definitely not going to give up now.