

Tulane student helps debut Music Learning Lab app

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In an app being promoted by student Russell Layng, kids can compose their own musical pieces and they can see their piece performed by an animated band. (Illustration from Music Learning Lab)

Russell Layng, a rising senior majoring in philosophy at Tulane University and a jazz drummer, is spending his summer promoting a new teaching tool app that he hopes will make effective, early music education accessible for children everywhere.

He is co-founder and general manager of Generategy, a company in Seattle, which this summer released [Music Learning Lab](#), an app that prepares learners for music appreciation, using music software such as GarageBand, and further music instruction privately or in school, Layng says.

“With the launch of Music Learning Lab, Generategy has an opportunity not only to foster the success of many budding musicians, but to demonstrate the real potential of apps in education. Our goal was not simply to make learning music fundamentals fun, but to help kids find the fun in learning and making music,” says Layng.

“Through three different sections, Learn, Create and Play, Music Learning Lab offers a balanced, well-rounded approach to music education.”

In the Learn area, 14 lessons of increasing complexity teach foundational music skills. The Play area comprises 3 mini-games to practice and extend these skills. Rewards specific to music learning are built into the program to keep learners motivated and engaged: completing lessons and levels unlocks up to 15 instruments and nine backing bands to use in the Create area.

According to Generategy co-founder Paul Andronis, a learning scientist who trained in classical piano for 18 years, “Traditionally, music instruction starts with concepts that are difficult to master without certain skills. We identified these necessary skills ? higher and lower pitch discrimination, interpreting sounds and melodies as written symbols, interpreting written symbols as sounds ? and designed the lessons in Music Learning Lab using methods that combine our love and knowledge of music with principles derived from basic learning sciences research.” Andronis is a psychology professor at Northern Michigan University.