

Final Reflection on My 2017 Summer Enrichment Experience at Lamont Summer Music Academy

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This summer, I attended the Lamont Summer Music Academy at the University of Denver, where I participated in orchestra, countless lessons, chamber music rehearsals, and attended concerts each night.

Violin Lessons

During a two-week period, I studied with Violin Professor Mark Rush multiple times, learning to improve different aspects of my technique, such as wrist flexibility and left-hand coordination. During the very first lesson, Professor Rush identified the wrist issue, something that my local teacher and I have been working on for some time. He gave me some exercises, and I can tell that my technique is already improving.

Choir

At 8:15 each morning, every Lamont student attended choir in the basement of the music building. In choir, I found myself face-to-face with the best choir director from whom I've ever had the opportunity to learn. Dr. Fleming clearly loved working with us and was energetic ALL THE TIME! He got our 97-member choir to sing a song in German, an African folk tune, a composition by Handel, and two spiritual pieces with solos. By the end of my two weeks at Lamont, I felt like I was singing in a college choir with all voice majors! The choir opened the final concert, and it was extremely powerful singing with a group of advanced musicians.

Orchestra

Auditions were held on the first full day, and I placed as fifth chair first violin. Orchestra was a required class for all string, wind, brass, and percussion majors. We learned Copland's *Buckaroo Holiday*, Saint Saëns' *Danse Macabre*, Max Bruch's *Violin Concerto in G Minor*, and C. Theofanidis' *Rainbow Body*. In truth, I did not love playing the entire orchestral repertoire, because some of the music lacked terrific string parts. For example, I would have enjoyed playing a movement of a Beethoven symphony more than *Rainbow Body*.

At first, the rehearsals were a little rough because most students were sight-reading or had not practiced enough. However, as the week went on, the whole ensemble improved. Conductor Joe Martin was really enthusiastic and an avid brass player. I enjoyed playing in the first violin section, and learned a lot from the musicians around me.

Concerts

We enjoyed a concert almost every night. The Summer Academy faculty gave a recital, and a violin/cello fiddling duo also performed. On most nights, we listened to a performance class, which featured students performing pieces they prepared. At the end of the second

week, I listened to a steel drum ensemble, jazz ensemble, and new music ensemble. In the new music ensemble, the musicians played pieces written by composition majors. Also, the entire Academy attended the honors chamber and honors solo recitals at the end of the second week. After hearing these performances, I know of some pieces that I hope to play in the future.

Master Class Performance

Students were required to attend master classes at Lamont. These are sessions in which students are selected to perform with piano for a “master,” who is a visiting artist. Students play their piece and then have a short lesson from the master in front of an audience. Master classes are quite common at music schools and conservatories. Often, when a distinguished soloist visits a campus, the soloist will give a short public lesson to several selected students in front of an audience.

While at Lamont, I attended a viola, cello, and chamber-music master class, and I was chosen to perform in the violin master class, which was my first-ever master class performance. Five violinists, including me, were picked to play in the violin master class. I played the Bruch *Violin Concerto in G Minor*, a piece that we happened to be playing in orchestra with a different soloist. I performed last on the program and was extremely nervous to be playing in front of my peers. All the string students were required to attend the violin master class, so there was a large audience.

Before my performance, I tuned with the piano and my string popped, which occurs when the peg loosens and the string has to be readjusted. I tightened the peg and tuned the rest of my strings before I began to play. My overall performance was not a great one, partly because my string had moved to different spot on the bridge, after it popped. This caused there to be a larger distance between my D and A strings, which affected my intonation. If my string pops before a performance again, I will know to check that the string has not moved, in addition to making sure that it is tightened properly.

Music Theory

Before I left for Lamont, I took a music theory test and was placed in the top-level theory class. In this course, we learned a lot of music theory concepts that I had never studied before, such as voice leading, harmonic function, and skills for analyzing music by ear. For example, voice leading is what composers study to ensure that each line of music follows established rules. My teacher, Conrad Kehn, made sure that each student had the opportunity to practice voice leading for a series of chords and tried to have everyone answer a question each day. In all, the class was extremely challenging and included a lot of college-level material, but I am pleased with the knowledge that I gained and am glad I could experience two weeks in a college-level class.

Chamber Music Rehearsals

A few months before heading to Lamont, I was assigned to be the first violinist in Antonin Dvorak’s “American” string quartet. We received our chamber music assignments early so that we would have the chance to practice them prior to arriving at the Academy. When I arrived at Lamont, it was apparent that most everyone had practiced beforehand.

The first few rehearsals were without a coach, but we started working with Katharine Knight, a cello professor at Lamont, mid-way into the first week. She was extremely helpful and aided us on listening to the main melodic voices. I really tried to listen to the ensemble after our coachings with her.

When we did not have a coach, I ran the rehearsal. In the process, I learned how to listen for problem spots and how to correct things professionally, without upsetting my colleagues.

During the second week, we were coached by Jerilyn Jorgensen, a violin professor at Lamont. She worked with me on some technical things and tried to get the entire quartet to bring out more dynamic contrasts.

By the last rehearsal, our string quartet had really improved. Happily, our final concert went well.

Social Activities

At Lamont, I met some amazing people from across the United States and even some international students. And, in working with my peers and learning from them, I have become a better musician.

Even though our schedules were full of courses and practices, we had some recreational activities. For example, I took a yoga class. And, on the middle Sunday of the Academy, the students took a trip to the Denver Art Museum, which I had never visited before, and which I thoroughly enjoyed. In addition, we got the opportunity to eat downtown while we were in Denver, which was a nice break from dining-hall meals. Twice during the two weeks, the Lamont students went to the Ritchie Center, a university recreation facility. The first time we went, I went to the soccer field and played cards with my friends. On the second occasion, I went swimming, which was extremely relaxing. These two days were rare occasions when we had free time. Generally, our schedules were so packed that we only got 45 minutes of free time each day!

Conclusion

After two weeks of living on the University of Denver's campus, I can happily report that I genuinely enjoyed my time there. My teachers were all fantastic, and I relished participating in all my ensembles, particularly the choir. When I first learned that I had to sing in a choir every day while at the Academy, I was not a fan. Now that I am back home, I miss waking up and singing in a choir of 97 musicians. I also loved studying with new instructors and am glad that I had a chance to participate in a master class. And I really enjoyed visiting the campus and loved having free reign of the music building.

The two weeks I spent at Lamont Summer Academy was an experience of a lifetime, and I am thankful to the Garwin Family Foundation for providing me with the opportunity to attend.