

Final Reflection on My 2024 Summer Enrichment Experience at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music High School Jazz Intensive

by Liam Batteau

Introduction

Creating music is an incredible skill, and thanks to the Garwin Family Foundation (GFF) grant, I had the chance to grow as a musician and as a person at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music (CCM) High School Jazz Intensive. My week there felt like a deep dive into the music world. Since returning, I've noticed a big improvement in my musical abilities. I learned a lot about living independently, the mental strength needed to be a musician, and the joy of meeting others who love music as much as I do.

At CCM, there were three jazz groups, each made up of students playing different instruments. My group had nine students. It was exciting to be with others who share my drive for making music. We all learned from each other, and this helped us grow both individually and as a team. Working well with others is really important in jazz. This camp helped me appreciate the style of music even more because you can't get by without working with others.

The feedback I received helped me think about my playing in new ways and become more creative. At first, I realized I needed to improve my understanding of music theory. Thankfully, the classes and my fellow students taught me a lot, and now I feel more confident in this area. I am most looking forward to coming back to school and being able to implement this newfound knowledge in class.

The program included classes on music theory, improvisation, and master classes about the music industry. We learned what it takes to be a professional musician and what to include in our "musician's toolbox," such as techniques, music history, and appreciation. I never truly understood the mental toll the music industry has on people. Dedicating your whole life to making music is a beautiful thing but very draining at the same time.

Living in rural Illinois is much different from big city campus life. Because we were in the city, there were many opportunities to experience jazz in the wild. Campus staff took us on daily outings including “Jazz in the Park” and listening to jazz at Caffè Vivace, a small jazz club close to campus. Getting a chance to feel the world of jazz around me opened my eyes to so many new possibilities. The whole time watching the musicians play, I thought to myself, “This could be my life someday.” It also reminded me of how much I love to perform for people. It's hard to go to somewhere where music is everywhere and then come back to a place where music is like pop-up festivals. This was also apparent in the talent of other students. These kids grew up playing gigs and have AP music theory classes, which I was very surprised by.

The program was challenging, with high expectations from instructors. We learned many important jazz standards and prepared four songs for performance. The challenging aspect also taught me about myself. I am very self-critical and torment my brain because I feel like I am no good and I don't deserve what I have. This is especially apparent when put under a tight schedule; however, it did push me to work hard and improve. Working under pressure can really show who people really are. One of my roommates was always freaking out over all the material he had to learn.

During studio time, we practiced improvisation and how to communicate with other musicians on stage. Jam sessions are a quintessential element of jazz. At the very end of the week, everyone played in one giant jam session, each taking part in a solo. In jam sessions, the personality of players is expressed; most players have a certain lick they use in all of their solos. My biggest achievement was becoming a better soloist. This was the biggest leap I made at this camp. Solos have always been an interesting skill of mine. Most solos I played before were very similar, and honestly, I wasn't very confident. However, after this camp, I truly understood the formula for a creative solo.

Living on campus was a new experience for me. Although it was my first time away from home, the staff made it easy to settle in. It was hard not to miss being home, and there were certain things that happened back at home that I felt like I was missing out on; in a sense, I kind of felt left out. I realized it's hard to manage things back at home when you're 5 hours away. At the beginning, everything was brand new and interesting, but it seemed every day I wanted to go home more and more. The experience taught me that I am a homebody at heart and I truly do love living in Carbondale. Meeting people helped make campus feel more like home. I hope to keep in touch with them because they truly are some of my best friends, and I just met them.

Thankfully, I am pretty good at making friends, but on the first day at camp, I didn't know anyone, nor did anyone try to talk to me, until this one girl came up to me

and was super kind and wanted to know all about me. After getting to know a lot of the other musicians, we had a really good time. It was kind of funny how they all thought I had a southern accent, even though I don't think I do.

The CCM Jazz Intensive helped me decide I want to become a music producer or studio musician in the future. The program opened my eyes to career opportunities in the field of music that I was unaware of. I would love to have a career in music, and this camp helped solidify that dream. To reach this goal, I know I will need to work hard and dedicate more of my time to music. I felt both challenged and inspired by the talented students around me.

This experience boosted my confidence and gave me clear goals to strive for. The Cincinnati Conservatory of Music High School Jazz Intensive was a valuable experience that taught me how to be a better musician. I would definitely recommend the program to future GFF students. The faculty was very knowledgeable and gave us the tools to help further our musical adventures. The skills and knowledge I gained will help me create music that brings joy and life to the world around me. I don't know where life will end up taking me, and I don't know if I will make it in a career in music, but I do know that I will always have music with me no matter where this unpredictable world takes me.