



► Zavitz in Austria

Playing in Graz: Carleton Music students study in Austria

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart once declared that Austria was the best place in the world for young musicians. Some two hundred and twenty years later, his words still ring true. Consistently described as the world capital of classical music, Austria has maintained its reputation as a premier destination for aspiring musicians.

Thanks to a partnership developed between Carleton and the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz (KUG), two Carleton Music students were offered the unique opportunity to experience the influence of Austria at first hand.

When James Wright, Associate Professor of Music in the School for Studies and in Art and Culture, presented John Dapaah and Kyle Zavitz with the opportunity to study at KUG, the two students spent little time deliberating. For the two talented pianists, the decision to pursue their studies in the same geographical context that produced Beethoven, Brahms and Mozart was an absolute no-brainer. Both students immediately recognized the tremendous implications that studying music in Austria would have on their music careers and lives.

"There are experiences, then there are life experiences, and then there's what I'm doing right now," explains Kyle.

John and Kyle are the first two students to participate in an exchange program that was signed by Carleton and KUG in 2009. John, a Classical and Jazz Pianist, and Kyle, a jazz pianist with a wide range of musical fluencies, are spending the entire 2011-2012 academic year in Graz.

One of the distinct advantages of studying abroad is that it has provided both students with a more expansive scope of music as a whole. It has also provided

them a different perspective on the work that can be done in the boundless pursuit of refining their craft.

John has noticed a divergence between European and North American teaching styles and has discerned that at KUG an increased focus is put on how much time should be spent on each piece of music.

"My piano professor, Dr. Eike Straub, focuses heavily on the character of the pieces I'm working on. This has improved my playing, making it more colourful, exciting, and more enjoyable to listen to. Time is an important factor with the teaching; every piece I'm working on needs time to mature and to have a life of its own. I expect everything to be perfect within a short period of time. I'm finally starting to see the importance of time and growth for my music."

Like John, Kyle also noted the differences from what he was accustomed to learning in North America, but he was also surprised by some of the striking similarities.

"As a jazz musician living in North America, I was learning where it all began. Coming to Europe, I was surprised at how similar the style of jazz is, but how different the methodology surrounding jazz is."

Though music is the primary reason both John and Kyle decided to spend a year of their lives in Graz, they are both cognizant of the fact that this exchange will shape more than just their music. Both students are well aware that they will return to Canada with a new view of the world, and how they fit within it.

"Maybe I won't be Austrian when I come back," explains Kyle. "But living in Europe will leave an imprint on the rest of my life. It's one thing to go to somewhere that is a polar opposite to your home, where

people live in very different circumstances. Even more influential, however, is going somewhere that is geographically similar, with people who are physically similar and who live in comparable circumstances but have totally different outlooks, personality, priorities and mindset. It really hits home, and makes you reevaluate how you live your life."

John credits Graz with helping him put some things in perspective.

"Before I came to Graz, I had one purpose- my music. Although I am focused on my music, I've made some amazing friends from all around the world and being able to see, travel, and live in a completely different culture has made me a better rounded person."

As Kyle and John's year long adventure abroad continues, they have taken the opportunity to reflect on their success. Many people and institutions have had positive influences on them, yet both students point to Carleton's diverse music program as playing a huge role in their musical and personal development. John and Kyle agree that Carleton has earned its reputation as one of the most diverse music faculties in the world. In fact, Kyle believes the motto of Carleton Music should be "Anything and Everything."

"Since coming to Carleton for music, I have developed strongly as a diverse musician. African Rhythm study has assisted in my rhythm. Ear Training and Jazz Theory courses were vital aids to my ability to improvise, compose, and arrange music. Music History courses opened my eyes to a breadth of musical styles that, while not popular now, have given me more than just the ability to play music; they have given me the ability to develop my own style...Jazz is still a very new style of music for me (this will be my third year



► Dapaah performing on a grand piano

studying), and so in terms of piano performance I will forever be indebted to my private piano teacher and ensemble director, Mr Mark Ferguson."

For John, being a music student at Carleton has made him a very versatile musician. Unlike most music schools which focus on one or two styles or forms of music, Carleton has allowed him to learn a variety of styles, including African drumming and new music. Among others, John lists Jesse Stewart, Nicole Presentey and Verna Jacobson as assisting with his work to date.

John and Kyle are quick to praise the many people who have helped them, but both students put a particular emphasis on the advice and influence of Professor James Wright. They credit Wright, the man who presented them with the opportunity to study in Graz, as being a pillar in their overall development.

As their adventures in Austria continue, Wright and all of Carleton University are waiting eagerly to hear the refined musicians John and Kyle have become.

Read John and Kyle's blogs

John: <http://jofi24.blogspot.com/>

Kyle: <http://kylezavitz.blogspot.com/>