

Quebec Counterpoint: Summer Clarinet Study at the Orford Academy of Arts

In music, *counterpoint* is the relationship between two or more voices that function independently from each other but sound harmonious when played together. Just as a single melody joins a diversity of others in the counterpoint of a musical fugue, so I joined a diversity of other music students to form a vibrant artistic community at the Orford Arts Academy in Quebec, Canada.

Fugues are academic pieces of music, so the analogy of the fugue is in this way appropriate: I learned a great deal while studying clarinet performance at Orford. In private lessons, an important type of counterpoint, or dialogue, I learned valuable aspects of clarinet technique, creative approaches to performing, and new perspectives of classic clarinet repertoire. In masterclasses—individual lessons held in front of a group of peers—the dual counterpoint of a lesson expanded to a performance setting that engaged a plurality of student voices in collaboration with the teacher to probe the music I was studying and improve many aspects of my performance.

Furthermore, the notion of counterpoint was not limited to my personal lessons but applied to other activities as well: at Orford I learned that the practice of making music is less the work of individuals and more the result of community and dialogue. The musical community at Orford, a matrix of counterpoint between musicians, composers, producers, and managers, functioned almost as a microcosm of the greater musical world. It gave me a unique opportunity to collaborate with composers, to perform in a professional venue, and to work with recording technology. It was invaluable to live and perform with distinguished music students from North America and Europe and thereby form connections with musicians outside of the UVA setting.



While the title that I originally gave my project—“Quebec Counterpoint”—aptly foreshadowed many aspects of my time at Orford, it did not predict the range of experiences that I had. The “soundtrack” of my experience at Orford was not limited to counterpoint and academic fugues, but rather was a musical medley. The soundtrack began with a meditative piece: each morning students and teachers alike met for “musical yoga”, which emphasized the importance of holistic body awareness while playing. Later in the soundtrack came a waltz: I was asked to dance while playing my clarinet during a masterclass. And, of course, contained within the soundtrack was all of the music shared by my peers and me, whether in a performance of an obscure avant-garde piece or in a discussion of Lady Gaga’s musical appeal. This amalgam of diverse experiences made for an incredibly fulfilling musical summer, made possible by the funds provided by the College Arts Scholars Award, which generously covered the cost of transportation, room and board, tuition, and musical supplies.



My summer experience at Orford catapulted me into the start of the fall semester with musical vigor in the wake of my fourth year Distinguished Major Project. For this project I will prepare a full-length recital to take place in the spring. I look forward to applying all that I learned at Orford to this project, as well as to future performance opportunities and clarinet study at the graduate level. At Orford I kindled my own musical voice, which I will present at my recital and which I will carry with me on future musical pursuits, engaging in the counterpoints of a musical career. I am very grateful to the support of Evelyn and Stephen Colbert for enabling me to begin preparation for my recital with such a rewarding experience.