

Culminating Experience Reflection

Culminating Experience Project: The title of my Culminating Experience Project is "The Transformative Effects of Education". This project is a reflection on how my educational experience at the Berklee Global Jazz Institute has affected me as a musician and educator, and how this experience has motivated me to become more socially active. Throughout this past year, I had the privilege of being in an environment that pushed me outside of my comfort zone and encouraged me to really reflect on what I want my career in music to look like. I feel I've grown immensely as a musician in such a short amount of time, and this made me reflect on how powerful education can truly be. I was very inspired from the pedagogy class taught by Marco Pignataro, which really helped reaffirm the passion I have for teaching, and how a good teacher can make such a huge impact on their students. The compositions that I wrote and recorded were all directly influenced from different lessons I've learned throughout the year at the BGJI, both musical and personal. Outside of specific musical influences I was also very inspired to be more socially active, and ultimately to try to use music as a tool to better society. This paradigm shift for me is a direct result of my education here, and the time I spent in the Music and Social Activism class. That class really got me thinking about what difference I could make in my community back home in Los Angeles, and this propelled me into the other component of my project. I had the idea to create my own non-profit organization, which I'm naming "The Norwalk Jazz All Stars". The mission of my organization is to expose middle school band students in the Norwalk/La Mirada school districts to jazz through free private lessons with professional musicians, playing in a jazz ensemble, and having performance opportunities in the community and area.

Results: My expectations of the project early on were to effectively incorporate the musical concepts I learned into effective compositions, and to familiarize myself with the process of creating a non-profit organization. The results of all my work this year yielded better results than I was anticipating. I feel proud of the compositions I composed, and feel I was effective in applying the musical concepts in an organic way without sounding too academic or like I was completing an assignment. The research I completed for my non-profit organization also yielded more positive results than I was initially anticipating. I was able to gain a lot of knowledge about creating a non-profit especially pertaining to creating a mission and vision statement. I was able to develop a clear mission statement and constructed a vision for the organization in its first year. Based on the results of this year, I'm very encouraged to pursue my non-profit organization, "The Norwalk Jazz All Stars" and incorporate many things I've learned from the BGJI in my organization.

Plan of Action/Process- The process I used in creating both the compositions and non-profit organization were very specific. My plan of action for the compositions was to use very specific things I learned at the BGJI and incorporate them organically into the compositions. The first tune I wrote is entitled "In Commons" which was inspired by a lesson I had with the drummer Adam Cruz. In my lesson, Adam and I were playing the jazz standard "Bye Bye Blackbird" and Adam suggested we try something a little unconventional. He suggested we close our eyes and visualize a location/scene and see how this would influence our playing. The first location I thought of was downtown Manhattan in the middle of rush hour and I was very surprised how just visualizing this

scene affected my overall interpretation of the melody and improvisation. I was very inspired to see how a location could influence my composition so I went to Boston Common park to try to compose based on the environment I witnessed. I used a birdcall from a bird called the American Robin as a tenor sax motif, and gathered influence from the park and surrounding metropolitan area. This was a totally different method of composing I'd never experimented with before and this process really gave me new inspiration for composing in this way.

The next tune I composed is entitled "Prayer for Poway" which was inspired from the music and Social Activism class. I truthfully never felt comfortable composing based on a political or social issue and so when we were asked in the class to compose based on a social issue I was initially uncomfortable. Unfortunately, while I was in the process of writing the tune a tragedy struck my hometown of Poway, California. A gunman entered a Jewish synagogue and opened fire, killing one woman and injuring a few other people. This event really made me want to write a tune that I could perform back home that would hopefully bring some catharsis or healing to the people that were affected by this tragedy. Most of the tune I used consonant harmonies, but wanted to also express my frustration and anger about the whole incident by writing a very dissonant chord at the end of the tune.

The next tune I composed I titled "Artet" which was inspired by a master class we had with Danilo Perez. Danilo discussed the application of combining tetrachords together to create exotic and different sounds. In my tune "Artet" I was inspired by the class to utilize different tetrachords to create a progression. For example, in the melody of the tune the chord progression is Bbm7, AbM7, Dbm7, and Bm7, and the roots of

these chords form an Ab minor tetrachord (Ab, Bb, B, Db). This process gave me a new way of creating chord progressions that I definitely plan on exploring more in the future.

The last tune I recorded was the standard "Like Someone in Love" by Jimmy Van Heusen. I wanted to utilize a technique Danilo has been working with us on the whole year, which is the concept called "Zero Gravity". In this approach to playing, there isn't a predetermined plan or destination, and instruments are not bound by their traditional roles. For example, in a standard Jazz quartet the saxophone will cover the melodic material, while the rhythm section comps/supports. In Zero Gravity any instrument can take over the melody, and the saxophone for example can function as a comping instrument. This approach was very uncomfortable for me in the beginning of the year, and I feel being comfortable enough at the end of the year to record a tune like this shows a lot of growth for me.

The plan of action in relation to creating the non-profit was to familiarize myself with key components so I could actually have a foundation after I finished the year. I knew from the beginning of the project that I wouldn't be able to completely create the non-profit while I was in school but found I was able to get together a lot of important elements. My committee member, Roya Hu was extremely helpful in guiding me with certain steps I could take to really help my organization take shape. She recommended I really develop a clear mission statement and think about the vision of the organization after 1 year, 5 years, etc. Thinking of these specific details really helped the organization take shape, which I didn't expect to happen. The mission of my organization is to expose middle school band students in the Norwalk/La Mirada school districts to jazz through free private lessons with professional musicians, playing in a jazz ensemble, and having

performance opportunities in the community and area. I want to undertake this project because in the Norwalk area most students can't afford private music lessons and have very little/no exposure to Jazz. This is very different to my personal privileged upbringing and I want to give students in Norwalk the same opportunities that I had. This mission statement is the core of what I want this organization to provide and I found the next step of creating a vision very important. My vision for the 1st year of the organization is to have 30 middle school students from the Norwalk/La Mirada school districts form a collective jazz ensemble. This ensemble will have monthly performance opportunities out in public and community to give students performance opportunities outside of their normal band concert environment (school gymnasium, performing arts center etc.). In addition to performing, the students will all receive 30-minute private lessons a week with professional jazz musicians to learn the fundamentals of playing Jazz. The students won't have to travel to get to their lessons because I plan on having the teachers go directly to the student's school site after school.

Next Steps: The next phase for my project will consist of utilizing many of the things I've learned at the Berklee Global Jazz Institute in my non-profit organization, which I want to get up and running. The next phase will consist of reaching out to my friends and colleagues to be the private teachers in the organization. Once I have the staff lined up I'll utilize some of the skills I've learned in respect to grant writing to write grant proposals to receive money to fund the program. Outside of grant writing I plan on reaching out to local businesses for donations in addition to larger companies/corporations.

Contribution to the profession: I hope my culminating experience project will contribute to the profession by incorporating knowledge I've learned at the BGJI and passing that knowledge along to younger students. I feel that my organization has the power to make a positive difference in the Norwalk community, by using Jazz as a vehicle to teach the students many important life lessons such as teamwork, work ethic, responsibility, and confidence.

Impact on student completing the work: This whole experience of researching and creating my project has been nothing short of transformative for me. I have a much more defined direction in my career path and know social activism is a necessary component for me. The knowledge I've received and growth I've had this year is inspiring that the right education can make a huge difference on the life of a student. This year has been transformative for me, so I posed the question to myself if I could create an educational experience that could transform another student's life. I'm very motivated to pass on the knowledge I've received this year, and am extremely grateful to have had this experience in my life.