

MUSO

Spring 2006



Stent Hall is one of Music@Menlo's main venues



Students just outside the Ludwig Recital Hall at Kent State University



The Prelude Performance Quintet at Music@Menlo



Wu Han coaches a student during Music@Menlo

Blossom Music Center, home of the Kent/Blossom festival



Students backstage at Blossom Music Center

'WORKING AT A FESTIVAL MAKES YOU LEARN ABOUT A NEW WORLD WHICH YOU WOULD OTHERWISE NOT HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO'

Something for nothing

Fancy a summer of fun doing something you love that could change your life forever?

As a volunteer at a music festival you could wind up doing anything from collecting tickets from concertgoers on their way into an auditorium to helping a star like Yo-Yo Ma to re-string his cello. It's a great way to meet people and network, learn about the music industry, watch the professionals in action and generally have a lot of fun.

Ricardo Sepulveda, a 22-year old violinist from Columbia, has been studying in the US since 2000 and is currently doing a Master's degree in performance at Kent State University. He has volunteered at the Kent/Blossom Music Festival for the last three years. 'I love to help out at the festival's concerts and take part in it. It's great to be surrounded by music and great opportunities,' he says.

Although there are typically no monetary benefits from volunteering at a festival, there are plenty of opportunities to make it worthwhile. 'You can make good relationships and it is a great networking opportunity; not only do you meet great musicians and artists from other schools, but you also meet professionals, and have the advantage of being able to go backstage and converse with them,' says Sepulveda.

After initially volunteering at Kent/Blossom three summers ago, Sepulveda was asked back the following year as a paid employee to work within the operations team. 'That will really help me progress my career,' he says. 'I really like arts administration and plan on commencing in this line of business when I have finished studying. Working at a festival has a lot to offer if this is what you would like to get into.'

A whole range of music festivals across North America and further afield offer incentives for volunteers. Most, if they don't pay, will offer housing or modest stipends – although this varies depending on the festival. Some with notable opportunities for volunteers include the Great Waters Music Festival in New Hampshire, the Central Park Summer Stage and California's Music@Menlo festival, which has a special volunteer scheme for young people.

VOLUNTEERING AT MUSIC FESTIVALS IS A GREAT WAY TO GET ARTS ADMINISTRATION EXPERIENCE – AND FREE CONCERT TICKETS TO BOOT. KATE CHUTER FINDS OUT MORE

As well as taking part in the Music@Menlo Institute (a music summer school), young people can also apply to be interns at the festival. 'Our intern scheme is very structured. It is important not only to think about what is currently happening in classical music, but about what could happen. At Menlo we are thinking about the next generation of audiences, musicians and arts administrators,' says Suzanne Field, executive director of Music@Menlo.

The festival takes on 20 interns each year for a period of two months. Volunteers are an important part of the festival's team of staff, gaining a real sense of what it is like to be an arts administrator. They are treated like any other member of staff: 'At Menlo the students have real responsibility,' Field confirms.

Marissa Dacay, 20, a student at New York's Fordham University, wanted to take part in an internship and chose Menlo because of its hands-on approach. 'At Menlo you are involved in the whole process and this is an incredible and invaluable experience – to plan, execute and enjoy an event and to see the result of your work,' she says. 'At Menlo you feel less like an intern and more like an essential part of the team making the festival happen and work.'

Menlo gives interns the opportunity to gain experience in everything from events management and planning to working within the festival's hospitality management department, taking on PR and production responsibilities and also helping out backstage.

'Working at Menlo helps young people to prepare for a professional career. Many of our past interns have gone on to more advanced internships in the US and abroad, and also backstage interns have gone on to become orchestra managers,' Field adds.

'I have recommended practically everyone I know to take part in this festival, or to volunteer at any summer classical music festival,' says Dacay. 'Working at a festival

makes you learn about a new world which you would otherwise not have been exposed to.

'It's also a good networking experience,' she concludes. 'I am still in contact with many friends and mentors who I met at Menlo, who have helped me with my career goals.' Since her initial stint as an intern, she has done work experience at various PR firms including Milina Barry PR, which handles publicity for the Menlo festival.

Unusually, interning at the Music@Menlo festival is paid. During her first year at the festival Dacay says she earned around \$1,000, and this was doubled for her second year. Other paid internships are available at the Bowdoin Music Festival and the Aspen Music Festival.

If you're set on a career in arts administration then there is no better place to develop your skills base than at a festival. But even if your only desire is to make it as the next superstar, volunteering at festivals can have its benefits.

Sepulveda explains, 'Because I was working at the festival I was allowed to attend masterclasses for free. I was surrounded by great musicians and got to see how they worked and taught and learnt from that. I had the opportunity to see what they do, listen to them play and get an insight into their musicality.'

'I would absolutely recommend working at a festival to anyone,' he concludes. 'Regardless of where you want your career to go, just the taking part and being a member of the community and helping out is great – and of course you get free tickets to concerts!'

CONTACTS

- www.musicatmenlo.org
- <http://dept.kent.edu/blossom>
- www.greatwaters.org
- www.summerstage.org
- www.bowdoinfestival.org
- www.aspenmusic.org

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