

KEYBOARD KAMP
By Shaina Worthington

One of the highlights of my summer was going to Keyboard Kamp in Biggar, SK. There were approximately fifty students registered for the two-day event. There were composers from across Canada, a variety of sessions to help you grow as a musician, and a few extras to make the time more exciting and enjoyable.

Keyboard Kamp had a vast variety of Canadian composers in attendance, each bringing their own style and personality. Julianne Warkentin, from Manitoba, was my group composition teacher. I spent the most time with her out of all the composers, she had interesting stories to tell, and she was able to bring nine of us together and create a new piece of music. I never had the pleasure of being taught by Martha Hill Duncan, from Ontario, but I spoke to her throughout the event, and I appreciated that she always wore a smile. Lynette Sawatsky is a Saskatchewan composer; she took the time to get to know many of us on a more personal level. She and I share a liking towards shimmery shoes. Another composer that I am becoming more familiar with is Wes Froese from Saskatchewan. He is more than just a funny guy; he enjoys playing the guitar just as much as the piano and does it just as well. Christopher Norton, New Zealand born, resides in Ontario and was one of the most worldly recognized composers in attendance. Debra Wanless stood out to me because she helped initiate the creation of CNCM and through that created Summer Sizzle and Keyboard Kamp many years ago. There were other composers, but these are the ones I interacted with the most and stood out to me. Without this great collection of talented composers, I would not have learned as much or had such a great experience at Keyboard Kamp I appreciate them taking the time to be there.

One of the ways that I was able to meet so many composers was through the sessions that were organized. Several of my most memorable sessions included playing composers songs for them, keyboard harmony, improv, and group composition. I played "Royal Verdict" for Lynette Sawatsky, this was a unique song composition as it was written so that I could choose between two endings. Lynette pointed out this detail to the other students, she also gave back stories to the other pieces which helped us know how the piece was supposed to be played. I also had the pleasure of playing a Christopher Norton piece for Mr. Norton called "Inter-city Stomp", at one point we played it together like a duet. In my keyboard harmony session Wes Froese taught us how to play along to Taylor Swift songs on the keyboard while he played his guitar, this is something we don't get to do in piano lessons, and I enjoyed it very much. Christopher Norton also taught an improv session where he played a short piece of music and we had to play it back. He also played pieces and had us play different beats over them, we learned how easy it is to change the sound of a song. Our group composition, "After Midnight", was led by Julianne Warkentin and there were nine students coming together to create a unique piece of music. I played the triangle, we had a kahone, clarinet, singing bowl and several students rotating turns on the piano. This was the first time I have worked in a large group on a composition, it challenged me to do something different. Each group did very well, weather was a common theme, and it was a time for dramatics.

There were so many things to do in between sessions and in the evening, like meals, concerts, and choir practice. Food in general was pretty amazing thanks to the chefs. The Tailgate Party was my favourite because it was unique and fun filled time. The composers put on little concerts throughout the day, but my favourite concert was the Jazz Concert the first night. Some of the students played from each group, which I enjoyed watching, but the highlight was the improv piece Christopher Norton and Wes Froese played together. Another first for me was being a part of a choir, we sang an original song "Our Farewell Song" created and directed by Stella terHart. A large number of people participated, composers, teachers and students, we sounded beautiful when we came together and sang. On the final night there was a gala, which was a formal evening of music, eating and presentations. It was the perfect way to close our time together.

I enjoyed every minute of Keyboard Kamp, and I made many memories that I will cherish. If the opportunity to participate again presented itself, I would go again.