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### Nathan Jorgensen, Assistant Professor of Music, COLA travels to Switzerland & Italy

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UNH Global

# Nathan Jorgensen

Assistant Professor of Music, COLA - Switzerland and Italy



UNH 3 O'Clock Jazz Band at the Montreux Jazz Festival

## Abstract

This summer (July 5-18, 2017) I had the opportunity to lead the UNH 3 O'Clock Jazz Band on a tour through Switzerland and Italy. The trip was initiated by my submission of recordings of the band to two major European jazz festivals: the Montreux Jazz Festival in Montreux, Switzerland; and the Umbria Jazz Festival in Perugia, Italy. I received word that we were selected to play at both festivals in September of 2016 and the planning for the trip

began. I want to thank the CIEGE office for awarding me a Faculty International Development Grant that supported my travel to Europe this summer.

Both of the above festivals have a tradition that extends many decades and both are among the most important jazz festivals in Europe. This year the Montreux Festival celebrated its 51st year and the Umbria Jazz Festival was hosting its 44th annual event. In addition to the two major festivals, the band also performed four other concerts on the tour. All told, we performed six concerts during the twelve days that we were overseas.

The 3 O'Clock Jazz Band is our top jazz ensemble at UNH and it has 18 student members. I also invited a guest artist, trumpeter Trent Austin, to travel with the group to be featured as a soloist. Trent is an alum of UNH and one of the finest trumpeters in New England. We were fortunate to have him travel with us as he provided an outstanding musical experience for the band (and audiences) and served as an excellent mentor and role model for the students while we were on tour. In addition to being the director of the group and organizer of the trip, I also brought my saxophone and played as a soloist with the band at each venue. My wife and two parents of a student also traveled with the group as chaperones for the tour. In total we had 23 travelers. One of the parents is a photo journalist and he took video and pictures throughout the tour.

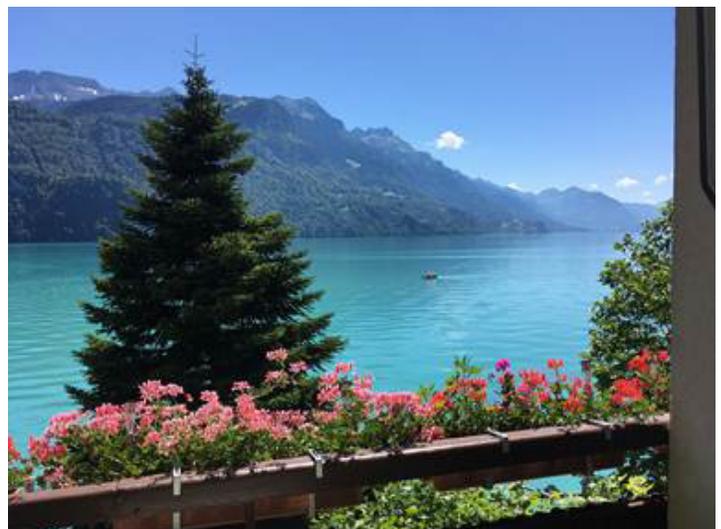
### **Itinerary**

July 5 - Departed from Boston Logan Airport at 5PM

July 6 - We arrived in Zurich at 6AM local time and met with our guide (Henk) and proceeded to Lucerne, Switzerland, for a walking tour of the city. Next we traveled to Brienz, Switzerland, to check into our hotel. Later that night we performed at in the hotel garden as part of the "Brienz meets Montreux" event. The band was treated to a 3-course meal before the performance.

July 7 - We departed Brienz and headed to Montreux and participated in the Montreux Jazz Festival. Our performance took place on the Parc Vernex Stage at 5PM, where there was a crowd of several hundred people to listen. The students played beautifully and the crowd was extremely receptive to our music. After the performance, the students and chaperones had the opportunity to explore Montreux and the rest of the festival, which allowed them to listen to several other performances throughout the evening.

July 8-9 - We traveled to Italy by way of the Simplon Pass and arrived in Stresa at roughly 3PM. Stresa is located in the lake region of Italy and there are several small islands in the middle of Lago Maggiore. Since it was very hot, several of the students took the opportunity to swim in the lake before our performance at a local restaurant that evening. Our gig was at Cafe Verbanella overlooking the lake, and many



people came in to eat and drink and listen to our performance. It was a quaint gig, but our music really connected with several of the people in attendance. I had a lovely discussion with a couple from London that stayed for the entirety of our 2.5-hour performance. We began the tour with 3 gigs in 3 days and thankfully the students got to have the next three days off to rest and do some sightseeing. On the 9th we took a ferry out to explore two of the islands on the lake - Isla Madre and Isla Bella. Both of the islands had palaces and gardens that were very beautiful.

July 10-11 - From Stresa we headed to Venice to spend 2 days exploring this beautiful and unique city. We stayed in a hotel just outside of Venice in a city called Mestre, where we could take a bus into Venice for a mere 1.5 euros. We arrived in Venice about 5PM and our guide Henk briskly walked us through the streets of Venice to St Mark's Square. After that we split into small groups and explored the city, ate dinner, had some coffee and gelato, and took pictures of the many sites in and around Venice. On July 11 we had a guided walking tour from a Venetian citizen/historian and learned a lot about the city and several of its landmarks including: the Rialto Bridge, St. Mark's Cathedral, St. Mark's Square, etc). We had a tour of a musical instrument museum and the Teatro la Fenice (a grand opera house in the heart of the city). After we finished our tour we were treated to a traditional 3-course Venetian meal, which was capped off with tiramisu. The rest of the afternoon and evening was open for the students and chaperones to explore the city in smaller groups.



UNH 3 O'Clock Band in Perugia, Italy, before our performance at Umbria Jazz Festival

July 12 - We had an early morning departure from Mestre and headed to Florence for a walking tour. We only had a few hours to spend in Florence, but did have the chance to see the square, the duomo, and the famous Ponte Vecchio. After our visit in Florence we drove to the medieval town of Scarperia, where our next performance was located. We were treated to a tour of the castle in the middle of town and ate a buffet style dinner in the castle courtyard before our performance. The town of Scarperia is well known for their knives and there were

several shops in the town where these handmade blades were on display and available for purchase. Our performance took place in the town square just outside the castle and many of the townspeople came out to listen to our performance.

July 13-14 - After breakfast we departed for Perugia, where we participated in the Umbria Jazz Festival. Perugia is a beautiful medieval city located in the Umbria region. The jazz festival in Perugia is one of the oldest and most important festivals in Europe. Our performance took place on the IV Novembre Stage at 7PM. Our students played one of their best performances at this event and they had the largest crowd of any of our performances on the tour, so it was a fantastic experience for everyone involved. One of the best aspects of our inclusion to this festival was that the students had all-access performer credentials, which allowed them to get in free to all of the concerts at the Umbria Jazz Festival. Concerts were given by some of the most recognizable names in jazz today. We had the opportunity to hear performances by Christian McBride, Wayne Shorter, Gonzalo Rubalcaba and Chucho Valdez, and many others. We also got to meet with some of the Berklee College of Music faculty at a late-night jam session.

July 15 - We departed to Tuscany where the band was set to have its final performance. On the way to Tuscany we traveled to the medieval city of Orvieto and spent the morning taking a cable-car up to the city and enjoyed lunch while we were there. There was a beautiful duomo from the renaissance period in the middle of the town square. Later that evening we were treated to a meal at the Muvis Museo del Vino (the largest wine museum in Europe), where our final performance took place. This was a special gig for the group as it marked several of the student's last performance with the UNH 3 O'Clock Band, and what a way to go out! After the performance concluded (which was near midnight) we were given a tour of the museum and given samples of the wines produced in the region. It was a wonderful conclusion to the performance aspect of the trip.

July 16-17 - Our final two days led us to Rome, which is Italy's most populous and one of its most historic cities. We had a walking tour of the city, which included stops at the Colosseum, the Roman Forum, the Trevi Fountain, the Vatican, St Peter's Cathedral and Square, Il Vittoriano, Piazza di Spagna, the Pantheon, and the Spanish Steps. This was a bucket list city for me as there is so much history and so many sights to see. My wife and I also visited the Vatican Museums and it was staggering to see all of the priceless artifacts contained in the collection. We saw artifacts ranging from Egyptian sarcophagi to modern art. The collection is almost unfathomable in its breadth and

magnitude. The tour finishes with the Michelangelo's famous frescoes on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. I must have spent 30-40 minutes just taking in the magnitude and history of that building and the artwork inside.

July 18 - depart Rome to head back to Boston

### **Assesment and Evaluation**

I was extremely proud of the students throughout the tour; they represented themselves, the jazz program, their university, and their country with dignity and respect. I feel that the students gained perspective on our country's traditions, and had the opportunity to experience two European cultures first hand. They also created even stronger bonds and friendships with one another and created memories that will last a lifetime.

This tour was important to me as a teacher as it allowed me the opportunity to lead my ensemble in these international performances on some of the biggest stages in Europe. Being selected to perform on the Montreux Jazz Festival and the Umbria Jazz Festival was a significant accomplishment for the program, and it was a great honor to share this experience with the students. From a scholarship (creative activity) perspective this tour enabled me to perform as a featured soloist with my band on each these international stages and it allowed me to demonstrate for the students the level that they can aspire to as professionals. We also forged new friendships and fostered potential future collaboration with musicians that we met.

In addition to the important teaching and scholarship aspects of the tour, our trip enabled me to connect with a couple of alumni who traveled to Montreux in 1976 with the UNH Jazz Band. Two of the members of that band donated money through Advancement to help defray costs for the students. I had the chance to get to know both of these gentlemen better and listen to them recount stories from their trip experience 41 years ago. For me that just showed the importance of giving our students opportunities like this - these memories truly last a lifetime.

If you are interested in viewing a few of the videos from each location, here is a link to a collection of videos ([https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLxecPNu9jjsJ5snO7eOmlewVn1A2w1FLj&feature=em-share\\_playlist\\_user](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLxecPNu9jjsJ5snO7eOmlewVn1A2w1FLj&feature=em-share_playlist_user)) on Youtube.

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