



UNH Global

## Grant Funded European Travel for Recent Alumna

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Katja on a hike in Innsbruck

In summer 2019, I spent five weeks touring world-renowned concert halls and attending performances at well-known classical music festivals in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland thanks to the support of the Stanley A. Hamel Traveling Fellowship. My goals through this traveling fellowship were to learn about the organizational and backstage aspects of managing large historical venues, to improve my German speaking abilities, and to experience the European performance culture

that continues to influence classical music in the United States today.

My incredible journey began in Munich with a tour of the Bayerische Staatsoper (national theater) and attendance at the Munich Opera Festival performance of “L’Elisir D’Amore.” I was able to learn about the workforce behind the Bayerische Staatsoper, made up of over 1000 people, and explore the backstage logistics on one of the largest stages in the world. The Bardentreffen Music Festival, which brings performers from around the world to Europe, was also taking place in Nuremberg. It was an amazing experience because around every corner you would walk by a new street performer and it felt like traveling the world in one city.

In Vienna, I was able to tour three world-renown performance halls. The Vienna Konzerthaus was the newest (built in 1912 as a private project) and while it houses the biggest organ in Austria, its three performance halls are open to all musical styles. The Vienna Staatsoper (state theater) is one of the most famous opera houses in the world. I was able to tour this venue and visit backstage, where I learned about three hydraulic floors used for set changes and the need to rebuild after the entire opera house caught fire (except the front) during WWII. Nearly 1000 people are employed by this opera company as well. The *Musikverein* was the last venue I toured in Vienna and where I attended a performance by the Vienna Mozart Orchestra. This concert hall is very similar to Symphony Hall in Boston. They both have a shoebox shaped design and are among the top-rated concert halls in the world due to their incredible acoustics.



Katja inside the Residenz Theatre Munich



Katja standing on the grounds of the Schonbrunn Palace

The next stop on my trip was Salzburg (the birthplace of Mozart), where I attended the Salzburg Festival - an internationally recognized classical music and drama festival. Here I was able to tour the three main festival performance halls before attending a performance by the ORF Radio-Symphony Orchestra of Vienna in the Felsenreitschule (where the Von Trapp family performed for the Salzburg Festival in *The Sound of Music* movie). My last stop in Austria was in Innsbruck, where I was able to attend an outdoor Renaissance

Festival at the Ambras Castle. There were performances by traditional renaissance ensembles, including a flag throwing group that reminded me of the traditions we have in U.S. marching bands, with color guard (or flag squads).

At the Lucerne Summer Festival, I was able to attend a performance by the Chamber Orchestra of Europe in the Culture and Congress Center (KKL) of Lucerne. The KKL had the most modern concert hall I toured in my travels, but even this venue used a shoebox shaped design - only with a more contemporary and simple design than the ornate interiors of the Vienna Musikverein and Boston Symphony Hall. Acoustically, this concert hall was the most stunning that I had experienced in my life, and during the tour we were able to visit the hidden reverberation chambers that change the reverb (echo or length of time the sound carries) from 1.6 to 2.8 seconds when opened.

Each tour gave me significant insight into the world of managing large concert halls and what goes on behind the scenes. I learned that opera houses require a larger workforce than concert halls because opera performances need sets, costumes, props, intricate lighting, and more technical aspects managed that orchestra concerts do not. Traveling through Germany, Austria, and Switzerland also allowed me to improve my communication skills and gave me a sense of the evolution of language - especially when experiencing "Swiss German" in comparison to the German I grew up hearing my family speak.

The museums I visited and musical experiences I had were invaluable in learning about the history, culture, and artistic practices in Europe that continue to influence the arts in the United States to this day. This trip allowed me to grow intellectually and independently while building cultural connections with new friends from around the world and I would like to thank UNH and the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation for their support in this highly educational travel experience. It has not only prepared me for graduate school, but made me a more confident and curious individual.

My next steps are to use this fellowship experience to make further connections between European and U.S. culture while studying Arts Administration and Music Education in Boston - an artistically affluent city with strong connections to the experiences I had on my trip. I would also like to spend a summer working at one of the many festivals I was able to attend... perhaps even the Salzburg Festival for the 100th anniversary next year!

The Stanley A. Hamel Traveling Fellowship is open to graduating seniors and recent alumni. It offers approximately \$3,800 for recipients to complete "self-designed travel in Europe with the aim of understanding the culture and history of Europe as it influenced American culture and history."

The Hamel Traveling Fellowship is coordinated by the UNH Office of National Fellowships (<https://www.unh.edu/fellowships-office/>) and the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation (<https://www.nhcf.org/>).

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