

It's hard to believe that the summer is over and school has already started. Looking back, I had an incredible summer filled with music and travel. Thanks to the NimbleFingers Bursary from the Victoria Bluegrass Association, I was able to attend the NimbleFingers Bluegrass & Old Time Workshops and Festival in beautiful Sorrento, BC this August.

I caught the 8am ferry off Denman Island and met Jenny Lester on the other side and we started our road trip to Sorrento. When we got on the ferry in Nanaimo we couldn't wait any longer and broke out our instruments and played the whole time, and that was the start of it for me! Arriving on the mainland, we had a big drive ahead of us, but the time flew by as we talked and listened to music along the way.

We got the NimbleFingers/Sorrento around 6pm and parked the rig. We walked around and found all our old friends at the instructors get-together. We all ended up sitting down to a pizza dinner and caught up with one another of all the things that happened since we last saw each other the previous year. Then the jamming started to happen... I found a killer jam in the back and ended up playing until 2am. This would become a routine.

On the first day of classes, I woke up at 7:45am walked over to breakfast. The food was pretty good again this year and we had scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage and salad. Coffee would become more important later in the week as I suffered more from lack of sleep. After breakfast I walked back to my Cabana and got some practice in before the class started at 9:30am.

I had never met David Benedict (Advanced Mandolin), but was very excited to meet him. I had known of him via his weekly "Mandolin Mondays" posts where he features a different mandolin player each week. David Benedict is a really nice guy and a great teacher - very organized! Throughout the week we learned about triads, double stops, tunes, scales, improvisation and so many other great things. In the first class we worked on "Little Georgia Rose", which we would perform at the student concert on Thursday evening. On Tuesday we learned how to connect double stops and chords up and down the neck. On Wednesday we learned the tune "Mississippi Waltz" and tied in a measured tremolo. On Thursday we prepared for our Student Concert and broke Little Georgia Rose into parts and had mandolins playing all the other parts. One section of the class played the bass parts, others played the guitar parts, while others played the fiddle



parts. My part was playing the banjo part with cross picking. We practiced this for a while and then performed it on the Kekuli stage that evening at the Student Concert in front of everyone. It sounded really good and I even got to take a break. It was such a fun night.

Living in a Cabana for a week was so much fun. A couple of my roommates were the same from last year and it was great catching up and hanging out with them. One of my roommates were in my class, so we got to see a lot of each other. All my roommates were friendly people and great to pick with. It was so nice to come back to the dry Cabana at 4am and not have to sleep in a cold wet tent (Saturday night).

During the afternoons, there were workshops that you could attend. My favourite one was with John Reischman and David Benedict. They played some tunes and talked about how they learned, how they practiced, songs they wrote, improvising, and so much more. John talked about how he got his Gibson Loar mandolin and where he gets it worked on when it needs attention. David also talked about his Apitius mandolin. They both talked about their upbringings and the bluegrass scene.



That alone would have been a great week, but my favourite part was the jamming at night. In the evening there was usually a concert and dance that were well attended. After that it was jamming time! Most nights I got back to my Cabana between 3-4 in the morning. It was so much fun playing with different people and in different jams. After the festival concert on Saturday August 24th, there were some great jams. At 12am, it was my birthday and I turned 17. They made up a birthday song for me and made me play a split break tune. That meant that I had to play half of everyone's break. It sounds kind of nerdy, but it was so much fun!

My dad and brother came on the Friday for the festival weekend and it was wonderful to see them. I moved from my Cabana on Friday and slept in a tent in the orchard with them for 2 nights. Late Saturday night it started raining which meant we had to pack up a wet tent on Sunday morning. Needless to say we left pretty early.



Sunday was a day for driving and we were heading towards Creston, BC. It turned out to be a beautiful day and I got to drive through some beautiful mountain scenery. We ended up camping in Crawford Bay on Kootenay Lake. I thought that being in the interior would get me away from ferries, but we crossed 2 that day - at least they were free! The next day we woke up early and went to Michael Heiden's shop in

Creston, where he did some setup work and fine tuning on my mandolin. It's always so much fun spending time with Michael and watching him work on my mandolin. From Michael's shop I drove straight to the Tsawwassen Ferry terminal. Unfortunately we didn't make the last ferry and had to sleep in the car that night. It made me appreciate my bed even more when I got home the next day.



I would like to thank everyone at the Victoria Bluegrass Association for making this opportunity possible. If you haven't been to NimbleFingers before, I highly recommend it! It's not too many places where you can stand across from your bluegrass heroes and jam with them. It's a lot of fun and you learn so much in a relaxed atmosphere. I think one of the biggest highlights of the week for me was playing a set with Jenny Lester and friends to kick off the Saturday festival. Great musicians and even better people!

<https://youtu.be/nrvDI0Y5uXs>

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