

La Plata Trip

The connection between two sister cities from across the globe is one that celebrates their cultural and language differences yet still creates a strong bond between the two communities. Music also bridges groups of people together through its universal appeal as a language everyone can appreciate. While in La Plata, several students from the U of L School of Music were able to experience life in Argentina through their own eyes, and also see the common experiences their newfound Argentinean friends had on a day to day basis. The common language of music served as a useful way to make friends, interact with others, and provide a service to the people of La Plata by participating in the La Plata Jazz Festival. The students on the trip include a mix of graduate and undergraduate students as well the Director of the Jazz Studies program at U of L, Mike Tracy. The two grad students were Colin Lippy performing in the festival on piano and Jonathan Epley on guitar. The three undergraduates included Luke Barker (tenor saxophone), Jenna Mattingly (Bass), and Justin Heaverin (Drums.)

One of the great things about being in La Plata was the close-knit community of musicians that were a part of the local music school. The music school was the main contributor to the La Plata Jazz Festival that U of L students performed in and was a common meeting place throughout the time spent in La Plata when meeting up with other students or friends. The school held classes that the U of L students were able to participate in and observe to learn more about music education in South America. There was a special class on Brazilian music, for example, that introduced the students to new rhythmic and melodic concepts. Classes like these also allowed the students from U of L to have a classroom environment to interact with Argentinean students. There were also students who had come for all over South America to take classes at the music school in La Plata, giving the U of L students even more cultural diversity and a chance to hear the difference between many different styles of South American music.

The school also offered recording and music production classes. Several of the U of L students got to be recorded for some of the classes. This gave the recording students at the school a chance to work with good musicians from another country in a pro studio environment. They had to check all the

levels on the instruments and set up all the microphones properly in order to ensure an excellent recording. The U of L students got the chance in return to be recorded in a high quality studio environment and get a free recording of themselves in the process. This was a win-win situation and is a classic example of how the U of L students got excellent opportunities to play their instruments, learn new elements of the music industry/ recording process, and help out the South American students all at the same time.

With the technological advances we have seen over the past few years, it is now possible to truly keep in contact with friends from so far away as well. The students traded email addresses and instant messenger screen names with several friends made in Argentina, and have made contact them since coming back to the states. This would have been virtually impossible ten or fifteen years ago. Trips like this can make a lasting impression on U of L students as well as the people who get to know these students during the trip.

The food, as in many foreign countries, was different from normal American cuisine. The people of Argentina are very proud of their cattle and the meat dishes that they came up with use every bit of the cow you can imagine! Pictured here is an incredible steak Colin had with complimentary egg on top.



The food was tasty overall and did not take a whole lot of acclimating time. Meats were very popular but there were also many vegetable choices as well.

The Jazz festival itself was full of electrifying energy and the crowd was hungry for good music. There were local acts as well as artists from all around North and South America and Europe that performed in the festival. While backstage waiting to perform, the U of L students were able to “hang” with the other performers and learn about the experiences of professional musicians from all around the world. Jonathan got the chance to jam with several other guitarists from other groups backstage before the students gave their performance.



Justin also got to take a lesson with one of the drummers from another group performing at the festival, a rare and appreciated opportunity. With so many high quality musicians in a concentrated area, it was hard not to be excited and ready to see what all these talented groups would bring to the table musically.

The last but certainly not the least of the incredible experiences from this trip was simply being around, soaking up, and embracing a new culture. On one of the last days on the trip, the students were able to take a bus into Buenos Aires and take in the metropolitan life of Argentina. La Plata was much like Louisville in that it has some small town atmosphere in a large city. Buenos Aires was much like New York City or Los Angeles. There was no mistaking it for anything less than a metropolitan giant! It would take several weeks to explore all Buenos Aires has to offer, so the students were a bit daunted with

what to do there in just one day. Simply the chance to see such a large city in a foreign country, however, is an experience unto itself and will not be forgotten.

The La Plata trip was a major success for both the students of U of L as well as the people of La Plata. The Festival was a major success, giving the students ample performing opportunities and exposure. The music school was a great learning environment for students and provided a safe haven to hang out and meet new people. The city itself was warm and inviting, and the people of Louisville should be proud to be sister cities with such an excellent community and cultural center.



(Pictured outside the festival auditorium from left to right: Jenna, Justin, Luke, Jonathan, and Colin)