

Ryan Packard

My winter term was spent studying timpani and contemporary percussion literature at the University of Victoria in British Columbia. I worked closely with Bill Linwood who has been the principal timpanist for the Victoria Symphony since 1982. He is also the artistic director and principal conductor of the Aventa New Music Ensemble, the première Canadian new music group that specializes in commissioning and performing avant-garde and contemporary music. Mr. Linwood currently is professor of percussion studies at the University of Victoria so I had access to the school's facilities and meeting his current students.

One of my goals this winter term was to be exposed to the life of a professional musician and get a taste of a career I am aspiring to. I was lucky enough to be housed by Mr. Linwood, and I am quite grateful for his hospitality. My living situation turned out to be a tremendous advantage since I was able to see the Victoria Symphony often and could immediately discuss the repertoire, his mallet choices, particular musical phrasing and nuances I heard, and specific timpani strokes with Mr. Linwood after the concerts.

I spent the majority of my time at the University of Victoria having lessons on timpani and percussion. My timpani lessons consisted of preparing for auditions, performing and executing specific repertoire and excerpts in a variety of different ways and techniques, discussing specific musical problems I may encounter on the job, and what is expected from a timpanist from a conductor's perception. Since he

is also an avid performer and conductor of new music, we worked on contemporary solo and chamber pieces for percussion.

I learned invaluable information on how a professional new music ensemble can survive in our financially unstable times. Everything from proper grant writing, concert programming, and financial planning were vital aspects of my studies at Victoria. I can apply this practical knowledge to my own future endeavors and grant applications.

My month concluded with a percussion ensemble concert with two other students from the University of Victoria. We were allotted two weeks to put together a concert, which is normal amount of time, if not plenty in the professional world. We performed works by Iannis Xenakis, Werner Heider, Kevin Volans, and Rolf Wallin. I found great satisfaction in working fast and diligently, and studying with a fantastic performer and teacher. I definitely recommend taking advantage of other academic environments and learn as much as you can from an active professional in your field.