



Summer in London
with students from
James Madison University
2025
REPORT



ACTIVITY SUMMARY

- 6 students from James Madison University in Virginia spent the month of June 2025 in London, volunteering with a variety of arts organisations.
- 4 students spent the month with a single organisation; 2 split their time between two different organisations.
- Host organisations: Ealing Music Service, Tri-borough Music Hub, Music Masters, Opera Holland Park, CoMA, Rambert School of Dance, and Courtauld Gallery.
- Students spent between 10 and 13 days volunteering with their respective organisations in total; averaging around 20 hours volunteering per week.
- Activities included cataloguing music collections, helping plan events and performances (including at the Royal Albert Hall), assisting with school outreach projects and workshops, collecting evaluations and surveys, assisting with marketing and promotion, supervising auditions, digital cataloguing, and project management.
- Creative Futures placed students with organisations, and led an induction session upon arrival, and a debrief session at the conclusion of the program.
- All 6 students were housed at Paddington Citi View student accommodation.
- Students took part in a variety of whole group, smaller group, and individual excursions and trips including to the Tower of London, Leeds Castle, Canterbury, many galleries and museums, and Paris.

Reflections: from the Host Organisations

Host survey feedback:

- “To what extent did the project meet expectations?”: average score **8.9/10**
- “Students conducted themselves in a professional, appropriate and courteous manner”: **9.7/10**
- “The JMU student(s) volunteering with us engaged well with the team and associated activities”: **9/10**
- Would your organisation take part again? **100% Yes**

On the most-part, 3 days (c.20 hours) per week was felt to be the right duration. Some larger organisations could have accommodated students for longer, for smaller organisations fewer hours often works best.

“E. was a delight to have around. She was punctual, reliable, worked hard, was open to learning and asked brilliant questions.” (host feedback on student volunteer)

“B. was extremely adaptable” (host feedback)

Recommendations for 2026:

- Having the placement confirmed earlier in the year, for more planning time;
- Clearer objectives from the student in advance so that the host can plan appropriate tasks and activities which align the organisation’s core mission;
- Being aware of any relevant gaps in knowledge/skills (e.g. basic office IT programs).

Reflections: from the students

Volunteering experience:

- I was in an environment to develop my professional skills with a hardworking team... I got to witness a healthy work environment of a small team that was passionate for the work they were doing.
- **This experience helped me develop many skills that will be so useful in the professional world.**
- This experience really enlightened me about all of the work that goes into running a non profit.
- I was exposed to the operational structure of a gallery, including copyright, legality, and user accessibility.
- The main skills I learned were adaptability, flexibility, and communication: all transferable to other professional jobs.
- This experience opened my eyes to the world of community arts and arts administration
- Being in this setting developed my experience as an art history student to think critically. This experience was transformative.

Personal development:

- Living in another country for a month I had to develop a sense of independence
- **I was constantly learning and growing** not just as a musician but as a person; now I'm not afraid of taking on big projects.

London & Cultural experience:

- I was grateful to have access to so many free museums, historical sites, beautiful parks and gardens, and an international food scene in such a vibrant city. As a musician, I came away with a lot of inspiration and energy from attending many concerts and shows.
- **London was the perfect setting to participate in this program.**
- I loved this program and would 100% do it again. I already miss London and can not wait to go back.
- **London is an amazing city. I felt personally rejuvenated** by experiencing its cultural, historical, artistic, and musical offerings.
- London is a great place to see theatre and dance at an affordable rate.

