

It Was a True Honor to Host the Women of the Mountains Conference

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To be a part of the student organizing committee for the Fourth International Women of the Mountains conference (WOMC) was a wonderful opportunity for me in order to learn something new and exciting. This summer I started a new job that was close to Utah Valley University (UVU) and when I heard that the conference was being held within a couple of months, I headed over to the office of the organizing committee to see if I could volunteer and help out a *little* bit (emphasis on the little). I really didn't think that I would have much time to help out before the conference.

As soon as I stepped into the offices though, I was asked to coordinate all the cultural events for the conference. Deann Torsak (the executive secretary) gave me the information about the couple events already planned, and I thought "Okay, I can do this. It'll just be a few calls and emails, right?" Wrong. What ensued over the next 6 weeks were dozens of emails, calls, text messages, numerous visits back to the office of the organizing committee of the WOMC, and hours of coordinating the performers and events.



Mary Foote, 19th century artist and novelist



***Dr. Kim Abunuara, and Dr. Nancy Rushfort, UVU
Professors during play***

The first day of the conference dawned bright and early (a little too early in my opinion) and I quickly realized that while the hours of preparation were worth the effort, we had a long way to go. I was thrilled and at the same time scared to death that first cultural event on Tuesday evening: a play written by Dr. Nancy Rushforth from UVU, which celebrated achievements of Mary Foote, well-known 19th century artist and novelist. Mary Forte described life in early Western mining towns in the United States. The performance consisted of excerpts from Foote's letters, accompanied by a narrative explanation of the sequence of events and was performed by Dr. Nancy Rushforth and her colleague Dr. Kim Abunuara, Associate Professor from UVU.



***Christina and Nate Keller, members of the Kellers family music group,
perform during the conference***

One of the first things I learned on the job was that being flexible was a requirement. A couple of times during the conference we had to make last minute changes to the performances, or changes in venues, and what amazed me each and every time was the performers themselves. For example, the Keller siblings, Nate and Christina, who performed during lunch on October 7, 2015 were two of the nicest and most understanding people. We asked them to change how long they would play for and they immediately said yes. The Kellers regularly contribute to the activities of the WOMCs, and had previously recorded several music numbers as part of the UVU video greetings to the participants of the landmark United

Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Brazil in June 2012 (Rio+20). (see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bmKj46hRhqM>). Similarly, the UVU “Cultural Envoy” dance group was asked to move to a different stage less than half an hour before performing, and they not only worked with us, but we’re happy to make the last minute changes.

Each and every time I thought I was going to fall apart and let down my fellow committee members, they were immediately there for me. They were ready to help answer questions I didn’t know, and more importantly, help me to solve problems and the little issues that came up.

Organizing the cultural events required a significant amount of logistical work, and problems naturally came up, such as how to get a piano to the top floor of the classroom building for the Gruppman International Music Institute (GIMI) demonstration? I was almost ready to tell them that we couldn’t make it happen, when Tony Medina, Vice President for Logistics and Protocol of the WOMC organizing committee had the brilliant idea of using an electric keyboard. This demonstration was especially important as it was not only the musical performance during dinner on Thursday, but showed how Igor and Vesna Gruppman, two world-known and extraordinary musicians used on-line technologies, like Skype to teach play music kids in Provo, UT from Rotterdam, Netherlands, where both of them currently live and work. The Gruppman’s work with students all over the world because of their unique teaching technique, was an important contribution to the conference agenda.



Vesna Gruppman teaches student play violin during Skype session

It would have been difficult to say the least, to have been able to pull off the cultural events without the teamwork of other committee members. Never having had so much responsibility in planning a conference or event, I was terrified going into it. I thought for sure I couldn’t be trusted with that of the conference. I have never been more relieved to discover that not only could I be trusted with the responsibility, but I loved the experience. It was so much fun to be a part of the student organizing committee of the conference. Being one of 6 girls in my family, the Fourth International Women of the Mountains conference hits home. I want every woman to be raised with the same message that I was: I can do or be

anything! Regardless of sex or race! This conference promotes that ideal and so much more and I am honored to have been a part of it.

Molly Hone, UVU Student