

My name is David Cruz and I am writing to share my experience of working with JPEC (Jazz Performance & Education Center) and Raymond Koskie.

I am a young, critically acclaimed Canadian jazz guitarist. I hold a BFA in music from York University and I am currently in the last year of my MMus Degree at McGill. I have been performing periodically for JPEC since around 2013 when I was first hired to perform in the lobby of the Toronto Center for The Arts ahead of concerts by some of the top jazz musicians in the country. Since that time, I have been fortunate enough to perform for JPEC in a handful of other settings, mostly playing for their dinner jazz series at Diwan restaurant. These gigs gave myself and a rotating cast of young musicians a paid environment to play music that I believe is incredibly valuable. Jazz nights at Diwan have always been an immense success in my experience with them. The audience is always appreciative and the musicians are always happy to play.

I was also fortunate enough to get to perform in JPEC's "Stars and Rising Stars" of Jazz Concert Series. I got to play a sold-out concert alongside Lorne Lofsky (one of Canada's greatest guitarists, most known for his work with Oscar Peterson) and the incredible bassist Artie Roth.

The experience of playing that concert was a highlight of my professional career as a musician. Ray and JPEC provided a setting for young musicians like myself to perform alongside their heroes and mentors: the older and more established jazz musicians. That evening is one I will remember for the rest of my life. It is also a significant resume booster. When it comes time to applying for festivals, grants or gigs at other venues, my experience and association with musicians like Lorne and Artie lends credibility to me and what I do.

I cannot possibly overstate the value that JPEC and Raymond Koskie provide to the Toronto music community. Their organization actively seeks to bridge gaps where they exist and provide opportunities for musicians and audience members to come together in celebration of the great artform of jazz. The opportunities created by JPEC and Raymond Koskie today are investments in the future of music in this country. JPEC works with the "who's who" of musicians from young students to established pros. The collaboration of all these people fosters a spirit of community and the passing on of musical knowledge that will benefit generations of musicians to come.

Again, I cannot overstate the value of the work that Raymond Koskie and JPEC are doing. If you need anything further from me I can be reached at:

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Thank you!

David Cruz (BFA, MMus Candidate)