Alumni Highlight: Gabrielle Garo, flute

How did you become involved with Apple Hill?
I became involved with Apple Hill while I was in the Music Advancement Program at Juilliard. My former teacher, Gretchen Pusch, made me aware of the camp, when I was around the age of 14. Being new to the camp, Gretchen assured me that it would be an outlet to take my music and playing abilities to the next level; that it would be an exciting opportunity for me to receive professional instruction, while finding the joy of attending a summer camp.

Apple Hill was all of that and more, for me.

What are you doing now? What is it like?
Currently, I am an Academy Assistant at Jazz at Lincoln Center and a graduate of The New School for Jazz & Contemporary Music (‘19). I will be receiving my Master’s Degree in Arts Management & Entrepreneurship this May (‘20). In the midst of my college studies, I’ve been blessed to be featured in the multi-Grammy-nominated Bobby Sanabria Multiverse Big Band, where we’ve been nominated for a Grammy for our Westside Story Reimagined album. I opened the GRAMMY Awards last month with Grammy-winner Lizzo; presented with Ricky Martin at the Latin GRAMMY Awards as an ambassador of the foundation; and had the honor of going on tour in Europe with the Grammy-winning Christian McBride Big Band. In addition, I am fortunate to film for TV, where I’ve worked with Spike Lee for Season 2 of “She’s Gotta Have It,” Sandra Bookman for WABC-TV, CBS, etc. Being awarded as the Brooklyn Jazz Hall of Fame’s Deacon Leroy Applin Young Lioness, I’m grateful to work with prominent musicians/artists, perform, share my experiences and knowledge as a music teacher, compose, arrange, and much more. In terms of the future, I am also further developing an organization that is very dear to me and will serve as a free artistic outlet for individuals.

When I remind myself of these events, I always acknowledge them as blessings. Music is a beautiful art form, and it is a great feeling to give back—whether it’s through a private lesson that I am teaching, the notes I play on stage/in a recording, or the music that I create. I am more than grateful for my experiences—for the individuals, music programs and entities like Apple Hill, that have shared their time, knowledge, and efforts with me.

How has what you learned at Apple Hill helped you in what you do now?
Apple Hill has helped enhance my areas of discipline, diligence, teamwork, and leadership. Apple Hill is a beautifully diverse and welcoming center that serves as living proof that you can encounter teachers who genuinely care about your development as a musician and person overall, as well as teachers who aim to work on your existing skills and expose you to new ones, while embracing your current abilities.
Apple Hill played a role in my exposure, my general outlook, and my love for music, during my most easily influenced years as a young creative, thus strengthening my foundation and guiding me to the path that I am on now.

Can you tell us about one of your favorite Apple Hill memories? Although I attended Apple Hill about 8 years ago, I remember the center being a highlight in my musical journey. Apple Hill has genuinely been one of my favorite camps, to this day, which makes it a little hard to share just one memory. Nonetheless, I remember meeting individuals from all around the world, who later became my friends. My small group instruction/rehearsals in the morning and the afternoon. The battles we had at the ping pong table! The camp discussions/activities we would have right after lunch—going around the circle to share a fun fact about ourselves, etc. The free time we had amongst all of the center’s spacious land, and our camp bonfire, making s’mores. Of course that was more than one memory. However, these are a few of many, for me.