

GPFS Member Feature



Meet Adam Eccleston

Written by GPFS Member [Abigail Sperling](#)

If you have not heard of local flutist and GPFS member Adam Eccleston (perhaps you've been distracted by current events?) you've been missing out! The international flutist and avid arts education supporter moved to Portland five years ago and has quickly become a fixture in the area.

A recommended book?

- Tomi Adeyemi, *Children of Virtue and Vengeance* (sequel to *Children of Blood and Bone*)
- Michael W. Twitty, *The Cooking Gene*

A recommended flute composition?

- Chaminade!
- Anything by Julio Racine
- David Baker for cool, fun, jazz-inspired music

A recommended musician or recording?

- Yumiko Sakuma, especially on her Beethoven recordings
- Sonara Slokum; especially her new album (Return)

Who is an inspirational visual artist/artwork for you?

- Yolanda Gampp, baker extraordinaire and cake designer
- La'Meeka Edwards, baker extraordinaire and cake designer

Adam Eccleston's love of music originated from his family's passion for music from their home countries of Panama and the Caribbean Islands. Originally from New York City, Adam moved to Germany with his family at the age of nine. The list of world-renown teachers with whom he has studied is impressive to say the least: Eric Lamb, co-principal flutist of The International Contemporary Ensemble; Thaddeus Watson, piccolo player of the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra at the Frankfurt Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst; Sir James Galway in Switzerland; William Bennett in England; and of course with Paula Robison at the New England Conservatory, where Adam received his Master of Music degree. Add to that Dr. Tara Helen O'Connor, Marco Granados, Amy Porter, Leone Buyse and Jim Walker, and you have some of our most treasured teachers!

In the years before he moved to the west coast, he had a career as a soloist with several orchestras around the United States and Europe. He is former principal flutist of The Eastern Festival Symphony Orchestra and the Boston-based chamber orchestra, Discovery Ensemble, which focuses on bringing classical music to inner city schools throughout Boston.

When you see Adam around Portland these days, it could be in any number of places. You might catch him at All Classical Portland where he is the 2020 [Artist-in-Residence](#). He might be at Portland State giving a masterclass, or working (from home at the moment) in his job as Program Director of [Bravo Youth Orchestras](#). Haven't heard about Bravo? Bravo is a school music program inspired by El Sistema with the goal of improving the lives of underserved children through intensive orchestral instruction in Portland. Currently at [five](#) Portland schools, Bravo offers both school-time music classes and an afterschool full youth orchestra.

What's your version of paying it back?

You forget how many people help you along the way. I think it is so important that we sit back and think and remember, a lot of people helped us along the way. For me growing up, part of my family is immigrant, they emigrated here to start a new life. That gives me inspiration to give back to people who have given to me. I've always loved playing the flute, even today, 20 years later, I love it! I absolutely love it. What I'm noticing is that there's not enough positive reinforcement going around, especially in low income areas. There's not a lot of positive role models today that are doing something clean, so for me I've always made it a point of be that role model. When I think about some of my role models, they're all white. In the flute world, they were all white. So having that representation is so important. So for me, giving back is so people can see that they can do it. Giving back to my community, my roots are immigrants, slaves, non-English-speakers, farmers, Native American, those are my roots! It's unfortunate that there's been so much inequity over the generations that there's only a handful of us who come out of those environments.

There is no question Adam is a dedicated supporter of arts education, and despite the pandemic, he is busy! "I've been busier now than I have been before this whole thing happened, which is crazy!" With several colleagues, he is working to build an institute for El Sistema inspired programs across the country. The goal is to help young teaching artists in these programs (who are usually fresh out of graduate school) in whatever area they need it: diversity, differentiability of students with learning disabilities, Individualized Education Programs for those who need it, especially with instruments, teaching philosophy, and more. As Adam points out, conservatory graduates enter the job market with a certain mindset, with ideas that are sometimes mismatched with the programs for which they work. His institute launched just a few weeks ago, and over three days nominated participants focused on Organizational Philosophy, Racial Equality, and Effective Assessments.

As if that was not enough, he is also teaming up with colleagues across the country to start a flute festival for black flute players. At the moment, still in the development phase, they're looking to get it started next summer. Like so many things these days, it's going to start virtual but with Adam, Valerie Coleman and UO Professor Jackie Cordova-Arrington on the planning committee it will almost certainly be successful at connecting BIPOC flutists from around the country.

As for inspiration, Adam doesn't have to look further than his students. "The students want to learn. They want to know what you know. Just talking about my life, as this black kid, growing up in Germany, they want to know about that [...] When you see them grow – I'm now in my sixth year working at Bravo, and our first kids are now going into their sophomore year in high school – to see the amount of creativity and leadership qualities that I know that we've instilled in them has been remarkable. That lets me know that I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing."

A lot of what Adam is doing these days is a balancing act between his flute and performance related opportunities and his Bravo work (not to mention those projects that he has on the go!) It is definitely not for the faint-hearted! Keeping up the chops, working a job, and busily planning ground-breaking and inspirational events for flutists, students, and teachers across the country, keep your eyes (and ears) peeled for more of what Adam is bringing to the Portland scene, especially as a member of the GPFS!

Links to Recordings

[Adam Eccleston YouTube](#)

A personal favorite of this writer is his recording of Valerie Coleman's [Fanmi Imèn](#).



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