



## Musician Profile – Flutist and GPFS Member Brian Fairbanks

By BJ Nicoletti

Brian is a flutist, flute/music educator, church musician/choir director and the new principal flutist for the [Sunnyside Symphony Orchestra](#). He is new to Portland from Seattle six years ago. Be sure to read on to page two to hear about some of his favorite music – there may be a piece or two you have not heard about!

*Brian, tell us a little bit about yourself and your life as a musician.*



I am originally from Seattle, where my mother still maintains a piano studio of about twenty students. She is good with beginners and young students. I wish I were as good at teaching basic skills. But, as a teacher, I do well with both young musicians, say middle and high school, and adults who are not necessarily looking for a career, but play because they love the flute.

I've always played and sang. I was a member of the Northwest Boy Choir, and I played, along with my sisters, in the Seattle Youth Symphony program. One of my older sisters has a degree in flute performance!

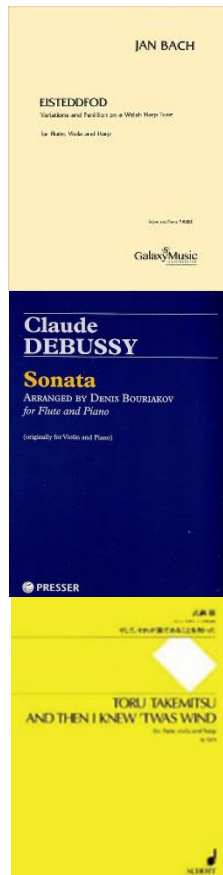
(Although she uses her communications degree more.) I have historically earned my living as a church musician, including a fifteen-year stint as Associate Musician at St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral in Seattle, where I directed upwards of five choirs.

*What projects are you involved with now that particularly excite you?*

I love playing chamber music, even more than orchestral music, although I love that, too. For the past decade or so I've played with a violist and harpist I met at the cathedral in Seattle - we call ourselves the [Cathedral Trio \(Naomi Kato on harp, Brian Fairbanks on flute, and Joyce Ramée on viola\)](#). We've had a great time working our way through the repertoire for flute, viola

and harp. We went on hiatus during the pandemic and will be preparing one final concert for this next fall of our favorites. Our harpist is retiring from public performance. The concerts will be in Seattle and Tacoma, late October, early November.

***What's on your music stand these days? What music have you played recently that you'd like to share with GPFS members?***



My all-time favorite piece for flute, viola and harp has to be Jan Bach's *Eisteddfod* (as much as I love Debussy's *Sonata*, or Takemitsu's *And then I knew 'twas Wind*). It's a set of variations on a traditional Welsh theme that doesn't appear until the final variation, but once it appears, one is practically in tears, it is so beautiful! Really creative writing, with extensive cadenzas for all three players. Also, get to know the music of Jiro Censhu, a composer from Japan. He's written two pieces for us, and they are stunning!

**Right now, I'm preparing a recital of music for flute and organ. It will be at St. Michael & All Angels in Hollywood, Saturday, May 20.** While at the cathedral in Seattle, I played several of these, but haven't since I moved to Portland six years ago. It is fun revisiting some old favorites. I really like Dan Locklair's *Church Sonata*. And a collection of pieces from Augsburg Press called, *Pipings*. It's a great mix of pieces by contemporary composers, including several excellent pieces by women. A favorite of mine from that collection is *Whirlwind Duo*, by Lynn Peterson.



*Pipings* is a collection of eight new compositions for flute and organ. These diverse compositions by an array of talented composers are equally at home in a liturgical setting as they are in the concert hall. A CD of a recital performance of these pieces by Professor Teresa Bowers of Gettysburg College is included.

### *What kind of flute do you play?*



I play on a wooden flute by North Carolina flute maker [Christopher Abell](#). I made the switch from silver about 12-15 years ago. I was first gifted with a wooden, simple system, 19th Century French flute. It's made of both grenadilla and box wood. The sound was so mellow and intriguing, I decided to do some research on wooden flutes. Finally, I went to an NFA convention and tried out several different manufacturers. Christopher Abell's flutes were just so easy to play, with a rich, warm sound. There are two things I love most about playing on wood. First, chamber music is much easier - playing either with strings or other woodwinds, intonation and blend are much easier when everyone's playing instruments made with organic materials. And second, the high register on a wooden flute doesn't have the stridency one sometimes gets on silver. Of course, that's why orchestral flutists often play on gold. But wood is cheaper than gold - ha!



### *What else would you like to share about yourself?*

I am also the Choir Director at St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church in the Hollywood neighborhood. We have three choirs there, for all ages and abilities. I have a part-time day job at Kitchen Kaboodle - rent needs to be paid. **[My studio is open for new students!](#)**

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