

Musician Profile: Flutist & Teacher Mindi Calabrese

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Tell us a little bit about yourself and your life as a musician.

I moved to the Eugene/Springfield area almost 25 years ago, as a new doctoral student in flute performance. Luck was, however, not on my side back then. I developed an overuse injury at school and was forced to retire my flute for almost 10 years. I would pull it out occasionally, but always was racked with pain after about 20 minutes.

In 2009, I was hired as the bookkeeper for the Eugene-Springfield Youth Orchestra, and spending time around all those musicians made me realize how much I missed the music world. I focused on learning to be super relaxed whenever I played my flute (something I now always encourage my students to do!!),

and finally managed to be able to play without pain.

Since that time, I have played in several large groups in the Eugene area, including the Eugene Symphonic Band and the Riverside Chamber Symphony. I also perform in pit orchestra whenever I get the opportunity. Playing *Les Miserables* down in Cottage Grove was one of my all-time favorite performances.

I am also an active chamber musician. I currently play in a wind quintet, the Sweet Winds. I have also been part of two regular flute duos, performing around the area.

It always amazes me how much my students teach me about music and myself every single day.

My favorite part of being a flutist, though, is teaching. I currently have 12 students, over half of which are adults. Several of them are members of the Westwinds Flute Choir here in Eugene, and

others enjoy playing in various amateur groups around town. My younger students often find their way into the Youth Symphony, and I even have a few that enjoy playing some jazz. It always amazes me how much my students teach me about music and myself every single day.

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

I am writing a book!

After attending a few national flute conventions with amateur friends, it came to my attention that everyone is encouraged to “build up your flute technique” by purchasing the “17 Daily Exercises” by Taffanel/Gaubert.

However, after about a month or two of playing exercise #1 or #2, most people get bored, and the book ends up on the bottom of the pile. They never are able to utilize it in the way it was intended, and thus, are never able to become a more well-rounded flutist.

When I was studying with Louise DiTullio in 2015, she asked me the simple question: “Have you played all of your Taffanel/Gaubert?” Of course, as a flutist with a master’s degree, the answer was “yes”then I really went home and thought about it. I may have done all of the exercises, but did I actually know them?

So, I decided to make sure that I DID know them. Over the next 3 years, I developed a system to progress through, and regularly review, the entire book. I was amazed at how much better my overall playing improved. My sightreading was better, and almost everything about my skill as a flutist leveled up to a point that I am far better now than I was even as a graduate student in college.

And I want to share with everyone how to do it!

I have completed two chapters, so there is still quite a long road to travel until its completion, but I am determined to stick with it, and get it published. I know that amateur flutists need a variety of approaches to improving their skills, and not everyone has access to a private instructor. I’m hoping that my book will make it possible for flutists to utilize the “17 Daily Exercises” to create their own exercise routines and enable them to gain technical skills that they may not otherwise be able to obtain on their own.

What’s on your music stand these days?

The popular new book on shelves at this summer’s NFA convention was the “Flute Music by Female Composers.” I am exploring the piece “Variations” by Leopoldine Blahetka as well as Mel Bonis’ “Piece.” Amanda Harberg’s “Feathers and Wax” is also in the works. Then, I always have

some jazz pieces to wrap things up, and I am working through Fernando Brandao's "Brazilian and AfroCuban Jazz Conception."

What music have you played recently, or recordings have you listened to that you'd like to share with GPFS members?

Most of my recent performances have been with large ensembles, but my wind quintet recently found an excellent version of "Scheherazade," arranged by Jonathan Russell, which has been loads of fun to explore. We also have "Lincolnshire Posy," arranged by Philip Wharton, in the works.

Who is your favorite flutist these days?

I have been a big fan of Jasmine Choi for many years. I enjoy her wide range of repertoire, and beautiful sound.

Why are you a member of GPFS?

I have been a private flute teacher in the Eugene/Springfield area for almost 15 years. The annual Portland Flute Fair is an event that allows me to bring my students along, and for them to try new flutes, take classes, and hear some spectacular musicians - all packed into a single day.

What kind of flute(s) do you play?

I play a Muramatsu professional flute with a Burkart head joint.

Don't ever give up on your flute playing. We are all on the same path - to become better musicians, while enjoying the whole process, step by step. I have never heard anyone say "I'm so sorry that I kept studying music."

Favorite book you've read or movie you've seen lately? Or, what do you like to do when you are not making music?

My favorite activity outside of music is taekwondo. I have been studying for almost six years and, at my next test, I will be earning my 1st degree black belt.

What else would you like to share with GPFS members?

Don't ever give up on your flute playing. We are all on the same path - to become better musicians, while enjoying the whole process, step by step. I have never heard anyone say "I'm so sorry that I kept studying music." There are so many joys and successes that music brings into our lives. I'm so proud of the fact that I get to help others realize their dreams of becoming better musicians.

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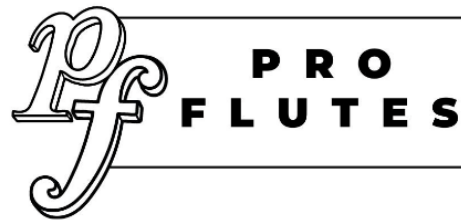
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“Music is the universal language of mankind.”
— Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

“Music can change the world.” — Ludwig van
Beethoven

“For me, there is something primitively
soothing about this music, and it went straight
to my nervous system, making me feel ten
feet tall.” — Eric Clapton

“Music is the divine way to tell beautiful,
poetic things to the heart.” — Pablo Casals

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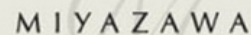
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“Music enhances the education of our children by helping them to make connections and broadening the depth with which they think and feel. If we are to hope for a society of culturally literate people, music must be a vital part of our children’s education.”

Yo-Yo Ma

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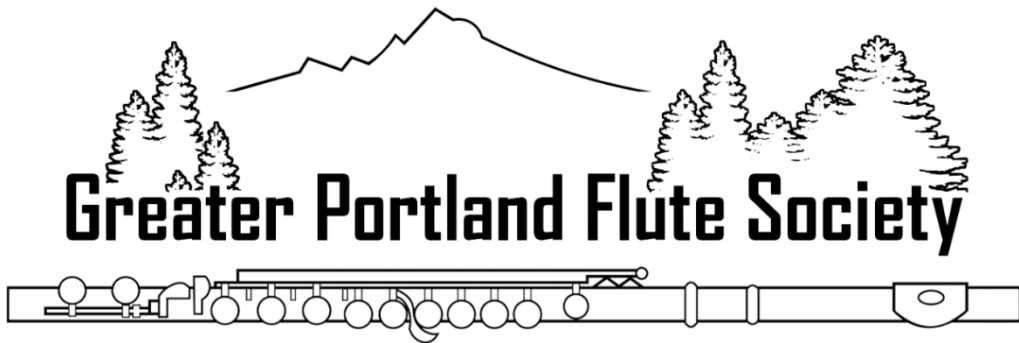
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