



Our Players' Voice

From the Musicians of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic April 2021

Valued Supporters,

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for supporting the musicians of the Philharmonic during this challenging time. With you standing with us, our cause is strengthened significantly. Arts and music are essential parts of what make us human, and a strong core of full-time professional musicians not only makes for a great orchestra, but also contributes significantly to the well-being of our community.

What can you do to help? If you haven't already, please sign up on our website at www.fwpmusicians.com to receive future issues of our newsletter. This will also allow us to contact you about performances and opportunities to assist us in our cause. Thank you again for your support.

Campbell MacDonald
Principal Clarinet, Fort Wayne Philharmonic
Chair, Fort Wayne Philharmonic Players' Association

Mark your calendar!

May Day Rally to Restore Music
Saturday, May 1st, 1:00 pm
Location: Allen County Court House Green
Speaker: Ray Hair, International President of AFM
Music by Brass Quintet and more!

For more upcoming events and our music videos:
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Perspective

by Dessie Arnold

Our Fort Wayne Philharmonic is in danger of becoming a ghost of its former self. The Philharmonic Board and Management are continuing to offer the Musicians of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic a contract which will reduce the orchestra's activities significantly.

In a professional orchestra like the Phil, the contracted musicians develop a musical rapport from working with the same group of people over the years. If contracted positions are eliminated, that rapport will be lost. The orchestra essentially becomes a revolving door orchestra, with the seats being filled by free-lance musicians who don't live here. This damages the quality of the orchestra, even though the Phil Management and Board say the audiences won't notice a difference.

I was a contracted part-time member of the Phil from 1984 -2016. Over that period of time, the orchestra grew in quality and in consistency. In the beginning of my tenure, there was fairly high turnover in the principal positions (the first-chair players of each section), as members auditioned for and were hired by orchestras that paid better. These

colleagues went on to the San Diego Symphony, Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Detroit Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony, Baltimore Symphony and the National Symphony - and others

As my tenure went on, and the musical quality of the Philharmonic got better and better, fewer and fewer of my colleagues left for greener pastures, choosing to stay in Fort Wayne, a community that they had grown to love, and decided to raise their families in. These musicians also have other musical work in the community - teaching privately - passing along their musical heritage to children and adults in the area - playing in chamber groups for private social events such as weddings and receptions, and being involved in other musical groups in the area (churches, and universities) - as performers and conductors.

We do not want many if not all of the current players to be forced to leave the area or find other (non-musical) work. The community will feel the loss of these talented individuals. I continue to hope that a GOOD resolution to this will be worked out, and that we will have our orchestra back, but this has been a dark season of discouragement with no guarantees.
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Meet Vivianne Belanger

Our orchestra's Second Flute player

Interviewed by Dessie Arnold

When I was a child, my aunt played the flute and I thought it was fun and definitely shiny! As soon as I was old enough I started taking lessons. In high school my only goal was to be a flute player. I really liked flute music and solo repertoire. I discovered my love for orchestral music once I got into my bachelor degree. The first piece I got to play principal on was Beethoven's 6th Symphony and I fell in love.

My favorite way to listen to music is live concerts. Experiencing the music at the same time as the performers create it is what I love the most.

The best part of performing for me is being in the flow of a piece and enjoying the sound that is surrounding me. There are moments when you perform that you forget who you are, where you are and you are just being one with the piece, like the music flows through you. It happens in orchestra, solo or chamber music and it is always magical.

For inspiration, recently I've turned to Instagram. I have been thinking a lot about what being a musician means to me. What inspires me are these musicians who focus on the process of making great music and telling a story. It inspires me to go back to the basics, and find the love for my instrument again. There are great flutists, musicians and artists out there that I am learning from. For a time in my life I was so focused on the *result* of playing (audition, job, competition) that I lost what it meant to be doing what we do; the past year or so I have been focusing on finding the love for music again.

You asked me how often do I work on music that I want to play as opposed to what is on the next Phil concert? Before last year it was mostly over the summers when I would have time to play music that I wanted to play – to try to learn new repertoire for recitals. Currently, with no orchestra concerts to prepare for, I have been working on the 20th-21st century flute repertoire and focusing on the extended techniques on the flute. It has given me a lot of joy. I am hoping that I can continue to play more repertoire

for myself in the future by putting on concerts at PFW where I teach even if we get back to work as an orchestra.

Music is definitely more than a job for musicians. It is a lifestyle. It is in our heads and in our thoughts every day if we practice, rehearse, or not. Musicians are like athletes. To be in top shape, we have to be consistent, train, learn new techniques and repertoire, and maintain our sound.

We sacrifice to prioritize our art before anything else. We live and breathe music, which is a job itself, and one that keeps going even when there are no concerts. Furthermore, playing together regularly as an ensemble feeds our souls.

Sometimes it is not easy to keep going. We must do all of the things above; however, a lot gets in the way such as other employment to stay financially afloat and taking care of families. I wake up to chase my toddler, and I teach in the evening once my husband takes over the duty. I love teaching, but more importantly it supplements our income as the orchestra's salary (even when there is one) is not sufficient. I devote myself to practice while our child is napping or in bed at night.

Music is part of us, and this is why we are fighting to keep our orchestra alive as it is now. We hope to see it grow in the future--not diminish and disappear. Without our orchestra paying us adequately, it is difficult to maintain ourselves at the very high standard where we need to be in order to perform all the music that feeds our souls but also feeds the souls of our audiences.



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I hope that members of the greater Fort Wayne area who love the orchestra will do what they can to encourage the Philharmonic Management and Board to find a better way to go forward - one that does not involve reducing the core of the orchestra.

Dessie Arnold was a Philharmonic violinist from 1984 until 2016. She has been a vital member of our community including volunteering with EB Feline Rehoming.