

NFA 2012: Creative Careers for Flutists

Panel summary and contact information

Jan Boland: *Red Cedar Chamber Music in Eastern Iowa*

My career has been shaped by chamber music. What does a career in chamber music require? Persistence, relationship-building, persistence, creative solutions to obstacles, and persistence. Get on the "chamber music bus" and no matter where it goes, "don't get off the bus." For the first part of my career, I followed the typical independent artist path – balancing 5 part-time jobs in performance and teaching, determined that at the end of the year they would amount to a full-time income. About 15 years ago, I co founded Red Cedar Chamber Music – a not-for-profit arts organization designed to serve Eastern Iowa with quality chamber music while, at the same time, providing a living wage for its core ensemble (my guitar partner and myself). I serve as flutist and Executive Director – and play 80-100 concerts each season. Our venues are the concert hall, libraries, rural communities, schools and senior residential facilities. The beautiful part of this model is that I (with my guitarist partner) design the programs (3 annually) – the repertoire, the schedule, the composers we commission, and the artists with whom we work are our choices. The down side is, it is a lot of hard work. Non-musical skills required include fundraising, marketing, bookkeeping, database management, artist management, music arranging, board development, web-design, lots of people skills, and more – some I enjoy a great deal, and other parts, not so much. At the end of the day, I like what I am doing – playing lots of concerts, making an artistic impact on the people in my region and beyond. I'm happy to talk to you.

Check out Red Cedar Chamber Music online at www.redcedar.org

On Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/RedCedarMusic>

Reach me at jan@redcedar.org / 319-213-7337

Stephanie Pedretti: *freelance teacher/performer in Chicago, IL*

Currently the main component of my career is teaching, although I am also active as a performer. As I was going through undergraduate and graduate school, I thought of myself more as a performer than a teacher - my major was "flute performance" after all! In spite of that, I was lucky enough to have had some teaching opportunities, and after graduating, somehow ended up with more students of all ages and levels than I knew what to do with. I became intrigued with the art of teaching and discovered that it was something I really enjoyed. It helped me to analyze my own playing and learn at the same time as I was teaching others. As I sought for creative ways to engage the youngest students in my studio, I discovered the Suzuki method and began taking teacher training courses. When I decided that I wanted to live in Chicago and see what kind of musical life I could build for myself there, it was this combination of teaching experience and Suzuki training that opened doors for me. The first step was casting a wide net -- I sent out letters and resumes to every community music school and college in the Chicago area that I could find. Out of approximately 40-50 letters, I received six responses -- one very positive letter from a college that had no current opening, and five offers for interview/auditions at community music schools. I started off in Chicago that fall teaching at three community music schools.

Over time I became involved in the Chicago Flute Club (a great way to meet other flutists), and reached out to colleagues of different instruments to create opportunities to perform – the beauty of this has been choosing our

own repertoire and the challenging part is seeking out the venues to perform in. I've found a good balance and enjoy the musical life that I'm still in the process of developing. Please feel free to contact me:

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Chris Potter: *low flutes specialist in Boulder, CO*

My love of the sound of low flutes started with the first Atlanta convention - 1976 I think it was. I had played a straight tube alto as an undergraduate, but the twist of the right wrist was too uncomfortable. When I discovered they could be made with a curved head as well, I started saving my pennies. In 1983 I was able to purchase an alto, and now almost 30 years later, there is an NFA Low Flutes Committee of which I am chair. I have performed at many NFA conventions and all over the U.S. and in England and France as an alto and bass flute soloist. I have commissioned and premiered many wonderful pieces and met many interesting people. Along the way, I have had several books published and been the guest artist with many flute associations, including the British Flute Society. I started an Alto and Bass Flute Retreat that just completed its 8th year. People contact me from all over the world for advice about altos and basses. If you would like some advice regarding low flutes, please contact me at

cpotter@altoflute.net

Nicole Riner: *national freelance teacher/performer*

I followed a very typical educational path, going all the way through to my doctorate, all degrees in flute performance, without ever taking a moment to stop and think about my goals. As I neared completion of my doctorate, my husband, also a musician, won "The Golden Job" (full-time, tenure-track) at a small school in the Rocky Mountains. There was not much freelance teaching to be had in our new town, and despite doing everything I had done in the Midwest to develop a studio, I had very few, irregular flute students coming to my house. I finished my doctorate while remodeling our old Bungalow; I started to get occasional sub work with local part-time orchestras, but it wasn't very fulfilling work, nor did it fill up my days. I taught adjunct at a local college and did not feel like I fit in; I cared about playing and teaching, but not about the politics or the committee meetings that seemed to fill the full-timers' schedules. I was fortunate enough to win a new adjunct position at University of Wyoming, 90 miles northwest of my house in Colorado, where I have spent six blissful years doing nothing but making chamber music with great colleagues and teaching motivated students, but it is still only part-time work, and the weeks are long.

So, in my early 30s, I finally figured out what it was I wanted to do: I wanted to perform in addition to teaching advanced students, and I also wanted to resume my love of writing, which I had shelved in college in order to be the best flutist I could be. I did not feel like this is quite what I was groomed to do in graduate school, so I began to work piecemeal to create opportunities to practice my crafts. I began to seek performances elsewhere, calling old contacts scattered across the Midwest and Pacific Northwest to see if someone would have me out for a recital. To my great surprise, people often said yes, sometimes with offers of money to cover my travel expenses and beyond. Slowly, I have built very satisfying relationships with other college flute teachers and freelance performers from across the country and have pieced together whole tours in which I actually get paid to give recitals and master classes. In 2010 I released a CD with a colleague from UW which has further fueled invitations to perform. Contact

with contemporary composers through my school's new music festival has led to commissions and world premieres, and I am currently in the throes of my first commission with one such composer from our festival. I am a teacher and performer, but I am also a business manager, a talent agent, grant-writer, and a well-seasoned traveler who can cite most major airlines' baggage fees. I have also reached out of my isolated area to create a national network of flutists with a collaborative website called The Pedagogy Project. On the side, I have published a book about my travels and maintain a blog. By never winning that tenure-track job, I spend the time my colleagues are in meetings and sitting on committees doing things I care about: teaching, playing, writing, and dreaming of the Next Big Project. Contact me at

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Ruth Ann Ritchie: *Astraios in Dallas area, Texas*

After I finished grad school in Australia and moved back to the States, I started the usual round of orchestra auditions. I was teaching a studio of about 55 students, but I wanted to play. I made finals in my third audition, but knew that I wasn't cut out to practice Daphnis for the rest of my life. The teaching was a good income, but I needed a better artistic outlet. My friends from school were facing the same questions—they were finished with grad school, but the economy was shaky and orchestras everywhere were facing cuts.

As a teenager, I'd given many informal concerts where people would ask questions and want to look at my music, or touch the buttons on my flute. Now in my 20s, I began to realize that there was a huge need for this kind of concert. There are many people out there who think classical music is something on a pedestal that can't be reached without a secretive induction ceremony, and that asking questions is unacceptable. So in 2007, I founded Astraios, a network of chamber musicians working to remove barriers between audiences and performers. We provide various forms of interaction for the audiences in our concerts—clapping exercises to understand the rhythmic drive, voting for which instrument sounds better with a melody line, even dramatic readings of poems. We always provide lots of time to meet the musicians and ask all the questions you'd like. We also run a monthly blog profiling our different musicians and giving updates on our rehearsal progress. We hold our performances to the highest level, but we want to show that classical music is not terrifying. I know that classical music is worth saving, and this is what we're doing to help.

Astraios now runs a summer chamber concert series in Colorado and is a frequent performer on Colorado Public Radio. We also just received the go-ahead to start a fall-spring concert series in Dallas, Texas; are working with local directors to help gather interest in the school band and orchestra programs; and are raising money for our first commissioning project. Please contact me if you'd like to know more!

<https://www.facebook.com/AstraiosMusic>

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