

YOUR LETTERS OF SUPPORT

by Diane Dickson

It is with deep gratitude the Musicians of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic thank you, our supporters, for signing our letter of support. The letter writing campaign, which garnered over 1350 signatures and over 450 additional comments, was presented to the management and Board of Directors during our contract negotiations in May. There can be little doubt that your strong support was instrumental in bringing the negotiations to a swift and successful conclusion. The new agreement expires in August of next year, so we will soon be back at the negotiating table. The value that the community places on having a fine orchestra in its midst will be central in deciding the future direction of the Philharmonic.

We heard from audience members, donors, educators, students, musicians and business people about how much you love and value the orchestra. You spoke eloquently about the management and Board's treatment of the musicians. You expressed concern about abandoning the legacy of growth and artistic excellence of the orchestra, and how its value to the community would be diminished. We appreciate the passion that was expressed by so many! Here are a few examples of what you had to say:

On the treatment of the musicians:

"The talented musicians of the orchestra provide artistic and social vitality to Fort Wayne and have earned the respect and gratitude of the community. As human beings, some raising families, they deserve the best the city and region can provide, not the least you can force them to accept."

"Your contract proposals are an insult not only to the talented, dedicated professional musicians of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic, but also to the thousands of supporters of the orchestra in the city and area. We urge you to reconsider your negotiating stance."

"Shame on you, management and board, for not valuing the professional and well-trained musicians of OUR community!! Shame on you for not seeing the



Players' Association in Concert!

Music on the Plaza

Main Library Plaza, Downtown Fort Wayne

Wednesday, July 14 at 12:00 p.m.

Wednesday, August 11 at 12:00 p.m.

value of human assets that bring cultural diversity to OUR community!! Shame on you for damaging an orchestra that is supported by OUR community!! "

On artistic excellence:

"The Phil is the backbone of Fort Wayne. Any effort to diminish it through cuts in pay and benefits to the wonderful musicians imperils this beautiful orchestra. Please stop trying to nickel and dime the excellence that has always existed at the Phil. I attend year after year because the wonderful concerts remind me of what is possible in life. Beauty is never reached by half-hearted methods or a primarily cost saving attitude. If you continue down this path of cost cutting, you will lose your best musicians."

On honoring the orchestra's legacy:

"The culture and entertainment assets of a city are a major part of what sets it apart from other cities, and what draws people to visit and live in that city. A Board of Directors should be committed to maintaining that asset. Previous boards have made that commitment and passed on that legacy to you. You accepted that legacy. Please don't lose your sense of commitment to the orchestra and to your community. Support your orchestra! Defend it! Fight for it! Follow the right course of action, the necessary one to carry on that legacy, the one you will be proud of. Don't take the easy way out. Don't let your orchestra and your community down."

On the orchestra's importance to community development:

"For many years employers in Fort Wayne have utilized the Philharmonic as a hiring tool to attract talented employees to Fort Wayne. Many prospective and desirable employees considered the presence of the Philharmonic as a valuable advantage when making a decision to accept a job in Fort Wayne. The Philharmonic enriches the quality of life and well-being of the community."

"In the last few years, we've seen several magazine articles highlighting Fort Wayne as either a great place to visit or a great place to live. The Philharmonic is nearly always cited as a significant part of our arts and culture scene. That recognition wouldn't continue with

the stripped-down, rent-a-body orchestra you are proposing."

On the Philharmonic's response to the pandemic:

"The behavior of the board is stunningly tone deaf. How is it possible that other regional orchestras like Toledo have managed to work with their artists yet such an established and well-endowed orchestra like FW is acting like the worst sort of strike breaker."

On the musicians as educators:

"In so many ways, the musicians of the Phil have supported my children to grow as musicians and as human beings. Please treat them well. Our community needs them!"

"Please stand up for the invaluable qualities that the Fort Wayne Philharmonic musicians offer to the city of Fort Wayne. I would not have dedicated my life to a career in music were it not for the experiences I had growing up and being mentored by the world-class musicians of the Phil who have also dedicated their livelihoods to the same cause. Please uphold the values of this cultural institution that is unmatched by anything else the city of Fort Wayne has to offer."



Philharmonic horn player Michael Galbraith (above), Musicians and audience at Promenade Park (left and below). Photographed by Bryan Gibson.



LUKE FITZPATRICK

Interviewed by Dessie Arnold

In this issue Luke Fitzpatrick, our Principal Flute player is our interviewee. I will let him tell his story:

When it came time to choose an instrument in the 5th grade, the flute was not my first choice. I wanted to play the trumpet, but that was

quickly vetoed by my Dad, mainly because we did not own a trumpet. We did, however, have a flute lying around, that my Dad had purchased in New York City. He had messed around on it from time to time, but wasn't a serious musician. It was a student model Gemeinhardt flute, which was perfect for me to start on. I had several different phases when I was really young; eventually, when we got to flute, something about my brain felt uniquely wired for music, and everything about it just clicked.

When I was in the 8th grade, I heard a recording on the internet of Mikhail Glinka's *Overture to Russlan and Ludmilla*, and was transfixed. I had never heard an orchestra sound like that, and from that point on, I HAD to play in an orchestra. My experience in ensembles growing up provided a sense of belonging; I loved making music with others, and experiencing that deeply human connection with the music community became addicting.

I can play the main members of the flute family (C flute, piccolo, alto

flute, bass flute), and I actually took a semester of voice lessons during the pandemic, and discovered that I am a tenor! Woodwind playing shares many similarities to singing, as we both use the breath to create sound. Studying voice, therefore is incredibly beneficial to flute playing. As you learn about the body, and specifically how to use the body to create the most warm, resonant sound possible, there are



Luke and Anne Lewellen, our Principal Harpist, perform *Londonderry Air*. Watch the clip on the Musicians' Facebook page: [Musicians of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic - Londonderry Air | Facebook](#)

many points of crossover to the flute, so that was a very enlightening experience. During the pandemic I also dabbled a little bit more in guitar and piano. I deeply regret quitting piano as a kid, and wish I had continued with it.

Listening to music is a huge part of the learning process as a musician, and I never want to stop learning. It also is so important to listen to art that others are creating to stay inspired, motivated, and filled with new perspectives on making music. I have a subscription to the Berlin Philharmonic's Digital Concert Hall, which is essentially classical music Netflix. Lately I've been listening to a production of Richard Strauss' opera *Elektra*, which I performed in with the Chicago Lyric Opera back in 2019 – it was recently released onto streaming

services, so it's been a thrill to relive some of those memories.

I've always been uniquely drawn to Russian music, and so I love listening to Shostakovich, Tchaikovsky, and Prokofiev. In terms of performing, I love performing Brahms and Beethoven because of the incredibly interesting flute parts, and the challenge they present.

No matter how experienced you become, Beethoven is ALWAYS hard.

I love so many different kinds of music, including movie soundtracks, hip hop, pop, gospel, and Indie. Since I am in a field where there are often no words written for a piece, I love hearing other artists who sing, and how they are able to balance lyricism with melody, poetry with rhythm.

Best part of performing?

I love the experience of being forced out of my comfort zone. I believe the greatest moments of growth and learning actually happen outside of our comfort zones, when you have one chance to get it right, and there are no do-overs. I also love connecting with our audiences, and getting to be people's "escape" from their everyday lives into the magical world of classical music.

Performing with small ensembles, chamber orchestra, or the full orchestra?

I love it all. In fact, I think maintaining variety in one's career is key to longevity. I also love performing concerti and various pieces for flute & orchestra, because the amount of preparation and dedication to such concerts is astronomically higher than normal,

which creates an even deeper connection to and understanding of the music than normal.

What advice would you give a student who might be contemplating a career playing in an orchestra?

There are a lot of ways to answer this question, but in my view, the two most important things in pursuing a career in music are your private teacher and your work ethic. Having a private teacher who both encourages you and tells you the truth is vital. However, no matter how incredible your private teacher is, he or she cannot wave a magic wand and turn you into a superstar classical musician. You have to do the work. You have to apply the principles and ideas they are sharing with you. Ultimately, your work ethic matters much more than what school you go to.

What inspires you?

As a flutist, I consider the practice room an almost sacred space. It is truly a laboratory, where experimentation occurs, sometimes with seemingly life changing results! Learning inspires me; problem solving inspires me; having the same problem for weeks, but not giving up, and breaking through a seemingly iron wall; that inspires me. I like to call those my “Red Sea moments.” The process of learning is endlessly inspiring, because it is a process that never ends; there is no ceiling on learning and growth as an artist.

I tend to divide my practice into 2 major chunks. The first chunk is where I focus on fundamentals; tone production, technique, articulation, intervals, and things like that. The next major chunk is

for repertoire: pieces I’m learning for recitals as well as orchestral excerpts for auditions and Bach. A personal rule of mine is that I play at least some Bach every day.

How did the pandemic year affect you as a musician?

For me, inspiration didn’t really hit until January of 2021. During 2020, I had several moments of investigating other careers, and honestly assessing whether or not it was viable for me to continue in music. Eventually I decided beyond a shadow of a doubt that I am meant to do music, and so that was settled.



Luke and Philharmonic 2nd Flutist Vivianne Belanger at the Barr Street Farmers Market on June 5, 2021. Photographed by Deb Welter.

Beginning in January, I used this new year as an opportunity to work on everything that mentally was put on the back burner before the pandemic. With no concerts eating up my time, I was given a potentially once in a lifetime opportunity to fix weaknesses in my playing that I always knew were there, but didn’t have the time or energy to do the necessary “deep dive” into fixing. I built my playing from the ground up, allowing myself the luxury of moving as slowly through things as I needed to, because for once I

truly was not in a rush. This process has yielded results I probably would have never achieved had there been no pandemic, so at least for that, I am grateful.

What is it like to “have a musical soul”- to have music be what gets you up in the morning and keeps you going?

Music is rarely if ever background noise for me. It is the main attraction; if I’m watching a movie, I’m thinking about the soundtrack I’m hearing as the movie goes along. If I’m studying something, putting on music is probably not a good idea for me,

as I would never be able to focus. If I’m getting a massage, Mozart string quartets definitely won’t put me to sleep. It is something I am constantly noticing and enjoying. And I hope it always stays that way.