

SOLOIST SPOTLIGHT March 6, 2022

GABE ONG, Oboe (Senior at Olympia H.S.)

Tell us the story of who or what inspired you to explore music?

My first introduction to music was with piano lessons which I started when I was about six years old. I started piano lessons primarily because my parents wanted me to, but also because my older brothers took piano lessons and I've always followed in their footsteps. The person that really got me to love music was my third piano teacher, Brooke Beecher. Before taking lessons with her, piano/music seemed like a chore, but after I started lessons with her, I was introduced to a lot of cool repertoire and I started to really love music. She retired a couple years ago, but her impact on my musical outlook will always be with me.

What is your story on how you ended up playing the instrument you play today?

One day in seventh grade, my band teacher, Mr. Holder, showed us a couple videos about two uncommonly played instruments: the oboe and the French horn. He was trying to get at least a couple of us to switch to either of these instruments.

How long have you been in SOGO and what inspired you to become a member?

I've been in SOGO since the fall of 2018. I joined because my oboe teacher, Karen Gheorghiu, brought it up at a lesson and encouraged me to try it out. It seemed like a good opportunity to learn cool repertoire and to expand my musical horizons (I had never played in an orchestra before). Soon enough, I sat in during a rehearsal, auditioned, and joined.

What were your initial thoughts when Mr. May asked you to be a soloist with the Conservatory Orchestra?

I was pretty excited to hear I'd be playing with Ryan. I've played alongside an orchestra as a pianist, which I really enjoyed, but never as an oboist.

Tell us what you enjoy most about your solo?

The Vivaldi Concerto is a concerto for oboe and bassoon, which means I get to play with another person which is always fun. With that being said, the concerto has a lot of nice oboe moments that I'm looking forward to playing.

Tell us what is most challenging about your solo?

The concerto overall is pretty straightforward. I'd say the only things that I'd have to pay special attention to are the other moving parts, like the orchestra and the bassoon.

RYAN KAPSANDY, Bassoon (Senior at Olympia H.S.)

I can't exactly remember what inspired me to join and continue with music. It feels like I've been doing music for my whole life, moving from piano in early elementary school, to choir, to orchestra, to band, then branching out from there to SOGO, private lessons, marching band, and jazz band. I think I must have gotten hooked and started to want more and more from there.

I went on a journey through cello in fourth-grade orchestra, flute, clarinet, and bass clarinet, to finally land on bassoon at the end of seventh grade. I auditioned for the Academy Orchestra in SOGO on bass clarinet and was told that I should consider switching to bassoon due to the lack of bass clarinet parts in orchestral music. I'd been seeing bassoon content online for a few months prior and thought that bassoon was super cool, so I was excited to try it out and it was probably the best decision I made all throughout middle school.

I've been in SOGO for about 7 years and I remember the things Mr. Allison had said about SOGO and why we should join, but I never really considered joining until I went to a concert in sixth grade. I played bass clarinet at the time, and I recall thinking "SOGO needs a bass clarinet player," so I went and auditioned for the Debut Orchestra.

My first thoughts when being told that I was going to have a duet on stage were mostly excitement. I love sharing what I can do with music with people and letting people know that I can play an instrument that is so special in my eyes and that maybe other people will think it's as special someday as well. Along with the nerves that follow me to every concert, I think I'm really going to enjoy performing for everyone.

I enjoy playing parts that were written specifically for bassoon, with knowledge of the bassoon and its strengths. Some of the 16th note runs in the first movement of the concerto capture the versatility of the bassoon and really lets it shine through. Bassoon can be smooth and lyrical, but it can also be one of the most bouncy and punctual instruments in the orchestra, which movements I and III take advantage of.

What has been becoming the most challenging aspect of playing and performing a piece of music, especially those that have a part that stands out in the orchestra's sound, is making the music sound easy. There could be the most awkward fingering, the fastest run in Cb major, or the sharpest note sustained, but it's the hard work on the smallest details that makes these things sound simple, like the easiest Hot Cross Buns you've ever played.

How will you prepare to solo on stage at the Washington Center on March 6? Or, what will you be thinking just before you play the first note of your solo on March 6?

My main concern will probably be my reed. Since I don't come in on the first measure, I have to make sure that my reed doesn't dry out as the orchestra is playing. Aside from my reed, I'll be counting to make sure I come in at the right time. I wouldn't want to mess up an entrance.

I will most definitely be cracking jokes in my head, because that's my defense mechanism for times of stress. There was an assignment in my psychology class that talked about stress and how the way we view stressors can change the way they affect us. I think realizing I'm nervous or scared, then changing that into excitement in my mind will be important for the way I sound on stage.

The SOGO mission tag line is "Orchestrating Lifelong Participation in the Arts." How do you see yourself fulfilling the SOGO Mission in your future?

Music is a big part of my life, especially since I play two instruments, so I don't see myself giving music up anytime soon. I can't imagine what my life would be like without at least a piano. It's like a friend that I've had all my life; giving it up and/or forgetting about it just isn't an option. With that being said, I absolutely plan to continue being involved with music after I graduate and head off to college. I don't plan to major in music, but I've looked at lesson and ensemble opportunities at the schools I've applied to so that I can still be musically active.

I'm currently saving up money for my own bassoon to take to college, although I don't think I'll have enough for a bassoon before school starts in the fall, because surprise, surprise, they really aren't cheap. But I've grown to love difficult, modern/contemporary pieces written for wind band, so I'm ready to continue my adventure in wind band in college and beyond.

What piece of sage advice do you want to pass along to young aspiring musicians?

I think it's really important to know the repertoire. I think the biggest reason why I didn't like playing the piano was that I didn't like what I was playing. Granted, there are some mandatory things to do like scales and arpeggios and repertoire to play like Bach. But aside from that, I really began to enjoy playing the piano when I was playing music I liked. For example, I hated Mozart and Haydn sonatinas, so when I had to play them, I dreaded playing the piano. But when I got to play Chopin preludes and waltzes, I had a lot more fun. And now, I have so much fun playing Rachmaninoff, Debussy, and Beethoven (and still Chopin, of course). And in order to play music that you like, you have to know what you like, and that means you have to know the repertoire.

When you're nervous on stage (when, not if, because it will happen), just remember that all those people in the audience are there to see you. They know you've been putting in the work and as long as you relax and remember that too, it'll show through.



**Ryan Kapsandy,
Bassoon**

**Gabe Ong,
Oboe**