



Name: Jessica Laing

City/Town of Residence: Shorewood

Instrument: Flute and Piccolo

How long have you been with Concord? This is my second year with the CCO.

What is your earliest musical memory? My earliest musical memory is listening to and singing “We Sing” songs on my childhood tape player.

What got you interested in music, and what was your involvement growing up?

I initially became serious about music in eighth grade while living in my home state of Montana. I laugh about this now, but I recall listening to a CD of a classical flautist and deciding that it would be “easy” to imitate a professional. Something tells me that James Galway might disagree!

Helena, Montana was an incredible place to grow up, but living in a rural area meant that I lacked access to musical opportunities or professional private lessons. As a result, my first teachers were recordings of prominent flautists.

I finally moved to the Milwaukee area my sophomore year of high school and began taking serious private lessons. My private teacher encouraged me to join MYSO and UWAY, and with a lot of hard work I became a MYSO Chamber Flute Ensemble Concerto Competition winner and served as the Principal Flute of the prestigious Wisconsin All-State Orchestra my senior year.

I started college as a music education major at Arizona State University, though I ultimately changed majors and institutions and graduated with an elementary education degree from the University of Minnesota- Twin Cities. Several years and two babies later I returned to school. I earned a post-baccalaureate music minor from the University of Montana and fulfilled my dream of earning a music degree while setting a positive example for my children.

Why do you perform with Concord?

I perform with the CCO because I love coming together with other committed musicians in order to share our gifts with one another and our audience members.

I also value each of the ensembles I serve because it is incredibly easy to lose yourself in the needs of others, particularly in parenthood. Performing is my form of self-care. It ensures that I dedicate time to myself and invest in something I am passionate about.

What has been the high point of your involvement with Concord?

It has been an honor performing with and getting to know my CCO fellow musicians. I would say that the new friendships I have formed as a result of joining the ensemble are invaluable.

What do you do for a living?

My background is in teaching and elementary education, though I am currently staying at home with my children.

Tell us about your family?

I live with my fiancé, Matt, and my three children: Everett, 8; Nightingale, 6; and Marielle, 6 weeks. We share our home with two talking African grey parrots named Nami and Lulu who love to tell my children to eat their food and go to bed!



What are your hobbies besides practicing and playing?

I am also a visual artist and enjoy watercolor and acrylic painting.

What is your favorite recording?

My box set of Leonard Bernstein conducting Gustav Mahler's symphonies.

Who is your favorite composer? Richard Strauss

What is one thing most people don't know about you?

Ten years ago I was traveling the world as a flight attendant for Northwest Airlines.

What is your advice for kids who are interested in music?

Never forget the transformative power of music. You have the power to alter someone's course, be it your own or that of an audience member. It is impossible to predict with certainty the path you will take, just ensure that music be your constant companion on that journey.

Over the years I struggled to determine the role that music would play in my life. I oscillated from achieving great success to struggling with burnout and questioning whether or not I would ever play again. I had lost sight of what Bernstein called the "joy of music." Beginning students understand innately that playing should invite play, and I had unknowingly allowed that earliest lesson to dissipate over time.

I think it is important to develop a heightened awareness of the emotional nature of music as a student. Beyond skill and talent, it taps into the very core of your identity. This is why self-criticism can be so detrimental to the developing musician. Remember to maintain perspective. Committing yourself to this, or any art form can be simultaneously rewarding and challenging as you search for authenticity in your playing, ultimately mirroring that which you seek in life.