

Stephanie Traska



City of Residence: Port Washington

Instrument: clarinet

How long have you played with Concord? Seven years.

What is your earliest musical memory? When I was little my mother had my three siblings and I sing “Jesus Loves Me” into a tape recorder. I think she still has it somewhere.

What is your musical background? I was always playing, singing or helping some other kid with their music. We sang *Silent Night* in German for Christmas services. We formed a little band for church festivals and played the sunrise service for Easter. Piano lessons started in 1st or 2nd grade and continued into high school. High school musicals meant the pits. I never made it on stage but I did get to play the slinky clarinet solo in *Fiddler!* We lived close to my high school so I used to bike there for summer lessons. Eventually, as a junior or senior I helped out my band director and was giving a couple of kids summer lessons myself. I thought I was going to be some sort of science major in college but when I found out I could get a scholarship for music school, that’s all I needed to know. I earned a bachelor’s degree in Music Education and a masters in Clarinet Performance.

Why do you perform with Concord? I love to play! There have been rough days when I’ve thought about calling it in and not going to rehearsal but afterwards it turned out to be the thing that really made the day great. I think it’s important as a music teacher to keep playing and setting a good example for your band kids. Sometimes it’s hard to put in as much practice as the music deserves but I can’t imagine not playing. I’m very lucky to be able to work and play near Milwaukee. Lots of great music opportunities nearby.

What has been the high point of your involvement with Concord? As a music ed major, I played a lot of contemporary band pieces. Jamin picks some awesome orchestra pieces, so when we play something I heard during my childhood or a piece we studied in college theory class it’s like magic. I love it. I love the other players, too. I’ve learned just about as much from them and their stories as I have from the music.

What do you do for a living? Currently I teach 5th-8th grade band and a section of 8th grade reading at Bayside Middle School. Go Bulls!

Tell us about your family. Music is a family affair. Mom always tinkered with the piano and said she played trumpet for a year, dad played trombone and had to share his trombone with two brothers. He likes to tell the story about how, while one group was walking off stage, in the wings one brother would hand the trombone to another brother walking on stage. Mom made us all take piano lessons and we all had to try an instrument in grade school. At one point we had two trombones, a clarinet, a flute and an oboe in the house.

What are your hobbies besides practicing and playing? I love to read, cook and hang out with friends. And nap. Sleep is always good.

What is your favorite recording (any genre): Oh my, this is like asking which child is your favorite. There are so many, it depends on what mood I'm in at the time. Too many good things to listen to.

Who is your favorite composer? Erik Satie, so simple, so beautiful.

What is one thing most people don't know about you? I was on the Central Wisconsin Symphony set up crew in college and I had to pick up Roberta Flack from the airport for a performance in town.

What is your advice for kids who are interested in music? Play as much as you can while you are young. I also tell my band kids: get your homework done and be a good student so your teachers leave you alone and you can practice all you want in your free time.