



## **"On the Beat" with Patty Ritchie**

**Featuring Jeremy Baguyos**

**Jeremy Baguyos is one of our newest NEASTA members. His recent contribution to our Nebraska musical community was to coordinate the fantastic Edgar Meyer bass workshop, in May. Our NEASTA chapter's goal of promoting excellence in string education and performance is attainable with the verve of great musicians like Jeremy.**



### **What are your musical roots? (Schooling/teachers/previous jobs)**

I'm a product of the Shawnee Mission Public Schools in Overland Park, KS where I grew up. I was fortunate to be in a school district that valued string programs and the string teachers that were dedicated to the programs. My first real double bass teacher was Misha Krutz who has just recently retired from the Kansas City Symphony. I also studied with Charlie Hoag at University of Kansas for two years. Bruce Bransby, my primary bass teacher at Indiana University, took me to the next stage of my learning. He didn't just teach me how to play the bass on a competitive professional level; he imparted an ethos that I have most likely applied to many facets of my personal and professional life. Like many bass players my age at this career stage, I've played in more orchestras and played more concerts than I can keep track of. But my most memorable experiences were as a full-time member of the Orquesta Filarmonica de Gran Canaria and the core of the Shreveport Symphony, and performing with the myriad of groups that are featured at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC.

### **Why did you move to Nebraska? (Please tell us about your work at UNO and any other opportunities for yourself or your wife) (How long have you been here?) (Are there particular goals you have while you are here?)**

I was looking for an academic career in computer music/double bass that was located in a small or medium-sized town within short driving distance of my hometown of Kansas City. I was fortunate to find such a situation at UNO. The best thing about working for UNO is that they allow me to be an uninhibited creative spirit. For the first time in my

career, I feel like I can just be myself as a creative artist without feeling compelled to explain or even validate what I do. Also, my predecessors did such a great job in building the programs that I have taken over, that it was very easy for me to hit the ground running as soon as I arrived in 2007. I was able to start doing some high-impact projects right away. Omaha itself has a high level of musical discourse without the big-city pollution, traffic jams, and overpriced housing that my counterparts on the coasts have to endure every day. Omaha's technology infrastructure really got my attention, and the Peter Kiewit Institute's forward-looking agenda was aligned with my own plans to continue research in computer music. A lot of good things are happening here, but I also feel that the best is yet to come.

### **What fosters great string playing? composition?**

All my students, past and present, know that I am a stickler for fundamentals in terms of bass technique. Most flaws (musical, technical, or otherwise) that occur on the intermediate and advanced levels can usually be traced to an improperly developed facet of technique on the beginning levels. In my opinion, and I'm just as guilty of it, in a rush to get students ready for contests, recitals, and auditions, we sometimes allow a few shortcuts in developing technique. This problem is compounded by a penchant for bass players to get a late start on the bass and playing basses with awkward set-ups that compromise the formation of a proper technique. Eventually, shortcomings and shortcuts come back to haunt students and teachers at a later date. Getting weekly lessons AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE with a bass teacher that uses an established teaching method is probably the only way to realize a student's full potential. That goes

## Stringing Along

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hand-in-hand with getting a student access to a bass that will allow a proper technique to form and make the musical experience enjoyable for the student. Establishing a concept of pitch center and intonation with clear articulated tone while producing sufficient volume on a bass is what makes the playing the double bass an extraordinarily impressive feat. A student must be able to realize a pitch away from the instrument. They can't play it in tune if they can't hear it in tune. Then eventually, students must develop a corresponding muscle memory and motor skill in the hands that will implement what they should hear in their head. Also, having strength and flexibility or dexterity in the right hand is important to achieve the clear articulations that are necessary for 21st century bass playing. This is just one way of doing things and it reflects my own methods.

### **What could we do as string educators to foster a healthy attitude toward composition?**

String players are lucky. The canon of the standard repertory of Western Art Music after 1700 was written with orchestra as the primary performance force, and for violinists and cellists especially, the major composers wrote a lot of good music for string players. However, this does not mean that string players don't need to seek out new contemporary repertoire. It is the string performers that will discover the next icon of Western Art Music. If we don't seek them out, the next Bach or Beethoven or Brahms may never get discovered. Besides, isn't it more fun to be one of the first performers to play a work instead of being yet another performer doing the same work that's been done over and over again for the last two centuries with all of the hegemonic details of its traditions of interpretation?

### **What qualities do you value in great teachers? (Was there a particular teacher who inspired you? or perhaps an event?)**

It old news to established string teachers, but a string student thrives when they have two components working in tandem: an expert and inspiring string instructor and an environment (usually other string players, other performers on the same studio instrument, or a youth symphony or good school orchestra program) that provides a social outlet not just for peer socialization, but also for normalizing high standards of excellence. In

other words, good string playing happens when the work involved in achieving it is as normal and every day as brushing one's teeth, and when one of the attributes of group identity in the socialization process are high standards of string playing. Finally, a string student has to see and hear him or herself improving noticeably from month-to-month in order to have the necessary work ethic to become a good string player. Sure, we can just yell at students all day and every day and just tag them lazy when they underperform, but, really, most students will put in the effort, if they can see results from good practice habits. So to make a long story short, I like string teachers that can work and pace their curriculum so that students can see, hear, and feel results from their practice time. And I like string teachers that can create learning environments where a student can thrive. I don't have this completely figured out, yet. It's a model that I'm trying to emulate in my own studio at UNO, and I'm always trying to seek out models where the output of the studio are happy, successful string players.

### **What do you do to, in Steven Covey's words, "sharpen the saw"- to keep yourself mentally and creatively sharp?**

Playing solo recitals and chamber music concerts helps keep me on top of my game and keeps the passion and excitement that drew me to the music profession in the first place. It should not come as a surprise to anyone that I like to play very complicated works from the Computer Music/Electroacoustic literature. In addition, although this may sound masochistic, I like to take orchestra auditions. It's not that I'm looking for another job. Hardly. I'm very happy at UNO. But orchestra auditions are a competitive process, and I'm a competitive person. An audition offers an outlet for that competitiveness, so I don't needlessly bring my competitive nature into other facets of my personal and professional life where it is not necessary. I like to compete against my current musical state and improve on it with no-nonsense benchmarks that only an orchestra audition can give me. And auditions keep my humble, because auditions remind me that there are always a lot of good bass players out there, and there is absolutely no reason for me to get cocky about anything

