

Musician Spotlights, Issue 11
Walker Kermode, Bassoon

The 11th was International Bassoon Day, so we're celebrating our bassoonists all week! Next up, Walker Kermode!



Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

I was raised on the Island of Oahu in Hawaii where I spent lots of time in the ocean. My folks ran a mom and pop construction business. So I got to spend a lot of time in the wood shop too.

I went to the University of Puget Sound and majored in music. After college, I didn't know what I wanted to do, so I rode my bike from Tacoma, WA to Laguna Beach, CA, hoping the experience would give me inspiration and direction. I mostly just realized I really like to ride a bike.

Ended up moving to Ashland on a whim, meeting my beautiful wife to be, Karli, and becoming a public school music teacher for 17 years. After getting laid off due to budget cuts, Karli and I became real estate agents and are still doing that today.

What brought or inspired you to pursue bassoon? If you'd like to share one of your favorite pieces of music as well, I'd like to know!

I became inspired to play the bassoon when in sixth grade. The middle school band came to our elementary school and did their recruiting concert. When I saw some seventh grader demo that funny looking thing that looked sort of like a bazooka or something, I knew I had to give it a try! Hard to believe that was 40 years ago! I really love the Andante & Rondo Ongarese by Weber.

What do you enjoy most about being with the Rogue Valley Symphony?

What I love about being a part of the Rogue Valley Symphony is the rich and sometimes complex harmonies and variety of voices and timbres found in the symphonic ensemble. I also love being surrounded by the smart, hard working, witty people that make up our RVS and the sense of community and teamwork with them all. And Martin, who is a delightful conductor!

What do you do when you're not playing music i.e. what are your hobbies or interests?

When not playing music, I enjoy riding bikes, sailing, windsurfing and woodworking. I love camping with my wife, Karli and our dog, Makana.

Finally, one unusual fact, story, or tidbit about you or your instrument?

When I was in high school, I auditioned to play the Mozart Bassoon Concerto with the Honolulu Symphony. The piece had to be played by memory and I was doing great until I failed to remember...

I was completely disappointed, so I went for a hike. Suddenly a herd of cows and at least one bull came stomping out of the bushes. Startled, I climbed a tree just as a thunder storm broke loose overhead. I tried "mooing" at the cows, but that just made them curious and more emerged until the tree I'd retreated into was surrounded by bovines. I decided to try barking at them and that worked. They quickly trotted back into the bushes. My earlier disappointment was replaced by ludicrous laughter at the situation. Standing in a tree in the pouring rain, barking at cows.