

Artistic Director's Personal Story

We all know that growing up for any young person is a difficult journey. I spent most of my youth in San Diego, seemingly a paradise to anyone visiting, for sure. After all, no one could have any problems living in a place drenched in year-round sunlight with endless beaches, and no mosquitoes!

I came from a broken home at a time (the 70's) when that sort of thing was quite rare. In fact, I did not know of a single person who had divorced parents (Later, in my college years I would amuse my friends by joking about "My Three Dads", a take-off from the old TV show "My Three Sons"). Naturally, there was a lot of pain that I ended up suppressing. As a young boy I became very shy and withdrawn and really didn't have a way to express my emotions.

I studied some piano from my mother when I was a child and took up the clarinet in junior high, but it wasn't until high school that I discovered what saved my life – orchestras! Now I don't literally mean that orchestras saved me from death, but they did help fill the emptiness. I found a way to express my emotions by playing in an orchestra, and listening to orchestras helped heal my pain. My clarinet teacher in 10th grade was the principal clarinetist of the San Diego Symphony and also the conductor of the local youth orchestra. He appointed me 1st clarinet of the youth orchestra and I was suddenly thrust into this beautiful world that I never knew existed. The only way I could get my emotions out was through playing and listening to orchestra music. The music helped me cope and survive a horrible home front. For the first time ever I had confidence in myself and from the first moment I played in the orchestra I knew I wanted to do this my whole life.

The first major work I performed in the orchestra was Beethoven's 3rd symphony, and to this day that is my favorite piece. During the period of weeks that we rehearsed the symphony, I noticed in the local classical radio station program guide that there would be a live broadcast by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra of Beethoven's 3rd Symphony, so I decided to tape it. I listened to that recording literally every night for a year as I lay in bed. I continued playing in the youth orchestra for the next three years until college, where I majored in music. I also started attending live concerts at the San Diego Symphony, and I continued listening to live radio broadcasts of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra every Wednesday night. Listening to orchestras opened up a world of imagination and wonder to me and I often found solace listening to orchestra music in my bedroom, leaving the family turmoil behind.

Music became my escape; whereas many young people find drugs or violence I found music. I truly believe that my life was saved through orchestras. I loved them so much that I wanted to become a conductor, and that is what brought me to Minnesota. Now I want to share my passion for orchestras with everyone and provide opportunities for as many people as possible to either perform or listen to orchestra music – both activities played key roles in my life.

The following is an excerpt from something I wrote for this past June's Allegro Con Brio event, "The Magic of Music": "Music, as we all need to remind ourselves, does not consist of the notes written on a piece of paper. Only through the 'magic' of live performance in front of an audience do the notes come alive and create music. Yes, the listener plays a crucial role in this trifecta of composer, performer(s) and audience. The music is only created, or recreated, in live performance – each performance creates another magical experience that is unique and can never be repeated. It is lost forever. That is what makes the live art of music so magical – it is truly 'in the moment'! It can take on a life and a power of its own, transcending time and transforming lives." I invite you to support the magic of ALLEGRO's programs.