

Now that's *Amore!*

When I was entering first grade, my mom suggested that I take piano lessons. It wasn't anything that I'd ever thought about doing, but I decided to give it a try. After a little bit of discussion with different teachers at school as to whether I was too young to start learning piano, Mr. Eric Semler agreed to teach me. These piano lessons at a young age were the start of my love of music. Some of my fondest memories of that age are the times when my mom would sit at the piano with me and play some pieces, my favorite being "Send in the Clowns" from Sondheim's "A Little Night Music." I also especially loved it when Mom would get out her old flute and play a little for me. I loved the sound of the instrument, and also thought it was really cool that it was played "sideways."

When I got to fifth grade and could play in band, it came as no surprise that I chose flute, the instrument I really wanted to play. My parents bought me a flute and arranged lessons with my first flute teacher, Cassie Rosenberger at Swing City Music. Even though playing the flute seemed really difficult at first, with practice, help from Cassie, and encouragement from my parents, I soon got a lot better and was moved up from beginner band to concert band, where I really enjoyed the more challenging music and the chance to play with older kids who had been playing their instruments a little longer.

Soon I was in eighth grade and we got a new band director, who suggested that I look into the Lutheran Summer Music Academy and Festival. Thinking that it looked like something I would enjoy, I sent in an application and was accepted. Around the same time, my parents took me to a Saint Louis

Symphony Orchestra concert. It was in the same year as Mozart's 250th birthday, and the Symphony was doing an entire series of concerts centered on the music of Mozart. The Orchestra performed the *Requiem* at the concert we attended, and I was awestruck by the beauty of the music. The other thing that really struck me was that the musicians on stage were being paid to play, and that was their job. I had been thinking that someday I might like to teach music, but it had never occurred to me that you could play and perform for a living.

From that day forward, it has been my dream to become an orchestral flute player. My parents have always supported me in that goal and encouraged me to take every opportunity possible to go and play the flute and continue to learn more. That summer before freshman year, and for two summers afterward, they sent me to Lutheran Summer Music, which was held at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota, about seven hundred miles away. I realize now how much love and trust it took on my parents' part to send me, a recently graduated eighth grader, that far away for four weeks. At LSM I learned so much about flute playing and music and met amazing, inspiring people. Last summer, they agreed to send me to the Interlochen Arts Camp, which is longer and farther away. Throughout high school, they encouraged me to audition for different honor festivals, such as the All-District and All-State Orchestras.

It was entirely thanks to my parents that I got to study with Jennifer Nitchman, first section flute of the Saint Louis Symphony for a little over a year – the SLSO box office called to talk to us about tickets for the upcoming season, and my mom, being the chatty, friendly person that she is, ended up talking to

the box office salesperson, Al, about me. His son is a professional trumpeter, and he and Mom talked about different aspects of music, especially lessons, and gave her Jennifer's number. Dad called and talked to her about taking lessons, and soon I had a new flute teacher. Lessons now required a longer drive over to Saint Louis, and were also more expensive, but my parents were always willing to enable me to take lessons and take the time out of their days to drive me there. They remain supportive, throughout my studies with Jennifer and later with Mark Sparks, principal flute of the Saint Louis Symphony.

Another goal that my parents were very supportive of was my desire to get into the Saint Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra. I auditioned three times and it wasn't until the third time that I made it in. Even through the failed auditions, though, my parents remained supportive and encouraging. I remember Dad saying, after the second audition, "You know, even Michael Jordan got cut from his high school team." That lesson has really stuck with me: even if something doesn't work the first time, tenacity and hard work do eventually pay off.

The love and support of my family has made my dreams more believable and my goals more achievable. Without the love and support of my parents, I would not be pursuing my dream of becoming an orchestral flutist. Even from a very early age, their love of the arts and encouragement of my creativity has influenced me. Throughout the years, their love and support has taken so many different forms: driving me to lessons and rehearsals, visiting colleges with me, allowing and enabling me to go away in the summer for music camps, attending my various concerts and recitals, and encouraging me to keep going, even when

I felt like giving up. If it were not for them, I would not be taking the next step to continue my musical studies in college. All of their love, support, and encouragement...now that's *amore!*