

Mount Olivet School of Music - Winter 2010

Featured Teacher Interview – Jenny Hanson

Where were you born?

Eden Prairie, MN.

Where did you grow up?

Mostly Lake Crystal, MN

What was your earliest recollection of music?

My dad playing guitar for me as I fell asleep at night.

Was music important in your family?

Music was a huge part of my family gatherings. My dad's family are all singers, guitarists, essentially folk musicians, so every holiday my uncles would bring about 10 guitars and everybody would play and sing.

Who was the person who most encouraged you in your interest in music?

Both my parents were very encouraging, if I was interested in an instrument they would find a way to rent or buy one. There were 5 kids in my family and we all took lessons, some on multiple instruments. When I consider what a sacrifice that must have been for my parents, I feel so grateful.

Tell a story of an experience you had with learning to play your instrument or an experience in a private lesson setting.

I tell my flute students this story a lot. When I first decided to play the flute, we rented one from a music store and I took it home and tried to play it. For about 2 weeks I was so frustrated because I couldn't make any kind of sound. We took the flute back to the music store because I thought the flute was broken. The nice man at the music store suggested that I try again and maybe take some lessons. He was right, my flute worked fine, I just needed to learn how to use it. The moral is if you keep trying, and get the right guidance, you can do it.

What is your favorite thing about music?

More than anything I love playing music with other people. It is such a great and subtle way to communicate.

What is your favorite practice tip for your students?

Find tricky spots in your music, no matter how small, and repeat each spot about 5 times, noticing what is making the movement tricky. If you get really frustrated or bored, stop and try again the next day. This technique trains 1) listening 2) awareness and 3) muscle memory, all the things you need to improve on an instrument.

What are your goals today as a music professional or teacher?

I am learning the Alexander Technique, a method of building awareness in your body and mind. I hope to incorporate the Technique into my lessons, because so much of what I'm learning applies to everyone who makes music. I also plan on taking Suzuki flute training this summer.

Tell us anything else that might be fun and interesting to students and families.

After college I formed an all girl punk rock band called Eufio. I played guitar and bass, and I sang. This experience was life changing. I think getting away from the printed page and songwriting and improvising with other musicians expanded my idea of music and changed my outlook. I have my students improvise in their lessons, and no matter how much it scares some, they all grow to love the freedom of making up their own music on the spot.