

Meet the Orchestra

As a community orchestra, our members come from all walks of life, and have a wide variety of skills and interests. So that we can share this fascinating diversity with you, we've asked our members to tell a bit about themselves.

Benjamin Robison, violin. I am a Master-of-Music Graduate from the University of Utah. I studied violin performance under the tutelage of David H. Park, Assistant Concertmaster of the Utah Symphony. I received my BMU, summa cum laude, from the University of Utah. I have been a violin teacher for over 16 years and am a frequent community performer. Along with my post in the Salt Lake Symphony, I regularly perform solo and chamber recitals in the Salt Lake area, and I am a founding member of the City Creek Trio. I have performed under the batons of Joseph Silverstein, Kory Katseanes, Robert Baldwin, Barbara Scowcroft, Kurt Bestor, and Brady Allred. A notable performance included playing for a master class given by Gil Shaham.



When not performing solo recitals or with the Salt Lake Symphony, I like to spend time fishing in the Uinta Mountains with my wife Tysha and our two dogs.

Hear me play at <http://www.youtube.com/user/BenViolin>.



Megan R. Smith, violin. Thanks to my parents, I've been around music all my life. Both of them are musicians who exposed me and my siblings to great music at a very young age. I started taking violin lessons when I was 5, and later in school took up the French horn as well. I can attribute many of my best experiences to the ensembles I've participated in with both instruments. I've travelled to many states, Canada, and Europe with the groups I've played in and enjoyed every minute of it! I have been playing with the Salt Lake Symphony now for four years to continue sharing my love for music.

After graduating from Granite High School, I briefly attended Utah State University before transferring to the University of Utah on a music scholarship, participating in performing groups on both violin and French horn. My skills with the French horn transferred to the football field, where I played mellophone in the Utah Marching Band for 4 years. When the Winter Olympics came to town in 2002, I was lucky enough to participate in the opening and closing ceremonies as a member of the Official Olympic Band. We also spent two weeks travelling around to all the venues to entertain the crowds. I then took a break to serve a mission for the LDS Church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. I finally graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree with an emphasis on Music so I could work for the financial world. (Who says music degrees aren't practical?) I have worked as a teller and a loan officer, but I'm excited to be starting a new position in the IT department at the bank where I work.

I have many interests, hobbies, and obsessions. I love outdoor activities like hiking, camping, and mountain biking. I enjoy going to concerts, plays, operas and musicals, and I also frequent the movie theaters. I have a passion for travel and have lately fantasized about visiting India to either learn the sitar, or to act in a Bollywood movie. If I can't do that, I will be happy if I can just go for a short visit. I love anything sci-fi or fantasy and have been known to obsess over the X-Files, Star Wars, Star Trek, and any show with Nathan Fillion. I will continue to enjoy the wonderful single life until my Han Solo comes to sweep me off my feet.



Charlotte Bell, oboe/English horn. I don't remember for sure, but I probably heard my first music before I was born. My mother had a lovely mezzo soprano voice and my dad sang baritone. Both were passionate about music, and they shared their love of music with my two sisters and me. We all grew up going to Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra concerts, playing piano, learning woodwind instruments and joining my parents at the Cincinnati Zoo for Cincinnati Opera dress rehearsals in the summer time.

For my ninth birthday, my parents surprised me with an oboe. I didn't actually know what an oboe was at the time, but soon found out when my dad taught me the fundamentals. A year later, I began taking lessons from Ferdinand Prior, the Cincinnati Symphony's English horn player, who was a passionate social activist and all-around gentleman. I studied with Mr. Prior for nine years, and played in the Cincinnati Youth Symphony in junior and senior high. Being in the midst of an orchestra playing incredible music carried me away, and still does.

At Indiana University I studied music sporadically, but my true major was the "college experience." Not having yet developed my practical side, I graduated with a degree in Italian language and a minor in fine art.

After college I took a 10-year hiatus from playing music and focused instead on listening to all kinds of music, including 40 Grateful Dead concerts. In 1983, I discovered the Telluride Bluegrass Festival. I became involved in the festival not only as a listener, but as a photographer and writer. 2012 will be my 30th year at the festival. The musicians I've heard over the years at Telluride, especially Jerry Douglas, Béla Fleck, Tim O'Brien, Chris Thile, Sam Bush and Edgar Meyer, have inspired me not only with their exquisite musicianship, but with their ability to step into any musical situation and play just the right thing. These musicians inspire and inform my playing in non-classical groups such as Red Rock Rondo.

In 1982 I discovered yoga and immediately fell in love with it. I began teaching in 1986 and was certified by B.K.S. Iyengar in 1989 after studying with him in India. I've practiced insight meditation since 1986 and have attended many silent meditation retreats for up to 30 days at a time. I teach yoga and meditation in Salt Lake. I currently write a monthly column for *Catalyst Magazine* and manage and write for Hugger Muggger Yoga Products' blog. I've written two books for Rodmell Press: *Mindful Yoga*, *Mindful Life* (2007) and *Yoga for Meditators*, that will be out this May.

I love playing in the Salt Lake Symphony, especially for the shared experience of making music with such a vast and varied group of people. I live in the 9th & 9th area, next door to my partner of 13 years, composer Phillip Bimstein, and with my three feline housemates.

Gina Koziatek, violin. I was five years old when I went to my first symphony concert. I loved the sound of the violins and thought it was fascinating to watch the bows go up and down at the same time. When I got home, I picked up my toy ukulele and a ruler and I pretended to play. My mother knew I was destined to play the violin and decided to enroll me in lessons. I studied under Katherine Peterson and Jack Ashton through my senior year in high school. I also studied under Jennifer Bogart many years later. During my college years I spent most of my free time skiing and traveling. Occasionally I would play at weddings or at back yard jam sessions.

I started playing with Salt Lake Symphony in 2004. I remember my first rehearsal. We read through Tchaikovsky's 6th Symphony and I was impressed by the incredible sound of this symphony orchestra. I couldn't wait until the next rehearsal to play it again. I look forward to all our rehearsals and concerts.

During the day I sell real estate. I have been in the business for five years and I absolutely love it. My husband is a computer science professor at Salt Lake Community College and I have two children. Olivia (11) likes to sing and dance, and Andrew (9) likes to build Lego cities that have taken over his room.

