

Meet the Orchestra

As a community orchestra, our members come from all walks of life and have a wide variety of skills and interests. We've asked our volunteer members to tell a bit about themselves.

Hilary Coon, oboe. After starting out as a youngster on the clarinet and deciding it was too boring, I switched to oboe in middle school. Though I loved the sound of the instrument, the oboe is a tough master, and I applaud my family and private teacher for suffering through the first attempts at getting a decent sound. It wasn't until after I was completely hooked that I found out that the serious oboe player must also learn to make reeds, akin to re-inventing the instrument with each new attempt. By this time, the risk-taking side of my personality was also drawn to the thrill of potentially sounding quite dreadful depending on a situation that double reed players euphemistically call 'reed hell.'



I majored in music in college, but realized I didn't have the single mindedness to make a go of it as a pro, so I also got a math degree. College was still a terrific time to study music and do a lot of playing. A trip to Japan with the University of Colorado Wind Ensemble was definitely a highlight. I also did quite a bit of singing in college, and met my husband Jim Yehle in our shared instrumental and vocal ensembles. We could also relate to the work juggling, as he was also a double major in electrical engineering. We played semi-professionally in the Denver area after college, and then both played in Salt Lake Symphony since arriving in Utah more than 20 years ago, and we love it.

I also have a PhD in statistical genetics, and now work at the University of Utah on projects investigating genetic risk factors for human diseases. My NIH-funded job is probably just about as secure as a professional music gig. Jim and I have two boys, both into music and the performing arts, but also math and design, not a big surprise. We now often struggle to see each other's performances, but wouldn't trade our busy lives. In my spare time, such as it is, I love traveling, skiing, bicycling, reading, and gardening.



Jim Yehle, French horn. In fifth grade, I was trying to decide which instrument to play: drums, bassoon or horn? Hmm. My mom vetoed drums, and how many elementary schools have a bassoon? So horn it was! Nobody said "Oh, there are easier instruments to play." I loved classical music, and my parents dutifully drove me to (and paid for) private lessons through high school. I remember a high-school horn player friend letting me borrow his record (yep, a vinyl LP) of Mahler's First Symphony—a horn player's dream—and the love affair had begun. College saw me majoring in music and engineering, and meeting my wonderful wife Hilary Coon, now oboist in Salt Lake Symphony. Playing in the Fort Collins Symphony the year before we were planning to move to Salt Lake, David Dalton was a guest conductor and suggested auditioning for SLS, where I have enjoyed playing for over twenty years. I serve also as the programming committee chair and webmaster. I have been in many other ensembles: choirs, woodwind & brass quintets, Utah Wind Symphony. I enjoy the outdoors, and have taken a bicycle tour of the west coast from Canada to Mexico, and hiked the Inca trail to Machu Picchu. Other interests are rocketry, skiing, ultimate Frisbee, travel, and woodworking. My two sons are turning into excellent musicians; I am looking forward to the day our entire family plays a Salt Lake Symphony concert.



Abby Kagie, viola. Abby Kagie started her musical education at age 4 on the piano. By 4th grade she had begun cello and violin as well. She switched to viola when she reached middle school because there were no violists in the orchestra, and has stuck to it ever since.

Abby attended Alta High school where she was a part of the orchestras there as well as several other groups, such as YACP and Jordan Symphony Orchestra. While part of these groups she was exposed to the Fry Street Quartet. She followed them to Utah State University where she studied under Russel Fallstad. She graduated from Utah State in 2009 with a degree in Viola Performance. She then attended the University of Utah for her Masters in Viola Performance, where she studied under Roberta Zalkind. She graduated in 2011.

She now has a private studio of 40 students and teaches orchestra at Sprucewood and Park Lane Elementary school. She lives in Murray with her husband Douglas Kagie.

Amanda Grapes, violin. Amanda starting playing the violin at the age of two with the Buffalo Suzuki Strings in Buffalo, New York. She picked up bluegrass fiddling around the age of 7 when she moved to Kentucky and started hanging out with old-timey fiddlers in the backwoods. (One interesting fact is that our illustrious Dr. Baldwin is from the same area of Kentucky and served on the Board of the Central Kentucky Youth Orchestra when young Amanda was a member. Small world!) She continued her classical training through college at Furman



University in Greenville, South Carolina. Although she was concertmaster, concerto soloist, and the recipient of a music scholarship, Amanda graduated from FU with a B.S. in Earth and Environmental Science. After graduation she moved to Atlanta, Georgia to pursue a career as an Environmental Scientist. While in Atlanta, Amanda discovered a new set of musical opportunities by joining a Rock/Alt. Country band. In 2008 Amanda transferred to Salt Lake City where she works as a Geologist/Environmental Scientist by day. By night you can see this year's Intermountain Acoustic Music Association (IAMA) Favorite Fiddler nominee fiddling and singing around town with The Green-Grapes Band (Country, Rock), the Nathan Spenser Revue (Folk, Blues), the Puddle Mountain Ramblers (Bluegrass), and various other musicians. In her spare time Amanda likes to ski, play with her dog, go to jam sessions, volunteer at the Humane Society, and go rock hounding.