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Interview with Richmond Symphony & a Giveaway

Associate Conductor Erin R. Freeman.



1. How old were you when you first started becoming interested in music?

Well, as a young kid I sang ALL the time. Songs from Annie, nursery rhymes, songs I made up - you name it. My mom thought that maybe enrolling me in children's choir would harness that energy.

2. Did you always know you wanted to be a conductor?

No - I knew I would be in music for the rest of my life, but I didn't understand until about my senior year in high school that it was actually career. At that point, however, I still didn't know that conducting was an option. Luckily, I had some great teachers that understood my skills and interests and led me to conducting.

3. What does a conductor do?

Wow - how much time do you have? Of course, on stage, a conductor waves her arms to signal to the orchestra the tempo, the feel, and the expression required for what they are playing. When there are so many people on stage, the musicians often need one person to keep things together. A conductor, however, also picks pieces for concerts, studies a lot of scores (books of the music), and reads a lot about the composers. The most important job of a conductor, however, is to listen - to listen to the sound of the orchestra so she can help it play its absolute best!

4. What is your favorite performance memory?

There are so many! As a kid, the children's choir I was in sang every year with the Atlanta Symphony, under the direction of the great conductor, Robert Shaw. I looked forward to those concerts ALL year. The Orchestra and the Symphony Chorus were simply awe inspiring, and I got to share the stage with them! Also, I've worked with some great artists, as a singer or conductor - Ray Charles, Arturo Sandoval, Patti Austin, Tai Murray, Leon Fleisher and more. I even accidentally conducted Yo-Yo Ma once!

5. How do you prepare for a show?

I eat early in the day! It's hard for me to eat right before a concert, so I always make sure to have a good breakfast. Usually, it's my homemade granola, orange juice, and, of course, coffee!

6. If you were not a conductor what would you be doing?

I'd probably be a lawyer. I like learning different sides of the same argument!

7. What do you like to do in your free time?

I practice the Korean Martial Art of Taekwondo. It's a great workout, and a lot of fun. Last December, I earned my second degree black belt, so I also help teach others.

8. What is your favorite place that you have have traveled to?

I love the National Parks. I've camped in most of the national parks in the contiguous United States, and next week, I'm actually going to Haleakala National Park on Maui. My goal is to visit and really get to know all of them in my life time.

9. What are some good books for younger children about music/symphony?

The Philharmonic Gets Dressed by Karla Kuskin is really cute! Also The Composer is Dead by Lemony Snicket is simply fabulous. In fact, our very first Lollipops concert featured a piece of music inspired by that book. It brought down the house!

10. What advice do you have for young students with a love of music

Music gives you ten times what you put into it. So, play an instrument and sing. Join a choir or orchestra. Work hard. Practice. Dedicate yourself to the great music of these fabulous composers. You will be inspired and make friends along the way. And...private lessons are worth every penny!

11. Could you tell us something about this upcoming performance that will surprise us all?

The soloist on our concert is a kid, like you! She's a sophomore in high school, and she won a contest to be able to play a solo with the Richmond Symphony. You'll meet her on the day of the show. Perhaps someday, you can play with a symphony, too!

Comment here with your most interesting fact from this article to be entered to win a family 4 pack to the Lollipops Concert on March 3!

Comments

1) Whitney said:

I love that the soloist is a sophomore in High School! What an honor.

3 days, 3 hours ago

2) Patricia Solari said:

That Whitney would like to be a lawyer as a second choice in a career - I think totally different sides of the spectrum.

3 days, 2 hours ago

3) sally said:

I thought it was cool that she found out how exciting it would be to be a conductor in high school. Most high school students don't know what they want to do.

3 days ago

4) Rosemary Utz said:

I dig that Ms. Freeman has two black belts!

3 days ago

5) Laurel said:

She seems like an amazing women, patient about her career but well balance in that she likes to explore the outdoors and has a black belt

2 days, 22 hours ago

6) Ashley Rhodes said:

I think it's so cool that the soloist is so young! How inspiring for kids to see a teenager in such a important role in the symphony!

2 days, 20 hours ago

7) Karen said:

I think it is interesting that she is a second degree black belt!

2 days, 19 hours ago

8) Melissa said:

I think it's great that the conductor does Taekwondo. I'd love to try it.

2 days, 16 hours ago

9) Heather said:

"The most important job of a conductor, however, is to listen - to listen to the sound of the orchestra so she can help it play its absolute best!" Kinda like being a mom, you have to help your family be in harmony and live its absolute best!

2 days, 15 hours ago

10) sarah said:

I think it's amazing that she has two black belts and is so young.

2 days, 14 hours ago