

Fantastic Fantasia

Lynn Barszcz '19 wins the music department's annual Concerto Competition for student performers

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LYNN BARSZCZ '19. COURTESY PHOTO.

Lynn Barszcz '19, a music performance major, is this year's winner of the [music department](#)'s annual Concerto Competition for student performers. The winner is invited to perform his or her concerto with either the Wind Symphony or Symphony Orchestra. On May 1, 2019, Barszcz will perform Claude T. Smith's "Fantasia for Alto Saxophone" (1983) with the Wind Symphony under the direction of Andrew Boysen Jr. Here, Barszcz discusses the competition, her winning piece, musical tastes and practice

habits with the music department's equipment manager, music librarian, and outreach coordinator, Adam Gallant.

AG: What was your preparation for the concerto competition audition like?

LB: As soon as I found the piece about a year and a half ago, I was preparing off and on. Whenever I had time to play what I wanted, this was what I was playing. Over the summer, I focused on it a lot and brought it to a summer camp I attended at the University of Iowa and got a lot of great comments from other professors. Then, once winter break came, it was a huge priority. I probably spent about five hours a week on this piece.

AG: Could you describe your daily practice routine?

LB: This changes all the time but usually about four to five hours a day, six days a week. If I don't have much on my plate, sometimes less. If I have a lot to prepare, sometimes more. I don't tend to spend much time on ensemble music unless there are really hard parts. I'd say 75% of my time is on solo music. This year Nate [\[Nathan Jorgensen\]](#) is an assistant professor of music and jazz program director] and I have decided to not do any more etudes in order to spend more time on solo music. So far it's been great having that extra time devoted to more music!

AG: "Six days a week." Do you take a full day off each week?

LB: Yes! I do it on the weekend so I don't have to do anything music related if I can help it. It helps me come back refreshed for the week ahead.

AG: How did you feel after the audition?

LB: After the audition, it was a relief. I have been working on this piece for so long with the intention of winning this competition that once it was over, it was such a great feeling to follow through on it.

AG: Have you performed "Fantasia" by Claude T. Smith before?

LB: Nope! Now I get to perform it for the first time in one of the scariest places possible!

AG: What led you to choosing this piece?

LB: I was looking for new pieces to play on YouTube and came across Otis Murphy, my saxophone hero, playing something I've never heard of, so of course I clicked on the link. After the first minute of the piece, I was hooked. I saw it as a huge challenge for me. There is a lot of difficult technique and altissimo [uppermost register] throughout the piece and I knew that it was something I needed to play.

AG: Tell me a bit more about Otis Murphy. What makes him your saxophone hero?

LB: Otis Murphy is one of the most amazing players I've ever heard. His tone, technique, musicality, etc, is everything I strive for. When I was trying to come up with pieces to play for my junior recital, I came across him playing "Carmen Fantasy" and asked Nate if I could play it. He immediately said "no" and of course I was upset and asked him why not. He handed me the music and as I went through it, I started to

realize the piece was easily a doctorate-level piece. Otis Murphy makes everything sound effortless, which is something I strive for all the time.

AG: Who are your favorite composers?

LB: David Maslanka, John Mackey and John Williams.

AG: You along with the last two saxophone winners in the concerto competition [Aaron Morneau and Mariah Goulet] have all played with the Wind Symphony. Coincidence? Are there more concerti for sax with winds than there are for sax and strings? Any other reason why you think this might be the case?

LB: There is no shortage of saxophone concertos in our literature! I have played plenty of concertos with orchestral backing, such as the "Glazunov Concerto" and the "Tomasi Concerto," which I am performing with the PSO [Portsmouth Symphony Orchestra] on May 5. But you definitely have a point. Saxophonists tend to play more with a wind ensemble. In my opinion, there is much "flashier" music for saxophone and wind ensemble, such as the "[Steven] Mackey Concerto" for soprano sax. I'll be playing a few movements of this for my senior recital!

AG: What type of saxophone do you play on?

LB: I play on a Selmer Paris Series III. Anything Selmer is great.

AG: Would it be fair to categorize you as a classical saxophonist? Or at the very least someone who prefers classical to jazz music?

LB: I'm definitely a classical saxophonist and I'd scream it from the roof tops if it wasn't so cold out. I've always been drawn to classical saxophone, the way it's played, the clarity of the lines, the extended techniques — everything about it just speaks to me. I like to play jazz, but, in my opinion, there's not much that I can relate with. I feel so much emotion speaking through classical music and it's just where I know I belong in the saxophone community.

AG: What are some of your favorite UNH memories?

LB: Call me a nerd, but my absolute favorite memory from UNH was my junior recital. Playing with Eustaquio Dones and having everyone I love in the same room to hear me play was by far the best feeling I've ever had. I've never felt more supported and more surrounded by amazing people and it was something I'll never forget.

AG: What is one piece of advice you'd like to give to an underclassman (or your freshman self)?

LB: Stop caring what people think. Once you can overcome that, you start becoming the person you're supposed to be.

AG: What is your favorite non-musical thing about UNH?

LB: Free Movies at the MUB!

AG: Your saxophone quartet will be giving a chamber recital at the Portsmouth Athenaeum this spring. Has the quartet decided on a program yet?

LB: My saxophone quartet with Emma Eafrazi, Christopher Ciaglo and Brendan McWalter is fantastic. There couldn't be a better group of people for me to work with. Nate throws us some insanely hard music and we always face it together. We haven't decided what to play for Portsmouth Athenaeum yet, but I can tell you it'll be just as awesome and crazy as we usually play. At the moment, we are playing the first three movements of "Mountain Roads" by David Maslanka. Along with Nate, we are actually on our way to Pittsburgh to play at the NASA (North American Saxophone Alliance) regional conference on February 8-10. It's bound to be an amazing experience and great outreach for the UNH music department.

- **WRITTEN BY:**

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