

Neal Sulmeyer – Clarinet and Saxophone, Musical Experience



Classical music has been a major part of my life since before I can remember. I started piano lessons at age 6. At age 10 I began studying clarinet with Floyd Estep (Coon-Sanders Nighthawks Jazz Band 1924-1929). Although I continued with piano, clarinet became my primary instrument. After several years of study, Mr. Estep recommended that I find a teacher better suited to my level and classical music interests. I soon started to study with Peter Zukovsky (former bass clarinetist and saxophonist with the Chicago Symphony). Under Mr. Zukovsky's tutelage, I received advanced training in clarinet, bass clarinet and alto saxophone. After his untimely death in late 1970, I was one of the few select students taken on by his son's father-in-law, Kalman Bloch (former principle clarinet with the Los Angeles Philharmonic 1937-1981). I continued my advanced studies with Mr. Bloch until late 1973 when I started college. During my advanced training years, I was also invited to attend several master classes with Mitchell Lurie (Clarinet instructor at U.S.C. and former principal clarinetist with the Chicago and Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestras).

My performance experiences started in Los Angeles at LeConte Jr. High School as principle clarinet in both orchestra and band. At Fairfax High School I again was

principle clarinet in the orchestra and principle saxophone in the marching and concert bands. The best experiences were playing in the pit orchestra for the annual musicals performed by the music and drama departments. Performing these musicals provided the opportunity to teach myself basic flute, oboe, and bassoon skills. I also had the opportunity to learn conducting from the music director, Mr. Brodsky, and regularly conducted both the orchestra and concert band rehearsals during his absence. While in my junior year, I was invited to join the Los Angeles City College Community Orchestra. In my position as second clarinet, I was often called upon to play bass clarinet or Alto Saxophone when needed. Here I had the opportunity to play Alto Saxophone in both, Mussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition" and Ravel's "Bolero". During my senior year, I was principle clarinetist with the Los Angeles City Youth Orchestra. The highlight of my high school experience was playing the Von Weber "Concertino for Clarinet and Orchestra" at the annual Christmas concert during my senior year.

I began teaching clarinet in my junior year of high school. My first students were other members of the school band. By my senior year, I had several paying students and this included some that were in Jr. High (middle) school.

I continued to play and teach through the first two years of College when my studies in physics became too consuming. Since obtaining my Masters Degree from California State University at Northridge (CSUN) in 1982, I have been an Information Technology consultant. In 1993, I moved to Georgia and began looking for a way to get back into music. In September 2006, I began playing with the Reinhardt College orchestra in Waleska.

I think there is no better way to be involved in music than teaching young aspiring musicians.