

Melanie Mason: Inspired by Music's Next Generation

Looking back, Melanie Mason of Local 160 (Springfield, OH) can still remember the first time she felt the full power of music. As a young adult at a summer camp in Ohio, Mason was introduced to Beethoven's 7th Symphony when a friend played it on the stereo at full volume. The music was loud enough so that Mason could hear and feel nothing else. "It was the first time a piece of music brought me to tears because of its power," says Mason. "I still feel that way every time I hear Beethoven's 7th, and I feel it even more when I get to play it."



Melanie Mason of Local 160 says that apprenticing for a violin maker helped her playing progress.

Today, the 24-year-old Mason is a violin and viola instructor for aspiring performers of all ages in Cincinnati. Mason obtained her bachelor's and master's degrees, and an artist's diploma from the College-Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati. Attending one of the highest rated music conservatories in the nation allowed Mason to develop relationships with talented individuals who continue to mentor and inspire her. "My peers, who are teachers and musicians as well, push me as a musician and as a teacher," says Mason. "I decided to teach violin and viola lessons because I also wanted to give back."

Mason took advantage of the audition and orchestration opportunities that college life offered, but found that this type of career information was rather difficult to obtain once her education was completed. She originally joined the AFM for the audition opportunities and other helpful guidance that the Federation offers members hoping to play for local and regional orchestras.

Mason's father was a musician and an opera stage manager whose work introduced her to orchestra life at an early age. From then on, she absorbed as much knowledge and experience as she could pertaining to the violin. Aside from giving violin and viola lessons, Mason is a member of the Springfield Symphony Orchestra.

Always open to new learning experiences, she also apprenticed for a local instrument maker. This began when she entered the craftsman's shop with the intention of purchasing a new viola. Intrigued by the work that goes into creating instruments, Mason began helping with the basic set-up work involved in perfecting

violins and violas. She believes that learning to polish, test fingerboards, and fit bridges, has helped her playing progress.

"There are a lot of things you don't expect that go into making instruments," she says. "I've learned a lot about my own instrument and why it sounds the way it does."

Having these experiences and knowing so much about her work has molded Mason into an ideal instructor for aspiring musicians and gives her hope for the future. "Even though many orchestras are going under at this time, so many children want to play," she says. "I am overwhelmed by the number of students who are interested in taking lessons and learning the craft."

Presently, Mason teaches about 30 violin and viola students, ranging in age from three to 50 years old. Many of her students partake in recitals each year to demonstrate their progress and talent to fellow students and family members. "My students inspire me," says Mason. "When I see how hard they work, and when they overcome obstacles in their playing, it makes me want to become an even better teacher."

Mason plans to continue teaching and building her studio with the hopes that she will never stop growing as a musician and instructor. Through her teaching, she hopes that future generations will, not only discover the power of Beethoven's 7th Symphony, but the power that lies in the entirety of the classical genre. "The excitement I see in the next generation of players is what makes me truly believe that classical music will live on," she says. "I am overjoyed about being a part of whatever the new frontier of classical music may bring."

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