

SCHERZO

Interviews with the notable musicians & fascinating personalities of our day

with WESLEY FERREIRA

RICHARD STOLTZMAN

Two-time Grammy Award-winning clarinetist Richard Stoltzman is known as a captivating recitalist, chamber musician, jazz performer, as well as a prolific recording artist. He is one of the most celebrated and well-known clarinetists of our era, and he sits down to answer some questions.

What's the best part about being a musician?

Awakening that part of you that loved music in the first place.

What's the hardest part about being a musician?

Realizing that awakening that part of you is not attainable.

What is the biggest challenge that you faced in your career?

Meeting recording expectations.

Who is your favorite composer right now? Toru Takemitsu.

Who is your favorite composer in history? Brahms.

Do you have a mantra?

"Om Namah Shivaya." This mantra is associated with qualities of prayer, divine-love, grace, truth, and blissfulness. When done correctly, it calms the mind and brings spiritual insight and knowledge.

What was a dream you had when you were younger, and has it come true?

I wanted to be a junior high school band director, and no, that did not come true.

What's something you used to love doing as a child and that you still enjoy today?

Jamming.

What's the best mistake you ever made?

The first time I performed Nielson and had to go to the conductor's podium to look at the score. It was then that I began to understand the value of knowing the score. Memorizing your solo part without seeing where, how, and why your solo works with the voices of the orchestra is just isolating yourself from the orchestra. Even if you don't care to play from memory, knowing what's in the score makes you a better musician and can bring many insights.

What really makes you laugh?

Bad spelling and poor translations!

Are you a morning practicer or an evening practicer? “Morning” 12-6.

How do you know when you’re finished with a practice session?
When I’m no longer listening.

What was your most meaningful performance(s)? Wien Philharmonic in Konzerthaus, October 1991. Commemorating the first performance of K. 622 (1791) by Stadler in that same hall. Also Toru Takemitsu’s Fantasma/Cantos, with the composer and my mother in attendance.

What’s the worst performance experience you’ve ever had?
Performing K. 581 at Casal’s funeral in the capital marble rotunda in Puerto Rico with hundreds of dignitaries all standing and the echoing clicks of high heels and photographers’ noisy cameras.

What is your favorite standout article of clothing to perform in?
A velvet jacket.

What is the first piece of music you remember falling in love with?
Debussy’s Prèmiere Rhapsodie.

What’s your best habit?
Daily breathing.

What’s the best piece of advice you’ve received, and who gave it to you? “Nothing lasts forever, not even the good things.” Kalmen Opperman



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If you weren’t a clarinetist, what would be your profession?
Dentist.

If you could have coined a single phrase of wisdom already in existence, what would it be?
“All you need is Love.”

If you had to spend 100 days on a desert island alone, what 5 things would you take with you?
My clarinet, bran cereal, a pot, water, matches.

If you could have any other talent, what would it be?
Make smiles.

If you could create a perfect day for yourself, what would you do?
The perfect day would be exactly as I have done for decades, which starts with one hour of exercises for muscles and breath expansion, followed by my standard breakfast. Then I would have all my children and grandchildren around me while improvising on Amazing Grace.