

Kelsey Schilling



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KELSEY ANDREW SCHILLING lives in the rarified world of historic bassoon playing. Since completing his studies in Early Music at Indiana University, he has performed with ensembles such as the Mallarmé Chamber Players, Opera Lafayette, Washington Bach Consort, Washington National Cathedral Baroque Orchestra, as well as other period orchestras throughout the country.

He has appeared in the Magnolia Baroque Festival (North Carolina), Staunton Music Festival (Virginia), International Young Artist's Presentation – Historical Winds (Antwerp, Belgium), Berkeley Festival and Exhibition (California) with ¡Sacabuche! and in music festivals throughout Brazil and in Ecuador with Ensemble Lipzodes.

Recently, Mr. Schilling directed a performance of J.S. Bach's cantata "Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich" using the forces Bach had available to him. Additionally, he has recorded for IU Press and Dorian Sono



CMSCVA. Can you name the first piece of music, performance or person that inspired you to take up an instrument, or to become a professional musician?

There were so many musical influences in my life from a young age---it's hard to identify a single piece or performance. Probably before anything or anyone else, however, were my parents, who are both professional musicians. The question was never whether I should be a musician, but what instrument I would play.

CMSCVA. What is the most memorable chamber music experience you've ever had, and why?

When I was a student, I had a classical wind sextet that was invited to a young artists' competition in Belgium. As if that wasn't memorable enough, we prepared for the competition the week beforehand in a house in Barcelona overlooking the Mediterranean. Great friends, wonderful music, delicious food, awe-inspiring scenery.

CMSCVA. What's the most striking thing an audience member has ever said to you after a performance you played?

I get a lot of compliments about how beautiful my instrument is (I agree!), but the most striking thing I've heard from an audience member came after an early music festival concert when a prominent baroque cellist and gambist told me I played a "rocking bass line."

CMSCVA. What music are you listening to right now?

Besides the obligatory baroque repertoire, there's usually some Brahms in my rotation... even if I, as a baroque bassoonist, don't get to play his music very often. Right now though, I'm listening to a new recording of historically informed Gershwin.

CMSCVA. What can you do as a performer to truly reach an audience member through performance? Or what do you think a listener should take away from a performance?

I think reaching the audience and giving them something to take away are two separate things... but they're equally important. You connect with them by providing something familiar to them, like a piece they already know or a personal story they can relate to. Then, you give them a new perspective---challenge their preconceptions about tempo or introduce them to a new instrument. Those are the things they'll remember.

CMSCVA. What is the role of a “classical” musician today, and how do you think it's changed?

I think the role of a classical musician, especially one who plays period instruments, is to remind the zeitgeist that there are new and exciting alternatives. I feel like classical music used to be seen as old-fashioned, but I've known people from all walks of life who enjoy chamber music or ballet. Just because pop music dominates the airwaves doesn't mean anyone should feel locked into a particular musical taste.

CMSCVA. What's the biggest challenge you are dealing right now with as a classical musician (or a person whose profession is "musician")?

Work-life balance. When so much of your career depends on finding your own work, it's really easy to let the office hours spill over into your personal time. It's a good thing being a classical musician is one of the most enjoyable and fulfilling things I can imagine doing!

