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Nestor Herszbaum



Nestor Herszbaum is the Principal Flute with the Kansas City Symphony Orchestra.

Nestor has performed for European, North and South American audiences. He has played with the Omaha Symphony, Lincoln Symphony, Charleston Symphony, Cincinnati Philharmonia Orchestra and Sinfonietta de Lisboa.

Nestor has taught at the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music Preparatory Department, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Creighton University and has coached the woodwind section of the Omaha Area Youth Orchestras.

Nestor's book 'Alternative Fingerings for the Flute' was published in August 2003.

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MyAuditions: Greetings Members. Welcome to MyAuditions celebrity chat. Our featured artist this evening is with Nestor Herszbaum, Principal Flautist with the Kansas City Symphony Orchestra. He has performed for European, North and South American audiences and has played with the Omaha Symphony, Lincoln Symphony, Charleston Symphony, Cincinnati Philharmonia Orchestra and Sinfonietta de Lisboa.

MyAuditions: This is a moderated chat and all comments are pre-screened and will be pre-approved by Mr. Herszbaum prior to

public display on this forum.

MyAuditions: Hello Nestor

Nestor Herszbaum: Hi! Thank you for being here.

MyAuditions: Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to join us this evening

Nestor Herszbaum: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to chat.

MyAuditions: Please tell us how you got your start on the flute?

Nestor Herszbaum: I started playing the flute when I was 16. Previously I had played the guitar and sang in choirs.

MyAuditions: The forum is now open to members. Please post your questions for Nestor.

Jessica Hull-Dambaugh: When were you in Charleston?

Nestor Herszbaum: I lived in Charleston in 1996-1997. My wife, Maria Harding got the principal flute job in Charleston so we left Cincinnati.

Jessica Hull-Dambaugh: Really? I'm principal in Charleston right now! She played here in 96-97?

Nestor Herszbaum: Yes, It was 1996. I remember it because that was the year we got married! Is David conducting the orchestra?

Jessica Hull-Dambaugh: Yup! And Mark and Tom are still here too!

<Debbi>: Where did you go to school?

Nestor Herszbaum: I went to school at CMM (College Conservatory of Music) - University of Cincinnati. I completed an Artist Diploma and I started a doctorate which I never finished.

<Terry>: Hello Nestor. Thank you for coming. My question is about the audition process and how it is conducted within the orchestra. Can you describe the process for us?

Nestor Herszbaum: Auditions vary from orchestra to orchestra. Most orchestras have at least 2 rounds of preliminaries and then 1 or 2 final rounds. There are some auditions where you play with members of your section or with piano in the final round. All 3 rounds were behind a screen here in KC, even the final round. I've heard that that's becoming the new trend in orchestral auditions.

<Wendy Scott>: Can you tell us about your audition with KC and how you felt when you won?

Nestor Herszbaum: The audition in KC was a very long one. I had to play 2 preliminary rounds and then a final round which was about 30 to 40 minutes long. I felt I played well and I think what made it a successful audition for me is the fact that I played the way I wanted to play. I didn't try to guess what the committee or the conductor were looking for. I was very happy.

Jessica Hull-Dambaugh: How did you handle the acoustic differences between the warm up room and the hall?

Nestor Herszbaum: That was very hard!! The warm up rooms were very resonant and the stage very dry. As I became aware of that difference I tried not to force on stage. It's still very hard for me when I play with the orchestra on the same stage to remember not to force.

Maestrolover: What made you decide to break your American career and take a post in a European orchestra? Do you think the experience was beneficial to you musically/personally?

Nestor Herszbaum: After studying in Cincinnati and after listening to the Cincinnati Symphony and realizing the level of the American orchestras I wanted to be part of one. I have never been part of a European orchestra, I just played with one as a soloist, but the level in Europe is also very high.

Suzanne: Along the lines of orchestra auditions: What do you feel it takes for a flutist to do a successful audition and get a

chair in a major symphony orchestra?

Nestor Herszbaum: That's a very good question that I asked myself many times. Truly, I don't have a definitive answer, but the preparation to auditions is the key. By preparation I mean both the musical aspect as well as the mental aspect.

Suzanne: Elaborate more on the mental aspect of preparing for an audition. How do you go about this and overcome mental obstacles when they arise?

Nestor Herszbaum: I read a ton of books about mental preparation for sports and things like that. Yoga, Qi-Gong or any other meditation techniques really help. I used to have a list of books in my web site. I'll put it back so you can see it (www.herszbaum.com flute info section). My main tip though is to be convinced of what you play. To do that you have to know the excerpts 100% and you HAVE to know the score. Listen to the pieces in the audition list 1000 times. Feel that you are playing in the orchestra.

<Susannah>: Who did study with?

Nestor Herszbaum: I studied in Argentina with Jorge de la Vega, in Europe I did some master classes with András Adorján, Peter-Lukas Graf and Michel Moragues and in Cincinnati I studied with Brad Garner, Jack Wellbaum and Randy Bowman. I owe the last three teachers a good deal for my success in the US.

<Jonathan Brahms>: At this time, 2 European-trained flutists, Mathieu Dufour (Chicago) and Robert Langevin (New York) are Principal Flutists of 2 of America's greatest orchestras. A third, Jacques Zoon played for a number of seasons in a third of the "Big Five", Boston, where an American-trained flutist is now once again principal. Dufour, Langevin and Zoon are great, great artists, that any orchestra would like to have, but they were competing for those chairs with the best, most experienced players America has to offer. My question is - do European-trained flutists in general offer something that American flutists do not?

Nestor Herszbaum: I don't think so. I think the level of playing in America is great and there are amazing American flutists around. Just to mention a few: Randy Bowman (Cincinnati) Mark Sparks (St. Louis) and many other orchestral players are among the best in the world.

<Frank>: So how do you like the Kansas City Symphony so far?

Nestor Herszbaum: The KC symphony is great! I'm having a blast. We play an amazing amount of music with great conductors and soloists.

Ticotico: How many orchestral auditions have you taken before winning Kansas City?

Nestor Herszbaum: The KC audition was my 11th one. I took about 5 or 6 of those auditions while I was still in school and very soon I realized how much tougher auditions are than chamber music or solo recitals!!

<Jonathan Brahms>: You just remarked on not "forcing" when playing with the orchestra. Flutists these days talk endlessly about the big sound. How does one produce a big sound without forcing?

Nestor Herszbaum: Forcing does not produce a big sound necessarily, but it certainly produces a forced sound. In my view to produce a big sound you have to relax both your thorax and your mouth cavity. The lips should be as relaxed as possible without losing control of the air stream. A pinched sound in my experience doesn't carry. Now, the other problem about forcing is how not to force when the orchestra is playing very loudly and you have to project. The best answer I have found is still to play relaxed and to worry about tone color and not so much about

volume.

Suzanne: You mentioned in the beginning that you started flute at age 16. That's older than most people traditionally begin their flute studies. What do you think the advantages and disadvantages are to starting at an older age and what advice would you give to those who do especially adult beginners?

Nestor Herszbaum: I think starting early has a big advantage. I started singing and playing the guitar when I was about 5 or 6 and that helped me train my ear. The disadvantages of starting at an older age have to do more with life itself than ability in my view. You have many hours to practice and focus on music making every day as a young person, but you will improve no matter what your age is.

Ticotico: What's your favorite recording -- flute and/or non-flute?

Nestor Herszbaum: My favorite recording is "Blue" by Joni Mitchell. I used to listen to Galway a lot and he influenced my earlier years immensely.

Ticotico: Which flutist would you say influenced your concept of flute sound and flute playing?

Nestor Herszbaum: I listen to Pahud and Dufour as well as other well known flutists. I very much like an open sound.

<Debbi>: Do you have any tips for increasing breath control?

Nestor Herszbaum: If you really want to increase breath control focus your practice on that particular aspect. For example: plays scales at the same metronome marking, but instead of playing them once and take a breath aim to do it twice in a row and you'll eventually succeed.

<Terry>: How do you feel about the state of the industry as a whole? A lot of negative press about the struggles financially orchestra's are going through.

Nestor Herszbaum: It is very tough to see what orchestras have to go through to survive. I'm ashamed sometimes that so little money is spent by the government in culture. I don't want to go into politics, so I'd better stop... sorry.

MyAuditions: Members, we have 10 minutes left. Nestor, would you like to extend until 8:15pm EST?

Nestor Herszbaum: Sure.

<Susannah>: How do you mentally prepare for an audition? Any tips would be greatly appreciated!! ;)

Nestor Herszbaum: That's a good question. Obstacles will ALWAYS arise. The mental preparation means to be flexible enough to let the obstacles creep in, but not to get hooked on them.

Suzanne: I think everyone suffers from a bad tone day every now and again. When you're practicing or performing, how do you overcome or work around it when you feel your tone is not at its best?

Nestor Herszbaum: When I practice at home and I feel my tone is not the best I try to fix that right away with some simple exercises. If my tone is too tight I practice multiphonics. If it's not focused enough I practice long tones *ppp* (triple piano) starting on low c to high c (C4).

Lynn: What are some of your techniques in mentally preparing for and during an audition?

Nestor Herszbaum: The main mental technique is focus. When I'm tired or nervous my mental focus is the first thing that goes. If I can be focused on the music both in an audition situation or a concert I know that everything will tend to work the way it should.

Ticotico: Do you prefer a dark or bright sound? To me, Pahud has a very dark but beautiful sound.

Nestor Herszbaum: If Pahud has a dark sound, then I like dark!

<Jonathan Brahms>: Playing the great first flute solos in any orchestra is a great privilege; however, would you consider moving to a better orchestra as a second or assistant principal flute or as solo piccolo?

Nestor Herszbaum: Yes, I would. Playing principal is lots of fun, but also means lots of pressure (especially in big orchestras). I think I would enjoy playing second or assistant principal. I know that I wouldn't enjoy playing piccolo. Sorry to my piccolo teacher and piccolo friends.

Ticotico: What is your daily warm-up routine? Do you do long-tones? Etudes?

Nestor Herszbaum: I do long tones only when I have too much time to spare. I did etudes this summer after winning the audition and I wish I had time to do them now.

Jessica Hull-Dambaugh: Do you spend a lot of time on exercises in your warm-ups?

Nestor Herszbaum: No, when I do have time to warm up I try to practice scales and arpeggios. I usually warm up with scales and playing the music that I need to play for the upcoming rehearsal or concert. Most of the time I spend nowadays is learning tons of music!

Flutegirl: What do you think about when you're playing the Brahms 4 solo? I always find this excerpt to be especially difficult to play out of context on an audition.

Nestor Herszbaum: Think of the horns playing in the background and think of the theme in which the flute variation is based on. The theme is at the beginning of the movement (long notes)

Suzanne: Have you had much opportunity to get involved with the flute community of Kansas City much yet? I am a grad student at the UMKC conservatory and I think it would be amazing if you did a master class and lecture here.

Nestor Herszbaum: I had the pleasure of meeting Mary Posses and other flutists at flute day a couple of months ago. I'd love to do a master class with you guys! You are only 15 minutes away!

Suzanne: I wasn't here last semester, so I'm sorry I missed the opportunity to meet both you and Mark Sparks. I'll ask Dr. Posses about getting you here!

Flutegirl: What exercises or tips would you suggest for finding freedom within the structure? I often find myself playing too metronomically or stiffly when preparing orchestral excerpts.

Nestor Herszbaum: Use the metronome as much as you can tolerate it then play without it, but still feeling the pulse. Playing too freely does not work in auditions. The people behind the screen will have no idea of what you are doing if your pulse is not strong.

MyAuditions: Nestor, we have time for one last question.

Jessica Hull-Dambaugh: What's the most effective thing you feel you do in your preparations for auditions?

Nestor Herszbaum: First. Practice your part and know it by memory. I can't stress enough how important it is to know the music by memory. Then, listen to recordings and study the score. Feel you are playing in the orchestra and play the music in the appropriate style, but the way you believe it should sound.

MyAuditions: And that is the last question for this evening's celebrity chat. MyAuditions would very much like to thank Nestor Herszbaum, principal flautist with the Kansas City Symphony Orchestra for taking the time this evening to chat with us. A transcript of this evening's chat will be made available to members in the coming days. Look for the link "Event Transcripts" on the celebrity chat main page if you wish to access

it.

Nestor Herszbaum: Thank you very much for your questions. I really enjoyed this chat!!

Suzanne: Thanks for your insights!

<Terry>: Thank you!!!!

Flutegirl: Thank you very much! I wish I had entered the room earlier!

Nestor Herszbaum: Thanks to MyAuditions for providing this space and its great website!

MyAuditions: Thank you Nestor. Also, please make sure that you check our schedule for next month's featured celebrity chat with Kevin Good, second trumpet with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. This event will take place Tuesday, February 7, 2005 at 7pm Eastern Time

MyAuditions: This concludes this evening's program. Good night.

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