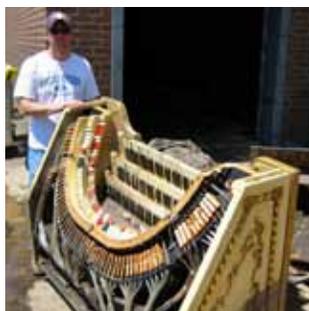




DONOR SPOTLIGHT

NEAL MARPLE & JANE RHEEM



LEFT: After the flood waters receded, Neal was at the Paramount helping salvage what remained of the Mighty Wurlitzer. Six years later, he is photographed playing the restored organ. RIGHT: A twelve-year-old Jane is pictured competing at the '37 Illinois Young Artists Competition, where she won first place in the junior division.



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Neal Marple and Jane Rheem are not your average Orchestra Iowa donors. Their charitable contributions to the symphony go beyond that of monetary giving, volunteerism and community advocacy; although they do that all as well. It is their passion for classical music that sets them apart, and that passion began at an early age.

For Neal, his first experience with musical performance began like many other

children raised in Cedar Rapids – through the music program in the community schools. But it was a fateful trip to hear the Mighty Wurlitzer organ at the Paramount Theatre that would shape his love of classical music. “It was so cool,” said Neal. “I was a 13 year old and I hadn’t heard it before. Then the organ comes out of the pit with big sounds and everything. That was it. I wanted to go take lessons right after that.”

For Jane, music notes were the many woven threads in her family’s tapestry. From a young age, she was encouraged to listen, perform and love the sonorous sounds of a symphony. Only in her adulthood would she realize how special that early exposure to the art form actually was. “It was just the norm in my household,” she explains. “Both of my parents were musicians, so there was always music at home. It was just a given that someone played an instrument if they were musically inclined.”

These early experiences with classical music would eventually bring Neal and Jane together. As their passion for classical music grew, both choose to hone their craft at the prestigious Juilliard School in New York City; Neal for organ and Jane for violin. Although Jane doesn't play as much anymore, highlights of her musical career include performing at Lincoln Center and as soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at the mere age of twelve. Neal still plays regularly, including performing as the guest organist for Walton's "Coronation Te Deum" and Mahler's 2nd Symphony at Orchestra Iowa's Resurrection concert in 2014. He is also the organist for First Presbyterian Church, not coincidentally the same church where he took lessons as a child. And while being a musician is neither of their full time jobs (Neal is the Director of Technical Services at Mercy Medical Center and Jane is the Director of BI & Analytics at TaxACT), it is undeniable the impact classical music has had on their lives.

When asked why supporting Orchestra Iowa was so important to them, Jane so eloquently summarized, "I view it as diversity in quality of life. There are so many benefits to being exposed to the arts. It inspires younger people in a different way than the traditional academia or sports tracks. It really opens opportunities for younger people to dive into other areas and career paths that they might not be otherwise exposed."

Neal was quick to add, "We had not been large supporters of an organization before, but as we progressed professionally, it was something that we really wanted to be able to do. I think the role that the orchestra plays in the community, being Orchestra Iowa and having the outreach across Eastern Iowa but still being the orchestra of Cedar Rapids as well, is

critical. The Orchestra provides more than just performances, it is a source of education and pride for our community."

Orchestra Iowa sincerely thanks Neal and Jane for their support and commitment to preserving music at large in our wonderful Creative Corridor community. ■

Article by Alexis Dagit
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