

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



KEVIN GOBETZ *assistant principal bass*

Although twenty-seven-year-old Kevin Gobetz ended up playing the bass, he was introduced to musicianship at the age of five by the piano that was in his house when he was growing up in Stony Brook, New York. That piano was his first music teacher—quite literally.

“We had a player piano in our house, so I would sit at the piano and watch the keys go down,” he says. “I’d memorize how they went down, and I’d learn the pieces that way.”

Then in fourth grade, Gobetz entered his school’s music program and decided to play the bass because he was “a big guy, and they needed bass players,” he says. He thought the instrument looked cool, and it presented a new challenge for him that he was excited to take on.

Overcoming challenges is one of Gobetz’s favorite parts about being a musician; he has learned to love the process rather than focusing on end results, like orchestra appointments or competition wins. It wasn’t always this much fun, however.

“When you first start doing something, you’re terrible at it, but your taste is there,” he says. “But once my playing eventually started to slowly reflect how I wanted to sound, that’s when I started to enjoy myself. When I was doing well on the instrument, I wanted to practice more. And when I was practicing more, I was getting better, so I started to fall in love with the process of getting better.”

Gobetz wasn’t always sure he wanted to pursue a career in music. When he graduated from high school, he had a few areas from which to choose in selecting a major for college: acting, singing, and playing the bass. He ended up choosing the bass because he had the most fun playing it, but it wasn’t until his sophomore year at Ithaca College that he was really ready to do all it took to achieve a performance career. The spark came during a performance of Brahms’s Tragic Overture at David Geffen Hall (then Avery Fisher Hall) in New York City.

“Just hearing those first two notes and having that experience made me think, ‘Oh, this is more fun than anything I’ve ever done. I need to work really hard and get really good at this because I want to do this for the rest of my life.’”

So, he did work really hard, and he did get really good. He earned a master’s degree from the University of Southern California’s Thornton School of Music, and he is spending his third summer at the AMFS studying with Chris Hanulik and Bruce Bransby with the support of a Wall Family Foundation Fellowship. He says he wanted to return to Aspen after studying here in 2013 and 2014 because of the high caliber of playing and teaching.

“This was one of the first places that I was in a healthfully competitive orchestra,” he says. “It was the first place that almost everyone will probably end up an orchestral player.”

He says the energy at the AMFS is also a factor in his decision to return.

“There’s this young energy and enthusiasm that makes the performance special,” he says. “And if you played the concert the next day, it wouldn’t be the same. I had a friend ask me, ‘How do you play the same music over and over?’ Well, it’s always different with different groups, different people, different halls.”

After his summer, Gobetz plans to continue auditioning for orchestras. He says being a musician is about more than just enjoying to play his instrument, though that is, of course, a factor. But there’s something deeper in why he has chosen this path in life.

“The selfish answer is that it makes me a better person to understand the discipline and focus that it takes to do what I’m doing,” he says. “I try and figure out where in other areas of my life I can apply that same standard. Music was the first thing I did that made me realize there is no ceiling. You can get as good as you want in anything.”

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