

## ASPEN FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Winston is sitting in the woodwinds section, first row to the far right.

## TAMARA WINSTON *Oboe*

With original plans to become a veterinarian, Tamara Winston's dreams quickly changed the moment her childhood teacher expressed how much she believed in Winston, and her dreams to pursue music. "She really believed in me then, and she believes in me now. It's largely because of her that I went into music," said Winston.

Winston attended The Juilliard School for her undergraduate studies and Mannes School of Music for her master's. Currently in her fourth summer at the Aspen Music Festival and School, Winston is studying under Mingjia Liu and Elaine Douvas, and is the recipient of the Allen and Kelli Questrom Foundation Scholarship.

"In sixth grade, I picked the oboe because I really liked its sound. I thought it sounded exotic and lush," said Winston. The oboe is a challenging instrument and it took time for Winston to get her bearings with it and figure it out. "Learning the oboe was a big challenge, especially figuring out the reeds, while simultaneously trying to say something meaningful through the music" Winston said. "I kept doubting my ability—always wondering, 'Is the juice worth the squeeze?'"

"I saw a concert of Scheherazade, which has a beautiful oboe solo in the second movement. I was moved by the oboe's ability to tell the story and in that moment I thought, 'I would really like to play like that and do that forever,' so I picked the oboe," said Winston. "I've had a lot of happy moments with Scheherazade. It's one of my favorite pieces to listen to and play."

Most recently, Winston joined Carnegie Hall's Ensemble Connect, a two year fellowship which focuses on combining high-level chamber music with community engagement. "We're all partnered with one New York City public school. I help teach fourth and fifth grade band. I really love doing this," she said.

Currently living in New York and originally from Skokie, Illinois, Winston has enjoyed escaping to the mountains for the past four summers. "Initially, it was because I wanted to spend more time with my teacher from school," said Winston. "That's the main reason I keep coming back. Just being able to play great music and be inspired by other colleagues and mentors in such a beautiful environment is amazing. There's nothing more you could really ask for."

An inspiring teacher can sometimes have a life-long impact on someone's life. When talking about her teacher Douvas, Winston lights up. "She's genuinely excited and loves music. She's either playing principal oboe in the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, or she is teaching her multitude of students," said Winston. "No matter what, she goes above and beyond to take care of us and inspire us. She's not only changed me as a musician, but also a person. I'm eternally grateful to her."

The journey to becoming a professional musician is never an easy one. Winston would not be who she is today without those who inspired her along the way. Despite the difficult journey, Winston has concluded that the juice is, indeed, worth the squeeze. "For me, in the end, it really is worth it because I love playing music and I love playing the oboe. It's challenging to get the oboe to work sometimes, but it's worth it," said Winston.

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– TAMARA WINSTON