

# SCHERZO

Interviews with the notable musicians & fascinating personalities of our day

with WESLEY FERREIRA

## DENISE GAINNEY

*The current president of the International Clarinet Association, internationally renowned performer, and Professor of Clarinet at the University of Alabama - Birmingham, Denise Gainney sits down to answer some questions.*

**What's the best part about being a musician?** Doing what I love every day - work feels like play!

**What's the hardest part about being a musician?** We always have to practice to stay in top shape.

**What's the last thing that made you cry?** A news story that showed someone being kind to another person in need.

**What is your best habit, and what is your worst?** My best habit is exercising first thing every single day. My worst habit is taking on too much, thinking I am Super Woman!

**What do you love most about your life right now?** I am at an age where I feel so much more secure in who I am and what I have to offer the world. I'm doing what I love and living a peaceful and happy life, trying to make a positive difference.

**What is the buzzword you never want to hear again?** Unprecedented!

**Is there a famous person you admire?** Julie Andrews, who has always inspired me musically and does so much to help children/education behind the scenes.

**What is your secret to being productive?** Keeping a consistent routine, especially working from home during the pandemic.

**When you're busy, what is your go-to food for fast fuel?** Yogurt and peanut butter.

**What's the meaning of life?** Love. Finding it and being it.

**Did you have a career fork in the road?** I was a middle school band director for the first five years of my career, then left to pursue graduate study and university teaching.

**What advice would you give your younger self?** Quit worrying so much about what others think - be true to yourself and own it completely.

**What one great thing did you learn from each of your teachers that impacted your life?** From Fred Ormand: the importance of a daily scale/technical routine. Frank Kowalsky: music is what happens between the notes. Ron Monsen: If you always sound good when practicing, you're not really practicing. Kal Opperman: teach the whole person, not just the clarinet.

**What is your favorite form of exercise?** Kickboxing. I got certified to teach it when I turned 40 just to know that I could do it.

**Do you have a favorite podcast?** Clarineat.



**What's the weirdest thing in your office?** An opera mask that looks pretty scary...sort of like a plague mask from the Black Death. :)

**Is there a book you recommend to everyone?** Big Magic by Elizabeth Gilbert.

**What was your most meaningful performance?** A faculty recital just days after my oldest brother died of a heart attack. I dedicated the Copland Concerto to him and felt him with me during the performance. It was incredibly moving, and I made it through and offstage before I burst into tears.

# CODA

If you looked at your to-do list, what would be the first thing on it right now? **Reply to ICA emails!**

If you could rid yourself of one personal fear, what would that be? **Being afraid not to succeed.**

If you could be any fictional character, who would you be and why? **Claire Fraser from the Outlander series. I love the idea of time travel, and Claire is a strong woman who always follows her heart and stands up for what is right.**

If you could have any other job, what would that be? **A veterinarian.**

If you could speak again to your former teacher, what would you say? **You were so right... about everything, and thank you!**