



**Fundamental Excellence:  
An Interview with Jacqueline Cordova-Arrington  
by Emily Stanek**



I had the pleasure of sitting down with [Dr. Jacqueline Cordova-Arrington](#) in her office at the University of Oregon this summer. Her charisma and passion for the flute was tangible and I left feeling invigorated and excited.

**Jackie, tell us a little about how you ended up studying with Emmanuel Pahud and Andreas Blau?**

Emmanuel Pahud gave a masterclass when I was studying at CCM. That was my first real interaction with him. I loved his creative ideas and his attention to detail. Halfway through my degree, I realized that I didn't feel adequately prepared to take orchestral auditions. I had only begun to scratch the surface of playing excerpts well. Did I want to pursue a Doctorate? Honestly, I wasn't sure. I decided to apply to doctoral programs and for a Fulbright. Initially, my intent was to study with Emmanuel Pahud. At the time, I asked my teacher if I could have Mr. Pahud's email address. So, I emailed him! AND he emailed me back!

**Wow! That is amazing! You must have been so excited of his quick reply.**

I just lost it when he replied! His email basically said that he really enjoyed my playing, but that he was so busy with his touring schedule that he really didn't teach students at the time. But he also said that he would love to put me in touch with his colleague, Andreas Blau. I emailed Mr. Blau and said, "I know we don't know each other, but I would love to take lessons with you if I receive a Fulbright, but the caveat is that I would need you to write a recommendation letter for me. Mr. Pahud told me that I could be in touch with you directly." It was a complete act of faith. And he said YES! His response was that he had heard great things about me from Mr. Pahud and that he would happily write a letter of recommendation for me. And so, he did, while he was in Italy in fact, and he faxed it over. I ended up studying with him after I received the Fulbright.

**In your uncertainty about what next after your master's degree, that was a very clear YES for you!**

Yes! It was all pretty daunting! I remember sitting in the hallway of the Berliner Philharmonie, waiting for my first lesson with Mr. Blau, when Emmanuel Pahud walked past me. He did a double-take and said, "you're here!" I was certainly excited about that and mentioned that I was studying with Mr. Blau. Mr. Pahud then invited me to study with him whenever he was in town.

**That is amazing! The best of both worlds! What did you work on in lessons?**

My lessons were in German with Mr. Blau and in English with Mr. Pahud. The nature of my study was primarily with Mr. Blau and I studied with Mr. Pahud only occasionally.

They are both very different. Mr. Pahud is an extremely creative player. He has crystallized creative ideas about how to interpret excerpts. For example, I was working on Mendelssohn's Scherzo with him and we spent an hour discussing the contour and shape of the excerpt. We talked about how the lines were shaped and how that fit with what the orchestra was playing. With Mr. Pahud, I got to know how excerpts fit within the context of the orchestra and the kinds of creative ideas that we need to project when we are playing these excerpts. He encouraged me to take an extra breath in the Scherzo and showed me where he took his! You must be quite loud to balance with the orchestra in this solo. He mentioned that playing this solo with the orchestra allowed more flexibility to sneak in a breath if needed. I was so relieved.



**I feel so relieved too! But probably in an audition we must play softer and without the extra breath. It is so good to know from him that it is okay in performance to breathe where we need!**

I would set Mr. Pahud apart as a creative artist who is open to experimenting with musical ideas so long as those ideas serve the music. That is what struck me about Mr. Pahud.

**Tell us about Andreas Blau? How was his style of teaching different?**

Mr. Blau studied with a very famous flutist name Karlheinz Zöeller, who was in the Berlin Phil prior to Mr. Blau's 46-year tenure with the orchestra. Mr. Blau's flute playing developed out of a very traditional style of German flute playing. I met with him every week or every other week depending on each month. We would have lessons on the stage of the Berlin Phil or at his house. Our lessons were very focused on fundamentals, making sure that my fundamentals were so good that I could do anything. We spent so much time talking about the importance of articulation and inflection in Bach's music and how these tools help flutists show rhetoric. That is so critical to Baroque music. Studying with him, I learned how fundamentals support what we can do creatively. You can be so limited creatively if you don't have solid fundamentals. And I really don't think I had thought of my fundamentals as being *that* important. I valued my time with both. I remember working on the Classical Symphony for about a month before I could play it decently. Mr. Blau told me that it sounded too hard and not effortless. He explained that the tone needed to have resonance for it to sound easy. I never understood how resonance or having a good tone could make something sound effortless. Now of course I understand. I worked on the Classical Symphony for another month, but this time very slowly, making certain that I had an awareness of what it felt like for the resonance to be really good at a slow speed. I then tried playing short sections at a faster speed, being more conscience of the resonance throughout. That was so fabulous for me!



**It sounds like your lessons in Berlin probably had a huge impact on your own teaching style and helped to craft what you hold as important in your philosophy of teaching.**

Yes, it is. I often tell my students, “if your fundamentals are great, like Emmanuel Pahud, you can play anything!” His fundamentals are so solid that it is intuitive. As a younger player, Mr. Pahud spent a lot of

time honing his fundamentals. I believe this is what gives him and Mr. Blau the confidence to be the greatest artists of our time. Build your confidence in fundamentals!

**That is so inspiring. Will you tell us more about your own teaching philosophy and what you focus on imparting to your students?**

As teacher, I aim to nurture the complete musician and flutist. The first step of this process involves improving and building fundamental skills. I have a diverse studio of students pursuing a variety of careers in and outside of the field of music. While the repertoire I choose for my students may be different for each student, due to academic loads, my expectations for fundamentals are the same. With the help of my students, I try my best to create an environment where everyone feels supported while working towards the same goal of fundamental excellence. We have scale game classes and utilize De La Sonorite often. Sometimes I approach fundamentals differently than my previous teachers. I have a scale game that I do with improvisation on scales (i.e. diatonic, blues, modal, etc.). In this exercise the students learn new scale patterns and listen for emerging melodic ideas. The other thing that is important to me is mentoring students. As an educator I am also interested in helping my students become well-rounded citizens. I fully support them in pursuing the career paths they've chosen and enjoy helping my students shape their careers according to their unique abilities and talents. I work with my students to write vision and mission statements that encapsulate what they want to do in music and the steps to get there. We start out our term with a vision board party. It can be difficult to articulate a mission, so the students will go on Pinterest or take personal photos and put them on boards with words. In the second term, students receive supportive feedback on their boards from their peers. Students highlight one another's strengths and gifts. As a studio we help each other reach our goals.



**How wonderful for your students to have you to walk alongside them and help them to see all the possibilities.**

I love helping my students when I can. I was prompted by the same questions when I was a student (not too long ago!). Pursuing a solo, orchestral, teaching, and chamber career are all bucket list items in a very competitive music eco-system. What if your interests don't reside in those small and often limited choices? The process of articulating your ideas is one of the most important steps that you can take. By doing this, I believe you are closer to choosing a life of music that is filled with beauty, purpose, and balance.

**What brand of flute do you play?**

I play on a 14k Muramatsu. I bought this flute when I was a student at the University of Michigan. When I first entered school, I had a pretty good flute, but it was not great. My teacher, Amy Porter, encouraged me to get a new flute. I visited Ervin Monroe at Muramatsu America in Detroit, and Ms. Porter had me pick flutes with a blindfold on!

**Wow! That's a great idea!**

That WAS great, BUT I ended up picking the most expensive one that was there! Fortunately, I was able to get a loan to purchase the instrument and then finally paid it off. It was well worth it. I have a lot of students who come to the U of O needing a new instrument. I always tell them that I too didn't have a great flute at the start. You can work with what you have, and your musicianship will ultimately shine through until you are able to get a new instrument!

**Tell us a little about your early career in LA and in New York. I'm also secretly curious about your work with Gustavo Dudamel.**

Gustavo Dudamel is an incredibly energetic and inspiring conductor. It was an incredibly enriching experience but was very challenging since I didn't ultimately win the job. So, I suddenly had to ask myself, "what's next?" It has not been an easy road by any means. Sometimes you feel like you are in a slump or that you are completely buried under the ground, what you don't realize is that you are planted, not buried. When something is growing, you can always see its fruit above the ground. So anytime I feel like I'm in a season of my life that's challenging, I just remember that I am growing. I would never take back any experience I've had, good or bad, because I believe that God is positioning me exactly where I need to be. He turns everything into good. I really love to have the freedom to do so many different things at the University of Oregon. I really feel like I am in a season of life where I am thriving and growing.

**What advice would you like to pass along to those who want to talk in your footsteps:**

To those students or adults wanting to be professional flutists, my advice is to hone your fundamental skills. Having incredible fundamentals will give you the confidence to knock out an audition. There are so many things that can affect auditions, stress and performance anxiety to name a few. It can really be a mental game. Focus on being your best player fundamentally. This will support you in an audition, even when you are nervous. Also, surround yourself with a community of flutists who are pursuing careers you are interested in. Their feedback can be so helpful in the journey. I encourage my students to take lessons from different teachers. Sometimes we even talk about those differences in pedagogy and thought in our lessons. These perspectives will help you become the musician that you want to be. Diversity of perspective enriches our flute community.



**Thank you so much, Dr. Cordova! We look forward to your recital and masterclass on Saturday, October 26!**

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