

Flutist teaches her instrument to all

Neptune woman instructs ‘all ages and skill levels’

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Growing up in Milton, Pennsylvania, Neptunebased professional flutist and flute instructor Marjorie Koharski didn't start out playing the instrument she's been associated with for decades.

“My father was a professional violinist, so I started on the violin, but my heart wasn't in it and I wanted my own instrument,” recalled Koharski, who changed to the flute at age 12 and studied that instrument all through middle and high school. “I liked the sound it made, the repertoire for flute music, and the ease of carrying it.”

After graduating from Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, Koharski temporarily put her flute aside as she married, became an elementary school teacher in Albuquerque, New Mexico, while her husband was in the military, and eventually moved to New Jersey.

But the break from her beloved instrument wouldn't last long.

“I took up lessons again after having children to refresh my skills and expand my repertoire,” said Koharski, a retired faculty member of the Monmouth Conservatory of Music in Red Bank who went on to play the flute professionally with the Monmouth Symphony Orchestra for over 50 years until 20162017.

Warm and welcoming

“I started teaching others privately in my home under my name beginning in the early 1960s,” said Koharski of her eponymous business that's combined the best of her flute and teaching experience for over half a century.

Conducted in her special music studio (which also houses a piano, an instrument she plays as well), “lessons typically last one hour and cost \$40, and I instruct people of all ages and skill levels,” she said. “I teach everyone, from children as early as the first grade through late adults and from beginners to more advanced players,” Koharski said. “I've also had several students who have turned professional, including one who went on to become associate principal flute of the New York Philharmonic.”

Koharski said the flute industry has expanded tremendously over the years. “There are more fine flutes than ever made by a growing pool of manufacturers from the U.S., Japan, and other countries, so it's become a huge market with many options,” she said.

With beginners typically starting out on a closed hole flute and advancing to an open hole instrument (prices of which can range from \$500 to as much as \$20,000 to \$25,000 for a gold or platinum model), “each manufacturer's flute has a different sound, so there are many choices to draw from today, from C flutes and piccolos to alto flutes, bass flutes, contrabass flutes and more,” said Koharski, who currently favors her gold flute but also possesses four silver ones, three piccolos and an alto flute.

According to Koharski, the flute has remained a popular instrument, but the profile of her students has changed over the years.

“It seems that there are less younger students now; fewer middle and high school students are taking private lessons because they’re so involved with other activities,” she said, noting that more and more of her students are adults who played the flute during their school years and elected to pick it up again.

While she has a current roster of eight to 12 regular students, Koharski is happy to take on more. “I’d love to teach more people because I have something unique to offer them,” she said.

Flute student Donna DeCotiis couldn’t agree more. Now 27 years old and a dance/movement therapist and mental health counselor, “I’ve been playing the flute for 18 years and began taking lessons with Marjorie 17 years ago,” said DeCotiis, a Belmar resident who took a break from weekly lessons while in college and graduate school but resumed a regular schedule of lessons with Koharski in 2016.

After DeCotiis fell in love with the flute in elementary school, “my grandmother saw Marjorie play in the Monmouth Symphony Orchestra and told me about her,” she recalled. She credits Koharski with helping her land flute positions in the All-Shore, Region, and All-State Bands in elementary and high school as well as in the Rutgers University Symphony Band during college.

“Marjorie is phenomenal at the flute, passionate about teaching others, and really believes in her students,” DeCotiis said. “She creates a warm, welcoming and supportive environment, but at the same time isn’t afraid to be honest with you to help you achieve your potential. She’s always pushed me to keep learning and growing and saw potential in me that I couldn’t see myself.”

Magic of music

While Koharski said it can be challenging to get the word out about her private flute lessons, the busy professional also pursues an active schedule of performances with several groups.

Among them, “I regularly play with a trio called The Festive Flutes at local libraries and senior residences and as a duo with professional guitarist Keith Calmes at libraries, performing arts centers, senior residences, weddings, and receptions several times a month and especially around the holidays,” Koharski said of the classical flute concertos and sonatas she favors.

Looking ahead, “Keith and I are preparing a new series of concerts this year, and beginning this February, The Festive Flutes will present its new series, which will include an all-Beethoven score in commemoration of Beethoven’s 250th birthday,” she said. “I’m excited to keep developing new music with both groups, provide music for entertainment and background purposes for weddings, showers, receptions and other special events, and teach others.”

In today’s society where schools often have limited budgets for the arts, Koharski understands the value of her instruction.

“Music is so important. It keeps the mind active and engaged and brings a lifetime of joy,” she said. “Private lessons can give students that extra boost, expose them to new experiences and provide the opportunity to hone skills that there’s no time to develop in school.”



Marjorie Koharski, a longtime professional flutist who provides private flute lessons to people of all ages and skill levels and performs with several musical trios and duos, plays in her home in Neptune. PHOTOS BY TANYA BREEN/ASBURY PARK PRESS



Marjorie Koharski says the flute industry has expanded tremendously over the years. She says she began teaching the instrument in the 1960s.

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