

# *Alaina Chester, Oboe*

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Alaina Chester grew up in the small town of Genoa, Illinois amongst the corn. Not having any idea what the oboe even sounded like, she was adamant about playing it simply because no one else wanted to, like a true middle child. She has loved the oboe ever since the moment she picked it up at age 11. Alaina was an active young musician growing up, she was her high school marching band's drum major and performed in ILMEA's All State Orchestra. She also received the Best Performance of the Day Award at Solo and Ensemble competitions for two consecutive years. Outside of school, Alaina played principal oboe in the Rockford Symphony Youth and Chamber Orchestras, Elgin Youth Symphony Orchestra, and in the RSYO's honor woodwind quintet. She also frequently played with the Kishwaukee Symphony Orchestra and Rockford Wind Ensemble.

Alaina continued her music studies at the Jacobs School of Music. While there she performed the English horn solo in Dvorak's Symphony, No. 9, "From the New World," with conductor Thomas Wilkins. She also performed as principal oboe in Beethoven's Symphony No. 6 and Richard Strauss's Don Quixote. Other conductors she has performed with include Arthur Fagan and Gerard Schwarz. In addition to getting experience in every orchestra chair, Alaina performed three solo recitals and in many chamber recitals. As a participant at the Eastern Music Festival, she also performed works by Strauss, Mahler, and Stravinsky.

Alaina has a passion for collaborative and educational projects. She and her woodwind quintet, Quintessence, performed for the Bloomington, IN community bringing classical music to everyday venues from bus stations to downtown sidewalks. They also have performed interactive educational concerts for children of all ages in public schools in the Bloomington and Indianapolis areas. Further collaborations include one of the Bruderhof religious communities outside of Pittsburgh, PA in a project that enhances the music life and performance practice of their youth. At Carnegie Mellon School of Music she served on an innovative student team that cultivates a culture of collaboration in the College of Fine Arts with initiatives such as a call for paintings on practice room walls and designing new community seating areas. She has also assisted Monique Mead in creating educational activities for German music teachers and their students to prepare them for her upcoming family concerts with the orchestra.

Alaina loves to share her experiences as a musician and oboist, especially with her students. She has taught private lessons to beginning oboe students for six years, all of whom have been selected to participate in ILMEA's district band.

Alaina received her Bachelor of Music in Oboe Performance at Indiana University studying with Linda Strommen and Roger Roe. While there she also received a Certificate in Arts Administration. Alaina has also studied with Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra's principal oboist, Cynthia DeAlmeida, at Carnegie Mellon University.

When she is not scraping on reeds, Alaina enjoys swing dancing, watching her cactus grow, and laughing at cult classic B movies.