

Susan Aspray, Oboe



Susan Aspray grew up in a small town amid the endless cornfields of Northern Illinois in a little house where classical music was often heard from the record player and radio. As a young girl she was very involved in ballet and pinpoints the start of a personal connection with great music to the Chopin her ballet teacher often chose for barre work. She began playing oboe in the 6th grade in a middle school band program. It wasn't long before music became her primary focus. In high school she started serious study of her instrument with Gladys Elliot, Principal Oboist of the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Ms. Elliot was a wonderful lady and a great oboist who didn't just teach oboe. She taught about surviving life's curveballs and how to make the perfect poached egg with cheese - among many other things. At the age of fifteen Susan began weekly lessons with Ray Still, Principal Oboist of the Chicago Symphony. He became her primary teacher through completion of her graduate work at Northwestern University, in Evanston, IL where she received Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Oboe Performance. Mr. Still was a legendary oboist, a demanding teacher and a most fascinating person to know. Susan is forever grateful to have been a part of the unique, long-term, one-on-one, teacher-student relationships that exist among musicians.

Shortly after her time at Northwestern, Susan became very tired of making oboe reeds and relocated to San Francisco where she worked in research administration at the University of California – Berkeley. In San Francisco she became interested in sailing and met her husband, Rick. They met at a car wash sitting on a bench waiting for their clean cars to be ready. He told her about his great sailboat and the rest, as they say, is history. Susan opted to become a full-time mom to their two children.



In 2001 the Asprays moved to Tampa to be near family. Susan was introduced to the Tampa Bay Symphony by violist Karen Mamel in 2013. She credits Karen, fellow TBS oboist Darlene Davis, TFO oboist Lane Lederer and Mark Sforzini for her return to oboe playing after a long hiatus. To date, Susan's most memorable musical experiences have been as a student of Ray Still, a camper at the National Music Camp in Interlochen, MI, a fellow at the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, CA, a \$3 student ticket holder to dozens of Chicago

Symphony concerts conducted by Sir Georg Solti in the 1980s and a recent TBS performance of 'Four Last Songs' by Richard Strauss.

Susan and Rick retired from the pool maintenance and supply business with the sale of their second Pinch-A-Penny store in September 2019. They now split their time between their home in Temple Terrace and 'Grace' - a Beneteau 393 sloop docked near downtown St. Pete. The kids are all grown up. Natalie graduated from UF and NYU and is currently beginning her career as a



nurse in Washington, D.C. Connor is a recent graduate of the Naval Academy in Annapolis. He is an Aerospace Engineer and soon-to-be naval aviator who will begin flight training in Pensacola within the year.

In addition to sailing, Susan loves to run, read, grow flowers and work word puzzles. She is a proud member of the Tampa Bay Symphony, a wonderful orchestra that also promotes the work of 21st century composers. She is also delighted and honored to be working part-time for the marvelously creative St. Petersburg Opera!