

**Inside the Artist -  
Anne Decker  
May 2015**



**Tell us about your journey in music / as a musician.**

It began at age three when my mom started piano lessons. Music was ingrained from the beginning. I was in a strong music program at school and had lots of church music experience growing up. Marching band was an exciting part of my development as I did lots of percussion and my interest in rhythm started there. I decided late that I would apply to music school. It was at the last minute when I realized that music was truly what I was good at and what I wanted to do.

At school I conducted all the time and I started writing grants and was able to bring in a composer to work on campus. I have a sweet spot in my heart for collegiate programs. It allowed me to dream in a place where I felt supported. I had institutional support and my time there was a very defining experience. After I received my Masters in Orchestral Conducting, I had two job auditions that were both amazing. One was a small music school and the other, the Vermont Youth Orchestra Association (VYOA), was the job that landed me in Vermont in 1999. I worked there for 13 years. I also had a degree in music education, which allowed me to pay the bills. I was hired at U-32 High School in East Montpelier where I started the orchestra program and I have been there for 11 years. I met a guy, got married and had kids; we decided to stay here and now we are very entrenched!



I did various free-lance professional conducting and after having my kids, decided to take a year off from VYOA. Part-way through my time off, VYOA decided to keep the guy who was

subbing for me. It was a huge blow for me, a blow to my ego. I was scared, freaked out, mad and also curious at the same time. I was a middle class, Midwestern girl who hadn't had a lot of adversity in my life and I had to learn to navigate my way through it; with everyone (musicians) so connected in Vermont. I have some resentment but also still have a working relationship with VYOA today.

I wound up having an amazing year off. With the summer off (the first since having my kids) and working part-time conducting, I had room to try new things and reconnect with mountain biking. When I later conducted Les Misérables at U-32, it reminded me how much I loved that state of being/working. It's intense but I love it.



During that time, I went to a Montpelier Chamber Music performance and met Mary Rowell, the rock star of the violin world (founding member of the rock quartet, ETHEL). She was a big person with a huge presence and I was thrilled when she later sought me out. Mary had liked the Vermont music programming I had incorporated at U-32 and she said she wanted to work with me. I started dreaming a little and realized I wanted to do new music, bring it to new people, make it accessible and I wanted it to do it in Waterbury. Mary is a professional musician I felt I was aligned with; from our music, to our tastes and even to how we socialize. I knew that I needed to try it then because Mary was on board and I didn't want to miss the opportunity. I had to figure out how to raise the money to make it happen and pay the musicians as the professionals they

are. TURNmusic was born.

One year ago, I had a concert on the books and began working on how the business piece would evolve. I started fundraising for the first time since college and I have loved every aspect of it. It's fun telling people about it and having their support. I seek out support from places that are meaningful to me and consider the choices in which I approach. I want the support to be more than just a check. I have the best places in Vermont interested in doing this project with us. For the May program, we reached out to Montréal musicians and are bringing in a turn table-ist from NYC. We are reaching for this one, merging two mediums in a way people won't expect. It has been tricky to balance it financially (I don't always pay myself) and I'm looking to get a board together for fundraising and writing grants. I've had some help from friends but want to be able to pay people for their time and support.

Social media has helped me explore and brings my ideas and dreams to life. I get to see what is happening in other places and explore ways to give it life here in Vermont. Being a mom, having kids, is blowing my mind, especially in how music affects them. I'm in a growth place in my life; I have to work to slow my brain down. My worlds (my kids, U-32/teaching and TURNmusic) are all colliding and it is amazing.



TURNmusic is fun, the model is working and people are coming to shows. The tickets are cheap (\$15), and the point is the experience. I want people to come, be surprised and be stimulated by something new. I think about the effects of technological advances like Pandora and Spotify and what has been taken away by it; in tailoring our music choices we control how the music affects us. Through my educational lens, I believe the arts should bring in something new, creating new reactions and new experiences. Through that experience it grows our appreciation of what the artist/musician is trying to get across.

**What is the musical genre you most like to work with/in?  
What draws you to this genre?**

It's so funny. What I'm trying to do is work in ALL the genres! Can I say the acoustic genre? It's kind of like that. I want to work in the skilled performer genre. I love and want to perform all kinds of music and with TURNmusic, I've been closer to this than ever before.



I'm trained and skilled in classical, but I love to listen to and play bluegrass, folk, hip hop, reggae, classic rock and the list goes on. Rhythm and groove tie it all together. Is that a genre? This is hard to answer! Maybe it is best to say I am anti-genre right now.

**What most inspires your work - Has there been anything that has been life changing or that has influenced your practice?**

No longer working at VYOA freed up the time and mental energy it took to be there doing that work. (After leaving VYOA) I was not sure where I fit in any longer. I decided to create this thing that was me, rather than work for someone else. It was life changing.

My kids are life changing on a daily basis. Where music and life connect are the biggest influences for me.

**What blogs or books are you reading or would recommend?**

I'm not reading a book right now but I do have *Judevine* (poem turned play) by Vermont poet, David Budbill, next to my bed. I got it out to revisit the stories. The book inspired composer Erik Nielsen who collaborated with Budbill to create his first opera in 2000, *A Fleeting Animal*. I did the premier when I first moved to Vermont and a revival is in the works for September 2015.

I'm seeking out any readings/writings on people I currently admire or am inspired by. I search Twitter and Facebook for artists I admire. Educating myself this way, I feel like I'm back at school crazily cramming curriculum. It's like an independent study. I recently read an article on Chris Thile and the Punch Brothers; I'm obsessed. I also read anything I can on composer Nico Muhly; he has a fascinating take on music and I like his perspective.

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