

MEET THE LIBRARIAN

Elana Lence Talley for

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Kathryn Taylor, violinist and librarian with the Madison Symphony for the past 14 years, is a friendly brunette whose eyes twinkle behind her glasses. A native of the Denver area, she credits her parents for exposing her to classical music, by taking her to concerts and operas at a young age. She says they are “the perfect classical music fans; our best audience members!” She began playing violin in the third grade, and knew she wanted to “do this forever” after a European tour with the Golden Youth Symphony. Kathryn went on to earn a bachelor’s degree in violin performance from the University of Wyoming, as well as doing some graduate studies at Michigan State University.

Kathryn says, “With a degree in music performance, I knew I had to have an additional way to make a living. My mom was a librarian, so I decided to get a Master’s degree in Library Science. As a librarian, I have worked in the Government Documents department at Michigan State University, and in the Music Division at the Chicago Public Library. These jobs allowed me to continue performing in regional orchestras. In 1994 I moved to Madison to join the orchestra, and a year later the orchestra librarian position opened, so I applied for the job. Even though I had a library degree and 13 years of professional experience, being an orchestra music librarian was quite a different beast!”

At Michigan State and Chicago Public Library, she was a public services reference librarian and worked on collection development. This involved working with researchers, students, and the general public to help them find the information they needed. Kathryn joined the Music Library in Chicago just as it was becoming evident that CDs were to be the next major media for sound reproduction, so she got to build an entire classical music CD collection from scratch. “It was great fun!” Kathryn said.

Queried about the difference between symphony orchestra music librarians and “library science” librarians, Kathryn explained, “Orchestra librarianship is much more like what libraries call ‘technical services.’ This is all the behind-the-scenes work that goes on in a library, such as purchasing and processing new materials, cataloguing, collection maintenance, and circulation. I had training in this in library school, but very little actual experience.”

“The steep learning curve for moving from a reference library to an orchestra library was figuring out the various sources for orchestral music, and getting a handle on the timing of the work we do. I was really caught off guard by how much in advance the work has to be done. I also learned early on about how important communication is among all the artistic staff. Knowing what questions to ask of whom is something that only experience taught me in the beginning.”

The Madison Symphony Orchestra season consists of nine classical programs, three educational programs, three operas, an opera gala, and a ballet about every two years. Kathryn averages about 20 hours a week in the library, which allows her time to perform in the orchestra and teach violin lessons. Kathryn brags, "...[I] always have plenty of elves who mark bowings, so that really helps me get the work done in those limited hours."

The Madison Symphony library is located in the same building as the orchestra staff, but in a separate room (no window, alas). Luckily, it is conveniently located across the street from the performance hall. When the library was moved to its current location, the enormous wooden shelves (c. late 1960s) were too large for the elevator, and had to be carried up four flights of stairs. To add insult to injury, it was impossible to maneuver them around the corners from the stairs to the library, so a large hole was cut into the wall, and the units were hoisted into the library. Kathryn laughs, "The drywall was patched up and when I leave, no one will ever be able to figure out how the shelves got in there or how to get them out!"

Kathryn credits the David Daniels *Orchestral Music*, the Education Music Service *Music in Print* database, and her MOLA colleagues as her favorite library resources. Kathryn goes on, "I was in the job for a couple of years before being introduced to MOLA, and it has made all the difference in the world. I was feeling so isolated and alone in my work, which I really hated. Attending the conferences, reading the Forum, and just knowing you all are out there dealing with the same issues is very reassuring! I try to go to the MOLA conference every two or three years, and I always learn new things about our work as orchestra librarians. The knowledge gained and experiences shared there just seem to be an essential part of my job. Also, I really don't like working alone as much, so meeting up with my colleagues is a real mental and emotional boost for me."

When Kathryn is not playing in the orchestra or preparing music in the library, she enjoys hiking, gardening, reading, and traveling. Favorite destinations are the mountains, California and Europe, and she and her husband (a clarinetist) try to make it to Carnegie Hall whenever the Berlin Philharmonic is performing there.