

NOTES & NUMBERS

The oboe has a reputation as one of the hardest instruments to learn. But after Juanita Gomes, CPA, played one for the first time as a kid, there was no going back. Today the oboist from Kelowna, British Columbia, balances her work as a partner at an accounting solutions firm with nearly two decades as a performer with the Okanagan Symphony Orchestra. **BY ROB CSERNYIK**

I was trained classically on piano from about age nine, and then I went into school band class and started on the clarinet. But I didn't find it challenging enough. **One day I took an oboe home and couldn't put it down.** I thought it was the most amazing instrument I'd ever tried. Though I never worked on a music degree, I did study with the principal oboist of the Okanagan Symphony Orchestra—Walter Burton, now a retired CPA.

The oboe's structure is different from most woodwinds. It's got a double reed, and I had to learn to make them in order to produce the sound that I love. **It's a beautiful, penetrating sound but it's also difficult to get that pure tone.** It can take years of practice and hard work.

I love the challenge of coming up with solutions for businesses. **Problem-solving often requires creativity, and music is creative.** The oboe is an extreme challenge as well. It's one of the hardest instruments to learn and I love the idea of conquering it.

In high school I took an accounting course and it piqued my interest. It's so outside the norm of your typical high school courses. **I found it fascinating to understand how a business was run and the logic behind accounting.**

I like making sense out of business challenges by finding solutions to see businesses succeed. It's also nice to have control over how your time is spent and be with family when needed.

I really like pieces that evoke emotion because the oboe is kind of like an extension of the human voice. I enjoy playing Mozart because the music that he wrote for the oboe is very light and beautiful. Romantic-era music like *Swan Lake* and *Romeo and Juliet* are some of my favourites, too.

Balancing being a musician with my professional life as a CPA is tricky. It's like being an athlete—you need to be in shape. My embouchure and lung capacity can go quickly if I don't practise at home, so I have to schedule time to stay on top of that. Finding time for rehearsals and shows to make sure I stay in shape can be really challenging—especially during busy season.



PHOTOGRAPH BY DARREN HULL