

Sam Gordon: A Life of Service

By Julie Marcotte

Sam Gordon has marched down South Michigan Avenue to his workshop in the century-old, Fine Arts Building for over forty years. A native Chicagoan, music and art lover, skilled musician and gifted flute technician, Sam is uniquely qualified to make the best flute sound even better. As a Powell distributor, he is also an expert judge in finding the right flute for each player.

Being raised by a father who owned an art gallery on North Michigan Avenue and was an avid appreciator of music, Sam was surrounded in his youth by beautiful sights and sounds. Visiting Mr. Gordon's art gallery meant viewing art to the strains of Chicago's classical music radio station, WFMT, which played non-stop throughout the day. On the other hand, both of Sam's parents instilled a sense of the importance of education and doing your best in every endeavor. When his brother chose to study oboe, Sam chose to study flute, and each brother continued along a successful path of music performance – but each finding his own specialized gifts.

After moonlighting with an instrument repair expert for several years as a student, Sam discovered that he had a real knack for the precise, technical aspects of working with flutes, especially with his own knowledge of what it takes to perform the instrument on a high level. While his brother landed a position in the St. Louis Symphony and Sam performed with the Orchestra of the Music of the Baroque, he soon realized that his true calling was on the other side of the spotlight, assisting performers and students as they sought to succeed in the cut-throat world of flute performance.

In the years of quietly working behind the scenes, Sam has developed a reputation for meeting the needs of world-class performers and young flutists alike while developing his own system of repair. Sam is one of only a few people in the nation who will work on the most expensive, hand-crafted flutes. Using his own, specialized contraption for holding the flute up to eye-level allows Sam to work meticulously for hours on end without any damage to his body, leaving him free to pursue his adventurous side, like traveling, landscaping, experimenting with food alongside his wife, exercising with his Chow-chow each day, or escaping with his favorite mystery books.

Our native Chicagoan and flute genius has been awarded the Chicago Flute Club's distinguished Lifetime Achievement award just in time for the 2021 Flute Festival. With great respect and admiration, our hats are off to our faithful friend, Sam Gordon.