

PROFILES IN EXCELLENCE

Natassja By

"THE ONE
THING THAT YOU
HAVE THAT
NOBODY ELSE HAS
IS YOU.

YOUR VOICE, YOUR MIND,
YOUR STORY, YOUR VISION.
SO WRITE AND DRAW
AND BUILD AND PLAY AND
DANCE AND LIVE AS YOU
ONLY CAN."

- Neil Gaiman

Mulgrave's Head of Performing Arts, Tony Allard Award Recipient, Musician, Student, Artist, Teacher & Music Champion the World Over

ABOUT MS. BY

Ms. By grew up in Regina, Saskatchewan, with an innate desire to sing and dance. Her parents are musicians, and music of all kinds could be heard in the house: jazz, classical, country, rock, folk... she was surrounded by music! Much of her childhood was spent on stage performing in music festivals, choir and band concerts, and musicals. In addition to her musical endeavours, Ms. By has competed at the provincial level in rowing, rugby and Olympic weightlifting. She moved to North Vancouver in 2004 to study vocal jazz at Capilano University. She has a BEd and BMus in Jazz studies. Natassja sings as an alto with Vancouver's Phoenix Chamber Choir, where she also serves on the Board. The choir just released a CD. In addition, she is part of the organising committee for Inspirare Choral Workshop. In her free time, Natassja can be found hiking and camping in the back country. She also loves to travel, read and play Scrabble.

WHO WAS YOUR FAVOURITE TEACHER? WHY?

My high school band teacher at Campbell Collegiate in Regina. He encouraged me to go into music when I lacked faith in my abilities.

He taught us with a contagious passion and raw vulnerability that is rare and wholly inspired.

WHO WOULD YOU LOVE TO SHARE THE STAGE WITH?

Dolly Parton at the Grand Ole Opry Theatre.

IF YOU COULD LEARN SOMETHING FROM ANYONE WHAT WOULD IT BE?

I would love to have a vocal improv lesson with Ella Fitzgerald.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE INVESTING YOURSELF IN?

At the top of the list is continuing to grow as a musician and conductor. I also love bringing people together to make music, learn together, or share a meal. Aside from that, I love adventuring outside! It really grounds me.



ONE PASSION: MUSIC FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Music, singing, and dance cultures from around the world have always inspired Natassja. During the summer of 2016, Ms. By had the incredible opportunity to spend time in rural Ghana learning about traditional music and dance of the Ewe people as part of Mulgrave's Tony Allard award. While in Africa, she also chaperoned the GEO trip to Kenya, and then traveled through Tanzania, Rwanda and Uganda. "To say it was a life-changing experience doesn't really begin to describe how deeply it inspired me." We asked Natassja to share three of her favourite moments from the trip.



Zebras, Sunsets and Cold Bucket Showers *Serengeti, Tanzania*

Zebras grazing in the wee hours, hyenas circling the tent and lions roaring in the distance. Dusty red sunsets, starry skies and waiting to pee until dawn. Instant coffee, PB&J, and campfires. Bumpy roads, red soil stained feet and counting the hours to a cold bucket shower.

Dancing with the Boys in Irkaat *Irkaat School, Kenya*

I walked over to dance with the boys in Grades 4-8. They giggled at first, unsure, but one grabbed my hand thus began an incredible hour of chanting and dance. I still have no idea what we were singing about, but it was one of those moments that make every cell in your being awaken and celebrate!

Community Drumming Groups & Looking for Music *Dagbamete, Volta Region, Ghana*

There is not one word for music in Ewe language. Drumming, dance, singing, and storytelling are inextricably linked together and are integral to all events in the community. Funerals last for several days, and the energy was electric. Community drumming groups play, sing and dance for hours without a break. I couldn't keep up with the women in their 60s who pulled me into their dance circle.

ONE TRUTH: Singing to Reduce Anxiety and Lower Stress

There are many scientific studies devoted to advancing the theory that singing enhances emotional wellbeing, increases endorphins and alleviates depression. The proof put forth by such research is hard to overlook. Whether it is a study published in the Evolutionary Psychology Journal suggesting that music elevates pain threshold, or evidence pointing to performance as an anti-depressant, it is comforting to know that science backs up what I have witnessed (and felt) for years. Exam worries, love troubles, and big teenage emotions dissolve when our choir students come together. Many studies compare singing in a choir to group meditation, and this transformation of headspace is an exhilarating example of synergy. The vulnerability, collaboration and connections students show during each choir rehearsal is a point of constant inspiration for me! The fact that many recent Mulgrave Choir alumni continue to sing after they graduate is a great testament to the impact of choral singing in helping us manage change and lower stress. Today, Mulgrave graduates can be seen and heard in choirs throughout many North American universities including NYU, McGill, UBC, UW and more. Although choir is not a curricular subject at Mulgrave, our students' commitment to the art form serves as the ultimate proof that sharing something intimate (our own voice) to make something transformative (harmony) is important and joy-filled. - Natassja By