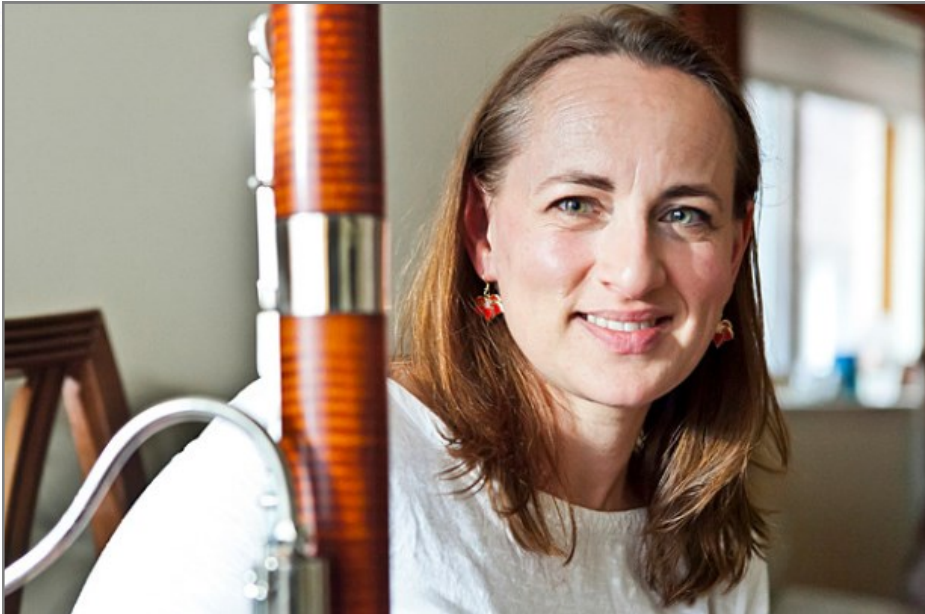


Bassoon is a way of life for local BRIO award winner

by Maya Rajamani



Marisol Diaz / The Riverdale Press

Larisa Gelman, a Bronx Council on the Arts BRIO winner for instrumental music performance, at her home on June 6.

Larisa Gelman recalls a day that began with a morning concert in Connecticut, continued with an afternoon concert in New York City and ended with an evening concert in Philadelphia. "I'll never forget that day. We had to travel through three states for three concerts," said the classical bassoon player.

Ms. Gelman is one of the winners of the 2014 BRIO Awards for Instrumental Music Performance, presented by the Bronx Council on the Arts to artists who excel in their fields and give back to the Bronx community. She has performed as a soloist with the Brooklyn Symphony and the Broadway Bach Ensemble, performing Vivaldi and Weber concertos, as well as at other concerts both in the U.S. and internationally.

A busy schedule does not faze Ms. Gelman. Along with performing the bassoon — a wind instrument made of a series of pipes that, when taken apart and lined up, measure about 12 feet — she works as the director of the Educational Outreach Center at the 92nd Street Y in Manhattan. There she creates music and arts education outreach programs for children at public schools.

Her career as a bassoonist dates back to the sixth grade, when switched from playing clarinet to playing bassoon. "You pick the instrument, but the instrument also picks you," said Ms. Gelman, who fell in love with the bassoon after her mother suggested she take up the less ubiquitous instrument.

A native of Rochester, New York, Ms. Gelman performed with the Rochester Philharmonic Youth Orchestra in high school, touring Alaska and the Dominican Republic with her fellow musicians. When the time came to choose between music and science in college she could not — Ms. Gelman double majored in music and biology at Oberlin College, after which she went on to Yale University, where she received a masters degree in music.

She and her husband Igor Begelman, a clarinetist, met at the 1998 Pacific Music Festival in Japan, started by composer and pianist Leonard Bernstein. They often perform concerts together, playing music they have arranged for bassoon and clarinet. Since 2003, the couple has lived in Riverdale with their two children, Eve, 10, and Joshua, 5. ■

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