



For a student perspective on Foundation Day, high school junior Thompson Blade and sophomore Sophie Glassman were selected to write an article. Thompson and Sophie share what they took away from the experience after listening to our Distinguished Alumnus, Scott Gleckler P/K/A Scott Harper '71 on March 28, 2022.

Wyoming School Foundation Day 2022: Scott Harper

“Potential into action creates actuality”

By Thompson Blade & Sophie Glassman

The Speech:

Sophie: As the school filed into the auditorium for the 2022 foundation day assembly, my expectations were relatively low. Of course, it's nice to miss a few bells of class, but I wasn't sure what to expect from Mr. Harper. *Was he going to be serious? Was he going to bore the crowd?* This was going to be my first foundation day, and I had no idea what to expect.

After an inviting introduction from Mrs. Blunt, Mr. Harper slowly approached the podium and lightly tapped the microphone a few times before exclaiming, "oh yeah!" The auditorium erupted in laughter and enthusiastic applause; the students transformed from tired zombies into solicitous spectators.

Mr. Harper was full of animated energy. As someone who knows nothing about music, I was genuinely enthralled by his anecdotes and jokes. He continually asked us to repeat an Aristotle quote: "Potential into action creates actuality." One would be surprised to discover that Mr. Harper was not involved in band or orchestra during his time at Wyoming, and as a self-taught musician, Mr. Harper sincerely values this quote.

He played a few of his arrangements, including "Love And Understanding," performed by Cher, and the music from the *Schindler's List* trailer. Students and faculty were dancing along to the music. Overall the assembly was a fun, lighthearted time.

With the Orchestra:

Thompson: As a member of Philharmonia (one of the two school orchestras) I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to perform with the orchestra for Mr. Harper, receive feedback, and ask him questions. After our somewhat timid performance, he was very encouraging, pushing us to be confident and expressive. He gave helpful insights into particular passages that improved our musicality as well. On our second playing of the piece, the difference was dramatic. Our dynamics were more defined, our playing was more emotive, we had a new sense of confidence that he instantly instilled in us. After this, he took the stage with us and offered some advice.

The piece of advice that he gave that stood out to me the most was “keep your fingernails short”. Perhaps I held on to this because it was oddly specific or because I didn’t immediately see the relevance. However, as I look back on it, this little piece of advice is symbolic of the entire day. This was a tip that you learn from years of experience devoting oneself to music. A true professional would know how something as trivial as a fingernail could have a dramatic influence on a performance.

I would also like to thank Mr. Harper for his donation of both a trumpet and a violin to the high school. Beyond speaking and giving us insight into his journey with music, this action truly shows a devotion to continuing the musical education for years to come. We are extremely lucky to have access to such an incredible music department and to have alumni who are working to maintain this for the next generations.

Interview:

Thompson & Sophie: We had the esteemed pleasure of interviewing Mr. Harper at the end of foundation day. Initially, we wanted to know how he got into classical/orchestral music, considering he was not involved in the strings program. He discussed how classical music had always been in life. His father had a cello, and he would consistently listen to pieces on vinyl such as the Grand Canyon Suite. He shared the exertions that followed with being a self-taught musician. “I had a realization in Northern Italy when it occurred to me that I know nothing... I basically had to start all over - forget everything I thought I knew.” Mr. Harper also expressed the difficulty he had when reading music on site. Despite the struggles many young musicians face, The Royal College of Music in London served as an excellent institution that thoroughly prepared Mr. Harper for his future endeavors. From the onset, he showed glimpses of his future

composition talents by auditioning with a piece that he wrote himself. One of his proudest accomplishments was when his dear friend Lin Murray told Mr. Harper that no matter what he composed, he was “too good”. In the challenging environment of Los Angeles, this was very validating for Mr. Harper, and dramatically boosted his confidence for future projects. When asked about his education at Wyoming, he talked about the importance of the breadth of education to which he had access. Though at times he felt like an outsider, he attributed his experience to building character. In our time with Mr. Harper, we were constantly amazed by his insight, curiosity, and personability. From the onset of his speech, we were captivated. Ultimately, we learned much about putting passion and creativity into action through his incredible experiences.