

# SCHERZO

Interviews with the notable musicians & fascinating personalities of our day

with WESLEY FERREIRA

## ALAN KAY

*Alan Kay is a Rochester, NY native, principal clarinetist of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra (and former artistic director), and serves on the teaching faculty of the Manhattan School of Music, The Juilliard School, and Stony Brook University. He sits down to answer some questions.*

**What's the buzzword you never want to hear again?**

I'd love not to hear the word "awesome" so much.

**Who was your hero growing up, and who's your hero today?**

As a kid attending Rochester Philharmonic concerts, music director David Zinman was my hero. Decades later, I played in Orchestra of St. Luke's in New York with him conducting and told him so. He could not have looked less interested. So much for that!

**What is your favorite gadget or piece of equipment in your home?**

My Nespresso machine!

**What in your workspace keeps you motivated?**

My collection of scores and books on music. I've spent SO many hours at my desk, surrounded by clarinets, equipment, and music... my eyes frequently wander to various books in the collection, and I'll often take one down and read a snippet or two. It might be a bit of fiction, some nerdy Schenkerian stuff, books on the clarinet, or jazz history.

**What's the one thing that people would be surprised to find out about you?**

I took ballroom dancing for three years.

**If you could have lunch with any human being in history, who would it be and what would you want to know?**

Probably Brahms, though my German is lacking, and his English was not great. I just think the late Romantic period is so fascinating, and it would be great to visit a Konditorei with the master.

**What's one thing you wish you had known when you began your career?**

Decide on a path for yourself and follow it, without worrying about the consequences and without allowing yourself to be bogged down by other things.

**Is there a musician/artist that you admire?**

While I do admire many classical musicians for their talent, their uncanny ability to carry multiple concerti and recital programs from venue to venue, all memorized, I am most admiring of jazz musicians, for their phenomenal ability to compose on the spot, while keeping track of time and form without fail. I'm a huge admirer of both Wynton and Branford Marsalis. I also want to shout out to the reigning clarinet YouTuber, Nicolas Baldeyrou, whose talent knows no bounds. Oh, and Randy Rainbow!

**What other art form resonates with you?**

I could spend days in art museums. I'm so grateful to Orpheus for the many overseas tours we've done, allowing me to visit so many of the great art museums of the world.

# CODA

If you ruled the world, what's the first thing you would change?

**Child starvation.**

If you could sing a duet with any artist, living or dead, who would it be and what song?

**"Let's Call The Whole Thing Off" with Ella Fitzgerald.**

**What are your hobbies?**

I enjoy cooking, though my wife puts me to shame—she's a very talented chef; I'm more of a recipe follower. My nerdy new hobby—a pandemic project—is clarinet reedmaking. I'm actually playing my own reeds. They're getting... better.

**What was your last audition like?**

Not great—I was sick but didn't want to cancel. I had lost my voice, too. This was MANY years ago!

**If you were given a million dollars, what would you do with it?**

After taxes? I'd make sure that my two kids were relatively comfortable, pay off my mortgage, and make a nice donation to Orpheus.



If you were to check into your retired self, what would you be doing right now?

**I'd be traveling through France and Italy, reading books, and not worrying about reeds anymore!**

If you could have coined a single phrase of wisdom already in existence, what would it be?

**Never give up!**

If you were born 100 years ago, what would you be doing?

**Probably playing in a pit band of some kind.**