

RYAN J. DILISI, PRINCIPAL TIMPANI



A native of Southern New Jersey, Ryan J. DiLisi has always had an interest in all forms of music and performance. At age 10, Dr. Robert Brosh helped develop his musical ability through both classical and jazz studies. Finding a love for classical percussion, Mr. DiLisi began studying with Don Liuzzi, Principal Timpanist of the Philadelphia Orchestra. During his last year of high school, Mr. DiLisi won the Albert M. Greenfield Competition, awarding him the opportunity to perform the William Kraft Timpani Concerto with the Philadelphia Orchestra. Mr. DiLisi received his Bachelor of Music from the New England Conservatory of Music under the instruction of Boston Symphony Orchestra percussionist Will Hudgins. During his college studies, Mr. DiLisi performed the David Mancini Jubilee Timpani Concerto and the William Kraft Concerto for Four Percussion Soloists. Mr. DiLisi then attended the Boyer College of Music at Temple University where he earned his Master of Music, studying with Alan Abel and Angela Nelson, both Philadelphia Orchestra percussionists. Mr. DiLisi won the Principal Timpanist position of the San Diego Symphony during its 2010-11 season. (He is shown in this photo with music director Jahja Ling on the day he won the audition.) Before joining the orchestra, he held the position of Principal Timpanist of Symphony in C. In addition Mr. DiLisi has performed with the Philadelphia Orchestra, the New World Symphony and the Boston Philharmonic. In his free time, he enjoys cooking, watching Italian soccer and spending time with his wife Katie.

Getting to know Ryan DiLisi...

Q: How did you choose your instrument?

A: From an early age I was drawn to the drums. While attending football games with my family, I would turn to watch the drummers in the marching band. Before I owned drums, I created a box drum set, hanging my tin can cymbal from a yardstick. The passion to play was always there. My dedication to the timpani took off while studying with Don Liuzzi, timpanist of the Philadelphia Orchestra. Watching him perform left no doubt in my mind about my career path.

Q: What is your favorite travel destination?

A: Italy. My father was born in Sicily, so Italian culture has always been a big part of my family life. I was fortunate enough to travel to Italy with my family, learning of my father's roots and meeting his relatives. I'll always remember my Dad bargaining with merchants in Italian, and always going just one block further to find that perfect restaurant! I was able to share these same joys with my wife on our honeymoon.

Q: What are some favorite composers and/or musical periods?

A: Beethoven is an obvious choice, and undeniably my favorite. His music spans the entire breadth of human emotion. Shostakovich is another favorite because of his ability to so vividly create pictures of time. In addition, he wrote some of the most fun and challenging timpani parts in our repertoire. Respighi is also a favorite. He is the perfect bridge between romanticism and impressionism. Respighi had a dramatic flair about his writing that other popular romantic era composers don't quite match.

Q: What is your choice for dining in San Diego?

A: Both my wife and I are avid cooks. So my honest answer is our own kitchen – Chez DiLisi.

Q: What is your favorite San Diego Symphony memory?

As a newly appointed member of the San Diego Symphony, my favorite memory is winning the job!

Q: The San Diego Symphony is essential to San Diego because...

The San Diego Symphony is an approachable musical experience for people of all walks of life. The orchestra incorporates all genres of music throughout its season – whether it be classical or pop, there is something for everyone. The orchestra values its loyal patrons and is always looking for ways to give back to the community. Being a part of an organization that not only inspires its musicians but also its community is an honor.