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One of Those Kinds of Players

School of Music trumpeter headed to Indiana for
doctorate.



Lexie Signor wears her passion on her sleeve: On her left arm, she has a tattoo she got to commemorate the completion of her master's degree in classical trumpet performance, which explains why it is a Baroque trumpet, she says. The black-and-gold rope on the instrument signifies her time at Mizzou, and the pink represents the academic regalia color for music. Photo by Nicholas Benner.

Story by Kelsey Allen

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When Lexie Signor is on stage, she's part band director, trumpet player, arranger and composer. During her graduate recital May 1 at The Bridge, she signaled the end of an open jam with a closed fist; she applauded when a fellow musician nailed a solo; and she bowed with grace after a standing ovation for her finale, a Dave Matthews Band piece she arranged for the 10 musicians on stage.

Signor is set to graduate May 18 with master's degrees in classical trumpet performance and in jazz performance and pedagogy.

Before coming to MU in 2010, she spent three years as a K-12 band director in Onaway, Mich., but when the recession hit in 2008, the band program was cut.

“On the last day of school, I told the students that they showed me what it is to care about another person,” says Signor, who was dealing with a difficult relationship at the time. “I was suffering every day, but what got me out of bed was those students. I didn't make them practice hours and hours. They did it because they cared, because they wanted to make beautiful music. They saved me. I learned more from those students than they ever learned from me.”

She has continued to evolve at MU, says Arthur White, assistant professor and director of jazz studies in the School of Music. Signor has been a member of the MU Faculty Brass Quintet, the brass ensemble-in-

residence at MU; served as a part-time teaching assistant for the jazz studies area; and directed the studio jazz band. In addition to performing, Signor also started arranging pieces and composing originals.

“She didn’t come to MU with the same experience that other incoming graduate jazz majors have,” White says. “But she works harder than most of her contemporaries. She has evolved into a fantastic lead trumpet player, a continually improving jazz improviser and one of the finest overall musicians I’ve had the pleasure to work with at MU or anywhere.”

She debuted a few of her arrangements at the International Trumpet Guild conference in 2011 in Minneapolis, where she met Pat Harbison, a professor of jazz studies at Indiana University. Harbison encouraged her to check out its School of Music. Intimidated but interested, she took a trumpet lesson with Joey Tartell, associate professor of music at Indiana.

“Can you imagine a school with four trumpet teachers,” says Signor, rhetorically. “Only certain kinds of players go to institutions like that, those stellar, exceptional, perfect, virtuosic types of players. I never considered myself that. I practice hard. I work hard. But I never considered myself to be one of those kinds of players.”

White says, and Indiana must agree, that Signor is

one of those kinds of players. She'll attend Indiana in the fall, pursuing her doctorate of music in trumpet performance.

“Indiana’s School of Music is consistently regarded as one of the top music schools in the country,” White says. “One of the most important jazz pedagogues in the history of jazz education, David Baker, is the chair of the jazz studies division. Her acceptance into the doctoral program is significant, but it isn’t surprising because she’s an excellent musician.”

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