

Hi! I am Jennet Ingle, and I'm a professional performing oboist—I'm the principal oboe with the South Bend Symphony Orchestra in Indiana. This job is not a full-time orchestra, which means that what I actually have is a portfolio career, one which is made up of many income streams, all of which are in my control to start or stop or to lean into or away from.

I have an oboe reed-making business, [Jennet Ingle Reeds](#), which enables me to hire other musicians as contractors and to bring in five figures a month from work I can do on my own schedule. I teach the oboe, but only online, only to adults, and only in groups. My two main group programs for oboists are The Invincible Oboist and Invincible Oboist FLOW. I evolved both of these programs after decades of teaching one-to-one lessons for middle-schoolers, high-schoolers, adjunct in colleges. I had all of the stuff I needed and all of the , experience, and knowledge that I needed to keep teaching, but I chose to form some groups and work in a way that suited me better. So I feel that by teaching in this way, I feel that I'm constantly inspired to come up with new ideas to share, and I get to use my brain and my attention and my performing capacity in a way that performing on the oboe alone does not offer me.

To talk about some of the ways that I've created this portfolio career, I published my book, [The Happiest Musician, How to Thrive in your Creative Career](#), back in 2022, and at that time, I also took over as the host of the podcast [Crushing Classical](#), in which I interview musicians about their creative careers and how they are building thriving lives within or parallel to the music industry. That has led me into business coaching for musicians, and I do that both one-to-one and in groups, and I love the work I get to do.

When I first graduated from conservatory, I understood that the path to success was in winning an audition and having a major principal oboe job with a major orchestra. That is what I was taught. It turns out, though, that that path is both more difficult and more limiting than I had been led to understand. Auditioning, although stressful and arduous, is largely a passive process: you walk out on stage, you do your best, and you HOPE to be chosen.

In contrast, starting my reed business back in 1998 was an active challenge: I had to make myself visible, I had to create an offer, market it. I had to stand up and say, "I can help you with your reeds, would you like me to? Here's the price." This kind of visibility, this kind of entrepreneurship, was never taught to me in music school, and it was scary and triggering for me. But as I did it, the money started to flow, and I started to realize that I could be of service to people and make money doing it!

I began to gain real visibility when I started a YouTube channel dedicated to oboe reeds and reed problems. You might not think that there are HUNDREDS of distinct things to talk about in the realm of oboe reeds, but there DEFINITELY are, and people were hungry for it. They asked me questions, and I answered them, and over time my audience began to see me as an expert about all things oboe. THIS made it easy—relatively easy—to launch those first few group programs, first in-person and then, once I discovered Zoom, online.

The wonderful thing about my portfolio career is that it consists entirely—NOW—of things I love to do and things that I am good at, and I'm able to charge premium prices because I have a proven track record of showing up and being good at these things! It's a career that has built on itself, and it keeps getting better.

FOR YOU, then: If you want to build your own version of this career, the version that looks like thriving for you, I think it starts with getting clear on what you want to do! Do you love teaching or performing, or designing curriculum? What is the MOST ideal version of that you can imagine? What is a baby step toward that?

I think that visibility is a really important part of that path, because if people can't see you and don't know what you can offer them, they won't know where to come and find you. Visibility might be as simple as talking to your friends and colleagues about what you are doing. It might mean writing about it or creating video or social media content or starting a podcast or a newsletter. It can mean a million things, but it DOESN'T mean endlessly tweaking your website or your logo or getting business cards printed. What you can do, right now, to move toward the career you want, is to say so, to say what you want. And if that feels too scary, I urge you to look for support: a coach, a mentor, or an accountability buddy who is working on something similar.

I say this because the world is a better place when more musicians and creative people and educators and teachers are thriving in it and are SEEN to be thriving. You deserve to thrive, and your artistry matters. Thank you!