

AN ARTIST'S CORNER

featuring

Brian Johnston



Brian Johnston joined the Fort Wayne Philharmonic in 2018. In addition to being part of the Philharmonic, Brian is a regular Member of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, and Substitute with the New World Symphony in Miami Florida. He has performed with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, Columbus Symphony Orchestra, Elgin Symphony Orchestra, Canton Symphony Orchestra, Quad City Symphony Orchestra, and is also a substitute for the Houston Symphony Orchestra & Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. Brian's teaching experience has included many schools in the Chicago area including the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra (CYSO) His primary teachers have included, Jay Friedman, John Rojak, John Faieta, Andy Malloy, Reed Capshaw and Eric Reynolds.

<https://www.youtube.com/c/BrianJohnstonTrombone>

How old were you when you began playing your instrument? Did you start playing another instrument before your current one?

I was nine years old when I began playing the trombone. Before trombone I was interested in piano, but didn't enjoy lessons, so I tried guitar before eventually sticking to bass guitar which I did for quite a while alongside the trombone.

What equipment do you primarily use?

What equipment do you primarily use? I have a custom Shires trombone which is a replica of a vintage Mt. Vernon Bach Trombone, and I primarily use a custom Hammond Mouthpiece which is equivalent to a 4.5G. I also occasionally use a Kadja from giddings & Marcinkiewicz 10 for certain styles. For Alto trombone I have a no-name alto and i'm using a Yamaha 46C2 mouthpiece which is equivalent to an 11c.

What are some of your favorite highlights of your career?

Getting the chance to play with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra a few times is definitely a highlight of my career, winning the 2nd trombone position with the Fort Wayne Philharmonic is definitely up there as well.

What are some of your favorite and most influential albums that you have heard?

The Beatles - Abbey Road is my favorite album of all time. I think hearing the vocal harmonies of the group since I was in middle school trained my ear from a very young age. In regards to trombone albums, my favorite has to be Nitzan Haroz - Towards the light. I also enjoy just about every recording of Chicago Symphony Orchestra with sir Georg Solti.

Who inspired you to play your instrument?

I saw the trombone in an i-SPY book on a page with all of the other brass instruments, and knew I had to pick a brass instrument. I was especially drawn to the one with the slide!

What are some of your favorite solos written for another instrument?

I really enjoy Rachmaninoff's vocalise op. 34 No. 14 which is a solo for female voice that works incredibly well on the trombone.

How have your practice habits changed from when you were a beginner until now?

I used to practice too much, too hard, and too quickly. Now I don't move on from a note or measure until it's exactly the way I want it to be.

As a young player, what did you struggle most with your playing?

When I was young my biggest challenge was playing loud/getting a bigger sound. I didn't achieve this much until I was around 20/21 years old.

Do you like to sing when you practice? Why or why not?

I like to sing while I practice for many reasons. 1. It saves your face & 2. You are free from the limitations of your instruments, so you are more free to be more musical!

What qualities do you think are important for being successful in life?

Constantly being open to learn, and not judging anything too fast are admirable qualities.

What do you want your legacy to be?

I just want to be remembered as a good person.

How do you stay motivated? Do you have any tips to help stay motivated?

Listen a ton! If you're constantly listening, you'll either want to practice out of fear, or practice because you love it!

Do you meditate? If so, what benefits do you get from meditating?

I meditated a lot as an undergraduate in college, and it helped me be calm in day to day life & in performances. I don't meditate as much anymore, but I believe I've engrained meditation subconsciously, as I tend to feel calm and in control in the situations that used to give me anxiety. 2020 is a clear exception though...

With whom did you study?

I studied with Jay Friedman, John Rojak, Andy Malloy, John Faieta, Reed Capshaw, Matthew Russo, & Eric Reynolds.

Who are some of your musical heroes?

The Beatles, The Brass sections of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Jesper Juul, Nitzan Haroz, Don Harwood, Bud Herseth, Christian Lindberg (the list can go on and on!)

Discuss your early musical experiences. Why did you pursue music?

Music was the thing in my life that I loved the most.

Do you remember when you decided that you were going to be a professional musician?

It was in 10th grade. I was having a lesson with my private teacher, when he asked me if I wanted to do this with my life, I said yes, and he replied with: "Ok, but you need to quit everything else to make time for this!". I'll never forget that day!

How much do you practice on a typical day?

The sum of all of my days of practice would likely equal 2-3 hours.

What are some of your favorite etude books?

Rochut Book no. 1

Do you use any apps when you practice?

Tunable

If you could go back in time and give yourself any advice, what would it be?

Slow down your practice!

Who are your main influences in your life (not just music!)?

Roger Federer. I admire his ability to stay calm under pressure & still come out on top, even though he had a rather angry past.

How do you suggest balancing life with music?

Hobbies! I tend not to practice for more than 30 minutes at any time. Between sessions i'll try to learn something new, or work on something else.

Please give some tips for freelancing.

Don't be afraid to reach out to everyone in town! Also, be a good person, sound decent, and be trustworthy.

What are some of your favorite places that you have performed?

Symphony Center in Chicago. It's history is so incredibly rich.

Do you have any suggestions for working on one's range?

In your practice, don't try to play WAY higher or lower than you can. Find where your limit is, and slowly chip away at making the next chromatic note as good as the last!

What advice would you give to someone interested in majoring in music in college?

Make sure you're as curious as possible.

Do you have a favorite genre of music?

Psychedelic rock

What are you working on right now?

I'm just trying to clean up my playing slowly, and little bits at a time!

Do you have any tips for preparing for auditions?

Give yourself 2 months, lots of slow practice, & lots of mock auditions.

Do you ever get anxious for a performance? What advice would you give for dealing with nerves?

I often get anxious for concerts. My advice is to keep performing (Nerves will get slightly less each time!)

To become a great musician, what are things that you think a young musician should focus on when they practice?

Sound is the most crucial thing.

Who are your favorite composers?

Bach, Respighi, Bartok, Shostakovich.

Do you like to teach? Why or why not?

Yes. I have one student who i've been teaching for over three years who has come along way since the beginning, and it's so satisfying to see him improve weekly.

What are your favorite solos for your instrument?

Grøndahl

What advice can you share about physical wellness?

When I am exercising regularly, I get less anxious during performances & when I eat healthier my practice & performances are of higher quality.

What is your favorite food?

New York Style Pizza!