

AN ARTIST'S CORNER

featuring

Christopher Houlding



In 1980, age 20, Chris toured with the London Symphony Orchestra under Maestro Celibidache at the invitation of Denis Wick and was appointed Principal Trombone of the Orchestra of Opera North in the following year, a seat he held for twenty seven years. He has since appeared as Guest Principal with most major UK ensembles including the London Symphony, London Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic, Royal Opera House Covent Garden and London Brass and still plays regularly with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Philharmonia, MusicFabrik, Scottish Chamber, Superbrass and the Symphonic Brass of London. A graduate of London's Guildhall School of Music, he studied with Denis Wick, Eric Crees and Peter Gane, and was awarded the Principal's Prize.

Currently Professor of Trombone and Brass Ensemble at the Folkwang University of Arts, Essen, Germany and Visiting Tutor at London's Guildhall School of Music & Drama, he has also served as Head of Brass at the Royal Birmingham

Conservatoire and Senior Tutor in Brass and International Visiting Tutor at Manchester's Royal Northern College of Music and was voted 2014 Teacher of the Year by the British Trombone Society. He has trained the low brass with the Gustav Mahler Jungendorchester, European Union Youth Orchestra, Junge Deutsche Philharmonie and National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain and gives recitals and masterclasses throughout the world, including the Joseph Alessi Summer Seminar, Juilliard, Eastman and conservatoires in Boston, Texas, St Petersburg, Moscow, Porto, Oslo, Aarhus, Riga, Budapest, Bern and Lausanne. Chris has also given recitals and classes and has served as outside assessor at many UK Conservatoires and universities.

In 2003 Chris represented the UK in the World Orchestra for Peace under Valery Gergiev and has made concerto appearances with the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra, Durham Sinfonia, Helix Ensemble and

Orchestra of Opera North with whom he performed the Elgar Howarth Concerto under the composer on his 70th Birthday. Currently Chairman of the International Trombone Association Executive Board and a former President of the British Trombone Society, he has hosted the IPV Symposium 2010 in Essen and appeared as guest artist at International Trombone Festivals in Nashville, Aarhus, Birmingham, Las Vegas, Slide Factory Rotterdam, IPV Symposiums in Rostock, Aachen, Hannover and Stuttgart, Adams and Lätzsch Festivals in the Netherlands and International Festivals in Washington DC and Sweden. His debut solo CD entitled *Houlding his own* was issued in 2008 on the SRC label and a second Duet Album is to be issued in the near future featuring Joseph Alessi, Brett Baker, Ben van Dijk, Carol Jarvis, Niels Ole Bo Johansen, Don Lucas, Ansgar Striepens and Jiggs Whigham.

Chris was awarded an MMus in Conducting by the Royal Northern College of Music in 2005 and held the position of Music Director with the Slaithwaite Philharmonic Orchestra for six years. He has also conducted the Bochumer Symphoniker, Duisburg Philharmoniker, Sinfonieorchester Wuppertal, Orchestra of Opera North, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Pops Orchestra, Folkwang University Pops, Trinity College of Music Wind Orchestra & Brass Ensemble, RNCM Symphony Orchestra, Wind Orchestra and Brass Band, Lancashire Youth Symphony, Oslo Music Academy Brass Ensemble, Prinsen Musikkorps Brass Band, Denmark, Black Dyke Band, Grimethorpe Colliery Band and DUT Yorkshire Imperial with whom he won the National Brass Band First Section Championships in 2005. As adjudicator, he has served on international juries including the Internationaler Instrumentalwettbewerb Markneukirchen, First International Wind Competition Moscow, Budapest International Trombone Competition, Turkish Young Musician of the Year, Norwegian and British Brass Band Championships, Feis Ceoil Dublin and the Royal Overseas League Music Competition London and is a regular contributor to Brass Journals.

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

I began learning the trombone aged 9. Having played piano since I was 7 years old my school music teacher chose four of us to begin on a quartet of newly acquired brass instruments. Scratching his head he announced that I should take the trombone as I was rotund !

What equipment do you primarily use?

I use an Edwards T350 (335CF Rose Bell with T-STDN Slide) and in UK a Courtois A440 with a Denis Wick Heritage 5ABL mouthpiece.
Conn 36 Alto with Denis Wick Heritage 9BS mouthpiece.

What are some of the highlights of your career?

As a student arriving at the Guildhall School, London and being told by the Porter to ring Denis Wick as a matter of urgency. Expecting the worst and

having queued for a coin phone the shock as he invited me to do my first tour with the London Symphony Orchestra aged 20 was almost too much. I will never forget sitting alongside Denis and other legends, Frank Mathison, John Fletcher and Maurice Murphy.

Being invited by composer/conductor Elgar Howarth to play his Trombone Concerto as the centre piece of his 70th birthday concert.

Leading the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Brass Ensemble at the opening of said city's new railway station, Grand Central, before Her Majesty, The Queen. My own arrangements of railway related 'fare', including Thomas the Tank Engine seemed to down very well with the dignified audience but Her Majesty's regal nod of approval will remain with me always.

If you were stranded on a desert island and could only have 10 albums, what would they be?

R Strauss Ein Heldenleben Dresden Staatskapelle/Kempe
Sibelius Symphony No 7 Halle Orchestra/Barbirolli (1967)
Brahms Symphonies Dresden Staatskapelle/K Sanderling
R Strauss Alpine Sinfonie London Symphony/Frühbeck de Burgos
Walton Symphony No 1 London Symphony/Previn (1967)
Wagner Götterdämmerung Vienna Philharmonic/Solti (1964)
Herold Zampa Overture Fodens Motorworks Band/F Mortimer (1939)
Trad arr Iveson Londonderry Air John Iveson Trombone with PJBE
Hornplayers Fifty-Fifty Two Bone Big Band L Nuss/I Luis
Carmichael Stardust Jack Jenny Trombone (1937) and as an extra, although watching my wife's reaction to Walton's Belshazzar's Feast

What are your favorite solos written for another instrument?

Blow the Wind Southerly sung by Kathleen Ferrier (1949)
I Got Rhythm Art Tatum Piano (1940)
Mozart Horn Quintet Denis Brain (1944)

What were your practice habits in high school, college, post-college, pro career?

The need for a thorough warm up was instilled in me from an early age, something that I stress as being crucial to students to this day . A little

breathing, buzzing and simple slurs. Basic lip flexibilities taking care to always produce smooth slurs, musically shaped with your best tone. Low register focus with a few false harmonics. A simple but thorough check of your coordination throughout the range ie air, embouchure/tongue & slide. A selection of scales and arpeggios to extend range. Allow time for a little break and continue with a well organized plan covering etudes, solo literature and orchestral excerpts. My warm up can be found on my website. Tip : Don't waste valuable time playing through passages you already know well. Concentrate on difficult passages. Play them very slowly to establish a 'muscle memory'. Continue away from the instrument rehearsing tongue and slide to preserve 'chops'. Best short cut to progress I know!

With whom did you study?

While at school : John Iveson (Philip Jones Brass Ensemble)
Guildhall School of Music & Drama, London : Denis Wick, Peter Gane & Eric Crees

Who are some of your musical heroes?

Frank Sinatra, Derek Watkins, Jack Jenny, Elgar Howarth

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

I was lucky to live in a region of England that possessed one of the most well established music education services in Europe. A fantastic system of Saturday morning tuition had been developed since the late 1940s when it was a pioneer in that field. The Leicestershire Schools Symphony regularly played under conductors and composers such as André Previn, Sir Michael Tippett and Sir Arthur Bliss and gave members a tremendous pre Conservatory and of course pre music profession experience. To compliment this I was also a member of the National Youth Brass Band of Great Britain which met every Easter and Summer. The flourishing British Brass Band scene meant that this group of around 90 musicians was made up of Britain's cream of young brass players many of whom I now see regularly both as members of professional orchestras and top brass bands.

How old were you when you decided that you were going to be a professional musician?

I cannot remember ever making a conscious decision to become a professional musician as I was simply swept along with the natural progressions that open up to talented young musicians. The only decision I did have to make was whether to go to music conservatoire or join the armed services. Both offer fantastic career opportunities and of course one can always change direction?

How much do you practice on a typical day?

If I told you I might have to kill you!

Do you have a website? If so, what is the address?

www.chrishoulding.com

www.folkwang-uni.de

www.gsmd.ac.uk

www.superbrass.co.uk

www.thesymphonicbrassoflondon

What are some of your favorite etude books?

Andre Lafosse Method Volumes 1,2 & 3 in particular "Twelve Exercises on the whole technique of the instrument" in Volume III.

J S Bach Cello Suites.

David Uber 23 Virtuoso Clef Studies

Circuit Training Volume II – Peter Gane (not forgetting our joint video presentation which accompanies this publication).

<http://www.warwickmusic.com>

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

My wife, Anne keeps a keen eye on the music world through social media and so her daily information and advice is invaluable. Although she is not a professional musician her grounding and assessment of musical performance always has a refreshing and sometimes surprising 'edge'.

What are some of your favorite albums?

Classic Sinatra – Frank Sinatra

But Beautiful – Gordon Campbell

A Thousand Kisses Deep - Christine Tobin

Swing when you're winning - Robbie Williams

Please give some tips for freelancing.

In short be everything to everybody ! Be well prepared, punctual, thoughtful and above all use your 'radar' or 'scan' to assess musical and social situations. Try to become the first choice of your potential employers by being natural, flexible and adaptable.

What are your feelings about students majoring in music education versus music performance?

In my opinion music education and performance are equally important. Acquiring the highest possible level of performance on an instrument should be the goal of any student in music. Taking a path in the direction of performance or music education will become evident but can easily be combined.

What is your favorite place that you have performed?

Well, I haven't made it to Carnegie Hall (yet) so obviously I haven't practiced enough but I have, however, had the opportunity to perform in so many of the world's other iconic venues. It is whom I am playing with and not necessarily where which perfectly illustrates the need for brass teamwork and has left me with many lasting memories of comradeship and inspiration.

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

If you are interested then don't bother, you need to be consumed ! However, the transition from school to university/music college is not easy. There will be a comprehensive curriculum but it is your responsibility to follow it. Be proactive, well prepared and come armed with questions for your teacher. Judicious use of this precious time is paramount and can seriously enhance your progress if managed well. Don't be afraid to have serious ambition to reach the highest levels. Aim high and miss rather than aiming low and hitting !

Do you have a favorite genre of music?

Music is an eternal gift to mankind that can be enjoyed in a myriad of forms. I remain curious to have new experiences.

What non-music courses in college helped you with being a musician?

I consider myself very lucky to have had smooth passage through higher education but frequently recommend the benefits of Alexander Technique and methods to deal with Performance Anxiety.

What are you working on right now?

Issue of a celebrity duet album to be made available on the ITA website
Mahler 9 (conducting next month) and on the lighter side looking forward to leading Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and Folkwang University Pops.
Composition for Brass Ensemble (premiere in May)

Please list some of your favorite websites for musicians.

www.musicalchairs (for jobs, competitions, courses, general orchestral information)

imslp.org (for out of copyright musical material of all types)

Do you have any tips for preparing for auditions?

Do your homework. Research the ensemble and it's trombone section members if you do not already know about the way they play and think, checking current repertoire for possible sight reading. Remember the jury is looking for the perfect 'musician' to compliment their line up. Orchestral excerpts are probably the most important element. Do not just try and play them 'note perfect' but make sure they are in musical context. If you have played the work before in the orchestra perform it just the same. An experienced panel will spot the all round musicians straight away. Work up your excerpts and so you can deliver them 'right on' first time !

If you couldn't have a career in music, what would you do instead?

No idea !

Who are your favorite composers?

R Strauss, Sibelius, Wagner, Hindemith, Mark Anthony Turnage

How could we make music education better?

There is a need for basic musical skills like singing to be a compulsory part of the curriculum in education before the age of 11 and carried on beyond. Too many prospective music students arrive at music college auditions without rudimentary musical skills. This puts these students at a terribly disadvantage and is a waste of university resources to have to provide this training at this level.

What are some of your favorite books that are helpful for musicians?

Inner Game of Tennis – W Timothy Gallwey

The Art of Practice – Howard Snell

Trombone Technique – Denis Wick