

AN ARTIST'S CORNER

featuring

Dr. John R. Marcellus



Professor Marcellus has been a member of the Eastman Brass and Conductor of the Eastman Trombone Choir and the Bionic Bones. He was appointed Principal trombone of the Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra in 1979 and Music Director of the Brighton Symphony Orchestra in 1980. He is past President of the Jamestown Musical Association, Local 134, of the American Federation of Musicians, and is Vice-President Emeritus of the 20,000 member New York State Conference of Musicians, American Federation of Musicians.. He is a Co-producer of the Bemus Bay Pops of Chautauqua Lake, NY. which he conducts and appears as soloist. He also has performed with the Eastman Virtuosi, Slee Sinfonietta of the University of Buffalo, and as an extra with the Rochester and Buffalo Philharmonics, St. Louis Symphony, Syracuse Symphony and the National Philharmonic in Washington, DC.

Former Chair of the Woodwinds, Brass and Percussion Department of the Eastman School of Music (1988-2004) he was formerly Principal Trombone of the National Symphony Orchestra (1965-1978); Asst. 1st Trombone with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and Tubist and Trombonist with the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra. Organizations he has served include the International Trombone Association, where he was a founding member and Past President in 1990, as well as the Eastern Trombone Workshop, which he founded with John Melick, at Towson State University in 1974. His Guest conducting engagements includes the Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra, National Music Camp at Interlochen, Penfield Symphony Orchestra, Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Oregon Symphony Orchestra, and the U.S. Naval Academy Band.

He has appeared as soloist with the National Symphony Orchestra, Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra, Eastman Wind Ensemble, Penfield Symphony Orchestra, Brighton Symphony Orchestra, Norfolk Chamber Orchestra, US Navy Band, US Army Band, Greater Miami Community Band, Pensacola Concert Band, Elkhart Concert Band, International Trombone Workshop, Eastern Trombone Workshop in Washington, DC and the music festivals of Eastern Music Festival, Brevard Music Center and Interlochen Academy of the Arts.

He has been a free lance musician and recording artist with the Eastman Brass Quintet, Empire Brass Quintet and Friends, Brass Band Journal of the Library of Congress, All-American Main Street Band (Capitol Records), Non-Parielle Band (Capitol Records), National Symphony Brass Quintet, Washington Theatre Chamber Players, Contemporary Music Forum, and the Toronto based Toca Loca contemporary ensemble. Solo recitals and master classes have been in Paris, Cologne, Stuttgart, Hannover, London, Birmingham, Manchester and also in Japan, Australia, Sweden, Finland, Austria, Netherlands, Poland, Denmark, Thailand, Brazil and Budapest, Hungary.

Honors include the International Trombone Association's Highest Award for Pedagogy, Performance and Literature (1999), New York Brass Conference Dedication for Achievement in Brass Performance (1997), Mu Phi Epsilon Musician of the Year (1997), Lifetime Achievement Award presented by the Eastern Trombone Workshop (2009). Lifetime Achievement Award, International Trombone Association (2014), Neill Humfeld Teaching Award, International Trombone Association (2014).

Marcellus was named Kilbourn Professor in 1982 as a member of the Eastman Brass. His studies on trombone included William Cramer (Florida State University), Lewis Van Haney and Edward Herman (New York Philharmonic, Gordon Pulis (Metropolitan Opera Orchestra), and Armand Sarro (National Symphony Orchestra). His conducting teachers include William F. Cramer of the Monteux Conducting School; Richard Lert of the American Symphony Orchestra League and Lloyd Geisler, Associate Conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra. His degrees in music include a Bachelor of Science from the University of Maryland and the Masters and Doctorate of Music from the Catholic University of America.

He has also been soloist with many community, university bands and orchestras throughout the United States and Canada and is an Artist Clinician with the Buffet Crampon, USA-Courtois trombones. Premieres and commissions of new music include over 50 contemporary works. His publications appear in the *NACWPI Journal*, *The Instrumentalist*, and *Accent*; music arrangements are published by Kendor, Belwin-Mills, Briar Music, Alfred Music. He was formerly on the faculties of the North Carolina School for the Arts (1965-68), Catholic University (1966-78), Howard University (1967-70), American University (1968-78), Chautauqua Music School (1979-), Interlochen Arts Academy (1982-83).

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

I started on clarinet with my Dad when I was nine years old in the third grade and in the 4th grade he introduced the trumpet when I complained about marching with the clarinet. After that, he observed that I was having trouble with the upper register and suggested that I switch to the baritone horn in the fall, which I did with much more progress. I studied viola with my mother when I was 11, which I played for seven years including the Jacksonville Jr. Symphony Orchestra, and picked up the Eb tuba when I was 12. I was tubist with the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra when I was 16 and then my Dad brought home a trombone one day at about age 15 and gave me a Rubank Book and said to learn the positions of the trombone. He introduced the Remington lip slurs to me. My formal study of trombone didn't happen until college.

What equipment do you primarily use?

I currently perform on the Courtois 440 Legend Tenor Trombone (.547 bore), Extreme Legend .508 bore, Conn 35H Alto Trombone, Miraphone Bass Trumpet, and the King Euphonium.

What are some of the highlights of your career?

The high lights of my career include performing as soloist with the U.S. Navy Band in Washington, DC, Asst. Principal trombone with the Baltimore Symphony, and Principal Trombone with the National Symphony and becoming Professor of Trombone at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY in 1978. I was also a charter member of the International Trombone Association in 1972.

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

If I was stranded on a desert island and could have only 10 albums they would be the following:

- 1 Anton Rubenstein, piano and the Brahms Concerti 1 & 2
- 2 Chicago Symphony with Reiner performing Wagner and Strauss
- 3 Cleveland Orchestra, Mozart Concerto with Robert Marcellus soloist and Szell conducting
- 4 Rostropovich and the Dvorak Cello Concerto.

- 5 Bach Cello Suites with Pablo Casals
- 6 Cuban Fire Album with Stan Kenton
- 7 City of Glass with Stan Kenton
- 8 Jai and Kai Duo, of any albums
- 9 Wildlife Refuge with Bill Watrous
- 10 Thundering Herd with Woody Herman

What or who inspired you to play your instrument?

Tommy Dorsey was my main inspiration when I heard him play in the Gator Bowl in Jacksonville, FL in 1956. The next day I went to the local music store and bought a King 2B.

What are your favorite solos written for another instrument?

Brahms Concerto No. 1 and 2 for Piano
Bach Cello Suites
Tchaikovsky Violin concerto
Dvorak Cello Concerto

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

Just enough practice in high school to get by because of so many conflicts, such as basketball, baseball, etc. In college it was 3-4 hours a day, in post college it was more like 4-6 hours a day, and in my pro career it was more about 1-2 hours a day on average depending on the repertoire I had to perform.

With whom did you study?

I started with my Dad, J. Robert Marcellus on clarinet, trumpet and then baritone horn, followed by the trombone. William F. Cramer of Florida State University was my first formal teacher of trombone followed by Lewis Van Haney of the NY Philharmonic and Indiana University; Edward Herman, Principal Trombone New York Philharmonic; Lloyd Geisler, Principal Trumpet of National Symphony Orchestra and Professor at Catholic University; Armand Sarro, Principal Trombone National Symphony Orchestra and Gordon Pulis of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra with whom I completed my Master's degree in Applied Music in 1970. My Dad was also a member of the graduating class at Eastman School with Gordon Pulis in 1935.

Who are some of your musical heroes?

Of course Tommy Dorsey, Urbie Green, JJ Johnson, Kai Winding, and Carl Fontana on trombone; Oscar Pederson and McCoy Tyner on piano, and in the classical field Leonard Bernstein; cellist, Pablo Casals; cellist Janos Starker; Robert Marcellus of the Cleveland Orchestra on clarinet amongst others.

Discuss your early music experiences. Why did you pursue music? How old were you when you decided to become a professional musician?

My early studies included my parents: my father was my technical coach and my mother was my musical coach, especially when solo contests in high school would happen in the Spring. My early study of piano with my mother at age 6 ended when I was 7 because she said, "I will not teach you if you are not going to practice! "

At age sixteen I was appointed tubist with the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra. In 1956 I auditioned for the Eastman School of Music on euphonium and trombone and in a discussion with Emory Remington during my 15-minute audition, he convinced me to study the trombone in college and not to major in the euphonium. I took his advice and it is ironic that I was appointed Professor of Trombone at Eastman in 1978 as one of his immediate successors after Donald K. Knaub.

I made up my mind at age 16 to become a professional musician and teacher and set out on that path with my studies at Florida State University in 1957. My experiences with the American Wind Symphony in Pittsburgh in 1958 on Bass Trombone and with the faculty orchestra of Brevard Music Center in 1955 certainly were beneficial. I also attended the Tanglewood Institute with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1959, where I was impressed with Pierre Monteux as a conductor. In 1960 I left FSU in my Junior Year and joined the U.S. Navy Band in Washington and was able to finish my undergraduate degree in Music Education four years later as a part-time student at the University of Maryland where I also studied with Henry Romersa, founder of the International Trombone Workshop. Further studies, when I was a member of the National Symphony Orchestra, resulted in a Master's and a Doctorate degree in Applied Trombone in the early 1970's.

I pursued music as a career because of the love of music that was so important to my life.

How much do you practice on a typical day?

Since I am retired now from the Eastman School of Music, I still try to manage a few hours a week of practice to help maintain my "chops".

Do you have a website?

Yes, it is <https://www.esm.rochester.edu> and www.buffer-crampon.com/en/where-to-find-us/

What are some of your favorite etude books?

The Bordogni Vocalises, particularly the Swartz play along CD's of the three volumes. Bitsch 15 Rhythmic Etudes and Bozza Thirteen Caprices, and the brass player's bible, the Arban Book for trumpet and trombone.

Who are the main influences in in your life (not just musical)?

My parents and William F. Cramer were my main influences besides my High School Chemistry teacher, Dorothy "Big Dot" Thomas. I happened to arrive late to my Chemistry Class one day because I had a morning youth concert with the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra, and as I slithered into my seat on the front row, "Big Dot" asked me what was the chemistry element on the blackboard and I sheepishly answered, "I don't know". Then as she pointed her finger at me, she said "John, are you going to become a square wheel the rest of your life?" I think that this is one of the main reasons I have a Doctorate degree today!

Please give some tips on free lancing.

1. Get to the job early
2. Mix with the members of the group when you have a chance.
3. Keep your mouth shut and observe.
4. Don't throw garbage underneath your chair after having a sandwich for lunch.
5. Don't give up a booked engagement when you are offered a better one. Keep your obligations consistent.

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

I majored in Music Education because I wanted to teach and was told by William F. Cramer that I would get the same level of applied music instruction as an applied music major in the studio as a Music Education student and he was right. My later studies were in Applied Music because I wanted to perform.

Is anyone else in your family a musician?

Yes, my parents and also my sister and brother. We were all in the Jacksonville Symphony at one time or another. Both my Dad and Mother were charter members of the Jacksonville Symphony in 1952. My Dad performed on Horn, my mother on Viola, sister Ruth on Horn and my brother as Principal Bassoonist.

What is your favorite place that you have performed?

The Kennedy Center in Washington, DC and Carnegie Hall in New York.

If you were on a desert island, what are your top 3 etude books for your instrument, solos for our instrument, as well as etudes/solos/albums not of your instruments?

Bordogni Vocalises, Bitsch 15 Rhythmical Etudes, Bozza 13 Caprices; solos include Albrechtsberger Concerto, Wagenseil Concerto, Ellen Taaffee Zwillich Concerto; Bach Cello Suites, Paganini Violin Caprices.

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

Find the school or faculty member that best fits your needs and goals in music.

What are you listening to currently?

After I finish your interview I'll probably listen to some great jazz performances on Sirius Radio. Only study with the best and experienced musicians.

Do you have a favorite genre of music?

No, I love all genres of music except I am not a fan of rap!

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

Psychology and Math.

What are you working on right now?

Some arrangements for Pops orchestra, wind ensemble and trombone ensembles.

Please list some of your favorite websites for musicians.

www.afm.org/en/, <https://www.youtube.com/feed/music>, and any major orchestra in America or Europe.

Do you have any tips for preparing for auditions?

1. Make a list of the repertoire on 3X5 cards and separate the list into solo excerpts vs. ensemble pieces for the finals.
2. Using solo excerpts, choose 3-4 excerpts at random and record them. Listen to the playback of the recorded excerpts and notate on a paper your observations for improvement and record again..... I would personally record and evaluate these items about 6 times, before choosing another round of 3-4 excerpts. It's also good to simulate the actual audition and play the 3-4 excerpts non-stop as in an audition.

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

I never thought that I wouldn't have a career in music so that is a very difficult question to answer. Maybe my alternative would be to be a beach bum and sell boiled peanuts on the beach (which I did in Fernandina Beach, FL) to make a living(kidding)! I probably would have made a good Chef if I hadn't majored in music since I love to cook and create things.

Who are your favorite composers?

Albinoni, Bach, Beethoven, Wagner, Strauss, Prokofiev, Tchaikovsky, Schedrin, Bernstein, Copland, Ellington and many more.

How could we make music education better?

Music Education could be improved if there was more adequate funding of the arts in pre-K-12th grades and more support of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Do you like to teach? Why or why not?

Yes, I love to teach to try and instill in the students that same sense of love that I have for music in my own life.

What are your favorite solos for your instrument?

Concerti by Albrechtsberger, Wagenseil, Leopold Mozart, Ellen Taaffee Zwillich, Lars Erik Larrson, Nino Rota, Gordon Jacob; Guilmaunt –Morceau Symphonique, Thoughts of Love-Arthur Pryor, Creston Fantasy.

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

Harvard Dictionary and Grove's Dictionary of Music; Zen and The Art of Archery, Hatha and Raja Yoga, The Inner Game of Tennis.

If you could go back in time, how would you practice differently?

Slowly!