

AN ARTIST'S CORNER

featuring

Lance LaDuke



LANCE LADUKE is internationally known as an educator, writer, speaker and performer (euphonium, trombone, singer and enthusiastic ukulele-ist). Lance is the Assistant Teaching Professor in Euphonium and Music Entrepreneurship at Carnegie Mellon University. His additional duties at CMU include serving as the Freshman Advisor, Coordinator of Special and Creative Projects, director of the Tartan Tuba Band and co-director of the Exploded Ensemble, an experimental electro-acoustic ensemble. Lance is a former member of international touring quintet Boston Brass, the United States Air Force Band in Washington DC and the River City Brass Band, the only full time professional brass band in the country.

Lance has performed with some of the finest ensembles in the country, including the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Brass Band of Battle Creek and the Pittsburgh Symphony. He has taught and/or given masterclasses at some of the world's finest universities and conservatories, including Juilliard, the Royal Academy of Music in London, the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts and the Tatui Conservatory in Brazil. He has appeared on over thirty recordings, has produced ten others and has toured extensively throughout North America, South America, Europe and Asia, performing in over 25 countries and all 50 states. His performances have been seen and heard on countless television and radio programs and Lance has appeared onstage with such legendary artists as Henry Mancini, Doc Severinsen, Morton Gould, Morgan Freeman, and Frederick Fennell.

A graduate of Michigan State University, Lance received a bachelor's degree in Music Education, with a cognate in English. After graduate study at the University of Akron (euphonium performance) and George Mason University (instrumental conducting), Lance joined the United States Air Force Band in Washington D.C. While there, he performed for two presidents, countless dignitaries and heads of state and in hundreds of protocol functions, ceremonies, and public relations tours. He maintained a Top Secret security clearance, played for well over a million people from the White House to Red Square, and can be seen (with a magnifying glass) in the movie A Clear and Present Danger.

Lance has written for countless organizations, including sketches for radio, stage and themed attractions. He was a member of several improv comedy troupes, co-wrote and produced (with Deanna Swoboda) Band Blast Off, a band recruiting DVD and is co-director of the Savvy Arts Venture Challenge. He works with VH1 Save the Music, has performed at TEDxCMU and has a song headed to the moon as part of a Space X project. He is the host of the Modern Musicking Podcast and co-host (with Andrew Hitz) of the Brass Junkies Podcast. His comedy songs, including a touching elegy to a dead goldfish and a song about getting underwear for Christmas, are available for viewing through lanceladuke.com.

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

I started on trumpet in sixth grade and switched to euphonium in ninth. High notes made my face turn purple. Not a good look for me, as it turns out.

What equipment do you primarily use?

XO Euphonium and trombones, Parker Mouthpiece, Lanikai Ukuleles

What are some of your favorite albums?

Tom Waits - Mule Variations, Joe Jackson - Night and Day, Beatles - Abbey Road, Elvis Costello - The Juliet Letters, Randy Newman - Bad Love, Robert Plant & Alison Krauss - Raising Sand

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

Too many to list! A current favorite is Orbit by Philip Glass. I'm also a sucker for old Herbert L. Clarke solos but those are more or less fair game for euphonium players at this point.

With whom did you study?

Phil Sinder (Michigan State) and Tucker Jolly (University of Akron) were my main teachers. I also had a chance to study with Brian Bowman for a semester when I was at MSU and then again off and on over the years.

Who are some of your musical heroes?

Elvis Costello, Tom Waits, Peter Gabriel, Marc Cohn, John Prine, basically any old songwriter dude who is musically fearless and not afraid to tell the truth.

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

Both my grandfathers were musicians. I grew up around it and it just sort of seemed like a natural fit.

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

Vividly. I was planning on being an architect. I was in architecture class in HS and all I could think about was getting back down to the band room. That cinched it for me.

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

lanceladuke.com

Do you use any apps when you practice?

I like the Practice Plus app, the Voice Memos app, iReal Pro and The Ukulele App

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

Seth Godin, Peter Diamandis, Leo Babauta, Steve Martin, folks with big brains and bold ways of thinking.

How do you suggest balancing life with music?

Life is never in balance. It is a matter of surfing the imbalance and realizing that the only constant is change. It's vitally important to stop and reevaluate things from time to time. Priorities shift and things that were once important can become stepping stones to levels of growth.

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

There is no single path to success in music. I do believe that I benefit every day from my music education degree but I don't really buy into the "either/or" notion. It's much about the person, the goal, the drive, etc.

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

I've been extremely fortunate in my career to travel all over the place. A lot of the places have as much to do with the people and the music as the place. If I had to pick three, I'd go with Japan, Italy and Spain. It may be no coincidence by the way, that those places were also my favorite places to eat!

What are you listening to currently?

I just checked my phone. The most recent downloads are Beat Root Revival, Fiona Apple, Bob Dylan, Beck and They Might Be Giants.

Do you have a favorite genre of music?

Intelligent acoustic singer-songwriter stuff by people who are great at playing their instruments. Which usually go hand-in-hand.

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

I got a cognate in English at Michigan State and I would say every one of those classes helped me improve my thinking and communication skills.

What are you working on right now?

I'm notorious for biting off more than I can chew. I have a book coming out in around nine months, another two in the works, some exciting plans with The Brass Junkies podcast, an album by the Tartan Tuba Band (from Carnegie Mellon) and a solo project, releasing my own version of the Song Reader album by Beck. Lots of projects. Lots of growth. I'm picking things that scare the heck out of me and will cause me to have to learn all sorts of new skills.

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

I would have loved to have pursued a career as a stand-up comic. But somehow, being a euphonium player was a more rational choice. Who knew?

Do you like to teach? Why or why not?

Teaching is the most important thing that I do. I love every minute of it. It is exhilarating, frustrating, challenging, rewarding, and humbling. Sometimes all in a single day.

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

Steven Pressfield - The War of Art, James Clear - Atomic Habits, Peter Diamandis - Bold, anything by Seth Godin

Do you have any tips on forming a chamber group?

Start with who. Have a clear sense of the unique value your group brings to the marketplace. That assumes one wants to do it as a money-making venture. If you are doing it for the sheer pleasure of it, just the "who" part. The music is the easy part. Make sure everyone's role is clear from the outset. Be honest and sensitive. Make all the hard decisions before the first dollar comes in. Listen more than you speak.

By the way, it took me a long time to come up with this list, after years of stepping in holes and doing it the wrong way. Learn from your mistakes. Be kind. Be patient. Be yourself. Unless you're a jerk. If you're a jerk, keep it to yourself.