

AN ARTIST'S CORNER

featuring

Matt Waters



Matt Waters is currently Professor of Trombone at the Nanhai Conservatory of Music in Haikou, China, founder of Phantom Brass, author of *Beyond the Practice Room: Making Music in the Modern Age*, and strategic consultant to MetroWest Opera in Boston, Massachusetts. As a musician, he has performed with Placido Domingo, the San Diego Symphony, opened for the Rolling Stones, and been shown on the hit American TV-series, *Glee*. He regularly speaks about marketing, branding, and personal development for artists across the world.

Check out Matt Waters website – www.mattwtrs.com and his group, Phantom Brass, at www.phantombrass.com

Matt recently published his book, ***Beyond the Practice Room***.

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

I started playing trombone when I was 9, and switched to bass trombone, which is my current primary horn during high school. I started playing piano before that around age 5-6.

What equipment do you primarily use?

I primarily play on a Shires Bass trombone with a NY-S Giddings Stainless Steel

Mouthpiece. My tenor horn is currently a Bach Strad 42, and my straight horn is an old King 2B.

What are some of the highlights of your career?

--Opening for the Rolling Stones in the Staples Center with the UCLA Marching Band

--Performing with Placido Domingo

--Currently, teaching and performing in China where I'm able to introduce people to western music on a regular basis.

With whom did you study?

High School- Jim Prindle

University- James Miller, Bill Booth

Post College- Michael Priddy

Who are some of your musical heroes?

--Stefan Schulz. There's a certain musicality and sense of phrasing in his playing that I don't see in a lot of trombonists, especially solo bass trombonists. Gorgeous sound.

--Patrick Sheridan. Pat has the career I want some day. He's not only a phenomenal tubist, he's a well-respected educator, conductor, and arranger. Other than my primary teachers, Pat has had the largest effect on how I think about my playing and career.

--James Miller. James was my teacher for the vast majority of my undergraduate degree, and all of my graduate studies. The man is a model of versatility in the Los Angeles music scene. He not only performs with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, but I'm never surprised when he pops up on the orchestra list for a major motion picture, or when he talks about the gig he played at a salsa club last night.

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

I was 17, and going into my senior year of high school. I had some options of whether to take some extra music related classes or some science related classes, and that prompted some soul searching on what I wanted to do with my life. I chose the music related classes, and the rest is history.

How much do you practice on a typical day?

--This varies depending if I have a major performance or something similar coming up, but I'm happy to get 2-3 hours in a day.

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

Yes! MattWtrs.com is my personal website, and PhantomBrass.com is the website of my brass ensemble.

Please give some tips for freelancing.

Being an effective freelancer is combination of two rules. One, be good enough. If you can't handle the demands of the gig, you won't be hired. Two, go make friends with people. This doesn't mean you're 'networking' in the sense that you're meeting people with the intention of being hired, but rather meeting musicians for the simple purpose of making true friends. Dale Carnegie said it best. "You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you." Go be interested in other people and what they're doing.

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

What a loaded question. I think that in order to make a career as a performer, you need to learn how to teach sooner rather than later. This means that if you are not in a 'teaching track' in college, you should absolutely find opportunities to instruct others, possibly at a local high school or middle school. On the flip side, the best educators I know are also extremely competent on their instrument of choice. To neglect becoming excellent at your instrument because you are pursuing a teaching career is doing a disservice to you and all of your future students.

Put simply, you should choose what's best for you, but you need to do both at a very high level regardless of the career path you intend to take.

Is anyone else in your family a musician?

No. I'm the only one.

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

Throw yourself into it 100%, and pursue everything you want that is even tangentially to a career in music. You never know what skills you'll develop in those 'side paths' that will be instrumental to your career down the road.

What are you listening to currently?

Trombone related- Copenhagen Recital (Live) by Stefan Schulz

Non-Trombone- Anjunadeep 09 by Jody Wisternoff

AudioBooks/Podcasts- Cosmos by Carl Sagan, 99% Invisible, TED Radio Hour

Do you have a favorite genre of music?

I love listening to deep house music when I'm not listening to work-related music.

What are you working on right now?

I always have too much on my plate, but my largest recent project just finished, which was [Beyond the Practice Room](#), a book for students looking to pursue music as a career. Other than that, I'm working on starting a university program at the Nanhai Conservatory of Music in Haikou, China, am preparing for a recital tour in China, and working on my brass ensemble, [Phantom Brass](#).

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

I almost pursued a career in Neuroscience when I was going into college, so that? Maybe? Who knows.

How could we make music education better?

Oh hey... I wrote a blog post on this. [Check it out.](#)

Do you like to teach? Why or why not?

I love to teach! Passing on what I know, especially to students who don't have a lot of background in western music is extremely exciting for me.

What are your favorite solos for your instrument?

Right now, I love Chris Brubeck's Concerto for Bass Trombone and Orchestra since I've started digging into it in preparation for a recital later this year. Other than that, I'm a huge fan of all of Ewazen's trombone rep, and the Concerto Borealis by Soren Hyldgaard.