

AN ARTIST'S CORNER

featuring

Dr. Natalie Mannix



Dr. Natalie Mannix, principal trombonist of the Delaware Symphony, is an avid soloist, chamber musician, orchestral performer and educator. In fall of 2016 she began her current position as Assistant Professor of Trombone at the University of North Texas after teaching 8 years at Towson University in Baltimore. Previously, she was a member of the United States Navy Band in Washington, DC for over 9 years where she performed with the brass quintet, concert and ceremonial band.

She has appeared as guest artist and clinician at colleges and conferences throughout North America, including the 2016 and 2013 International Trombone Festival, the International Women's Brass Conference, the Midwest Band and Orchestra

Clinic and the American Trombone Workshop. Natalie is an active freelancer on the east coast. In addition to frequent performances with the Baltimore Symphony, Natalie has performed with the National Symphony Orchestra, the Washington Opera and Kennedy Center Orchestras, the Washington Trombone Ensemble, the Monarch Brass, Stiletto Brass and several regional orchestras and brass ensembles. A new music advocate, she has commissioned several works for trombone and continues to perform and promote music by emerging composers.

Her recent recordings include a solo album, *Breaking Ground: A Celebration of Women Composers* and two chamber music CDs: the grammy-nominated *Interchange: Concertos by Rodrigo and Assad* with the Delaware Symphony and the LA Guitar Quartet; and *Shadowcatcher: Music for Winds, Brass and Percussion*.

An avid brass pedagogue, Natalie has taught trombone at Shepherd and Georgetown Universities and has served on the faculty of Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp in Michigan. She has adjudicated international solo and ensemble competitions and serves on the Board of Advisors and as chair of the Competition Committee for the International Trombone Association and on the Board of Directors for the International Women's Brass Conference.

Natalie received her degrees from the University of Michigan, The Juilliard School and her Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Catholic University. She is a performing artist for Edwards Instrument Company.

Natalie Mannix Website - www.nataliemannix.com
University of North Texas Trombone Page - www.trombone.unt.edu

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

I started playing trombone in 6th grade. Before that, we all had Suzuki violin class in 4th grade, and I played clarinet (horribly) in 5th grade.

What equipment do you primarily use?

I play an Edwards T350-HB and a Greg Black 4G-5G mouthpiece.

What are some of the highlights of your career?

My early highlights involve euphonium. I won first place at the Leonard Falcone competition student division when I was 18 and toured with the Blue Lake International Band as euphonium soloist through Europe the summer after that. On trombone, my career highlights include playing in the Navy Band for 9 years, playing in the Delaware Symphony, subbing with the Baltimore Symphony, playing with the amazing women of the Monarch Brass at the International Women's Brass Conferences and my current teaching job at UNT.

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

It's hard to remember how much I practiced in high school, but I was always really motivated. No one ever had to tell me to practice. I had a strong desire to be the best I could be. It was fun too! I had great teachers who stressed fundamentals and encouraged me to participate in solo competitions on both trombone and euphonium. I'm sure I averaged about an hour or so a day, but I wasn't keeping track. In college, I tried to make it a goal to practice two hours a day, but didn't always succeed. I was a double major, played in marching band, and enjoyed time with my friends. I would make up for it in the summer and weekends by practicing more. Embarrassing story: I actually had a hard time being motivated to practice my junior year, so my roommate, an elementary education major, made a sticker chart for me. Every time I practiced 2 hours in a day, I got a sticker. After 10 stickers, she

would give me a prize. (By the way, this works great with four-year olds!) When I was accepted into Juilliard for grad school, I decided it was really time to commit to trombone and give it everything. I practiced four hours most days for two years. Hour 1 was fundamentals, hour 2 was etudes, hour 3 was solo literature and hour 4 was excerpts. It was intense, but I didn't want to graduate having not tried as hard I could. Since then, I usually do an hour maintenance practice on a daily basis and more before big performances. I hardly ever practice more than two hours a day now, but I play a lot with students. My practice is much more focused and efficient, and I can more or less rest on the fundamental work I did earlier in my career. I also enjoy taking two or three weeks off in the summer!

With whom did you study?

Through grade school, I took lessons with Andy James. He is a Detroit area freelancer who could play all styles. Then I studied with Dennis Smith at the University of Michigan, Joe Alessi at Juilliard and Milt Stevens at Catholic University. I also had several great lessons with David Langlitz and David Finlayson during two summers at Music Academy of the West. All of these great teachers had different but complimentary approaches to the instrument and practicing.

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

I remember it was always so much fun! My summers were spent at music camps, my weekends were spent playing with youth orchestras and my days off were spent playing duets with my best friend, a trumpet player. We practically lived in my high school band room. I couldn't imagine NOT doing it. It was so much of my life.

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

That was always the hardest choice to make! It felt like such a leap of faith. I didn't fully make that decision until I was 21, when I was admitted to Juilliard. Until then I always had a back-up plan.

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

www.nataliemannix.com

What are some of your favorite etude books?

The old standards like Arbans, Schlossberg, Bordogni, Tyrell, and Blazevich are all still great. I also love a few new books like Brad Edwards's "Lip Slurs" and David Vining's "Flow Studies" and "Daily Routines."

Please give some tips for freelancing.

It starts in college: Take every opportunity while you are in school to expand your learning and experience. Play in every kind of ensemble. Learn from everyone you can: students, musicians of different instruments, ensemble directors, guest artists. Become as well-rounded and educated as you can be. There are many different paths toward forging a career in music - be open to everything. When you first start out, say yes to everything. You never know what connections you will make. I once played a gig where I had to dress like a clown and play brass quartets in a grocery store. This gig led to my first regular orchestra gig with the same contractor. You never know! Be early, be easy to work with and be prepared. Don't be a jerk.

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

First of all, a bachelor's degree in any subject area whether it be in the arts, music or science, is a valuable degree. Choosing music does not have to be a scary lifetime jail sentence. If you love it, do it! If it doesn't work out, you still have a college degree that you can use toward another field. Music education should not be a backup plan for those who can't succeed on their instrument. Education majors should have just as strong a desire to teach as performance majors have to play. Conversely, If an aspiring performer really loves teaching, then a music ed degree can be really valuable down the road.

Is anyone else in your family a musician?

No, but my dad was always a performer. He majored in radio and television performance, dabbled in musical theater, stand-up comedy and miming. He was also the entertainer and the life of every party!

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

I really hope if I'm on a deserted island, it's not just with etude books!

What are you listening to currently?

I rotate between listening to pieces I'm performing or conducting soon, solos my students are working on that I'm not as familiar with, true crime podcasts and Howard Stern. It changes every day. Some days, I do all of that, depending on how much time I spend in the car.

What are you working on right now?

This is a particularly busy time of year. I'm premiering the band version of Dorothy Gates's *Servant of Peace* at ATW in a couple weeks, and I'm working on a few solo pieces for upcoming recitals at Ball State and ITF. I'm also playing Mahler 7 in May with the Delaware Symphony and Mozart Requiem next month here in Texas.

Please list some of your favorite websites for musicians.

www.bulletproofmusician.com is an amazing resource for being the best performer you can be.

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

Hopefully I would be independently wealthy, so I could make a living out of my hobbies! I really enjoy travel, photography and hiking. Last year I started learning Spanish. If I could combine those into a job, it would be perfect!

Who are your favorite composers?

This has morphed over the years. In college, I loved Wagner, Mahler, Brahms and Bruckner. The bigger the brass, the better! I still love those composers, but after hearing the typical trombone-heavy masterworks enough, I appreciate new, emerging composers much more. This year I've performed/conducted works by Dorothy Gates, Lauren Bernofsky, Andy Skaggs and Joe Buono to name a few. It's such a great time for new trombone compositions!

Do you like to teach? Why or why not?

I do! My students are such hard workers. They are also really entertaining, kind people! The unique mentoring relationship an applied teacher has with the student over the course of years, is such a rewarding exchange. It works both ways. Teachers have a responsibility to pass on their knowledge and experience, inspire creativity, motivate, and protect the student's spark. Students challenge us to discover new methods of teaching and in return share their great successes and "aha" moments (not to mention hilarious jokes.) As I get older, it's no longer about my ambition or successes. It's much more satisfying to see my students win auditions and competitions.

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

I do a lot of reading regarding performance anxiety and the mental approach to performing. My favorites are "My Lessons with Kumi" by Michael Colgrass, "Effortless Mastery" by Kenny Werner and Don Greene's "Performance Success". One of the best books on musicality is "Sound in Motion" by McGill. David Vining has a great book on playing called "What Every Trombonist Needs to Know About the Body." As I age, I am focusing on finding the most relaxed, natural way to play the instrument.

What advice would I give to young women interested in a career in music?

Stay true to who you are. Music should be a unique, personal experience. You don't need to be like everyone else. Classical music thrives on individuality. Embrace it.

Don't be afraid to seek help and tell someone you trust about inappropriate behavior. It's not your fault, and you shouldn't feel bad about yourself or what happened.

Find a great support system and network. If there are only a few ladies in the brass area at your school, have lunch once a week. Go see concerts together, or read inspiring books together. There are so many wonderful, supportive people that would love to see you succeed and thrive. Seek out role models in your field. If it's brass, join the International Women's Brass Conference.