

AN ARTIST'S CORNER

featuring

Timothy Riordan



Timothy Riordan is the trombone instructor at Merit School of Music in Chicago, where he teaches beginners through high school seniors, and at VanderCook College of Music. Mr. Riordan has given masterclasses on trombone pedagogy at schools such as Juilliard, Eastman, Lawrence, and Indiana University and has presented at the International Trombone Festival and the Midwest Trombone and Euphonium Conference. Mr. Riordan has been invited to teach the 2018 ITF Youth Workshop, alongside Per Brevig and Christopher Bill, and will serve on the faculty of the 2018 Washington Brass Institute. He also sits on the board of the Private Teachers Guild of the International Trombone Association.

Mr. Riordan's former students can be found at many of the world's finest music schools, and many have

gone on to successful professional playing and teaching careers. The Bone Rangers trombone quartet, which Mr. Riordan coaches at Merit, has won numerous chamber music competitions and has appeared on local and national radio and television, including the PBS program *From the Top: Live from Carnegie Hall*. Both the Merit Trombone Choir and The Bone Rangers have performed with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Timothy Riordan studied with John Marcellus at the Eastman School of Music, where he was nominated for a Performer's Certificate. Mr. Riordan has performed as soloist with Gaudete Brass Quintet and premiered James Stephenson's Triple Trombone Concerto in Chicago. Mr. Riordan has played in recitals with Gene Pokorny, Jauques Mauger, and John Marcellus, and has performed with Chicago Philharmonia, Northwest Indiana Symphony Orchestra, and the Southwest Symphony. He toured Germany and France after the fall of the Berlin Wall with a joint American and Russian orchestra as part of a PBS documentary. Mr. Riordan has also performed with jazz luminaries Diane Schuur and Phil Woods and has played Milwaukee's Summerfest with the Star Orchestra Big Band. Mr. Riordan is an S.E. Shires Trombone Artist.

Tim has three beautiful children aged 12, 10, and 9 who, of course, all play trombone.

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

I was seven years old when my step grandfather gave me his old trombone to play. Wow, I just realized when I wrote this that in two years I will have been playing for 40 years. Blows my mind. I had never played anything else, but I sang ALL the time (and still do).

What equipment do you primarily use?

I'm a Shires Artist now, and I'm very happy with my Shires Vintage New York trombone. I still play the Bach 5G that came with 42 I played since college.

What are some of the highlights of your career?

Watching four of my high school students perform the Koetsier Concertino for Trombone Quartet with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Or standing on the Wrigley Field infield while my students played the national anthem before a Cubs game. Another highlight was conducting Bud Herseth, in what turned out to be the last solo performance of his career, on an arrangement of the second movement of the Haydn Trumpet Concerto with the Merit Trombone Choir. I remember he winked at me as I gave him a totally unnecessary cue at his first entrance :)

There are also so many small, but no less important or gratifying, moments which happen every year. Students becoming the first in their family to go to college because of the trombone. Watching a former student sub with the CSO. Watching a student who never left their Chicago neighborhood go on an orchestra trip to Japan. If you take pride in your students' accomplishments, there's no end to the highlights.

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

No WAY I can pick 10, so I'll tell you about my most influential album. I was pretty much self-taught until late in high school, and no one in my family was a musician. My step-grandpa played in the Shriner Band in Boise, but didn't know much other than marches. The only albums I came across in my local music shop that featured trombone were by Tommy Dorsey and Glenn Miller. But my whole life changed in 1990 when I came across *What Because* by Ray Anderson. I must have listened to that album a thousand times. I hope to meet him one day.

What or who inspired you to play your instrument?

My band director, Mr. Allie, for sure. He was old school and was like a second father to me. Also Frank Crisafulli, who taught me my senior year and helped me get into college. And, of course, John Marcellus, who took a chance on a kid who auditioned at Eastman on a small-bore tenor and didn't read tenor clef or know what a minor scale was. I was lucky to have such wonderful men in my life.

Who are some of your musical heroes?

Movie soundtracks played such an incredible part of my early life. Most of those players, at least at the time, were nameless to me, but their musicianship inspired me so much. I wore out two copies of *By Request: The Best of John Williams and The Boston Pops Orchestra*. Nowadays, when my kids are excited by a new Star Wars soundtrack, I'm able to tell them, "That's Alex Iles--he and daddy are friends on Facebook!" Times have changed. Oh, and thanks, Norm Bolter--I now know it was you!

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

Family lore is that I picked up the trombone for the first time at age seven, blew a note into it, and immediately announced to my family, "This is what I'm going to do with the rest of my life." Of course, nothing is ever such a straight line, or easy, but I've stuck mostly to that for almost 40 years. I was very lucky to have an amazing first band director, Mr. Allie. They started students in 5th grade, so when I asked to join the band in 2nd grade, he was reticent but gave me a chance. Mr. Allie would also go on to give me my first teaching job after I left Eastman, so he was very influential in my life. I suppose the easiest answer is that I loved music and I loved the trombone. I was also ignorant of how bad I was, so that helped :) You never met a more arrogant or ignorant trombonist in high school, which was quickly remedied at Eastman!

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

www.meritmusic.org or www.vandercook.edu

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

I think parents, teachers, and especially guidance counselors need to eliminate the phrase "fall-back" when talking about pursuing music in college. Going to college, especially in music, is about pursuing dreams. I dreamed of making my living as a professional player and once I was able to support myself playing, I realized how much more I loved teaching. Thank God I pursued my 18-year-old dreams first, otherwise I might have resented teaching. We have all had a teacher in our lives who is miserable to be in the profession because it was pushed on them as a "safe bet." Young people should go to college to study what they love, and we should support them.

Is anyone else in your family a musician?

My sister, Colleen Bayoneto, is an amazing trombonist (and my first student, although she hates it when I say that). She studied with Scott Hartman at Boston University and is just the most ridiculously gifted teacher and player. She inspires me every day.

What is your favorite place that you have performed?

I played Beethoven's 9th in a French castle once--that was pretty amazing.

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

If you love it, go for it. You have the rest of your life to figure things out and to make money. This is a time for you. Don't let people who have forgotten how to dream tell you to be sensible.

What are you working on right now?

Touching up Elegy for Mippy II for a radio broadcast celebrating Bernstein's 100th birthday.

Please list some of your favorite websites for musicians.

Trombone101 !!

Do you have any tips for preparing for auditions?

Put each audition element (scale, etude, excerpt, solo movement, etc.) on a notecard. Have friends and family hold the cards and call out stuff for you to play for them. Do this a LOT. The more you perform your audition, the less scary it is.

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

I suppose be a lawyer, so thank God for music!

How could we make music education better?

Make it more widely accessible for all kids. It is why I teach at Merit School of Music in Chicago, whose mission it is to remove barriers to participation. I believe there are great musicians everywhere!

Do you like to teach? Why or why not?

I love it more than anything. I am working my dream job. I get to help students pursue their dreams. Beyond that, it's a great challenge to do it well. Every student is different and has different ways of learning. It allows me to be creative in the way I connect with each student.