

# AN ARTIST'S CORNER

*featuring*

## Timothy Smith



Trombonist **Timothy Smith's** tenure as 2<sup>nd</sup> Trombone with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra began in 2009. Currently, he is serving as Acting Bass Trombone. In the orchestral world, Mr. Smith has appeared with the Chicago Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Toronto Symphony, Boston Pops, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Diego Symphony, Jacksonville Symphony, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Grant Park Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony and Opera, Sun Valley Summer Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic, Virginia Symphony, and Chicago's Music of the Baroque.

Smith is an avid proponent of new works for trombone, and has led commission projects for several works, including Eric Ewazen's "Triple Concerto for Trombone and Orchestra", premiered and recorded by the BPO in 2012. Most recently, he led a consortium of 11 middle school bands to commission Viet Cuong's *Howls and*

*Hymns*, which will be premiered right here in Western New York in Spring 2018. Additionally, Tim has commissioned several other works for alto, tenor, and bass trombones and coordinated the Richard Myers Memorial Trombone Trio Composition Contest. In the realm of chamber music, Tim performs with *Tres Bone*, a Maryland-based trombone trio, and was also a founding member of *CT3*, winners of the 2005 International Trombone Quartet Competition.

As an educator, Mr. Smith maintains a private studio in Buffalo, is faculty at the Washington Brass Institute *Low Brass Boot Camp*, and has also served on faculty at San Diego State University and the British School of Chicago. Tim is a frequent educational outreach artist through the BPO, visiting public schools all over Western New York. He has also visited over 50 universities around the country, presenting lectures, clinics, and recitals.

Timothy holds degrees from Ithaca College and Northwestern University, and his primary teachers were Dr. Hal Reynolds, Michael Mulcahy, Charlie Vernon, Randy Hawes, and Mark Fisher. Tim is an S.E. Shires Company Artist, and you can hear and read more about him at [www.timsmithtrombone.com](http://www.timsmithtrombone.com)

### ***What equipment do you primarily use?***

Since I have been Acting Bass Trombone in Buffalo for the last two years, my primary equipment is my Shires bass: 7YWL bell, dual independent axial valve section, B62 slide, B1.5 lead pipe, gold seamed tuning slide, and either a Hammond Design 21BL or custom 20.5BL mouthpiece. My main tenor is also a Shires, 5YWL bell, X tuning slide, axial valve, TW47 slide with a custom Hammond Design 11MXL.

### ***What are some of the highlights of your career?***

The highlights for me are more about the people I was playing with and my relationships with them, than a particular hall, conductor, piece, or event. But, an obvious highlight would be when I won my job in the BPO, premiering Eric Ewazen's "Triple Concerto" in Buffalo, and my first call to play with the Chicago Symphony. Musically, playing with Music of the Baroque in Chicago is always a refreshing, soulful experience, as is playing with the Sun Valley Summer Symphony each August. It also worth mentioning that perhaps the most downright fun I've had was doing a run of holiday concerts with the Boston Pops a few years ago. Now THAT is a slick operation that everyone – audience, orchestra, chorus, ushers, etc – really enjoys.

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

When I became serious about trombone in high school – midway through my Junior year – I was practicing 2-3 hours per day. I structured my school schedule to spend study halls and lunch in the band room practicing, and would also practice in our basement late into the evening. Once arriving at college, I was practicing 3-4 hours a day my Freshman and Sophomore years, then once I dropped my Education degree program, I had less course commitments, thus more practice time. I was easily practicing 5-6 hours a day from that point through graduate school. It took until I graduated from grad school and was responsible for paying bills and living expenses that I really figured out HOW to practice. I was used to practicing for hours on end, simply playing until my chops were shot. In school, being tired for ensemble rehearsals was no big deal as you had 2-3 months of rehearsals on one program! Once I was freelancing and teaching, I had to learn to balance my practice to those demands.

### ***With whom did you study?***

My primary teachers were Mark Brumbach in high school, Dr. Hal Reynolds at Ithaca, Mick Mulcahy, Charlie Vernon, and Randy Hawes at Northwestern. Mark Fisher was also a tremendous teacher, coaching me regularly when I was in full-on audition mode.

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

My parents sang in the church choir, and both took piano lessons while children. My father played bassoon and saxophone through college, so a knowledge and appreciate for music was always present. I took piano lessons for 6 years while in elementary school (it all atrophied since), and took up trombone in 4<sup>th</sup> grade so I could get out of class for sectionals with my best friend. The whole story is on my website, but in short, my decision to go into music was that it was a unique cross between a trade and academia. I genuinely love making sound on the trombone, and getting to do that throughout college was a huge sell for me. I've always enjoyed practicing, and the self-discovery and problem-solving that comes along with that. It was more about my selfish desire to make trombone sound and have practice time than anything else!

### ***How much do you practice on a typical day?***

There's no such thing as a typical day for me anymore! I find my week to be difficult to average out. Often, I get less than 45 minutes, but on other days it might be 3-4 hours. I try to work as much fundamental practice into my warmup, work schedule, and solo repertoire selection/preparation.

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

[www.timsmithtrombone.com](http://www.timsmithtrombone.com)

### ***What are some of your favorite etude books?***

Vobaron, Tyrell, Blazhevich (tuba version), Voxman, Bordogni. Honestly, I don't spend much time with etudes anymore as I end up using 'real' music as practice material, whether I plan on performing it someday or not. The Bordogni's have probably been the most useful for me over the years, especially playing in different clefs, dynamics, ranges, duets, etc.

### ***What are some of your favorite albums?***

My favorite trombone albums, that also had the most impact on my development, are *Les Sacqueboute* (Le Sacqueboutiers de Toulouse), *Russian Melodies* (Vienna Trombone Quartet), *Offroad* (James Markey), and *Golden Age of Brass* (Mark Lawrence performing Pryor solos). They all were introduced to me at various points in my formative years, and I listened to them so frequently I'm surprised the CDs didn't wear out! Non-classical, I gravitate towards classic rock from the 60s/70s, such as Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin, but also really dig Bossa Nova – especially Gilberto and Jobim.

### ***Please give some tips for freelancing.***

Learn how to promote yourself with humility. Find an opportunity in *any* situation, and cultivate relationships. The best players are not always the ones consistently working – the best *people* usually are.

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

Both are passions, and one cannot serve as a backup for the other. If you don't absolutely want to be a teacher, don't pursue Education! You'll be doing your students and yourself a disservice. For performance, you have to be absolutely committed. Follow your heart, but also be open and welcoming to criticism. Be realistic about the challenges, and be open to various pursuits within the field.

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

Music is not a career choice, but a lifestyle choice. It is not a 9-5 job that we can just "turn off". You will never master anything, but always be honing your craft/art. Also, ear training will be the most important course in which you will enroll – take it seriously and be disciplined!

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

The ones I skipped class for so I could keep practicing!

### ***What are you working on right now?***

I have a daunting few months ahead, including commitments on alto, tenor, bass, and contrabass trombones. In the orchestra, we have a tour of Poland coming up, with some demanding “licks” in the bass trombone part: Gershwin Concerto in F, Bernstein Symphonic Dances, Candid, and Barber’s 1<sup>st</sup> Symphony. After that, we record Respighi’s Roman Trilogy for NAXOS. I’m also playing the 4<sup>th</sup>/Contrabass part on *Die Walküre* with the Dallas Symphony coming up, which is going to be fun! Additionally, I have a few solo engagements with local bands, including a new work I commissioned. Busy busy!!

### ***Do you have any tips for preparing for auditions?***

Study music, not excerpts. Don’t be a “note-getter”, but rather a storyteller – we already have enough of the former. The closer you get to the audition, guard your confidence -- you don’t need to play for anyone and everyone just to get feedback.

### ***If you couldn’t have a career in music, what would you do instead?***

Oddly, I’ve been thinking about this a lot lately. I think something in human resources would mesh with my personality. I’ve also been getting into real estate investment lately, so I could also see myself being involved with the commercial aspects of that.

### ***Who are your favorite composers?***

Schubert, Mahler, Bartok, Vaughan-Williams, Gershwin, and Cole Porter. All have an ability to touch the soul unlike others I’ve heard.

### ***How could we make music education better?***

Take the egos out of it. That is not said without hypocrisy, and is probably impossible!

### ***Do you like to teach? Why or why not?***

I do like to teach, for several reasons. I love enabling students to achieve their best sound, which I call their “musical fingerprint”. I also like seeing when students

witness the result of diligent work. Helping students understand musical logic and develop thoughts/concepts of their own is also tremendously rewarding.

***What are your favorite solos for your instrument?***

Joseph Matej's *Concerto no. 1*, Gunnar de Frumerie's *Sonat*, and the Sigmund Stojowski *Fantasie*