

Musician Spotlights, Issue 9

Bruce Dresser, Trumpet

National Trumpet Day is coming up on October 10th, and since we're blessed to have a performance that day, we're celebrating early! To kick off the festivities we're spotlighting Bruce Dresser!



Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

I have lived in the Rogue Valley since 1997, when I also joined the Rogue Valley Symphony. My wife Marcia and I moved with our two-year-old daughter Alison to Ashland.

My wife and I have both done different things as careers: technical writing, biogenetics, bookkeeping, magazine editing, and teaching. I got my MAT degree at SOU in 2008 and have taught in the band program at Ashland Middle School for many years. Throughout my life I've always kept music alive in my life by performing in brass quintets, freelancing in churches, conducting, teaching trumpet privately, and playing in orchestras.

Upon moving to the Rogue Valley, I also started playing in concert bands, two of which I'm still active in, the Rogue Valley Symphonic Band and the Ashland City Band.

During the pandemic in April 2020, Cindy Hutton and I, along

with my daughter Alison, who's now grown up to become a professional musician (she's third horn with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra), started an ad hoc horn group (as Alison's dad, I was allowed to play flugelhorn), playing every Sunday in Lithia Park. This turned out to be something of a spiritual lifesaver for me and other horn players who gradually joined the group, allowing us to play during the most rigorous lockdown period, which continued into October.

My most recent endeavor is becoming the choir director at Ascension Lutheran Church in Medford, where I have a pretty steep learning curve with working with a choir and programming music for Sunday services. I do enjoy working with groups, and am looking forward to the challenge.

What brought or inspired you to pursue trumpet? If you'd like to share one of your favorite pieces of music as well, I'd like to know!

How I came to play the trumpet is pretty straightforward. I didn't necessarily yearn to play the trumpet or feel that it was my way of expressing myself musically. In 5th grade the junior high instrumental music teacher came by our school and gave us a choice of instruments we could learn to play. I went home and asked my mom what she thought I should play. She said, "anything but the violin," not looking forward to hearing a beginning violinist around the house. So I chose the trumpet (which is pretty ironic, since it's pretty loud). It's suited me since, and I have enjoyed playing duets with other trumpeters, playing in the brass sections of bands and orchestras, as well as in smaller and larger brass ensembles. One of my favorite pieces is Mahler Symphony No. 5, which has a prominent trumpet part. Also, Moussourgsky Pictures at an Exhibition, which Ravel wonderfully arranged with a great trumpet part.

What do you enjoy most about being with the Rogue Valley Symphony?

Playing in RVS has always felt like a different (higher) level, so I always try to stay in performing shape for the symphony, and the adult bands help me keep in shape, as well as practicing, of course! As a brass player (and woodwind and percussion players also appreciate this), I love having my own part to play. I also love listening to how my part fits in with the other brass instruments and string and woodwind sections. Espe-

cially when we play earlier classical music, the trumpets play parts similar to the timpani, and that's fun, staying in sync with the timps!

What do you do when you're not playing music i.e. what are your hobbies or interests?

When I'm not playing music I enjoy reading, arranging music for brass quintet (recently I went on a binge of transcribing Renaissance madrigals for my quintet), and bike riding. I also enjoy sci fi movies and TV and Scandinavian crime shows, where I try to incrementally add to my essentially nonexistent Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, and Finnish vocabularies.

Finally, one unusual fact, story, or tidbit about you or your instrument?

The most unusual thing I found out about myself recently is that I am a great-great-grandchild of José Miguel Carrera, who was a Chilean general who was one of the founders of independent Chile, and the President of the First Chilean Governing Council from 1811-1814. That was a pretty cool thing to learn!