



Bronstein Music profile: Cathleen Torres

Over the past few months, we've been writing profiles of the people who work and teach at Bronstein Music. This time we're glad to feature Cathleen Torres, a French horn teacher here at the store. We think you'll enjoy reading about Cathleen.

Thanks for all of the comments about these profiles. We'll keep them coming in the weeks ahead.

Don Edwards
Bronstein Music

Many of the people we've profiled got their first formal exposure to music via piano lessons. For Cathleen Torres, piano lessons started at age 4. When she was in the 5th grade, as a student at Monte Verde Elementary School, she took up the flute and found the piano foundation to be very helpful. She continued to play flute in middle school (Westborough) and until her freshman year in high school (South San Francisco High School). Her teacher at Westborough and South San Francisco High School was a positive and very influential music educator named Fred Cadiente. Through his encouragement, Cathleen made a switch to horn in her freshman year of high school.

At first, Cathleen had a very hard time playing the horn. She says it took her a week of trying before she made her first sound. She was ready to quit, but was tenacious enough to continue trying. Eventually, she got there and continued to teach herself more and more about the horn. When she was a junior, she learned how to play the trombone. She said trombone was "fun!" (Note: It's an unusual skill for a brass player to be able to play both horn and trombone due to the vast difference in the size of the mouthpieces, but Cathleen succeeded at both instruments.)

Upon graduating from high school, Cathleen was accepted at California State University, East Bay (formerly Hayward). She double-majored in business administration and music. She played trombone in the jazz ensembles and horn in the wind ensemble and orchestra. She took her first formal horn lesson while in college. She also landed a seat (on trombone) in the College of San Mateo Monday Night Jazz Ensemble, and started to work as a freelance

musician.

Cathleen earned a B.S. in business administration and a B.A. in music. The business degree required each student to have a "focus" in a particular field of study. Naturally Cathleen chose music, and completed two degrees that interwove both fields.



After earning her degrees, Cathleen went to work as an admin for a construction company, Summerhill Homes. She continued to work as a freelance player (you guessed it - on trombone and horn). Eventually, her mentor at CalState East Bay, Tim Smith, encouraged her to pursue a graduate degree in music.

Cathleen had a difficult time choosing between horn and trombone, but ultimately decided on horn. She wanted to study with a woman teacher, and was lucky enough to find Mary Bisson, a member of the Baltimore Symphony. Cathleen was accepted to the Peabody Conservatory of Music at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. At this point, her business degree came in handy, because she was hired as the Administrative Operations Assistant for the Baltimore Symphony. Her studies went well and she completed all of the course work for a Master's degree in just 3 semesters. She stayed for a 4th semester and was glad she did. In those months, Cathleen played Assistant Principal horn with the Baltimore Symphony. She also studied and played professional engagements with Barry Tuckwell (an international horn superstar), who was Professor Emeritus at Peabody.

She earned her M.M. in 2004 and realized that she was tired of the snow, humidity, and cicadas that Baltimore had to offer. Cue the music to "California, Here I Come," because that's exactly what Cathleen did.

When she landed back in the Bay Area, she immediately started freelance playing thanks to a long list of professional contacts. She also worked as the horn coach at Logan High School in Union City for 10 years, taught private music lessons, and taught horn at Alvarado Middle School. She worked administrative "day jobs" for the City of Millbrae and the San Mateo County Office of Education. In 2006, Cathleen joined the teaching staff at Bronstein Music School. She has been on adjunct faculty teaching horn at College of San Mateo since 2014.

Most freelance musicians have a collection of their favorite gigs. For Cathleen, these include playing in the orchestra for Josh Groban's Bay Area appearances, playing with a rock group called "Echo & the Bunnymen," and playing a concert at the Fox Theater in Oakland for the "Video Games Live!"

multimedia event. She has also been fortunate to "get her jazz fix", and had opportunities to perform with ensembles such as the Asian American Orchestra and Jim Norton and Brilliant Corners.

Cathleen has been a member of the California Pops Orchestra for many years. She enjoys playing musicals and has performed with numerous theatre companies throughout the Bay Area. She has played with the Oxford Street Brass Quintet since 2007, and in January had the opportunity to perform with the Canadian Brass in a joint concert.

These days Cathleen works as an administrator for a church in Portola Valley, teaches horn, and continues to play freelance engagements. She says, "I'm living my dream." You can't get any better than that.

For more information about music lessons at Bronstein Music, contact the store at (650) 588- 2502, or visit www.bronsteinmusic.com.

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