

# AN ARTIST'S CORNER

*featuring*

## Lisa Lizanec Chappell



**Lisa Lizanec Chappell**, or **Lisa Liz**, is a freelance trombonist, music educator, arranger and content creator currently living in the Seattle, Washington area. She received her Bachelors degree in Music Education followed by a Masters degree in Music Performance from Arizona State University. During Lisa's time at ASU, her teachers included Ralph Sauer, Douglas Yeo, Ryan Haines and Sam Pilafian. In 2008, Lisa toured throughout Japan as a trombonist and euphonium soloist with Min-On Concert Association's original production *Music Motion Theater: Odyssey—Brass Angels*. During that first tour in Japan, Lisa felt a special connection with country's beautiful landscape, culture and people. She always knew that one day she would return to that part of the world.

Lisa has been on five international tours with the Tony and Emmy award winning Broadway show *Blast!*. Her most prestigious performance with *Blast!* was at the 2012 World Expo in Yeosu, Korea. As fate would have it, Lisa's intuitions were right. In the summer of 2012, Lisa returned to Japan with the cast of *Blast!* for the show's first tour to travel to all 47 prefectures of the country. This was the largest tour in Japanese history undertaken by any musical production. Lisa was also an inaugural cast member in Kyodo Tokyo Inc.'s new show *Blast! The Music of Disney*. She

with the company ever since.

In between international tours, Lisa performed regularly throughout the Phoenix area as one of the city's most in-demand freelance trombonists. Her talents and experiences most notably led her to the artistic world of musical theatre. As the former principal trombonist at the Arizona Broadway Theatre, she has performed in multiple productions including classics such as *West Side Story*, *The Sound of Music*, *White Christmas* and *Les Misérables*. Lisa has also played in the pit orchestra at The Palms Theatre and Theater Works.

In March of 2018, Lisa made her return to the pit orchestra playing both trombone and euphonium in the Japanese premier of *Mary Poppins*, produced by HoriPro. *Mary Poppins* ran at the Tokyu Theatre Orb in Shibuya, Tokyo and the Umeda Arts Theatre in Osaka. Also in 2018, Lisa performed at the Tokyo International Forum as the featured trombone soloist in Kyodo Tokyo Inc's brand new show, *One Piece Oto Utage*. Other performance credits include: The 7th Fleet Band Pacific Ambassadors, Sonoran Serenade Big Band, Scott Keo - Michael Bubl  Tribute Artist, Bobby Vinton, *Video Games Live, Mix it Up* at Busch Gardens in Williamsburg, Virginia, the Scottsdale Arts Orchestra, Symphony of the Southwest, the Blue Devils Drum and Bugle Corps and the Yokosuka Symphony Orchestra.

Aside from her stage performance and pit orchestra career, Lisa also has significant experience in the realm of commercial music. For years she played trombone and sang backing vocals in the original rock band, The Hourglass Cats. During her time as a member of The Hourglass Cats, Lisa collaborated in the music writing process, recorded two EPs with the band and toured throughout the Southwestern United States and Mexico. The band's most notable performances were at the McDowell Mountain Music Festival in 2014 and 2015, Arizona's largest annual music festival.

Lisa also performed regularly with TAD Management. "TAD Management is a nostalgia based/tribute show and concert production company with over 200+ Artists, Bands and Acts booked worldwide within the Resort Community, Theatre, Casino and Cruise industry." During her time with TAD, Lisa performed with: Sharon Owens - *Barbara Streisand Tribute*, December '63 - *Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons Tribute*, Lou Nelson - *Tom Jones Tribute*, and *The Manilow and Midler Tribute Show*.

In addition to performing, Lisa has a passion for music education and enjoys sharing her musical knowledge and guiding students of all ages. After completing her Bachelors degree in Music Education in 2009, Lisa became a certified music teacher. She has taught private and group music lessons for the Phoenix Symphony's "One Nation Project", Kirk's Studio for the Performing Arts and Band for Today, a Chicago, IL based education company. Lisa was the first teacher in Arizona hired by Band for Today in their efforts to expand into the Southwestern region of the United States.

Currently, Lisa maintains a self-managed virtual lessons studio and produces weekly videos for her YouTube channel, *Lisa Liz Trombone*.

Website: <https://www.lisaliztrombone.com>  
YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/lisaliztrombone>  
Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/lisaliztrombone>  
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Twitter: <https://www.twitter.com/lisaliztrombone>

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

I was 13 years old when I started playing the trombone. Before playing the trombone I played the piano, saxophone and clarinet. It took me a while to find my instrument.

*What equipment do you primarily use?*

King 3B and Conn 88HTO tenor trombones

*What are some of your favorite highlights of your career?*

- Touring the US, Japan and Korea with the Broadway shows Blast! and Blast the Music of Disney.
- Being a part of the Japanese promotional tour for Blast the Music of Disney.
- Performing in Kyodo Tokyo Inc.'s, One Piece Oto Utage, as the show's featured trombone soloist.
- Getting sponsored by Conn-Selmer Inc. as a King and C.G. Conn Trombone Artist

*Do you have any tips on becoming better at transcribing?*

Listen to the tune a million times before you even start to write it out or play along with it. Get to the point where you have the entire tune memorized and can sing it. Listen to the song all the time, not just when you're sitting down at your practice session. Listen to it while you're working out, on your commute, while you're cooking, while you're getting ready in the morning etc. If you have the song completely memorized and internalized, it will be a lot easier to transcribe.

*How have your practice habits changed over the years?*

When I was in high school I didn't practice AT ALL. When I was in college it was all about logging hours for me. I was super into how long I was practicing for. Now, it's all about efficiency. I know with a busy schedule practice time can be limited. I go in with specific goals in mind and what I need to accomplish. I know how to get results from a one hour session, a 30 minute session, a 15 minute session... I think the more efficient your practice sessions are the better!

*Do you like to sing when you practice? Why or why not?*

Yes. Singing helps me "hear" difficult intervals if I am not getting them. I used to have a teacher in college say, "If you can sing it, you can play it". I have found this to be very true!

## ***What qualities do you think are important for being successful in life?***

This is a loaded question, as I think success is defined differently by different people. I think the quality that will take you the farthest is simply being kind. Be kind to others, be kind to your teachers and your colleagues. This will translate well into the professional world. Basically, no one wants to work with a jerk! Treat people with respect and be a pleasure to work with.

Beyond that, I think work ethic is very important. Whatever it is you choose to do, you have to want it! You have to want it so bad that you spend all of your time working towards that goal. You have to be "all in".

## ***How do you stay motivated when you get frustrated or down? Do you have any tips to help stay motivated?***

I stay motivated by setting goals for myself. Especially if the goals have a date or a deadline, that is huge for me. Preparing for a gig or an audition or a concert really motivates me to practice because I know I want to sound the best I possibly can. Due to the pandemic with no gigs in sight, I turned my attention online for making and creating deadlines. I started putting more effort into my YouTube channel and I have a goal of uploading one video a week. Putting deadlines on myself really helped me get my butt in gear and not just sit around during this time. I've always been pretty self-motivated, so this hasn't been a problem for me. However, if you're the type that needs a little outside motivation, make these deadlines with a friend (or friends)! Start up a rehearsal group, even if it's just 2 people. Or have a buddy that you send recordings to once a week and offer each other advice and critique. You can also do online projects together, making fun videos. The Acapella app makes this super easy to do. The possibilities are endless, you just have to make opportunities for yourself. Set a goal, put in on the calendar (yes, I'm serious) and achieve the goal by that set date. Wash, rinse, repeat.

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

Doug Yeo, Ralph Sauer, Sam Pilafian and Ryan Haines

## ***What qualities do you think are important in a student?***

A good attitude! My favorite students have a great attitude when it comes to learning about music and getting better at their instrument. You have to be happy about it, you have to want to get better, you have to put the time in, and you have to enjoy the process. Also, being willing to try new things always helps.

Being a student is like being an explorer. You are exploring all of these different paths until you find one that will take you where you want to go.

*Do you remember when you decided that you were going to be a professional musician?*

It was on my first international tour with the show *Odyssey*, I was 22 at the time. *Odyssey* was a stage production show that toured Japan in 2008. It was my first big gig, and my first big paycheck. I'll never forget receiving my first per diem installment (in cash) and throwing it all over the bed in my hotel room, haha. I got to perform every night, hang out with some of the coolest people I've ever met, and go on countless adventures in a new country. It was on this tour that I knew I was hooked. I knew there was no other option for me than to do this for the rest of my life.

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

It changes, depending on what I have going on at the time. On average, I feel pretty good maintaining my skills practicing about 1-2 hours a day. When I am really preparing for something (a gig, a show, a recording session) I feel better when I put in 3-4 hours a day.

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

Yes, my website is [www.lisaliztrombone.com](http://www.lisaliztrombone.com)

*What are some of your favorite etude books?*

This is always changing, as I am always on the hunt for new books to play out of! Right now I would have to say, *Range Songs* by David Vining, *Total Trombone* by Michael Davis and *Exercises and Etudes for The Jazz Instrumentalist* by J.J. Johnson. Special shoutouts to the *Rochut* book and the *Arban's* - the trombone bibles!

*Do you use any apps when you practice?*

I use *Total Energy Tuner* for the metronome and the drones. I use *iRealPro* when I want to play along with a rhythm section.

*If you could go back in time and give yourself any advice, what would it be?*

Practice more!

***What is your favorite place to which you have traveled?***

Japan, for sure! I am so happy I got to live there for 4 years. I also really like Thailand.

***How do you suggest balancing life with being a musician?***

I am the absolute worst person to ask about this, haha. I am definitely a workaholic and have gone months without a day off before. As a freelancer, I have definitely fallen into the hustle culture, always chasing the next gig or the next thing. I am really trying to be better about this now by making conscious decisions and setting limits for myself. My new thing is, I am trying to take one day off a week from ALL music and business stuff. On this day, I go do something fun and get outside!

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

There is so much to cover here! I have a few presentation videos on my YouTube channel that discuss this topic in more detail if anyone is interested. Some general tips: get to know as many people as you possibly can, make meaningful relationships and meaningful connections. Go out as much as possible and listen to live music. To be a part of the scene you have to be "seen". The other is a tip I got from Michael Kocour, my jazz band director in college, "To be a musician, you must be a shameless self promoter".

***Is anyone else in your family a musician?***

My husband is also a musician, a trombonist at that! He plays trombone for the US Navy Band.

***What are some of your favorite places that you have performed?***

My absolute favorite place to perform is at the Tokyo International Forum in Tokyo, Japan. I have performed in three different shows at this theatre and have seen other productions there as well. Getting off the train at Yurakuchou station is so nostalgic and exhilarating for me! I love everything about it; the cute melody that plays when you get off the train, the short walk to the theatre, all of the surrounding bars and restaurants. It is the perfect venue, one of my favorite places for sure. Special shoutout to Banditos in Puerto Peñasco, Mexico. Lots of fun memories performing there as well!

*Do you have any suggestions for working on one's range?*

I am a huge fan of the "one half step at a time" approach. Take a scale, an arpeggio, a melody, anything, and move it up one half step at a time. Eventually, your range will expand. You should also make sure you play your full range everyday and always work to extend in both directions. I have several lesson videos on my YouTube channel about this as well if you want some examples!

*What are your favorite things to do that make you happy?*

Playing trombone, performing, traveling, hanging out with my friends, petting my cat, going out to eat at good restaurants, going to the beach...

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

I would say, make sure you have a goal in mind. What do you want to do after you graduate college? What do you want your ideal life and career to look like? Keep those questions in mind, and it will help you decide which direction to go in. Also, this is something I wish I would have thought about that before I went to college: go to school in the city where you want to live! The best networking and connections you will make happen in college. You can definitely take advantage of that and get connected in the local scene while you are still a student. It will make for a smoother transition after college.

*Do you have a favorite genre of music?*

POP! I love popular music, absolutely love it. The catchier the better. I love short, simple tunes that just bring a smile to people's faces. I also like rock and alternative music (especially from the '90s) and musical theatre.

*What projects are you working on right now?*

Right now, I am working on producing weekly videos for my YouTube channel. It has been hard work, but it has been worth it to be able to continue to make music, expand my reach online and meet and network with other musicians during the pandemic. I am also working on growing my online private lessons studio (If you want to take a lesson, let me know)! Behind the scenes, I have been writing original music for my first solo album.

***Do you ever get anxious for a performance? What advice would you give for dealing with nerves?***

I used to, but I don't really any more. The best way to deal with nerves is preparation, and I'm not just talking about the music. Of course, the music has to be super prepared and practiced to the best of your ability. Memorizing the music definitely helps.

You should also be prepared in every other sense of the word, nothing should be a surprise on the performance day. Try to re-create every aspect of your performance and do it multiple times before the big day. If you can get into the performance space before hand, even better! Do multiple run throughs in the performance space full out (practice like you're going to perform). Have as many people watch you as possible beforehand - your friends, your family, your pet, do a livestream, film a video, etc. If you get used to performing all the time, it won't feel any different on the day of the performance. It also helps to create a daily routine so everything is the same leading up to the performance - meal time, what time you go to sleep and wake up, exercise, set-up, makeup, getting dressed etc. Don't make any changes to your routine on the performance day, it's just another day.

Also, try to create as many performance opportunities for yourself as you can. 1 recital per semester will not get you the experience you need. Weekly performances would be a good goal, of course daily is best!

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

I have actually thought about this a lot. I think I would do something that made more of a difference in the future of our planet. I am pretty passionate about the fragile state of our world. I am a vegan, I drive an electric car, I do my best to conserve waste and not use single use plastic. I think I would be an activist or work for some sort of conservation company. Maybe get a biology degree and do research... anything that would help make a difference.

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

I have so much to say about this topic, in all levels of music education from beginning to college. Some overarching things would be, teaching more musical styles - not just classical and jazz. Allow students to choose what kind of music they want to play, what kind of music makes them happy. Teaching more about improvisation and free music making. Creating more performance opportunities, especially as soloists. So many students have severe performance



anxiety from lack of performance experience. I think performance training is just as important as the music training itself.

For beginning and intermediate band, get away from Bb major! It's so crazy to me that the beginning band materials stay in one key for so long. Then maybe in junior high and high school they expand to 4 keys - Bb, Eb, F and maybe Ab? The result is, you have high schoolers, or even college students who cannot play in sharp keys, let alone all 12 major keys comfortably.

***Do you memorize your music? Do you have any advice for young players on how to memorize?***

Listen, listen, listen! I touched on this earlier when I was talking about transcribing, the same applies here. If you listen to the point of memorization, where you can sing the whole tune/song/piece, it will help you get the form down cold. The rest is just filling in the notes. Also, I do not memorize in chronological order. I prioritize what is most important. I like to work on any solos, melody or exposed parts first because those are the most important. Then any prominent section parts, or harmony lines. Lastly, I memorize any background figures, doubled parts etc.

***What is your favorite food?***

Indian food!