

ALTHAT JAZZ

BY MICHAEL J. SOBIECH

PARENTS WHO WORRY ABOUT TELEVISION ROTTING THEIR CHILDREN'S BRAINS SHOULD PERHAPS TAKE HOPE IN WKU'S MARSHALL SCOTT, FOR IT WAS THROUGH THE LATE-NIGHT TRUMPET CALL OF JOHNNY CARSON'S "TONIGHT SHOW" THAT HE DISCOVERED HIS LIFE'S WORK AS A JAZZ MUSICIAN AND PROFESSOR.

Growing up in West Virginia, the youngest of four, Scott began playing trumpet when he was nine. When he hit junior high and heard his "lifetime trumpet hero" Doc Severinsen, he knew he would make the trumpet and music his career. "Even though the show ran until 1:00 in the morning, by the time I was in eighth grade, I'd stay up just to watch the band."

Scott's late-night viewing eventually led to long nights studying, with a BME at Ohio University (1981), followed by an MM in trumpet performance at Notre Dame (1983), culminating in his doctorate (DMA in trumpet) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (1988). "Through three college degrees and 24 years of college-level teaching (with 20 of those years at WKU), I've rarely taken a day off the trumpet," states Scott. "Even on a 'day off,' I still do a warm-up routine because even a couple of days off the horn will take a toll on the chops."



Dr. Marshall Scott

This level of commitment and natural passion is essential for his work of cultivating young musicians and music teachers. "Music students take one-on-one lessons with their professors on their chosen instrument, which means that I have to be ready to sound good for them at a moment's notice. I have to be ready to walk in the door in the morning and play anything from B-flat trumpet (the basic all-around horn), to C-trumpet (orchestral), to Piccolo trumpet (for music from the Baroque period), to jazz styles."

Scott's work on the hill has not gone unnoticed in the world of jazz. He has performed for the International Trumpet Guild Conference's Festival of Trumpets, and in addition to performing, he has been a judge and chaired the culminating event of the conference — the collegiate jazz trumpet competition. "These conferences are great places to hear all the best living classical and jazz players, and, of course, they are great places to try new equipment — mouthpieces and trumpets. My wife," he admits, "always worries how much I'll spend."

His love for new trumpets and mouthpieces has brought positive

dividends to WKU and his students. "Trumpet players tend to be fanatics about equipment — I have about 100 mouthpieces and around a dozen trumpets. And while that may sound like a large number, the supply of trumpets is actually on the low side. And so when I replace trumpets of my own, I tend to sell them at a good price to my students so that they can have a professional-level horn in their hands. Additionally, over the years I've represented three major trumpet manufacturers, which has led to some wonderful exposure for my work and the University, along with producing a collaborative relationship with the manufacturers concerning trumpet and mouthpiece innovations."

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During his quarter of a century of teaching, Scott's highest-profile teaching and performing opportunities were his 14 summers as a trumpet instructor at the world-famous Interlochen Arts Camp in Interlochen, Michigan. "My family and I would live there for two months every summer. And as a result, I was able to teach some of the best students in our country along with performing alongside some of the most famous musicians in the world."

Scott's summers at Interlochen, while fulfilling and enjoyable, were no vacation from work. "It was a full teaching day, six days a week, like my work week at WKU. But at Interlochen, the teaching day often did not end at 5:00 or 6:00; rather, there would be another rehearsal or live performance with other faculty or professional guests who came

through for the summer concert series. To name a few, I was able to perform with various traveling groups including Aretha Franklin, Bernadette Peters, the Temptations, the Four Tops, Natalie Cole, and the Canadian Brass. I was constantly surrounded by outstanding players and great music — every summer, I learned a year's worth of knowledge."

Everything that Scott does to maintain his standards for himself and his current students is also done with a view to his future students. "Music faculty actually recruit most of our enrollment. It is my job to find good trumpet players but not just for my studio; with the trumpet, you are finding players



for almost every ensemble in the department. Recruitment is a year-long process involving visits by high school students to WKU, visits by myself and my colleagues to high schools, constant correspondence, and auditions for grant money. Considering all the other state-wide college music programs, it is highly competitive." To maintain WKU's high standards, Scott looks for help in the highest places: "President Ransdell was great about providing a personal contact with one potential student. And, I am happy to say, this student is one of our incoming trumpet majors this semester."

Scott has also received help from generous alumni. "A huge amount of credit for WKU's jazz program's existence and success goes to Frances Wilson and the late Lively Wilson, whose generosity gives



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the jazz band its operating budget. Without their support, we would not be able to bring in guest musicians for concerts, purchase equipment, buy music, or do much else. Their vision has helped us with our goal — helping our students become good musicians and some of the most successful public school music teachers in the state."

In addition to Presidential and alumni assistance, Scott and fellow WKU music professor John Martin, have been using their own music to bring new musicians to the Hill. "In 2003, I did a jazz quintet CD with all-original tunes, and in 2009, my good friend and colleague John Martin

and I recorded a duo CD of original music, with John on guitar and me on trumpet. We use both of these CDs as part of our efforts to promote the music program here at WKU."

"And I have to mention that the long-awaited arrival of the new Van Meter Auditorium, as well as the new Rehearsal Hall, which is under construction, are two major pluses to help us stay competitive. Van Meter is now one of the finest acoustical and most beautiful halls I have ever been in."

For Scott, a passion that began with viewing late-night television continues in constant practice in his own studio and beyond, for it is as an

"active practitioner and performer" that Scott sees himself fulfilling his role as a researcher. "To me and most people in similar positions at other institutions, we feel that we are performing artists in residence; and as such, I feel blessed to be a trumpet professor at WKU. I'm able to keep my own performance level high, while enjoying the great reward of seeing my students grow. We've had students go on to receive doctorates, and we've had students go on to become some of the most highly regarded school band directors in the country. And in both cases, all are — first and foremost — fine musicians." ■