

# Justin Bland

## *A Trumpeter for the Ages*



*Justin, you have a really varied and interesting career. Please describe it for us.*

Being primarily a trumpeter, I spend most of my time performing world-wide on baroque trumpet with early music ensembles. I also still play modern trumpet and teach modern and baroque trumpet. I have also developed interest in arranging music and making editions.

*What drew you to the trumpet – how did you start playing?*

Even though I was curious about music from a young age, I did not have a specific instrument that I wanted to play. My mom suggested trumpet because my elementary school's band director told her that a person who learned trumpet could more easily learn another instrument. I started playing in 5th grade. I was not very enthusiastic at first because of the difficulty of producing a tone and the fatigue associated with playing. However, as I improved I began to practice more, listen to more recordings, and read more about trumpet playing - this gave me more motivation to continue with trumpet playing.

***You live in Copenhagen! Why did you decide to live there, and how does the classical music scene differ from that in the USA.***

I have been living in Copenhagen for a little over a year. My first visit was in 2013, and I came back a few times for auditions; I finally decided to move in 2016 and am extremely happy about my decision. Moving to a different place always poses difficulties, but I feel that the music community here in Denmark has welcomed me. The last place I lived in the States was in Nevada, and although I had the opportunity to travel all over the country for work I very rarely performed in the state. It is nice to live in a place where there are more performance opportunities. I was told to not to expect to have much work in the first year or two of living here, but I am almost certain that in the short time I have lived in Denmark, I have performed here more than in Nevada. I still have the opportunity travel for work, as is evidenced by my performance with CMSCVA on April 23rd as well as my concerts in Minnesota and California immediately after. There are also many more opportunities to see a large variety of high-quality classical concerts here than I experienced in the States, many of which have no entrance fee.




***“...a relaxed, conversational approach can be applied to playing with chamber groups, both on modern and early instruments. “***

***The Chamber Music Society was really excited to program two pieces on our April 23<sup>rd</sup> concert that (unusually) involve trumpet. Do you have to change your playing style when you are working with small groups as opposed to orchestra?***

When I play with a bigger modern orchestra, I feel that there is often the need to play loud just to be heard since the brass is positioned in the back of the group. When I play on baroque trumpet, even though the instrument is in some aspects trickier, I usually feel like my playing can be more organic, conversational, and nuanced. That type of relaxed, conversational approach can also be largely applied to playing with chamber groups, both on modern and period.

However, I do have to change my approach when I play modern and early instruments. I don't often get to perform on historic and modern instruments in the same program, so this concert is quite exciting for me. The concert features two septets that were both commissioned by the Parisian Chamber Music Society "La Trompette." Saint Saëns's Septet, op. 65 (for trumpet, string quintet and piano) composed 1879-80 seems to have been written for a valved trumpet in E-flat. The trumpet part of d'Indy's *Suite dans le style ancien*, op. 24 (for trumpet, strings, and 2 flutes) is playable by a natural trumpet in D, which I will use for this performance. It is notable that d'Indy's work which was written later (in 1881) uses an earlier

form of the trumpet. It is a reminder that the new valved trumpet did not immediately replace the old natural instrument. The two instruments coexisted; the timbres are quite different, and many composers at the time still preferred the sound of the older instrument even if it could not play as many notes as the valved instrument.



*We see from your bio that you also sing as a countertenor! Describe to us how the singing helps your skills on the trumpet.*

I think singing can help one's skills on just about any instrument. For me, it helps both with pitch/accuracy and with achieving a more vocal approach on trumpet (which is often needed when playing Baroque trumpet, especially when playing in the high *clarino* register). Because of the trumpet's physically demanding nature, singing also gives me a chance to work on aspects of the music such as rhythm and phrasing while not overly exhausting the facial muscles I use to play trumpet.

Hear Justin Bland perform Saint-Saëns's Septet, op. 65, and *Suite dans le style ancien*, op. 24 by Vincent d'Indy on our April 23<sup>rd</sup> concert. [www.cmscva.org](http://www.cmscva.org)

Read more about Justin on his website  
<http://justinblandtrumpet.com>

*What composer or artist are you really into right now? Who is currently on the top of your playlist?*

I have always listened to more music from the Baroque than any other period. Lately, I have been listening to a lot of Handel.