

Federal Brass Bio
August 17, 2011
Word Count: 901



The United States Army Field Band

The Musical Ambassadors of the Army
Washington, DC

FEDERAL BRASS

The **Federal Brass Instrumentalists**, as part of The U.S. Army Field Band from Washington D.C., travel thousands of miles each year bringing high quality concerts, chamber music, educational clinics and masterclasses to students and patriotic Americans nationwide. Their performances have inspired, educated and entertained in various musical styles from modern brass quintet compositions and transcriptions of classical literature to jazz standards and popular movie themes. The F.B.I. provide exciting arrangements and dynamic performances that bring musical favorites to life!

Originally from Long Island, **Sergeant First Class John Altman (trumpet)** joined The U.S. Army Field Band in 1999. After completing his Bachelor of Arts degree at Centre College of Kentucky, SFC Altman performed professionally in the Miami and Chicago areas before completing his Master of Music degree in Jazz Pedagogy and Performance at Northern Illinois University. Since joining the Army Field Band, he has performed in the Embassy Brass Quintet and Chamber Brass, and is currently the group leader of the Federal Brass. SFC Altman has performed as a featured soloist with the Concert Band many times in many diverse styles.

Sergeant First Class James Wood (trumpet) earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of North Texas, a Master of Music degree from Northwestern University, and a Bachelor of Music degree from the New England Conservatory. His instructors include Armando Ghitalla, Charles Schlueter, Vincent Cichowicz, and Keith Johnson. He has served as principal trumpet of the North Texas Wind Symphony, has performed with the Dallas Opera and the Newcastle Brass Quintet, and was a teaching fellow at the University of North Texas.

Prior to joining The U.S. Army Field Band, **Staff Sergeant Jeanne Wiesman (horn)** was a fellow with the New World Symphony in Miami Beach, Florida. She received a Master of Music degree at the Manhattan School of Music and a Bachelor of Music degree from Boston University, where she studied with Eric Ruske, Eli Epstein, and Jerome Ashby. SSG Wiesman won fellowships to the 2002 and 2003 seasons at the Tanglewood Music Center while also earning the prestigious Harry Shapiro award for outstanding brass performance. Additionally, she has been a member of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago and participated in the Spoleto Festival USA, Salzburg Easter Festival, Aspen Music Festival, and Opera in the Ozarks. SSG Wiesman is an advocate for promoting music education and is involved with several community engagement programs.

Staff Sergeant Carmen Russo (trombone) studied with Per Brevig at the Aspen School of Music and later studied with Don Kneeburg, ultimately earning his Bachelor of Arts in Music Performance from the University of South Florida in 1997. From 1994-2004 he performed with a variety of professional organizations including: The Florida Orchestra, Florida West Coast Symphony, The Symphony of Southwest Florida, Sarasota Opera, Walt Disney World, Universal Studios, and for the Holland America and Carnival Cruise Lines. SSG Russo was also selected to play with the Grandlink World opening festival band in Qingdao, China, in addition to several traveling off-Broadway shows including The Lion King, Cinderella, 42nd Street, The Producers, Chicago, and Showboat.

Staff Sergeant Wesley Ballenger is the bass trombonist with the Concert Band, The U.S. Army Field Band Trombone Ensemble, and the Federal Brass. SSG Ballenger has performed as soloist with the Concert Band on works by Chris Brubeck, Daniel Schnyder, and Eric Ewazen. SSG Ballenger earned his Bachelor of Music degree from Indiana University in 2005, where he studied with M. Dee Stewart and Peter Ellefson. He also spent four months abroad in Vienna, Austria studying with Ian Bousfield. SSG Ballenger has served as bass trombonist with the Richmond (IN) Symphony Orchestra, the Columbus (IN) Philharmonic Orchestra, and the 2004 Disney Collegiate All-Star Band in Orlando, FL. When he is not traveling the country with the Army Field Band, SSG Ballenger enjoys traveling the country with his wife, Becky.

Staff Sergeant Lauren Veronie (euphonium) grew up in Willis, Texas and is a student of Dr. Brian L. Bowman. While attending the University of North Texas, she earned her Master of Music in Euphonium Performance in 2007, and graduated summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Music degree in 2005. SSG Veronie is in demand throughout the country as a soloist and educator. Prior to joining the Army Field Band, she recorded extensively with the North Texas Wind Symphony, performed with the Dallas Wind Symphony and the Houston Symphonic Band, and was an active performer, chamber musician, and teacher in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area. She maintains a blog about her travels at www.laureneuph.com.

Staff Sergeant Robert Marino was named the Principal Timpanist of The U.S. Army Field Band in 2006. He began his graduate studies at Boston University and completed his Master of Music degree at the University of Maryland in 2010. He is a 2005 graduate of the Eastman School of Music, with majors in Percussion Performance and Music Education.

SSG Marino has been a featured soloist with the Concert Band at The American Bandmasters Association Convention and The Pennsylvania Music Educators Conference. He is also active in the marching arts, and has been an instructor for the nine-time DCI world champion Cadets Drum and Bugle Corps since 2007. He has also taught the Madison Scouts and Capital Regiment Drum and Bugle Corps. SSG Marino is a Vic Firth Educator and Endorser. He lives in Baltimore with his wife, Elizabeth