
Interview with Karen Donnelly – Principal trumpet

National Arts Centre Orchestra

FOURTH STAGE

August 7, 2002

Part 1 of video

Q. What does your position as Principal Trumpet of the NAC Orchestra entail?

Karen: As principal trumpet I am the soprano voice of the brass section. That means that I usually play the highest note that is heard in the chord or often the melody. I take that role with in the entire brass family brass and with the trumpet section I act as the leader, working with my colleague Eric Rupp. Usually there are only two of us in the NAC Orchestra.

Q. When did you start playing the trumpet and why?

Karen: I started playing the trumpet in my school band in grade six – a long time ago! I chose the trumpet because some of my brothers had played the trumpet and in my house – in my family – we had both a flute and a trumpet. I have a twin sister and she chose to play the flute so I was sort of stuck with the trumpet. It turned out to be a very fun instrument to play and I am very glad.

Q. What do you enjoy most about your career?

Karen: I think what I enjoy most about my career as an orchestral musician is the teamwork. I am part of an orchestra and we are a team. I'm just one cog in this great big machine that works together to play concerts. That is what I find most satisfying about my job; it's very exciting to work together towards that goal of a concert.

Q. What would you do if you weren't a trumpet player?

Karen: If I weren't going to play the trumpet I would probably still do something working with people. As I said earlier, that's the part that I enjoy most. I originally thought I would be a band director as that is how I started my education. In university I studied music in order to teach kids. I still think that I would have been happy doing that but luckily for me I actually found a job and am able to play the trumpet for a living.

[Questions from Part 2 of video on page 2...]

Part 2 of video

Q. What advice have you got for students?

Karen: Advice I would give to students when they are practicing is, if you come across a passage that is difficult, try performing it once on your trumpet. Then, take your mouthpiece and do that same passage just on it. I'll just give a short example...

[Ms. Donnelly demonstrates this technique]

Karen: What happens is that this technique usually focuses the embouchure into a more concentrated and more focused buzzing of the lips. That focused, concentrated buzzing is what you want to achieve. That's a little trick that I use all of the time.

Karen demonstrates two solo trumpet pieces:

1. Beethoven's Leonore, Overture No. 3
2. Piece No. 4 by Marco Bordogni from Johannes Rochut Vocalises Book 1