

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT – BRIAN NORCROSS

For Brian Norcross, the epiphany of career choice came at the New Jersey All-State High School Orchestra Festival while suffering the machinations of a dictatorial guest director.

“He took all the joy out of the performing,” he recalls. “I knew then that I wanted to be someone who would bring the joy of music to performers.” To this day, the phrase “playing music with great joy” is one that recurs in any conversation he has about his teaching approach.

Brian started playing the French Horn at age 10 in the Moorestown, New Jersey school system with the encouragement of his mother, herself an accomplished oboist. He played with distinction and was consistently selected to perform in district and all-state music festivals.

He continued his music education at the University of Massachusetts, where he graduated with a degree in Music Education. He pursued every directing opportunity he could, even to the point of successfully petitioning the university to add a third semester of conducting classes and create a reading band under student direction.

Upon graduating in 1981, he became a high school band director at Mt. Greylock Regional High School in Massachusetts and began work on a Master’s Degree at the New England Conservatory of Music, which he completed in 1986. It was here that he worked with Frank Battisti, a faculty member, who became his mentor. “Study with Frank was a life-changing experience for me,” he describes. “He believed that music teachers should use music to inspire their students to carry creativity into every part of their life.”

Brian was so taken with this philosophy that he used it as the basis for his doctoral dissertation, completed at Catholic University in 1992.

He kept playing, but the French Horn took a back seat to his teaching load and graduate study. His first introduction to college-level teaching came when he was asked to direct the jazz ensemble at

Williams College. “I’m not a jazzzer,” he told the college, but agreed to accept the challenge, an experience that further defined his career path.

He joined the [Franklin and Marshall College](#) faculty at the incredibly early age of 26, taking over its band program following the retirement of (long time Local 294 member) John Peiffer.



To become known in the musical community and network with its best players, Brian joined Local 294 and began performing with the New Holland Band and the Lancaster Symphony.

As F&M expanded its music department, Brian’s teaching and conducting load expanded to include orchestral and instrumental ensemble programs. The department currently provides services to about 450 students each semester.

He was honored as the college’s “Most Influential Professor” in 2004 and 2008.

In 2002, Brian helped form the [Allegro Chamber Orchestra of Lancaster](#), and to this date as artistic director, ensures that the organization lives to its mission statement: *We are Music for the People*. The orchestra’s repertoire includes an exciting mix of traditional chamber and modern music, and also world premiere performances.

With a philosophy of using performers with Lancaster County connections, Allegro has enjoyed a meteoric rise in local popularity. In addition to a year-round concert season, it sponsors a youth orchestra, Allegretto, NextGEN targeting a high school audience, and informal club-type events in the downtown Ware Center. The orchestra likes to think of its music as a “conversation between friends.”

And in his “spare time,” he is the musical director at First United Methodist Church. .

Brian and his wife of 30 years, Kim, live in Lancaster and are the proud parents of Molly (French Horn), Megan (Oboe), Greyson (Trombone), and Gloria (Cello).