

Wanda Ortiz 08-06-07

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- Many players choose bass, where I hear that you found your musical destiny at the end of a tardy slip. Were you drawn to bass before being late for school that fateful day and if not when and what was the epiphany that bass was your instrument? Love at first note, or a long courtship? You picked up electric several years later, was that natural progression or did you hear something that led you to it?

I didn't know what a bass was before that day at school (I was only 9 years old then). Before then, I had only seen violins and cellos so the bass was a new thing for me. At the time, I was happy to just play music but since then, the instrument has really grown on me. I ended up picking up the electric bass at around age 11 because the school I was going to had a jazz band and I was the only bass player. I played for a couple years and then not at all for a year (I auditioned for jazz band in seventh grade but didn't get in). I ended up getting into jazz band again in eighth grade and it was around that time I started playing in rock bands.

- You have a 10-minute exemption from the paradox of time travel. What do you advise little 9 year old Wanda starting out on bass about her future bass career, both what to do and not to do?

I would probably just encourage her to have fun and start off with better fingering and playing habits . Bad playing habits are hard to break!

- Sky is the limit what is your fantasy gig, piece of music to play, and where?

I'd like to play in a major symphony orchestra some day or play in an original project I really love.

- How many projects do you have going on right now in addition to The Iron Maidens?

For now, I work mostly as a freelance musician in various groups and orchestras in the Southern California area. I'm a regular member in South Coast Symphony and I'll be playing with the Marina Del Rey Symphony over the summer. The girls and I (The Iron Maidens) have tossed around the idea of forming an original band but since The Iron Maidens project keeps us busy , it's been hard for all of us to find the time to do other things .

- With your busy schedule how do you woodshed these days both on upright and electric? Which of your electrics is the one you grab and why?

I practice whenever I can on both instruments. If pressed for time, I'll just work on material that needs to be prepared the soonest. As for electrics, I only use G&Ls because they are comfortable to play, sound great, and are really sturdy. You

can check out their website at www.glguitars.com

- What song or piece of music do you most look forward to playing and which the least? Is there a song or piece you play just for the sheer fun of it when no one else is around? There isn't really only one song piece of music that I look forward to playing most or least. I look forward to playing any music if it's fun and interesting.

- At 5' 1 • you are an inspiration to anyone who feels the bass is too big for them. Did you ever feel your small stature was a hindrance at all?

Sometimes. Especially on upright bass ~it took me a while to find one that fit. I wish I had larger hands.

- In a perfect world the only thing that matters is when the fingers hit the strings. Have you ever run across musicians that didn't take you seriously because of your gender or size?

Yes but I think almost every musician has run across other musicians who didn't take them seriously for one reason or another.

- All the gear stuff. I know you have several basses and a few amps, what is your current set up both upright and electric and your desert island gear? Anything you miss or anything you were glad to be rid of?

- Electric : G&L basses , Rotosound Strings, Schroeder cabinets, BBE B-Max-T PreAmp, QSC PLX3102 Power Amp.

- Upright: A carved Romanian bass. It has a maple neck, back , and sides, and a spruce top. My bow is a Keller • bow which was made in W. Germany. Desert Island Gear: Same as above

- Missing Gear: I would like to get a fretless electric bass, another 5 string, and I'm thinking about getting a low-C extension for my double bass but haven't decided yet. Glad to be rid of: Any gear that I've broken or outgrown.

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- You are most known for your role as Steph Harris in The Iron Maidens and as a symphonic bassist. What other genres have you played that were far removed from either of those?

Jazz and blues.

- Some folks may think being a metal and classical fan is unusual but given, for example, Randy Rhoads and Ritchie Blackmore drew heavily upon classical it isn't unusual at all. Give us your take and a few gateway to classical • suggestions for the metal heads.

It doesn't seem unusual at all that someone would be influenced by classical music when writing if that's what they have been listening to. It's great that there are metal fans who also like classical music. It never hurts to listen to something else sometimes and you might even have fun trying something new. If I was just starting to getting into that genre of music, I'd start listening to baroque music (Bach, Vivaldi) first and then slowly work my way into the 20th century to get a good overview.

- Steve Harris is one of if not the most influential player in heavy metal and you win high praise for nailing his feel. Give us one thing that you found was key to getting that feel down? Also you use the Steve Harris signature strings which are perhaps the highest tension strings around. Do you have fingers of iron or is there a secret to not getting fatigued using those suspension bridge cables?

Listening and practice is key. The secret to not getting fatigued is also practice. Like an athlete, the more you practice, the more you build up your endurance.

- Obviously as an orchestral bassist you read music where many bass players do not. What is your most compelling argument to convince someone to stick with learning to read? As a side note for those struggling or just beginning does sight reading become akin to reading words on a page and speaking them? Give us your best analogy to understand the goal.

Depending on what style of music you want to play and who you want to play with, it may or may not be necessary to read music. If you want to play in an orchestra, you have to read music. If you only want to be in a rock band, you don't. You can play music without knowing how to read ~ it's like speaking a language but not being able to read it. Since being able to read music is like being able to read a book, my most compelling argument for reading music would be that there is a lot of great literature out there so why miss out? And yes, sight reading is like reading words on a page and speaking them..

- Was the transition from upright to electric easy and how difficult would it be for a player to go from electric to upright? Total culture shock?

I thought it was easy because an electric bass is smaller and therefore more manageable to play. I think it would be much harder to go from electric to upright: you would have to get used to no frets, wider finger spacing, and a higher action (and possibly using a bow depending on the type of music you decide to play).

- When you do get some time off between all the performing and rehearsal and get to kick back for a weekend what do you do?

As much as I can squeeze in : hang out with friends and family, travel, read, go to concerts, play more music, etc.,

- A great bassline is a great bassline so there are no guilty pleasures. • However what do you have in your mp3 player or on CD that would surprise people?

I own a lot of Kiss CDs. Most people are surprised when I tell them I like Kiss.

- The South Coast Symphony does a lot of work with youth programs correct? Do you see many kids that remind you of yourself back then that will carry on to become orchestral musicians?

Yes for both questions.

- We all steal from our bass heroes, give us some of your heroes and what you stole from them? Steve Harris, Geddy Lee, and Chris Squire are a few of my favorite bass players. I've borrowed techniques and musical ideas from them.

- Going by the old adage, If you can read this, thank a teacher. • Who is the teacher you would like to acknowledge that had the biggest influence on your growth as a bassist?

Andre Baulmer (UCI) and Dean Ferrell.

- Any parting words for the badass community?

It's always fun meeting other players so please feel free to send me an e-mail or say hello at a show. J Here's the website: www.theironmaidens.com . Thanks for keeping a buzz going about the bass.

A Bad Ass thank you to Wanda Ortiz , and also to member Jim "Spidey" • Green, for compiling the questions. For the latest on Wanda, please visit The Iron Maidens