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LAPD Band

by Christina Challey

"Music is the best thing that happened to me," says LAPD Band member and trombone player Rhoadell Suddeth. "Without it, I wouldn't have played the Grammys twice, performed for three



Playing at the LAPD recruit graduation.

World Expos and married my beautiful wife, Alexandra."

Rhoadell started playing trombone at the age of 15. But he didn't stop with just the trombone. He also plays tuba, euphonium, string bass, flute and piano! With his mother's side of the family consisting of musicians and singers, he says he spent a lot of time listening to his Auntie Starletta play the organ and piano. Though Rhoadell plays piano as well, he says he doesn't play it as well as he plays the trombone.

He attended Westchester High School, where he played in the band. He then went on to study at California State University, Fullerton, where he got his bachelor's degree in music. There he played in a number of



ensembles and held the principal trombone seat for the CSUF orchestra. When asked who inspired him as a trombone player, he said it was his teacher, Eric Hankey. He said Eric made a big impact on his life and was the first trombone player he wanted to emulate.

When asked if he always wanted to be a musician, Rhoadell said, "No, I always wanted to be a computer programmer and make video games." Although he loves to play video games, he has stayed true to the trombone, both as a player and as a teacher! For 11 years, he has been an instructor and mentor to the trombone section of what he calls, "the greatest marching band in the history of the universe," the University of Southern California Trojan Marching Band. From 2010–2014, he also served as assistant director for small ensembles with the band.

Through his association with the USC Trojan Marching Band, Rhoadell has had the opportunity to play for audiences around the world. He has played for dignitaries at World Expos in Japan, Shanghai and Milan, as well as in Macau for the Chinese New Year. He has performed twice at the Grammys as part of special performances by Outkast and Radiohead and can be heard with the Trojan Marching Band, under

the direction of Alan Silvestri on the soundtrack of "The Croods." Along with his mentorship of the trombone section of the USC Trojan Marching Band, he also serves as a mentor for the Inner City Youth Orchestra of Los Angeles and enjoys playing in their annual concerts at the Walt Disney Concert Hall.

In 2014, Rhoadell traveled with his wife, Alexandra, to Budapest, Hungary. There, while she was pursuing her Olympic dreams in water polo, he volunteered at the Liszt Ferenc Jazz Academy. Along with his volunteering, he taught English and was a regular trombone sub for the Modern Art Orchestra Jazz Band of Budapest.

Along with playing in the trombone section of both the LAPD Swing Band and the LAPD Concert Band, Rhoadell also performs with the Baker Brothers Big Band. He continues to play video games, teach, cook and lives in Koreatown with his wife and two cats, Cooper and Helios. With his dedication to the USC Trojan Marching Band, Rhoadell says, "Fight on!"

For more information about the band, please contact Jim Starr, executive director, at sngcop@aol.com. For greatly appreciated donations to the band, please go to www.lapolicfoundation.org, and in the "notes box," put "for the band." ♦

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